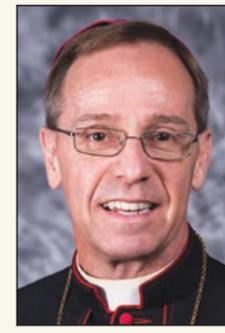




The

# Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Christ the Cornerstone

The voice of God speaks to us, sometimes loudly, sometimes softly, page 5.

CriterionOnline.com

January 10, 2025

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## On New Year's, pope calls for real commitment to respect human life

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Marking the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and the start of the new year, Pope Francis renewed his appeal for a “firm commitment” to respect all human life worldwide.



Pope Francis

“May we learn to care for every child born of a woman, above all by protecting, like Mary, the precious gift of life: life in the womb, the lives of children, the lives

of the suffering, the poor, the elderly, the lonely and the dying,” he said in his homily during Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Jan. 1.

“All of us are invited to take up the summons that flows from the maternal heart of Mary: we are called to cherish life, to care for wounded lives—so many wounded lives, so many—to restore dignity to the lives of everyone” because it is the basis for building a culture of peace, he said, highlighting that the feast also marks the World Day of Peace.

The pope’s message for the World Day of Peace was published in December and is shared with heads of state around the world by Vatican ambassadors. In it, Pope Francis called on all nations to eliminate the death penalty, to divert a fixed percentage of arms spending to a global fund to fight hunger and climate change, to cancel the international debt of developing nations and to respect human life.

After praying the *Angelus* in St. Peter’s Square following Mass, the pope urged the leaders of countries with Christian roots and traditions “to set a good example by canceling or reducing as much as possible the debts of the poorest countries.” The Church’s Jubilee Year in 2024-25 focuses on the “remission of debts,” and it also “asks us to translate

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Tom Ricke, far right and kneeling, joined other members of a mission team from St. Mary Parish in Greensburg and the Food for the Poor organization who are working to bring hope and housing to families in a poor community in Honduras. Other St. Mary team members in the photo are Linda Weigel, behind Ricke, and retired archdiocesan priest, Father Carlton Beever, next to Weigel. Representing Food for the Poor are Kitty Soriano, left, and Father Bob White, holding a stuffed bear. (Submitted photo)

## A time of desperation leads a couple to strive to give hope to a community in need

*(Editor’s note: As Pope Francis has announced that this year is a Jubilee Year for the Church with the theme, ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ The Criterion has invited you, our readers, to share your stories of hope—how embracing hope has helped and guided you in the toughest moments of your life, how others have given you hope for your future, how your faith in God has sustained you and uplifted you in hope. Here is the first story in a continuing series.)*

By John Shaughnessy

It was one of those moments that nearly everyone faces at some point—when a person desperately clings to hope during an especially tough time in life.

For Tom Ricke, that defining moment began on a Christmas Eve, shortly before midnight, when his wife Susan awakened

him and said, “Honey, I can’t move my arm, and my legs are tingling.”

Ricke rushed her to a hospital near their home in Greensburg where her condition continued to deteriorate, with the left side of her body becoming paralyzed.

From there, she was quickly transferred to a larger hospital in Columbus where doctors, worried that she was near death, decided she needed to be taken to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis by Lifeline helicopter.

“I immediately went to the chapel at the hospital, dropped to my knees, prayed to Jesus and cried like a baby,” recalls Tom Ricke, a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg.

“I poured my heart out and asked God to save Susan for our children—Andrea and Luke—and myself. While praying,

See HOPE, page 10

## Celebrations mark the beginning of the Jubilee Year of Hope in the archdiocese

By Mike Krokos

Father James Brockmeier didn’t have to look far to find a symbol of hope in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to open the 2025 Holy Year to mark the Jubilee, whose theme is “Pilgrims of Hope.”

During a prayer service on Dec. 29 at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis to open the jubilee year, the rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral explained the significance of the cross chosen for the event—the cross that soon thereafter led a procession across Meridian Street to the

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People process across Meridian Street from the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center to SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on Dec. 29 after a prayer service to mark the start of the 2025 Jubilee Year, whose theme is “Pilgrims of Hope.” (Photo by Mike Krokos)



# Participants from all dioceses will take part in Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22

By Natalie Hoefler

The annual Indiana March for Life and associated events will take place on Jan. 22, in Indianapolis.

Youths and pro-life advocates from all five of Indiana's dioceses will participate in the event, which solemnly commemorates the date in 1973 when the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion in the country.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

The Supreme Court's June 2022 decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* returned the legal issue of abortion back to individual states. On Aug. 1, 2023, a law abolishing more abortions went into effect in Indiana.

So why the need to continue the Indiana March for Life? To create "a common voice and witness to the Church's long-standing, Christ-centered teaching on the dignity of the person from the moment of conception to natural death," said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson in an interview with *The Criterion* about last year's event.

The Indiana March for Life serves as a witness to the sanctity of life from conception to natural death in a country where, according to a Guttmacher Institute report release in March 2024, 1,026,700 abortions occurred in 2023.

## Schedule of events

The event schedule is the same as last year's schedule, starting with a morning youth rally followed by a Mass for Life.

"The main coordinating body is the Archdiocese of Indianapolis," says Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, who helped coordinate the event.

"But for the youth rally there is involvement from all five Indiana dioceses, and financially all of the dioceses have contributed, so they are the main sponsors."

The day starts with a youth rally from 9-11 a.m. in the Indiana Convention Center, 100 S. Capitol Ave. Youths in grades eight-12 from throughout the state will be "inspired, equipped, and empowered to be missionary disciples of the Gospel of Life," says Varick.

Catholic radio host, author and speaker Katie Prejean McGrady will address the youths during the rally, with music by the Sarah Kroger Band. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available.

The youth rally is free, but registration is required at [archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life](http://archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life).

Following the rally, all are invited to worship at a Mass for Life at 11:30 a.m. in the convention center, concelebrated by four of Indiana's five bishops, (Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Gary Diocese is unable to attend.) No registration is required to worship at the Mass.

Right to Life of Indianapolis is coordinating the remaining events of the day—a pre-march rally, the Indiana March for Life and a post-march rally.

The pre-march rally with pro-life speakers will take place at 1 p.m. on Georgia Street west of Meridian Street.

The Indiana March for Life will begin at 1:45 p.m. at the corner of Georgia and Illinois streets. It will conclude with a rally on the south steps of the Statehouse from 2:30-3 p.m.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St. across from the convention center, is offering pre-ordered \$10 box lunches, which can be picked up between noon-1 p.m. on the day of the event. Lunches can be ordered at [cutt.ly/INMFLlunch2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFLlunch2025). The deadline to order is Jan. 15.

For more information, including about parking, go to [cutt.ly/INMFL2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFL2025). †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

January 12–23, 2025

**January 12 – 10 a.m.**  
Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

**January 13-17**  
Cross Catholic Outreach Board of Directors Vision Trip, Guatemala

**January 19 – 6 p.m.**  
Christian Unity Prayer Service at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church, Indianapolis

**January 21 – 10:30 a.m.**  
Visit to Fiat Academy, Aurora

**January 21 – 1 p.m.**  
School Mass at St. Nicholas School, Sunman

**January 22 – 9 a.m.**  
Respect Life Mass and March for Life at Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis

**January 23 – 10 a.m.**  
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

**January 23 – 2 p.m.**  
Legal Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

## Official Appointments

### Effective Immediately

**Deacon Michael Fish**, permanent deacon of the Diocese of San Diego, Calif., appointed permanent deacon to St. Boniface Parish, Fulda, and St. Meinrad Parish, St. Meinrad.

**Very Reverend Joseph Newton, JCL**, vicar judicial, appointed administrator *pro tem* of the Church of the Holy Angels, Indianapolis, and St. Rita Parish, Indianapolis, while remaining vicar judicial.

### Effective December 8, 2024

**Deacon Isaac Siefker**, seminarian of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, appointed to transitional diaconate ministry at Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Beech Grove, in accordance with the provisions of the

Program of Priestly Formation (6th Edition).

**Deacon Thomas Day**, seminarian of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, appointed to transitional diaconate ministry at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, Greenwood, in accordance with the provisions of the Program of Priestly Formation (6th Edition).

### Effective January 13, 2025

**Deacon John Jacobi**, permanent deacon to St. Michael Parish, Bradford, St. Bernard Parish, Frenchtown, and St. Joseph Parish, Crawford County, appointed associate director of deacon formation for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis while continuing to serve as permanent deacon to St. Michael Parish, Bradford, St. Bernard Parish, Frenchtown, and St. Joseph Parish, Crawford County.

*(These appointments are from the office of the Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis.) †*

## NEW YEAR

continued from page 1

this remission on the social level, so that no person, no family, no people will be crushed by debt."

He also expressed his "grateful appreciation to all those in many areas of conflict who are working for dialogue and negotiations. We pray that fighting will cease on every front and there will be a decisive aim for peace and reconciliation."

While Pope Francis presided over the morning liturgy and gave the homily, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, was the main celebrant at the altar. He was joined by Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister.

The pope took a moment before the Mass to pose for a photo with more than a dozen young people dressed as the three kings who visited Jesus. In Germany, Austria and other regions of Europe, children known

as "sternsingers," or star singers, sing carols and raise money for charity between Christmas and Epiphany each year. And, after the Mass, Pope Francis spent nearly 10 minutes greeting children and handing them chocolate Santas as his aide pushed him in his wheelchair down the central aisle of the basilica.

In his homily, the pope reiterated his proposal in his peace day message for "a firm commitment to respect the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, so that each person can cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to the future.

"Let us entrust this new year to Mary, Mother of God. May we learn, like her, to discover God's greatness in the little things of life," he said.

God chose to act "through littleness and hiddenness" by coming into the world as a tiny helpless child born of a woman in a manger to be "one of us and, for this, he is able to save us," the pope said.

"Jesus never yielded to the temptation of performing great signs and imposing himself on others, as the devil had suggested," he said. Instead, "by the frailty of his

humanity and his concern for the weak and vulnerable, Jesus shows us the face of God," who is always near, compassionate and merciful "to those suffering in body and spirit."

Mary reminds the faithful "that Jesus came in the flesh, and that we encounter him above all in our daily life, in our own frail humanity and that of all those whom we encounter each day," the pope said.

"If he, who is the Son of God, became so small as to be held in a mother's arms, cared for and nursed, this means that today, too, he comes among us in all those who need similar care: in every sister and brother we meet, in everyone who needs our attention and tender care," he said.

The pope asked the faithful to entrust to Mary "this new jubilee year. Let us entrust to her our questions, our worries, our sufferings, our joys and all the concerns that we bear in our hearts," and to "entrust to her the whole world, so that hope may be reborn and peace may finally spring up for all the peoples of the Earth." †



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# Pope urges war-torn world to walk through ‘door of peace’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As millions of pilgrims prepare to cross through the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis called on individuals, nations and the global community to take a transformative step toward peace and reconciliation by walking through the “door of salvation” that is Jesus Christ.

“Jesus is the door of peace,” he said from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica on Dec. 25. “This Christmas, at the beginning of the Jubilee Year, I invite every individual, and all peoples and nations, to find the courage needed to walk through that door, to become pilgrims of hope, to silence the sound of arms and overcome divisions!”

Prior to offering his blessing “*urbi et orbi*” (to the city and the world), the pope prayed for various countries grappling with conflict and crisis.

Although there was a strong wind, the Roman sun shined brightly on the crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square to pray with the pope.

In his Christmas message, Pope Francis called for an end to hostilities in Ukraine, praying for “the boldness needed to open the door to negotiation and to gestures of dialogue and encounter, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace.” Several Ukrainian flags were visible among the throngs of faithful.

Speaking while seated, the pope then prayed for peace in the Middle East, asking that “the doors of dialogue and peace be flung open throughout the region.

“In contemplating the crib of Bethlehem, I think of the Christian communities in Israel and Palestine, particularly in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is extremely grave,” he said. “May there be a ceasefire, may the hostages be released and aid be given to the people worn out by hunger and by war.”

The pope also highlighted the plight of Christians in Lebanon and Syria “at this most delicate time.” The week of Christmas, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets of Damascus on Dec. 24 to protest against anti-Christian sentiment following the burning of a Christmas tree in central Syria.

With the Holy Door standing open beneath him in the basilica, Pope Francis pleaded that the jubilee be an occasion for global forgiveness, especially for alleviating the financial burdens of the world’s poorest nations.

Cardinal Silvano Tomasi, a retired papal diplomat who negotiated debt-relief agreements for the world’s poorest countries, stood alongside the pope as he delivered his message from the balcony of the basilica.

Low- and middle-income countries owed a record debt of \$8.8 trillion at the end of 2023—an 8% increase over 2020—according to data from the World Bank, and developing countries spent a record \$1.4 trillion to service their foreign debt in that year.

“Each of us is called to forgive those who have trespassed against us, because the Son of God, born in the cold and darkness of the night, has forgiven our own,” the pope said in his Christmas message.

Pope Francis prayed for communities affected by a measles outbreak in Congo, and for those suffering from the humanitarian crises in Burkina Faso,



Pope Francis gives his Christmas blessing “*urbi et orbi*” (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 25, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Mali, Niger and Mozambique “caused mainly by armed conflicts and the scourge of terrorism” and “aggravated by the devastating effects of climate change.”

In the Americas, he asked that Jesus would inspire political authorities and all people “to find as soon as possible effective solutions, in justice and truth, to promote social harmony, particularly in Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia and Nicaragua.

“On this festive day, let us not fail to express our gratitude to those who spend themselves, quietly and faithfully, in doing good and in serving others,” he added, commending parents, educators, teachers, health care workers, charity

workers and missionaries for their contribution to society.

Jesus, Pope Francis said in his message, “is the wide-open door that we are invited to enter, in order to rediscover the meaning of our existence and the sacredness of all life, and to recover the foundational values of the human family.”

He prayed that society’s most vulnerable members—children, the elderly, refugees, the unemployed, prisoners and persecuted people—may meet God at the threshold of that door.

“As pilgrims of hope, let us go out to meet him,” he said. “Let us open to him the doors of our hearts, as he has opened to us the door of his heart.” †

## St. Peter’s Holy Door sees more than half million pilgrims in two weeks

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—More than half a million pilgrims crossed the threshold of the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica in the first two weeks after Pope Francis opened it.

From Dec. 24, when the pope inaugurated the Jubilee Year, to Jan. 7, the Vatican said, 545,532 people from around the world have made the journey along the lengthy boulevard leading to St. Peter’s Square and crossed through the basilica’s Holy Door.

“This is a very significant beginning,” Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the chief Vatican organizer of the Jubilee Year, said in a statement. “The groups crowding Via della Conciliazione are giving an important testimony, and this is also a sign of the great perception of safety and security that pilgrims experience in the city of Rome and around the four papal basilicas.”

A tunnel diverting vehicle traffic underground at the beginning of Via Della Conciliazione—the street leading to the Vatican—was completed just before the start of the jubilee year. A pathway

extending from the new pedestrian square at the start of the street to the Holy Door also was set up exclusively for pilgrims walking individually or in groups to St. Peter’s Basilica.

Archbishop Fisichella acknowledged, however, that there were some “difficulties” in managing the flow of pilgrims and tourists through St. Peter’s Basilica, a problem that would be studied.

The city of Rome has estimated that more than 30 million people will travel to the city during the jubilee.

Based on the number of pilgrims that crossed the Holy Door in the first days of the Holy Year, “a steady increase in pilgrim turnout is expected,” the Vatican said in its statement, noting also the many children, youths, adults and elderly who participated in jubilee celebrations at the diocesan level on Dec. 29.

The Vatican said that the “great desire to participate in the jubilee was also visible in the thousands of people who filled the four papal basilicas on the days celebrating the opening of the Holy Door, often filling the squares in front of them.” †

## What do we owe each other?

When he became the 18th president of the University of Notre Dame last year, Indiana native Father Robert A. Dowd chose a theme for the university’s community to consider.

It’s a theme connected to the ways that people are divided in this country, a theme based upon this question, “What do we owe each other?”

*The Criterion* is inviting our readers—our community—to share their answers to that question, as a way of starting the new year together. Your responses could range from a one-word answer to a personal story reflecting what you think we owe each other.

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

## Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition

Feb. 14 issue of *The Criterion*

Couples who are planning to be married between Feb. 14 and July 11, 2025, in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between Aug. 1, 2024, and Feb. 1, 2025, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming Feb. 14 Spring Marriage Edition.

Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form below or electronically at [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements).

### E-mailed photos

Photos should be saved in jpg format and be at least 500 kb. Color photos are preferred. We recommend sending a photo where the couple’s faces are close to each other. Please send the photo as an attachment to the e-mail: [alewis@archindy.org](mailto:alewis@archindy.org). Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). In the e-mail, please include the information in the form located below.

If it is not possible to e-mail a photo, a photo can be mailed with the bottom form. Please no photocopies or laser prints. To have the photo returned, please include a return addressed envelope with a postage stamp on it.

### Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on Feb. 5.

— Use this form to furnish information by mail —

Clip and mail to: BRIDES, *The Criterion*, ATTN: Ann Lewis, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. To submit information online go to: [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements). **Deadline with photos:** Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 5 p.m. Please print or type:

Name of Bride (first, middle, last)				Daytime Phone	
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip Code	
Name of Bride’s Parents (first, last)					
City			State		
Name of Bridegroom (first, middle, last)					
Name of Bridegroom’s Parents (first, last)					
City			State		
Wedding Date	Church	City	State		
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Enclosed	<input type="checkbox"/> Return photo				<input type="checkbox"/> No Picture
Signature of person furnishing information			Relationship	Daytime Phone	



# The Criterion

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*  
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*

## Editorial



A visitor touches the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Day, on Dec. 25, 2024, after it was opened by Pope Francis during Christmas Mass the night prior to mark the start of the Holy Year 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

## We are invited to celebrate 2025 as a Jubilee Year of Hope

Ten days into this new year, most of us are probably struggling to remain faithful to the resolutions that we made before the year began. Usually this is because our resolutions, while sincere, are not realistic. We tend to overreach in our desire to change the way we think, act or behave. Better to begin with something we know we can accomplish, then move gradually to more challenging resolutions.

One New Year's resolution that we have been invited to make—and keep—this year is to be “pilgrims of hope.” This is the theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Francis, and it addresses the growing problems of disillusionment and despair faced by people throughout the globe.

“*Spes non confundit*” (“Hope does not disappoint,” Rom 5:5) is the message that Pope Francis offers us, using the words of St. Paul to the Romans and applying them to all nations and peoples everywhere. “For everyone,” the Holy Father says in his papal bull announcing this special year, “may the jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ [Jn 10:7-9] of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as our hope” (1 Tm 1:1).

Hope does not come easily to people who have experienced the devastating effects of war, poverty, economic and social unrest, or the uncertainty caused by moral decay and political turmoil.

Hope is urgently needed in every age and circumstance, but it is especially important in times of crisis. We who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord of heaven and Earth are compelled to share this good news with others. We dare not trust in political figures, ideologies or secular movements. Christ alone is our hope.

By inviting us to see ourselves as pilgrims of hope, the Church reminds us that none of us is alone in facing the challenges of daily living. We are members of God's family who travel together on a hope-filled journey. If we forget our final destination, or the mission we have been given by the risen Christ to be Spirit-filled evangelizers who proclaim his good news to all, we are easily bogged down by despair. The world is a confusing, gloomy place.

Only the light of Christ can make it clear and bright.

The jubilee prayer for 2025 provides us with the right way to approach our pilgrimage of hope:

*Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your kingdom. May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new Earth, when, with the powers of evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally. May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the Earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.*

The “blessed hope,” for which we pray will be reawakened in us by the Holy Spirit, is Christ himself. The seeds for which we pray will transform us into tireless missionary disciples. They are the life-giving instruments of God's grace that have been planted in our hearts by word and sacrament. These compel us to abandon the safety and security of our comfortable lives in order to go forth and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus, whose victory over sin and death gives us the hope of eternal life with him.

Christ alone is our hope. He is the only source of joy and peace that we can rely on in this new year and beyond.

As Pope Francis wrote in his letter introducing the “Jubilee of Hope”:

“We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire.”

Let's make this jubilee year a time for making and keeping hope-filled New Year's resolutions. Let's make 2025 a year of hope for all.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Greg Erlandson

## Like St. Thomas More and many others, Pope Francis likes a joke

Pope Francis has made it abundantly clear through the years that he is no fan of “sourpuss” Catholics, who he calls “querulous and disillusioned pessimists” (“The Joy of the Gospel,” #85).

On this subject, he echoes Jesus' own condemnation of sourpuss religious leaders who make a big show of their fasting and religious piety. “Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward” (Mt 6:16), was Jesus' curt commentary.

But Pope Francis has now taken it one step further, endorsing humor as not just compatible with, but perhaps essential for, faith.

In a recent column in *The New York Times*, itself excerpted from a forthcoming book, Pope Francis wrote: “Those who give up their own humanity give up everything, and that when it becomes hard to cry seriously or to laugh passionately, then we really are on the downhill slope. We become anesthetized, and anesthetized adults do nothing good for themselves, nor for society, nor for the Church.”

The pope's essay is in large part a collection of jokes made by two saints, Pope John XXIII and Pope St. John Paul II, as well as jokes often told about Jesuits (his own religious order before he became a bishop). It should come as no surprise that Pope Francis, who loves folksy sayings, would believe that at times laughter is the best medicine.

Several months ago, he invited comedians from the United States and other countries to join him at the Vatican. He praised them “for getting people to ‘think critically by making them laugh and smile.’”

Comedians play an important role, the pope told them. “In the midst of so much gloomy news, you denounce abuses of power, you give voice to forgotten situations, you highlight abuses, you point out inappropriate behavior.”

Comedy can sting a little, but these

days the rage can overwhelm the laughs. Late night comedians, once the refuge of tired folk just before turning in, now often have a bitter edge to them. Scorn is a poor substitute for good humor and likely leaves the listener more agitated than prepared for a good night's sleep.

Perhaps we all need a dose of comedians like Nate Bargatze or Jim Gaffigan, who show us ways first of all to laugh at ourselves. There are many serious issues deserving of our full attention. But laughter is a balm for the soul, and it is a very Catholic recognition that we do know there is a happy ending.

I had the good fortune to have a father who loved practical jokes, the wit of Gilbert and Sullivan and the edgy humor of Tom Lehrer. I grew up reading

the comic pages as well as sports and news, a practice I maintain to this day. Bedtime is not the time to read about crises and scoundrels. Bedtime is when I catch up on “Pearls Before Swine” and “Zits,” guaranteeing at least a smile before I sleep.

Not every saint is a barrel of laughs (looking at you, St. Jerome), but Pope Francis is reminding us that when we take ourselves too seriously, we become less

effective, less a witness for the joy of the Gospel.

It is the pope who reminded the comedians he met with that one of our most famous martyrs, St. Thomas More, wrote a prayer for good humor. It may do us all a bit of good to recite its last lines before bed tonight:

“Give me a soul that knows not boredom, grumblings, sighs and laments, nor excess of stress, because of that obstructing thing called ‘I.’ Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humor. Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke to discover in life a bit of joy, and to be able to share it with others.”

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



*Perhaps we all need a dose of comedians like Nate Bargatze or Jim Gaffigan, who show us ways first of all to laugh at ourselves. ... Laughter is a balm for the soul.*



Pope Francis laughs with visitors after his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican on June 28, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## The voice of God speaks to us, sometimes loudly, sometimes softly

*After the Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Mt 3:16-17).*

God speaks to us, his people, in various ways depending on our ability to hear and understand him. In the Gospel for this Sunday, the Baptism of the Lord, we hear that the Father “thundered” his affirmation of Jesus as his beloved Son. In the Old Testament (1 Kgs 19:11-13), we are told that God also speaks softly—with a “still, small voice.”

The baptism of Jesus was a public event that took place after many years of preparation during the quiet phase of his life. During this gathering of people who had come to receive the baptism that John offered, we can imagine that there was the kind of noise and distraction that any crowd generates. On the most basic level, God the Father “thunders” in order to make sure his voice is heard.

But there is more to this than the fact of his being heard above the crowd.

Thunder is a symbol of majesty and awe. What the Father proclaims here is the awesome truth that Jesus is Lord and Savior, the one who has been sent to redeem us from sin and death. John the Baptist has already prepared us for this divine revelation by saying: “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Lk 3:16).

Jesus, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, is mightier than John. He is both God and man, and his symbolic baptism is a sign that he freely takes upon himself the weight and the sorrow of our sins.

In the second reading for this Sunday’s liturgy, St. Paul offers a powerful reflection on the mystery of the Lord’s baptism in the Jordan. Paul says:

“When the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus

Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life” (Ti 3:4-7).

Nothing we have done, or could ever do, can justify the grace poured out on us “through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” that we received when we were baptized in Christ Jesus. Our salvation is unmerited and undeserved. It is pure gift. Through it, we have become sons and daughters of the same Father, and we have received the hope of eternal life with him.

Just as the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as he was baptized by John in the Jordan, the same Spirit was present and active at the time each of us received the great sacrament of our rebirth and renewal. For most of us, this was a quiet event that took place among family, friends and perhaps fellow parishioners. The priest or deacon who administered this great sacrament probably did not “thunder” the prayers, but he did speak with God’s voice in a manner appropriate to the occasion.

Every baptism provides us with an opportunity to reflect with majesty

and awe on the wonder of God’s mercy. Every person who is baptized, whether as an infant, child, adolescent or adult, is being born again in God’s grace “with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Everyone who receives this incomparable gift from God is liberated from the bondage of sin and death and becomes an heir to eternal life.

No wonder we can rejoice in the simple act of humility that is represented in the Baptism of the Lord. No wonder the Father is pleased. His only beloved Son has agreed to take on himself the sins of the world. He has freely and selflessly volunteered to empty himself, as St. Paul teaches, taking on the form of a servant.

What is taking place here, in our celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, is a revelation of God speaking to us—both loudly, in the thundering voice of the Father, and softly, in the quiet acceptance of Jesus’ baptism by John.

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, let us give thanks to God for the sacrament of baptism and for the words that he speaks in the stillness of our hearts. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## La voz de Dios nos habla, a veces en voz alta, a veces como un susurro

*Una vez bautizado, Jesús salió en seguida del agua. En ese momento se abrieron los cielos y Jesús vio que el Espíritu de Dios descendía como una paloma y se posaba sobre él. Y una voz, proveniente del cielo, decía: “Este es mi Hijo amado en quien me complazco” (Mt 3:16-17).*

Dios nos habla a nosotros, su pueblo, de diversas maneras, según nuestra capacidad de escuchar y comprenderlo. En el Evangelio de este domingo, el Bautismo del Señor, se nos dice que se escuchó la voz del Padre proveniente del cielo que afirmaba que Jesús era su Hijo amado. En el Antiguo Testamento (1 Reyes 19:11-13), se nos dice que Dios también habla en voz baja, con “un ligero susurro.”

El Bautismo de Jesús fue un acontecimiento público que sucedió después de muchos años de preparación durante la fase tranquila de su vida. En esa reunión, donde la gente se había congregado para recibir el bautismo que Juan ofrecía, nos imaginamos que había el ruido y la distracción propios de cualquier multitud. En su forma más elemental, Dios Padre habla en voz alta para asegurarse de que todos lo escuchen.

Pero no se trata apenas de hacerse oír por encima de la multitud: hablar

alto es símbolo de majestuosidad y dominio. Lo que el Padre proclama aquí es la asombrosa verdad de que Jesús es Señor y Salvador, el que ha sido enviado para redimirnos del pecado y de la muerte. Juan el Bautista ya nos ha preparado para esta revelación divina al decir: Juan les habló a todos: “Yo los bautizo con agua; pero viene Uno que es más poderoso que yo, a quien no soy digno de desatar la correa de Sus sandalias. Él los bautizará con el Espíritu Santo y fuego” (Lc 3:16).

Jesús, el que bautizará con el Espíritu Santo y fuego, es más poderoso que Juan. Él es a la vez Dios y hombre, y su bautismo simbólico es signo de que asume libremente el peso y el dolor de nuestros pecados.

En la segunda lectura de la liturgia de este domingo, san Pablo ofrece una poderosa reflexión sobre el misterio del bautismo del Señor en el Jordán. Pablo dice:

“Pero cuando se manifestó la bondad de Dios nuestro Salvador, y Su amor hacia la humanidad, Él nos salvó, no por las obras de justicia que nosotros hubiéramos hecho, sino conforme a Su misericordia, por medio del lavamiento de la regeneración y la renovación por el Espíritu Santo, que Él derramó sobre nosotros abundantemente por medio de Jesucristo nuestro Salvador, para que

justificados por Su gracia fuéramos hechos herederos según la esperanza de la vida eterna” (Tito 3:4-7).

Nada de lo que hayamos hecho, o podamos hacer, puede justificar la gracia derramada sobre nosotros “por medio del lavamiento de la regeneración y la renovación por el Espíritu Santo” que recibimos cuando fuimos bautizados en Cristo Jesús. No hemos reunido méritos y no nos merecemos nuestra salvación; se trata meramente de un regalo. Por ella, nos hemos convertido en hijos e hijas del mismo Padre, y hemos recibido la esperanza de la vida eterna en Él.

Así como el Espíritu Santo descendió sobre Jesús cuando fue bautizado por Juan en el Jordán, el mismo Espíritu estuvo presente y activo en el momento en que cada uno de nosotros recibió el gran sacramento de nuestro renacimiento y renovación. Para la mayoría de nosotros, se trataba de un acontecimiento tranquilo que tenía lugar entre familiares, amigos y, tal vez, algunos vecinos parroquianos. El sacerdote o diácono que nos administró este gran sacramento probablemente no entonaba las oraciones con una voz majestuosa, pero hablaba con la voz de Dios de una manera apropiada para la ocasión.

Cada bautismo nos brinda la

oportunidad de reflexionar con asombro y admiración sobre la maravilla de la misericordia de Dios. Toda persona que se bautiza, ya sea bebé, niño, adolescente o adulto, está naciendo de nuevo en la gracia de Dios “con el Espíritu Santo y fuego.” Todo el que recibe este don incomparable de Dios se libera de la esclavitud del pecado y de la muerte y se convierte en heredero de la vida eterna.

No es de extrañar que nos regocijemos en el sencillo acto de humildad que representa el Bautismo del Señor, ni que el Padre esté contento. Su único Hijo amado ha aceptado cargar sobre sí los pecados del mundo. Se ha ofrecido libre y desinteresadamente para entregarse por completo, tal como nos enseña san Pablo, al adoptar la forma de siervo.

Lo que sucede aquí, en nuestra celebración del Bautismo del Señor, es una revelación de Dios que nos habla, tanto en voz alta, con esa voz impactante del Padre, como en un susurro, en la aceptación silenciosa del bautismo de Jesús por Juan.

En este Año Jubilar de la Esperanza, demos gracias a Dios por el sacramento del bautismo y por las palabras que pronuncia en la quietud de nuestro corazón. †

# Events Calendar

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

## January 14

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer at the Woods**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence, virtual option available. Information: [Taize.SistersofProvidence.org](mailto:Taize.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952.

## January 15, February 19

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

## January 15-April 30

St. Jude Parish, Guerin Room, 5353 McFarland Road, Indianapolis. **Surviving Divorce Program**, 6:45-9 p.m., three Wednesdays a month for a total of 12 sessions (Jan. 15, 22, 29, Feb. 12, 19, 26, March 12, 19, 26, April 9, 23, 30), \$30, scholarships available. Registration, information: 317-786-4371, [pcollins@stjudeindy.org](mailto:pcollins@stjudeindy.org).

## January 16

St. Malachy Parish, 9833 East County Road 750 N, Brownsburg. **"Purified" and**

**"Gender and the Theology of Your Body,"** 6-9:15 p.m., two talks by Catholic speaker Jason Evert, includes adoration and confession, \$25 individual, group discounts available, use code EARLYBIRD for \$5 discount. Registration, information: [chastity.com/purified](http://chastity.com/purified). Host parish questions: 317-852-3195.

## January 16, February 20

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

## January 17

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Chief Operating Officer and Chancellor at Marian University Ken Britt presenting "Marian University 3.0: The Changing Landscape of Education and the Catholic University Response," rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Jan. 14. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## January 18

Sisters of Providence,

1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Youth Volunteer Day**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, interact with elder sisters of the community. Information, registration: [teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org](mailto:teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org), [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org), 361-500-9505.

## February 5

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

## February 7

**Virtual Prayer with the Sisters of Providence**, 7-7:45 p.m., for single women ages 18-42, prayer and sharing on topic of fear. Information, registration: [events.sistersofprovidence.org](http://events.sistersofprovidence.org), 361-500-9505, [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

Women's Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to

follow. Information: 317-829-6800, [womenscarecenter.org](http://womenscarecenter.org).

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

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

## February 8

Our Lady of the Greenwood, Parish Life Center, 399 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Celebrate Romance**, 6:30-11:30 p.m., dinner, dancing, door prizes, optional dance lessons 6 p.m., \$75 per couple through Jan. 14, \$85 after, \$280 table of four couples through Jan. 14, \$320 after. Information, registration: [celebratemarriageinistry.com](http://celebratemarriageinistry.com).

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.

## February 9

Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting**, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-762-6259, [popofsindy@gmail.com](mailto:popofsindy@gmail.com).

## February 14-16

Louisville, Ky. **Retrouaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage, location disclosed upon registering. Information, registration: 502-479-3329, [3012@helpourmarriage.org](mailto:3012@helpourmarriage.org), [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org).

## February 16

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Indianapolis Symphony Sphinx Series Concert**, 2-4 p.m., featuring string quartet of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra musicians, tour of Sacred Heart Church available after concert, free. Information: 317-902-3006, [judithessex@icloud.com](mailto:judithessex@icloud.com).

concert, free. Information: 317-902-3006, [judithessex@icloud.com](mailto:judithessex@icloud.com).

## February 21

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, presenter TBA, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Feb. 18. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## February 22

East Central H.S. Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Place, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men's Conference**, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., featuring keynote by author and speaker Chris Stefanick, other speakers: Jake Khym, Bobby Angel and Father Jonathan Meyer, includes Mass, confession, adoration, lunch, adults \$48, group of 10 or more adults \$43 per person, high school and college students \$18, clergy and religious free. Information, registration: 812-576-4302, [contact@efcatholicmensconference.com](mailto:contact@efcatholicmensconference.com), [efcatholicmensconference.com](http://efcatholicmensconference.com). †

## Retreats and Programs

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

## January 25

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **St. Paul's Conversion and Ours: An Experience of Metanoia**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, includes lunch, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## February 7

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

## February 8

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **The Power of the Jesus Touch: Healed, Transformed, Saved**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., author Sandra Hartlieb presenting, \$30. Information,

registration: 812-933-6437, [center@oldenburgosf.com](mailto:center@oldenburgosf.com), [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## February 19

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## February 22

**Mystics and Fellowship virtual program**, 9-10:30 a.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence, third of four independent sessions (March 29), register by Feb. 19, \$25 per session. Information, registration: [events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Wisdom Knowing and Wisdom Jesus**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., doctor of nursing Kay Jackson presenting, \$40. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [center@oldenburgosf.com](mailto:center@oldenburgosf.com), [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## February 25-27

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **A Contemplative Approach to the Lord's Prayer**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## February 28

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information,

registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## March 5

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Ashes, Awe and the Cross**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, \$75, includes lunch. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## March 21-23

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Christian Contemplative Prayer: Being Centered on Christ**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## March 28

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org). †

## Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse to offer couples retreat on Feb. 14-16

A retreat titled "Benedictine Wisdom for Married Life" will be held at Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., in St. Meinrad, from 2 p.m. on Feb. 14 to 1 p.m. on Feb. 16. St. Meinrad is on Central Time.

The weekend retreat, presented by Benedictine Father Simon Herrmann, is for married couples who wish to grow in their relationship with God and

one another. It will focus on tenets of monastic life and how they can foster peace in marriage and family life. The weekend includes time for prayer, reflection, Mass and sharing. Meals and accommodations are included.

The cost is \$550 per couple in a double room. To register or for more information, go to [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats) or call 812-357-6611. †

## Wedding Anniversaries

**JERRY AND CAROL (DOYLE) COSBY**, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on Dec. 27.

The couple was married in St. Mary Cathedral in Lafayette, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette), on Dec. 27, 1954.

They have seven children: Lisa Carter, Erin Mock, Michele Shaw, Sheila Stewart, Sharon, Benjamin and the late Jeffrey Cosby.

The couple also has eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.



**ED AND PAULA (MAGNANT) ROESSLER**, members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Jan. 9.

The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Jan. 9, 1965.

They have two children: Chelle Bruce and Mic Roessler.

The couple also has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. †



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

# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Process of naming saints has developed through the centuries

By Michael R. Heinlein

(OSV News)—The Church celebrates saints on feast days throughout the year. They are a “cloud of witnesses” in heaven worshipping the Lord and praying for us (Heb 12:1). But how, exactly, is someone formally named a saint?

From its earliest days, the Church has celebrated the memory of some of its members known for heroic examples of faith, hope and charity, and has acknowledged the outstanding holiness that existed in them.

The first Christians most readily heralded as saints were those who suffered martyrdom and were killed in hatred of the faith. In subsequent generations, the Church held up as saints those who modeled heroic Christian living. A central reality of the Catholic faith is that all the baptized are called to be saints, an idea underscored and articulated anew by the Second Vatican Council as the “universal call to holiness.”

For centuries before there was a process for canonization, saints were declared by popular acclaim. But through time, a process for naming saints developed and was codified. As it developed, the prerogative for elevating someone to sainthood came to rest solely on the Holy See at the Vatican.

In 1983, however, Pope St. John Paul II overhauled the process, and the result is what guides the Church today.

Because a specific procedure must be followed to prove that the person in question is in heaven, the road to canonization has a juridical quality to it. The final step of the process is the pope’s solemn declaration, during the canonization rite, which states the given individual is in heaven.

The canonization process depends first upon the popular appeal of the holy person. Is the individual one to whom others turn for inspiration? Is he or she sought as an intercessor by the faithful for helping to secure divine intervention amid life’s problems? If so, what is called in the Church a “cause” must be established for the process of an individual’s canonization to advance.

The work to advance the cause typically is accomplished by an association or guild composed of the faithful, in conjunction with approval of members of the hierarchy. In order to foster prayer and devotion to the individual, what is more formally referred to as the “cult” (without any negative connotation often attached to the word), this group oversees dissemination of the individual’s written works and other items such as devotional materials, including prayer cards. The group also needs to secure financial resources to sustain the work that goes into advancing the cause.

An established and consistent popular devotion to the individual proposed for canonization is the foundation of any successful cause of canonization. The person’s holy life must be a source of inspiration to the faithful,



A banner depicting the “Martyrs of Damascus”—eight Franciscan friars and three Maronite laymen martyred in Syria in 1860—hangs from the front of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Oct. 16, 2024, ahead of their Oct. 20 canonization. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

and the person should be petitioned through prayer for intercession in various needs and occasions.

Current Church law requires the person to be deceased five years before a cause can commence, though the pope can choose to dispense this waiting period.

Most usually, as a person’s fame spreads and devotion to him or her increases, a thorough examination of the holy person’s life is conducted. All of this work is overseen by a person called a postulator who is assisted by various experts. The investigation happens first at a local level—usually overseen by a diocese or religious community. Evidence is accumulated to prove the individual existed, and his or her life and work are carefully scrutinized by historical and theological commissions.

The cause proceeds according to one of three paths: the person is proven to be a martyr, the person is proven to have lived a life of heroic virtue, or the person is proven to have prematurely offered up his or her life in an act of supreme charity.

Somewhere toward the beginning of this phase, the title “Servant of God” is bestowed upon the person in question, indicating that it has become clear that sizable numbers of the faithful believe that he or she strove for a holy life in accord with God’s will. Also, at some point within this phase, the individual’s grave typically is exhumed, the body is examined and relics are preserved.

When the local investigation into the person’s life and work is completed, the materials are forwarded to the Holy See’s Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. Working with the materials submitted, the same scrutiny is given to the person’s life at the Vatican level. Officials at the dicastery comb through all the documentation submitted by the authority sponsoring the canonization cause and compile it into what’s called a “*positio*”—something like a lengthy book. Bishop and cardinal members of the dicastery vote on whether the cause should be advanced, and if it proceeds positively, the *positio* ultimately is presented to the pope.

If he concurs with the work already completed, the pope grants the individual the title “venerable,” as one who is to be venerated for his or her holiness and intercessory privilege. This process is very much the same for an individual to be declared a martyr. The declaration that an individual is venerable or a martyr is arguably the greatest hurdle to clear in the canonization process.

Additionally, there is also a fourth, rarely used path called equipollent, or equivalent, canonization, whereby an individual is named a saint by the pope after a lengthy period where it has been established that the person has long and consistently been renowned for holiness and has a reputation as a miracle worker. This path demands a lengthy investigation as well, to prove the grounds that it should be invoked. Albeit on the rarest of occasions, portions of the canonization process, or the entirety of it, can be dispensed by the pope at any time.

Two proven miracles attributed to the person’s

intercession are needed for non-martyrs to be canonized. The first would lead to the person being declared “blessed” in a beatification, the last step before canonization. When a person is beatified, the Church states it is worthy of belief that he or she is in heaven. The additional miracle leading to canonization needs to occur after the beatification.

Only one miracle is necessary for a martyr to be declared a saint. He or she is beatified once the martyrdom is confirmed through investigation.

The presence of miracles typically has been a part of the declaration of saints even from earliest times. While supernatural phenomena might have been present in the holy person’s life, it is the miracles that occur after the person’s death that give evidence to his or her intercessory closeness to God as a heavenly denizen.

The Church takes very seriously the task of authenticating alleged miracles, and reported miracles typically are inexplicable medical healings. They are subjected to thorough investigations by medical and theological experts. After examination, ratification and endorsement by local and Vatican commissions, alleged miracles are submitted to the pope for his ultimate approval.

When a person is beatified, provision is made for the person to be venerated on a local level—perhaps in a given diocese, or nationally, or in a religious community and their apostolates, etc. Churches may be dedicated in the blessed’s honor in the specific locations associated with their life or work, and they are assigned a liturgical memorial to be celebrated in places associated with the blessed’s life. Pope Benedict XVI began the practice of having beatification Masses celebrated locally by someone other than the pope, often but not always the prefect for the Dicastery of the Causes of the Saints. It usually occurs in a place where the beatified person lived or where he or she died.

Canonization is a declaration that the individual is in heaven and enjoys the beatific vision. The canonization takes place in a liturgy celebrated by the pope, most typically at the Vatican. It is an infallible act of the magisterium that is to be definitively held by the faithful that an individual is now truly a saint.

When people are canonized, their cult is spread throughout the whole Church by inscribing their name in the canon, or official list, of saints. The saints may or may not be included on the Church’s universal liturgical calendar. Regardless, they are invoked publicly and may be liturgically celebrated and have churches dedicated to their memory anywhere in the world. A proven miracle is needed for all individuals who are canonized. But, at times, the pope has dispensed with the need for a final miracle.

(Michael R. Heinlein is editor of OSV’s *Simply Catholic* and author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I.*) †



A snow-covered statue of St. Theodora Guérin is seen in Mary’s Garden on the grounds of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The 19th-century French-born nun is the foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

## Holy attention: reclaiming quiet to hear Jesus in the new year

If you're trying to write a book about quiet and you're a mom of four, you might need a few extensions on your deadline. Such was the reality for writer



Sarah Clarkson, 40, daughter of the acclaimed Christian author Sally Clarkson.

It all started—as did so many creative pursuits—during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sarah began “deep, convicted work” about quiet: why it’s threatened, why it’s needed, how to cultivate it. She sensed its ramifications were profound, and

ultimately, a spiritual matter. She believed the topic warranted a book.

“Then I promptly entered three of the least quiet years of my life,” Sarah said. Two babies, three moves, numerous health issues and family deaths.

She kept trying to resume her book, hoping another extension would ignite that “deadline fire,” but she was simply too overwhelmed.

Finally, Sