The risen Christ is depicted in this detail from a 14th-century painting from Austria. Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, is March 31 in the Latin Church this year.

FaithAlive!
The drama of Easter brings us hope in life everlasting, page 11.

Resurrection
Writer offers fictional Roman newspaper report of Holy Week, page 10.

'Blessing of disaster'
Year following southern Indiana storms reveals growth for communities and continued need, pages 8-9.
Pope on Palm Sunday: Christ’s passion leads to joy

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS)—With a warm embrace, a helping hand, shared prayer, a long discussion, and lunch together, Pope Francis spent several hours with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on March 23 at the papal summer villa.

Pope Francis gave Pope Emeritus Benedict an icon of Mary and Jesus that the Russian Orthodox delegation to his inauguration had given him just a few days earlier. “They told me this was Our Lady of Humility. If I may say, I thought of you,” Pope Francis said. The retired pontiff, obviously moved, grasped his successor’s hands.

Pope Francis told Pope Emeritus Benedict, “You gave us so many examples of humility and tenderness.”

The meeting took place in Castel Gandolfo, where Pope Emeritus Benedict is staying while a Vatican monastery is being remodeled as a residence for him. The retired pope moved with much greater difficulty than he did a month ago. Walking with a cane, he took smaller and slower steps.

When the two went into the chapel of the papal villa to pray, Pope Emeritus Benedict indicated that Pope Francis should take the front pew, but Pope Francis, reaching out to help his predecessor walk, said, “We’re brothers,” and they knelt side by side.

Traveling by helicopter from the Vatican, Pope Francis arrived shortly after noon. While the two have spoken by telephone at least twice, this was their first meeting since Pope Francis’ March 13 election.

Pope Emeritus Benedict, wearing a quilted white jacket over a simple white cassock—without a cape or white sash—was driven to the garden heliport to greet his predecessor walk, said, “We’re brothers,” and they knelt side by side.

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Pope Francis embraces Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, Italy on March 23.

Pope Francis travelled by helicopter from the Vatican to Castel Gandolfo for a private meeting with his retired pontiff.
Bishop Coyne to give April 10 lecture on the Year of Faith at Marian University

By John Shaughnnessy

As the executive director of the PeyBack Foundation, Elizabeth Ellis admires Peyton Manning’s commitment to provide support for organizations that help economically-disadvantaged youths in Indiana, Tennessee, Louisiana and Colorado.

As a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, Ellis is also thrilled with the dedication and cooperation that several north side Indianapolis parishes have shown in wanting to help families in need during the Easter season.

On March 25, 600 families in need received all the ingredients for an Easter feast—a ham, rolls, desserts, vegetables and even Easter candy—because of the combined efforts of volunteers from the parishes of Christ the King, Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Lawrence, St. Matthew, St. Pius X and Ss.

“It’s been amazing to see all the outpatient of help from all the parishes,” said Ellis, a committee member of the North Side Easter Basket Project. “Most organizations do food drives during Thanksgiving and Christmas time. A couple of our parishioners feel Easter is just as special so they wanted to do something to help families now.”

The Easter giveaway was inspired by a similar food drive that takes place at Holy Cross Parish in Indianapolis at Thanksgiving and Christmas, according to Deanna Lustig, youth minister at St. Matthew Parish and co-chairperson of the Easter Basket Project.

“We also thought that with this being the Year of Faith, it would be a good time to start it,” said Lustig, citing the call by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI for Catholics to try to deepen their faith that began in October of 2012. “It also fit nicely because the North Deanery youth ministers do a Lenten series every year of speakers, prayer experiences and service projects.”

In the two months before Easter, volunteers at the six parishes collected non-perishable items that included corn, green beans, macaroni and cheese, cornbread mix, fruit cocktail and pudding. Donations were also collected at the parishes and schools to pay for hams and rolls.

Vouchers for the food were given to 600 families in need through the parishes, Catholic Charities Indianapolis, Miracle Place, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and Boulevard Place Food Pantry. And the Easter food was distributed during a drive-thru at St. Matthew Parish during the afternoon and early evening of March 25.

“I’ve just been bowled over by the generosity of the parishioners on the north side,” Lustig said. “This has been a very faith-filled experience. To see everything fall into place and all the generosity has been very amazing. It allowed people an opportunity to give back for a great cause.”

She especially cited the efforts of Ellis and co-chairperson Dean Burger in making the Easter Basket Project a success.

Mary Sowski, left, Lillian Henniger and Maggie McGuih pose for a photo after filling grocery bags with food items for families in need. The girls were part of the North Side Easter Basket Project at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis on March 24. A day later, 600 families received the ingredients to help them have an Easter feast.

Toy Easter eggs were included in the baskets that volunteers from six Indianapolis North Deanery parishes made to add a colorful touch of joy for families in need on Easter.

“‘I really wanted to try to devote more time to my faith this Lent, through prayer and this project,’” said Burger, a member of St. Matthew Parish. “Rather than talk about it or think about it, I wanted to do it.”

Ellis appreciated the project so much that she found time in her schedule, a schedule that includes her work for the PeyBack Foundation and her role as the mother of three children who are age 5 and younger.

“I’m very fortunate in my life, my surroundings and my faith,” Ellis said. “I know there are people out there struggling. If I can make the Easter season better for someone else, that’s what I want to do.”

Bishop Coyne to give April 10 lecture on the Year of Faith at Marian University

Marian president Daniel Elesner encouraged Catholics across central and southern Indiana to attend the gathering.

“The Marian University community welcomes Bishop Christopher Coyne back to campus for this important lecture,” Elesner said. “During this Year of Faith, when we recall the historic moment that Vatican II was for our Church, it is a special privilege to have Bishop Coyne share with us ‘a younger bishop’s perspective’ on the magnificent, forward-looking teaching that was promulgated by the Council fathers—in full continuity with 2,000 years of Catholic faith and practice.”

“We urge all members of our archdiocesan family to join us for this wonderful evening of prayer and reflection.”

Father Bob Robson, rector at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, agreed.

“We are pleased to have Bishop Christopher Coyne delivering the second annual Bishop Brute lecture at Marian University. As a distinguished scholar in liturgical theology, Bishop Coyne brings a vast knowledge of liturgy, as well as many years of pastoral experience as a priest and bishop, to our celebration of the Year of Faith at Marian University,” Father Robson said. “We invited Bishop Coyne to give this lecture because we believed that he could bring a unique and relevant perspective in reflecting upon the new evangelization in light of the Second Vatican Council.”

The lecture is free and open to the public.

For more information, call 317-924-4100.

For information about Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, log on to www.archindy.org. For more information about Marian University, log on to www.marian.edu

The Domus Sanctae Martae, the residence where cardinal electors resided during the conclave, is pictured at the Vatican on Feb. 19. Pope Francis has decided to live here instead of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace.

While offering relative comfort, the residence is not a luxury hotel. The building has 105 two-room suites and 26 singles. About half of the rooms are occupied by permanent residents. Each suite has a sitting room with a desk, three chairs, a cabinet and large closet; a bedroom with dresser, night table and clothes stand; and a private bathroom with a shower.

The rooms all have telephones and access to an international satellite television system.

The building also has a large meeting room and a variety of small sitting rooms. In addition to the dining room and the main chapel, it also has four private chapels, located at the end of hallways on the third and fifth floors of each of the building’s two wings.

Pope Francis to live in Vatican guesthouse, not papal apartments

VAI TICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has decided not to move into the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, but to live in a suite in the Vatican guesthouse where he has been since the beginning of the conclave that elected him, said Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman.

“The pope is experimenting with this type of living arrangement, which is simple,” but allows him “to live in common with others,” both the permanent residents—priests and bishops who work at the Vatican—as guests coming to the Vatican for meetings and conferences, Father Lombardi said on March 26.

The spokesman said Pope Francis has moved out of the room he drew by lot before the conclave and into Suite 201, a room that has slightly more elegant furnishings and a larger living room where he can receive guests.

The Domus Sanctae Marthae, the official name of the guesthouse, was built in 1996 specifically to house cardinals during a conclave.

Celebrating Mass on March 26 with the residents and guests, Pope Francis told them he intended to stay, Father Lombardi said. The permanent residents, who had to move out during the conclave, had just returned to their old rooms.

Pope Francis has been there since his election on March 13, taking his meals in the common dining room downstairs and celebrating a 7 a.m. Mass with Vatican employees in the main chapel of the residence.

He will be the first pope in 110 years not to live in the papal apartments on the third floor of the Apostolic Palace.

In 1903, St. Pius X became the first pope to live in the apartments overlooking St. Peter’s Square. The apartments were completely remodeled by Pope Paul VI in 1964 and have undergone smaller modifications by each pope since, according to Monaco Vaticano, a Vatican-published mini-encyclopedia about Vatican buildings, offices and tradition.

The large living room or salon of the apartment is located directly above the papal library, where official audiences with visiting bishops and heads of state are held.

Pope Francis will continue to use the library for official audiences and to recite the Angelus prayer on Sundays and holy days from the apartment window overlooking St. Peter’s Square. Father Lombardi said.

The apartments contain a chapel, an office for the pope and a separate office for his secretaries, the pope’s bedroom, a dining room, kitchen and rooms for two secretaries and for the household staff.

When Pope Francis returned to the guesthouse after his election, Father Lombardi had said the move was intended to be short-term while a few small work projects were completed in the papal apartments. He said on March 26 that all the work had been completed, but at least for the foreseeable future, Pope Francis would not move in.

The Domus Sanctae Marthae, named after St. Martha, is a five-story building on the edge of Vatican City.
Easter is the season of hope and joy. We have hope because sin and death have been conquered. The dark night of our sins has been extinguished by the light of Christ's resurrection. We have hope because sin and death have been replaced by the joy of eternal life. Easter is the feast of hope and joy.

The Jewish community in Indiana welcomes Pope Francis.

The Jewish community wishes to express our warmest sentiments on the election of Pope Francis and this historic milestone in the Catholic Church during a time of such great global change.

The pope’s choice of St. Francis of Assisi as his namesake reminds us of the great legacy of interfaith peacemaking and dialogue, as well as our collective and abiding commitment to lifting our voices and speaking for all those who suffer. We are heartened by Pope Francis’ legacy of closeness with the Jewish community, expressed by his previous statements of solidarity with the Jewish people in the aftermath of the 1994 bombing of the Jewish Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that killed 85 people. And we are deeply moved by the message that Pope Francis sent to Chief Rabbi of Rome, in which he stated: “I strongly hope and strive to contribute to the progress of the relations that have existed between Jews and Catholics since Vatican Council II in a spirit of renewed collaboration, and in service of a world that may always be more in harmony with the Creator’s will.”

The Jewish community in Indiana is filled with hope that our cherished friendship with the Catholic community will continue to broaden and deepen. We offer our blessings and look forward to continuing our work together in the pursuit of just policies for those Hoosiers most in need through our shared and sacred task that Jewish tradition calls “Tikkun Olam,” the repair of the world.

Todd Maurer, Jewish Community Relations Council president
Lindsey Mintz, Jewish Community Relations Council executive director

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informative, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful. The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, past editorial sensitivities and content.

Letters must be signed, but for serious reasons, names may be withheld. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor.” The Criterion, 1800 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

Readers with access to e-mail may send letters toCriterion@archindy.org.
Expungement bill gives offenders new lease on life

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

Should people who are convicted of minor, non-violent crimes, such as OWI or minor drug possession, be given an opportunity to become productive members of society, "especially when the crime is one that they have cleaned up their act and are ready to get back to being tax-paying members of society."

This latest bill is an effort to strengthen the current law which only seals records.

State Rep. Eric Turner, R-Cicero, said he worked for eight years with Rep. Bill Crawford to get a bill passed to seal the records of persons who committed Class D felony or, more recently, nonsexual and nonviolent offenses and who had no further convictions for a period of time after they had completed all their sentencing, their records could be sealed.

"I personally had "countless individuals" contact him and Crawford to say "thank you for giving them the opportunity to provide for their families."

"These crimes should not be a lifetime sentence. We do have crimes that should be for life, but not these," Turner said. "These individuals have made a determined effort to put what’s in the past in the past, and provide for their families. I don’t think we can ask any more of them."

State Rep. Matt Ubelhor, R-Bloomington, added, "Having the opportunity to hire many, many people throughout my career, I’ve turned down incredibly good people because a prior record was not revealed until it was time to hire (permanent) hiring and background check."

"No background check would be done for temporary workers. I have had an accountant working as a temporary as a young person he got an OWI. For more information about the Indiana Catholic Conference, log on to www.indianacc.org.

"He can’t even get a job at McDonalds," Mahan said. "You want a jobs bill. This is a jobs bill."

"Even if all of those assumptions were wrong, the accommodation still requires the objection religious organization to furnish documentation of its morally offensive conduct. Such organizations and their employees continue to bear the brunt of their right to live and work under a health care plan consonant with their explicit religious beliefs and commitments," the document said.

The USCCB also maintained that the contraceptive mandate continues "to represent an unprecedented (and now illegal) violation of religious liberty by the federal government."
Missouri State Catholic University presents "Dance of the Cross," 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholic noon.org. Information: 317-344-3547 or ArchdioceseCA@gmail.com.

Family Ministry is offering "Seven Sacraments," six sessions, 7-9 p.m. Information: 317-235-2193.


Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. onion seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced, new members welcome. 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-370-1189.


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North Dakota lawmakers approve ballot referendum on ‘right to life’

BISMARK, N.D. (CNS)—The North Dakota Legislature voted on March 22 to put a referendum on the 2014 ballot that would amend the state constitution to say that “the inalienable right to life of every human being at any stage of development must be protected and respected.” It won’t ban abortion. It doesn’t ban anything,” said Christopher Dodson, executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state’s bishops.

“It doesn’t ban abortion. It doesn’t ban anything,” said Dodson in March 12 testimony. “It doesn’t ban anything,” said Christopher Dodson, executive director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state’s bishops.

“It does provide an expression of legislative intent that would make it clear, hopefully, that there is not a right to an abortion in the state constitution and give courts guidance for interpreting state laws regarding life,” he told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview on March 25.

He compared the referendum to a Missouri statute ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court in its 1989 decision in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services.

Webster v. Reproductive Health Services

The U.S. Supreme Court in its 1989 decision in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services held that states could adopt constitutional restrictions on abortion as long as they did not discriminate against lawful abortion providers.

Opponents of the abortion measures are urging Daltry not to sign them into law, and have vowed a legal challenge to fight them if he does.

A measure to protect human embryos was defeated and one to ban abortion after 20 weeks was amended and has to go back to lawmakers for a final vote.

After a failed attempt to strip the genetic abnormality portion from House Bill 1305, the Senate passed the bill 27-15. House Bill 1456, the fetal heartbeat bill, passed 26-17 with no debate. Both measures were approved on March 15. They were passed by the House earlier.

The bill to prohibit abortions when the heartbeat of the unborn child is detected “does raise some new legal questions,” but the questions are without merit, Dodson said in March 12 testimony.

“Currently, the U.S. Supreme Court only allows states to protect unborn life after the point of viability, which is when an unborn child can survive outside the womb,” he told the Senate Judiciary Committee.

“It’s a plenary indulgence that can be given to those who take part in Divine Mercy Sunday devotions, receive Holy Communion, go to confession and pray for the intentions of the pope.”

Divine Mercy Sunday prayer services on April 7 reported to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have a website where people can sign up to serve as a volunteer online.

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/UCA.
**THE ‘BLESSING OF DISASTER’**

**By Karice Holder**

HENRYVILLE—One year ago, Stephanie Hayen and her family were left homeless when their home—and hundreds more—was destroyed by two tornadoes that tore through southern Indiana on March 2, 2012, taking the lives of 15 Hoosiers.

“My son, who was 5 at the time this all happened, had nightmares every night,” Hayen recalls. “He would sleep with his sister. He sleeps all by himself in the basement!”

“Everyone has grown.’’

Father Steven Schaftlein, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in Henryville, says. “They’re both very good friends now—almost family.”

“It’s so important to remember that a disaster is more than the damage done. People need fixing, too. "I think Father Steve is just wonderful,” she says. “He knew what to expect when they got there.”

Such preparedness was not just essential to helping the victims, but also to how the community functioned helping neighbors in need and still function as a spiritual community.”

“The hayens are just one of hundreds of families who have received—or are still receiving—from the devastation. The year has been a journey of meeting basic needs, rebuilding, healing emotionally, and discovering the increased need for the affected communities that often comes as a “blessing of disaster.” But the journey continues. Needs that include fixing and rebuilding homes still exist.

Catholic Charities has been—and continues to be—a powerful presence through the journey.

Meeting physical needs

The tornadoes left an estimated 65-mile trail of devastation in southern Indiana. Since that time, Catholic Charities, in conjunction with several long-term recovery groups, has helped more than 625 families in that area. The assistance has ranged from personal hygiene products to household goods, to construction material, furniture to furnishing, skilled labor to spiritual and emotional counseling, and more.

Much of the help Hayen received came through Catholic Charities and Henryville’s long-term recovery group, March 2 Recovery (MCR). The group is a coalition of organizations that coordinates and distributes resources and funds to those in need of disaster recovery assistance in Clark, Jefferson and Washington counties. Catholic Charities has been a part of MCR since its inception.

“They helped with costs. They helped with volunteers. They helped with materials and contractors,” Hayen says with gratitude.

“We’d have a bunch of help, all it came together, and we were in the Fixer Upper Christmas. We still have to have the house blessed. When we do, I want Sandy and Jane there.”

For Hayen, Sandy and Jane are the faces of Catholic Charities and MCR. Sandy Lalbot had volunteered as a case manager and connective through Catholic Charities during the first several months after the disaster. Jane Craigy is coordinator of Catholic Charities Disaster Preparedness and Response for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

“We’ve also seen religious barriers disappear. This is not just a Catholic area, but people got put together, Presbyterians, Methodists, Pentecostals, Baptists; they all began to know each other and work together. Everyone has grown.”

Father Whittington agrees. “I’ve seen a lot of people come together to work as a team, especially in the long-term Recovery (MCR).”

Residents also attest to this long-term “blessing of disaster.”

“With this kind of tornado occurring the beginning of the storm season, remember this can happen to any of us, and there are things we can do to prepare ourselves, our families, our parishes to be prepared,” he says.

“People immediately come to help in sort of an old-world way. We need to be prepared and ready to respond to that. Pastors and lay leaders should look seriously at how they are going to handle if a tornado hits or a flood—how will they function helping neighbors in need and still function as a spiritual community?”

Father Whittington further explains that one of the reasons St. Francis Xavier Parish was able to organize so quickly after the tornadoes is the church’s location—nearby five miles away. People lined up alongside the large trucks the day after the storms to give.

It was also a day to remember and honor. In the newly built Henryville High School and Elementary, students participated observed a moment of silence at 3:10 p.m., the time the tornado struck the town a year ago.

A more somber commemoration of the anniversary was held in Henryville, a man who was severely injured during the storms passed away only weeks ago. His death was the third from the tornadoes in the small community.

**Efforts continue**

The long-term recovery groups remain active, and will be through 2013 or the spring of 2014. Catholic Charities offers a program that is still in place for those clients that have still not completely rebuilt.

“Some important to remember that a disaster is more than that day or the work or work immediately after.”

Father Whittington notes. “We’re grateful for all of the past generosity, but things still need to be done.”

Father Schafflein observes that “it takes months to pull a project together. You don’t just start rebuilding. Some families are still living with relatives or friends. Some homes are just now being torn down. And some people just haven’t been emotionally ready to deal with things. [At the end of February] we had five families who came to us for help for the first time.”

He estimates there are about 100 homes in the Henryville area in need of repair or replacement. And with Henryville being a rural community, the point out that “there are still a large number of barns and other agricultural issues that need to be addressed.”

Part of the holding is simply a lack of volunteers with professional labor skills.

“We have our volunteers all been wonderful.”

 Says. “But we’re at the point where you can’t have just the average volunteer doing the work. They need to do professionally by skilled volunteers. These are people’s permanent homes, so you want to make sure that certain things are done professionally, like hanging drywall, electrical wiring, plumbing and things like that.”

**Lessons learned**

Even in the work continues, Father Whittington cautions against complacency.

“We have seen disasters being the beginning of the storm season,” she says. “The community is more united.”

According to Father Whittington, even as the work continues, the community is held united.

“Father Schaftlein and Father Whittington have managed to open the eyes of the community to what Catholics do by example.”

“Catholics have done it with a much more organized approach, where the community in Henryville is located—had recently received disaster preparedness and recovery training offered by Catholic Charities.

“Father Holton and the Holton Long Term Recovery Group is a similar coalition in Henryville and St. Michael Parish in Charlestown, is on the job full-time.”

“Father Holton is out with whatever they could pull together,” to enter the parade, says Fr. Holton.

Residents also attest to this long-term “blessing of disaster.”

“Father Whittington says. “I’ve seen a lot of people come together to work as a team, especially in the long-term Recovery (MCR).”

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As a whole, the community is more united,” he says. “Father Schaftlein has witnessed this blessing in Henryville.

Amid the fixing, rebuilding and healing, both Holton and Father Whittington point out that “there are still a large number of barns and other agricultural issues that need to be addressed.”

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By John F. Fink
Jerusalem Correspondent

JERUSALEM (Pentecost)—A man named Peter, from Capernaum in Galilee, declared today that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified the day before Passover this year, rose from the dead three days later. Saying, “God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:23), Peter and his associates convinced enough people that 3,000 people were baptized in the mikveh located in front of the Jewish people’s Temple.

Jesus was a popular preacher in both Galilee and Judea. Many of the Jews believed that he was the long-awaited Messiah who would restore the kingdom of the Jews. However, he was crucified by order of Governor Pontius Pilate after he was handed over to him by members of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

They accused him of opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, maintaining that he was the Messiah, and inciting the people with his teaching. The Sanhedrin was led by the high priest Caiaphas. In an interview, he said that members of the Sanhedrin had been alarmed by the number of people who were following Jesus. They feared that, if something wasn’t done, all the people would believe in him, and the Romans would take away their land and their nation.

“That’s when I stepped in,” Caiaphas said. “I made them understand that it would be better for one man to die instead of all of us. So when the opportunity arose, we arrested Jesus and took him to Pilate.”

Pilate has said that he found Jesus not guilty. “But they were adamant,” he said. “I had Jesus flogged, hoping that that would satisfy them, but it didn’t. I tried all sorts of things, even sending him to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, at one point. But when it looked like a riot was breaking out, I washed my hands of the matter and turned Jesus over to be crucified.”

In a separate interview, Herod admitted that he had met with Jesus. “I was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,” he said. “I talked to him at length, but I was disappointed when he refused to answer my questions. So I sent him back to Pilate.”

Herod was back in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Caiaphas admitted that it had been difficult to convince Pilate to have Jesus crucified. “At one point,” he said, “I told Pilate, ‘If you release him, you are not a friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar’” (Jn 19:12). I think that’s what did it.”

Jesus was crucified with two other men, nailed to the cross rather than tied. Pilate had an inscription put on the cross that read, “Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews.”

After several hours, when the Roman soldiers went to break the legs of the men to hasten their deaths, they discovered the Jesus was already dead. However, one of the soldiers thrust his lance into Jesus’ side. Pilate said that he thought he was rid of the whole affair. However, he said, the next day the chief priests and Pharisees were back. They told him that, while still alive, Jesus had said that he would be raised up after three days.

“I thought that was ridiculous,” Pilate said. “But, to humor them, I gave them some soldiers to guard the tomb. I understood that they secured the tomb by fixing a seal to the stone, and then they posted the guard. Imagine, guarding a tomb.”

Despite the measures taken, two days after the feast of Passover, the tomb was found to be empty. Most of the guards refused to answer questions. However, one of them, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified, admitted that the Jewish high priests had given the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘his disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep’” (Mt 28:13).

“That’s not true of course,” the soldier told me. “Imagine what would have happened to us if we were found to be asleep while on guard duty. Besides, how could anyone believe that his disciples could have removed that huge stone from the entrance to the tomb without waking us up, if we had been asleep?”

Peter, whose real name is Simon, told me that Jesus not only rose from the dead, but started to appear to some of his disciples.

“At first, we thought that the Jewish leaders took his body,” he said. “Some of our women said that Jesus had appeared to them, but that seemed like nonsense.”

Then, Peter said, a couple of the disciples told them about meeting Jesus while they had been walking to Emmaus. They said that they hadn’t recognized Jesus until they began to eat supper. When Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, they recognized him. But then, they said, he vanished.

“We didn’t believe them either,” Peter said.

Then, he said, that night, while they were all inside a locked room, Jesus suddenly appeared to them. “At first we thought we were seeing a ghost,” Peter said. But, he said, Jesus showed them his hands and feet with their nail holes and invited them to touch him. He even ate some fish, he said.

An angel is shown at Christ’s empty tomb in this stained-glass window. Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, is on March 31 in the Latin Church this year.

Peter said that Jesus appeared to his disciples several times during the next 40 days. He commissioned them, he said, to go out into the whole world and to teach the people all that he had taught to them.

“We started that mission today,” Peter said. “We are confident that Jesus will do what he promised, that he will be with us always, until the end of the age.”

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion.)
The drama of Easter brings us hope in life everlasting

By Marcellino D’Ambrosio

The serpent’s bite was a deadly one. The venom had worked its way deep into the heart of the entire human race, doing its gruesome work. A remedy was unavailable until he appeared. One drop was all that was needed, so potent was the antidote. Yet it was not like him to be stingy. He poured out his life, the sacrifice of his entire life, poured out at the foot of the cross. This was Jesus’ answer to the problem of sin. On the third day came the Father’s answer to the problem of death. It was equally extravagant. For Jesus was not simply brought back to life like Lazarus. That would have been resurrection, the mere return to a normal human life with all its limitations, including death. Yes, Lazarus ultimately had to go through it all again—the suffering, the dying, the grieving family, the burial. Jesus did not “come back.” He passed over, passed through. The Resurrection meant that he would no longer be subject to suffering, death and decay. Death, as St. Paul said, would have no more power over him.

You may say that physical death was not the prime reason for the sacrifice of Jesus, or you’d be right. Separation from God, spiritual death, is indeed much more fearsome. But even more basic is the fact that physical death is “beautiful” and “natural.” It is not. Our bodies are not motor vehicles driven around by our souls. We do not junk them when we wear out and then buy another one. By the way, that’s one problem with our bodies being an “essential” and “natural.” They are not.

Our bodies and immortal souls are intimately and completely intertwined, which makes us so different from both angels and animals. Therefore, death separates what God has joined. It is, in a sense, entirely natural that we rebel against it and shudder before it. Remember, even Christ, the Son of God, trembled in the Garden of Gethsemane. The serpent’s bite was a deadly one. The venom had worked its way deep into the heart of the entire human race, doing its gruesome work. A remedy was unavailable until he appeared. One drop was all that was needed, so potent was the antidote. Yet it was not like him to be stingy. He poured out his life, the sacrifice of his entire life, poured out at the foot of the cross. This was Jesus’ answer to the problem of sin. On the third day came the Father’s answer to the problem of death. It was equally extravagant. For Jesus was not simply brought back to life like Lazarus. That would have been resurrection, the mere return to a normal human life with all its limitations, including death. Yes, Lazarus ultimately had to go through it all again—the suffering, the dying, the grieving family, the burial. Jesus did not “come back.” He passed over, passed through. The Resurrection meant that he would no longer be subject to suffering, death and decay. Death, as St. Paul said, would have no more power over him.

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From the Editor
Eminus John F. Fink

Year of Faith: Atonement and redemption

In a column for this series in January, I wrote that it is not sufficient for Christians to follow Jesus just because he is a great man. He claimed to be God, forgave sins—which we can do—and performed healing miracles to demonstrate the power to forgive sins.

But why is the divinity of Jesus so important for Christians? The answer to that question is particularly pertinent at this time of the year because we will commemorate the day on which Jesus accepted death by crucifixion to atone for our sins.

Atonement and redemption are at the very core of Christianity. As Christians, we believe that God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became human in order to die for our sins.

Throughout the centuries of Christianity, people have questioned why atonement and redemption were necessary. Various Christian traditions have answered that question differently, with the Catholic Church affirming the traditional doctrine of original sin.

Original sin is the sin of Adam as described in Genesis 3:1. It is the disobedience to God and lack of trust in his goodness. It was a sin passed on to all generations through the lineage of Adam.

Theories of original sin for humans meant that we were subject to ignorance, suffering, death, and the consequences of our own sin. It was because of this first sin, and those that followed it, that humanity required redemption.

Most Christians accept the fact that human nature was in a fallen state prior to Christ’s descent from heaven. The Nicene Creed: “For this we believe was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and died. And because he was God, he never sinned.” They also accept the words of St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3).

And that is why the divinity of Christ is so important. How could any mere man, even the holiest, die for our sins? How could a mere man be crucified and then our redemption be had accomplished by God? But not by God alone. Since suffering and death were part of man’s disobedience to God, in the person of Jesus, was able to make the perfect sacrifice that atoned for our sins.

What is it that Jesus has to do and what does he do in his atonement and redemption? In the Nicene Creed is written, also, “Just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made subject to death, so also through the obedience of one the many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

St. Peter wrote: “He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed” (1 Pt 2:24).

Faith and Family
Sean Gallagher

Pope Francis’ actions speak louder than his words

In my life as a priest, I quickly learned that the cliché that “actions speak louder than words” isn’t quite true. There’s the real truth in that often repeated phrase. As Pope Francis, the world’s first pope from Latin America has shown, his word is far more powerful than his actions. He spoke long and eloquently of the poor and the weak. He led prayer more effectively if they see me on my knees by merely giving them a call to action on this essential practice of our faith.

Even though I learned this reality quickly, it’s still something I struggle to put into practice. Maybe it’s an occupational hazard of being a writer. More than likely, it’s just good, old-fashioned laziness on my part.

Thankfully, parce like me have been given a good sample of what it means to teach through action by our new Holy Father, Pope Francis, formerly Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires.

In the first days of his papacy, he has shown his spiritual charisma, his commitment to the poor, and his generosity. Across the world powerful messages through his words and actions.

The first of those actions was the choice of his papal name, which he selected in honor of St. Francis of Assisi—the first pope ever to do so. The 13th century Italian’s example of joy-filled poverty, love of God’s creation and care for the things of society are so clearly holy and attractive to the human heart.

But Francis didn’t choose that name simply because it is popular. He chose it because he has lived a simple life and shown true humility. But Francis has chosen in his papacy, he has sought to teach us a place to prioritize simplicity and shouted change.

Then he came out on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican overlooking thousands of people praying for you at the same time that hundreds of thousands of people were waiting to see the new pope for the first time. Traditionally, a new pope’s appearance on the balcony is a rare event. But before giving his blessing, Pope Francis first asked for the prayers of those in the crowd.

And as he humbly bowed down to receive those prayers, the crowd recognized the power of that simple gesture. Moments earlier, they had been screaming as Pope Francis came out onto the balcony. Now complete silence fell over the square.

What a great way to start a ministry so large that it dwarfs the lives of thousands of people praying for you at the same moment. And what a powerful way to turn this into an opportunity to need to place a priority on prayer.

On the day of his inaugural Mass on March 19, Pope Francis showed his people a man eloquent hornor. But he was as much a teacher before the Mass when he was riding through St. Peter’s Square in his popemobile and had the driver stop.

He got off, walked to a nearby barricade and embraced a severely disabled man. The tenderness shown to this man by Pope Francis is a powerful lesson to us all that every person deserves dignity and respect. The image of Francis is created in the image and likeness of God.

Pope Francis has 1.3 billion spiritual children around the world. As he began his ministry leading the universal Church, I pray that each of us who are spiritual children of our Holy Father will take to heart the lessons he is giving us through his living actions.
Easter Sunday/ Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 31, 2013

• Acts of the Apostles 10:34a, 37-43
• Colossians 3:1-4
• John 20:1-9

The Church celebrates the Easter Vigil late in the evening on Holy Saturday. These readings are those read during Mass on Easter Sunday itself.

For its first reading on this extraordinary feast of Christian faith, the Church presents us with a passage from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts is in effect a book of the Church, the history of the early Church, from its origins to its development as a community. Scholars say that this Gospel and Acts were written by the same author.

These readings are those read during Mass on Easter Sunday. The first reading mentions Mary Magdalene. She was so intensely a follower of Jesus. The second reading, places Christ at God’s right hand. It says that Christians already have died to sin and have been raised in Christ by the sacrament of baptism. The third reading is from Paul’s letter to the Romans, a passage which stresses the importance of the Resurrection and its aftermath. The reading goes into some detail about the eternal life of the Risen Lord. It goes on to say that penances these past weeks have healed and strengthened us to receive the grace of faith. Hopefully, Lenten practices and respect for life and for property will continue to be observed in the days leading up to Easter.

We, the baptized, are initiated into the mystery of Jesus’ death and Resurrection and apply the merits of Christ’s action to ourselves. We, the baptized, are initiated into the sacramental life of the Church and placed on a path to holiness and to heaven.

Reflection

The Church excitedly tells us that the Lord lives. He rose from the dead. It is a proclamation of the greatest and central belief of the Church, namely that Jesus, the Son of God, overcame even death. More than simply affirming once again the Church’s trust in the Resurrection, actual and physical, of Christ, these readings call upon us to respond. Such was the message in Colossians, the second reading. Such is the important lesson in the references to Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. They believed. He had faith. They believed, regardless of the costs. So must we.

We must be open to God ourselves. Limited and bruised by sin, we must be healed and strengthened to receive the grace of faith. Hopefully, Lenten penances these past weeks have healed and strengthened us and made us within this openness.

In the meantime, the Church shares with us the testimony of Peter and the Apostles, not just bystanders as the mission of Jesus occurred, but rather the Lord’s especially commissioned agents, especially trained students, and especially empowered representatives, to tell us about our own salvation. Their testimony, so guarded by the Church, is our avenue to knowing and meeting the Risen Christ. †

Rebuild My Church

By Sandy Bierly

The words to rebuild my Church
Resound with humility, love, and grace,
As we welcome Francis, our Pope,
As the servant to us all.

We pray for unity.
That divisions will cease and heal,
As Pope Francis enlists our Church
To lead us to grow in holiness.

Sandy Bierly is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Pope Francis greets the crew before celebrating his inaugural Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on March 19.

Daily Readings

Monday, April 1  
Monday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:14, 22-32
Psalm 16:1-2a, 5, 7-11
Matthew 28:18-20

Tuesday, April 2  
Tuesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:36-41
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
John 20:11-18

Wednesday, April 3  
Wednesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:1-10
Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9

Thursday, April 4  
Thursday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:11-26
Psalm 8:2a, 5-9
Luke 24:35-48

Friday, April 5  
Friday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 4:1-12
Psalm 118:1-2, 4, 22-27a
John 21:1-14

Saturday, April 6  
Saturday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 4:13-21
Psalm 118:1, 14-15, 16ab-21
Mark 16:9-15

Sunday, April 7  
Second Sunday of Easter
Divine Mercy Sunday
Acts 5:12-16
Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19
John 20:19-31

Question Corner/ Fr. Kenneth Doyle

The Gospels do not show clearly if Jesus performed baptisms or not

I remember being taught, somewhere in my Catholic training, that the Bible never mentions Jesus baptizing anyone because our sacrament of baptism commemorates the death and Resurrection of Christ, and he had not yet died and risen. But I recently came across this passage in St. John’s Gospel: “After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptizing. John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim” (Jn 3:22-23). In Matthew 3:11 though, John says that he is baptizing with water and Jesus will baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. So my question is: in John 3:22, isn’t Jesus baptizing with water or what else would that quote mean?

(Milwaukee, Wis.)

A You raise a good question, and the plain truth is that we don’t really know whether Jesus baptized anyone with water during the two and a half years of his public ministry. The scriptural passage to which you refer (Jn 3:22) would seem to indicate that Jesus did baptize, along with some of his disciples.

However, if you continue on just a few more verses, you will read: “Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John [although Jesus himself was not baptizing; just his disciples], he left Judea and returned to Galilee” (Jn 4:1-3). The scriptural writers—Matthew, Mark and Luke—offer no clarity on this, because they are silent on the question of Jesus baptizing. What we do know is this—if Christ did in fact baptize during the early days with his Apostles, it was not the sacrament of baptism as we know it today. That sacrament, as you correctly point out, inserts us into the mystery of Jesus’ death and Resurrection and applies the merits of Christ’s action to ourselves. We, the baptized, are initiated into the sacramental life of the Church and placed on a path to holiness and to heaven.

Q My parish regularly changes or omits words from the first and second scriptural readings at Sunday Mass. I claim that, under Vatican II, it is permissible to do so under the inclusive language guidelines. Shouldn’t Scripture readings be read as they are printed in the Lectionary?

(Arlington, Va.)

A First, and parenthetically, isn’t it funny how the Second Vatican Council gets blamed for—and sometimes credited with—things that were far from its agenda? I don’t think that the issue of inclusive language was on the radar screen of the council fathers or of the world during the years of Vatican II (1962-65). The answer to your question is stated in a balanced and succinct way by the Office for Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in guidelines offered to lectors: “In recent years, sensitivity for inclusive language in the liturgy has been encouraged. It is important to note, however, that the lector is not at liberty to change the approved scriptural and prayer texts for the liturgy. In the preparation of other texts, such as the general intercessions or commentary of any type, language which is inclusive is always used.”

The approved text for the Mass readings is a modified version of the New American Bible with revised Psalms and revised New Testament. This is the text found in all current Lectionaries in the United States. †

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column.

Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org.
Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to the office by Thursday, the week before the Thursday of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obligation 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 obituary notices on this page.

ABERER, Eileen (Murray), 72, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, March 1. Mother of Michael and Patrick. Arrangements by Good Funeral Home.


BRUGGIE, William, 88, St. John the Baptist, Jeffersonville, Feb. 27. Uncle of several.

CLIFFORD, Paul, 65, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis. March 3. Father of Ashley and Andrew Clifford. Brother of Patricia Kung, James, Michael and Tom Clifford.


FAUST, Joan, 85, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, March 5. Mother of Kathy Rink and Tom Faust. Great-grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of four.


HIGHE, Mary E., 88, St. Gabriel, Converseville, Feb. 25. Mother of Kathleen Byrd, Martha Noble, Patricia Kung, James, Michael and Tom Clifford.


LAMARONIGHI, Robert, 92, St. Anne, New Castle, March 10. Father of Valerie Totten of Indonesian Family of Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, 25. Father of Sandra Lawlor and Gary Pen. Great-grandfather of four.


SMITH, Louis E., 83, St. Mary, Navienton, Feb. 28. Husband of Marie Stumler. Brother of Margaret Hoffman, Therese Martin, Mary Jo Mayer, Doris Doby, Connie Schmoldt. Elenen


SCHEIDER, Joseph Daniel, 80, St. John the Baptist, Greenwood, 80, and Linda Stegemiller. Brother of Kevin Schneider. Great-grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of seven.


A woman holds an image of Pope Francis as people watch the televised broadcast of the pope’s inauguration Mass in Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on March 19.

Watching history

A woman holds an image of Pope Francis as people watch the televised broadcast of the pope’s inaugural Mass in Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on March 19.
Archbishop shares witness of ‘silent’ saint at Solemnity of St. Joseph Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

TERRE HAUTE—Through the hovering incense, the image of St. Joseph silently watched while Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin reflected upon the silent witness of the actual man and saint.

“In all of scripture, St. Joseph is silent. But he speaks so eloquently without saying a word,” the archbishop said, gesturing at the painting of the saint in the apse of St. Joseph University Church in Terre Haute.

The archbishop spoke to the congregation on March 19 during a Mass for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the parish’s patron. The Mass concluded a year of events celebrating the 175th anniversary of the parish’s founding.

Archbishop Tobin emphasized the importance of listening to the new evangelization. He cited Pope Paul VI’s 1975 apostolic exhortation, “On Evangelization in the Modern World.” “[In the letter] he said, ‘Modern men and women listen more to witnesses than they listen to teachers. And if they listen to teachers, it’s because they’re also witnesses.’

“No, I think our Church has seen the power in the last week or so of a witness. Just the excitement of that which has been generated by Pope Francis,” the archbishop said. “Not for what he said but for some of these gestures … carrying his suitcase, riding on the bus with the other cardinals.”

Yet Archbishop Tobin cautioned that Pope Francis cannot be the “single, sole witness of our Church. … The Lord is counting on us as individuals and as parishes to witness to God’s presence in the world, to God’s dream.”

He described Renaissance paintings portraying the Holy Family with Mary and the Christ Child in the foreground.

“And where’s the foster father? He’s off to the side, usually like this,” said the archbishop, placing his hand on his head with his eyes closed, foaming sleep. “And I realized … it showed Joseph dreaming because that’s when God spoke to him, and that’s when Joseph decided to obey, to walk the way God chose for him. And fundamentally, that’s our witness as a parish, as St. Joseph’s Parish or any other parish in the archdiocese—an openness to God, an openness to walk the way God shows us.”

To celebrate the archbishop’s presence on his and the parish’s feast day, and to close the celebration of the parish’s 175th anniversary year, Conventual Franciscan Father Mark Weaver, pastor of St. Joseph University Parish, invited everyone in attendance to a soup supper following the Mass.

On the chilly evening, the line stretched between the church and the next building where the soup dinner was served. With colleagues, students appreciated the free meal, their main reasons for attending the Mass that evening were spiritual.

“St. Joseph is my confirmation patron, so I wanted to go to Mass,” said David Bertschinger, a second-year student studying optical engineering at nearby Rose-Hulman Institute for Technology. “As a studier of St. Joseph, I appreciated that the archbishop humanized him quite a bit. Instead of a mythical figure or an abstract figure, he made him a man, into someone we can relate to.”

Kelsey Foi, a sophomore at Indiana State University who is studying special education and elementary education, connected with the archbishop’s reference to evangelizing through witnessing.

“To show Christianity, you have to be a witness,” Foi said. “You can’t just go and tell people about it, you have to live it, too, and that in and of itself will teach people and show people what Christianity is.”

Cheryl Radler is proof of the effectiveness of witnessing.

“Everyone has been so welcoming to me; even though I’m not Catholic,” said Radler about members of St. Joseph University Parish.

“A friend invited me to BCTA (Becoming a Christian Through Adult), and I haven’t left since. I love the Church. I love the order of worship, and the traditions of the Church and how everyone is so welcoming.”

Rader was there for Archbishop Tobin’s final blessing and prayer.

“I pray that you may witness as Joseph did to an openness to God, to God’s love for you and for this world,” she said. “And like Joseph, you will obey and walk the way that God shows you.”

Members of St. Joseph University Parish in Terre Haute enjoy a soup dinner following the Mass for the Solemnity of St. Joseph on March 19. The Mass and dinner marked the parish’s celebration of its patron saint, and closed the year of events commemorating the parish’s 175th anniversary.
The Criterion

By Patricia Happel Cornwell

Special to The Criterion

NEW ALBANY—A crowd of about 100 people attended at the Cardinal Ritter House in New Albany on Monday to hear a lecture on liturgical renewal, view the newly renovated museum, enjoy Irish coffee, and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the renovated museum."Reconsidering Sacrosanctum Concilium," was delivered by Dr. Timothy O’Malley, director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame. He discussed liturgical changes made following the Second Vatican Council, which went from 1962 to 1965, and Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter’s role at the council.

“Cardinal Ritter wasn’t the greatest intellectual at the council,” O’Malley said, “but it seemed he knew how to work with others better than most.”

O’Malley said the council issued several documents, one of which was “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” dealing with liturgy.

“The bishops began with the document on liturgy because it was essential to the life of the Church,” he said. “They could not foresee the revolutionary movements that would take place in the ensuing years—the secularization of society in Europe, consumerism at the expense of our humanity, moral relativism, and a lack of faith base in many families.”

“There was never a doubt in the minds of those at the council that the faith would continue to be passed on but, of course, it’s not,” he added. “There are increasing numbers of people with no faith at all.”

O’Malley attributes this partly to inadequate interpretation of Scripture as it relates to different cultures and to modern church buildings, and oversimplified liturgical music.

“The sense of wonder has been lost because we have forgotten the value of beauty,” he said. “At the second Vatican Council, the issue was not simply to turn the altar around or to make the church look more modern. The goal was not simply to turn the altar around or to make the church look more modern. The goal was to be liturgical and transformative.”

“For Catholics, helping the poor isn’t conservative or liberal. It’s eucharistic. The poor are Christ, reaching out for help. What drives us isn’t a series of ideologies. It is eucharistic. The poor are Christ, reaching out for help. What drives us isn’t a series of ideologies. It is eucharistic.”

Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered while celebrating mass in 1980 after opposing Church policies in El Salvador, is a beacon for social justice and civil rights. We hope this will be the first of many such programs.

“The stars are aligned [for Romero’s canonization], but it seemed he knew how to work with others better than most.”

—Dr. Timothy O’Malley, director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy

Salvadoran clergy hopeful for canonization of Archbishop Romero

SAN SALVADOR (CNS)—Salvadoran clergy are hopeful that the canonization of Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered while celebrating Mass on March 24, 1980, during El Salvador’s civil war, will move forward under the Church of his first Latin American pope.

“We are in the best of circumstances. The time is ripe for a final verdict,” said Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez of San Salvador, director of the Catholic News Service, referring to Pope Francis, who as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, until he was elected pope on March 13.

The media, he said, have reported about the admiration that the new pontiff has for Archbishop Romero, and the conviction that the martyred prelate should be canonized. “The stars are aligned [for Romero’s canonization], but I insist that we should not rush. God has his time and that time will not be rushed,” Bishop Rosa Chavez added.

The canonization process for Archbishop Romero began in 1994. The case is being studied by the Vatican’s Congregation for Saints’ Causes.

Msgr. Jesus Delgado also told reporters that in 2007 he spoke with Cardinal Bergoglio, who told him that if he were the pope, the beatification and canonization of the slain archbishop would be the first thing he would pursue.

In another meeting in 2010, Msgr. Delgado said Cardinal Bergoglio recalled what he said about Archbishop Romero in 2007, but added that the problem was that he would never become pope.

When Cardinal Bergoglio was elected pope, Msgr. Delgado told local media it was “a wonderful surprise,” and that he thought it was time that Archbishop Romero became a saint.

Archbishop Romero was a staunch defender of the poor and criticized the human rights violations of the military junta that ruled El Salvador beginning in October 1979. His outspokenness led to his assassination. Regardless of how the canonization advances, “the Salvadoran people have named him a saint long ago,” Bishop Rosa Chavez said of Archbishop Romero.

‘Cardinal Ritter wasn’t the greatest intellectual at the council, but it seemed he knew how to work with others better than most.’

—Dr. Timothy O’Malley, director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy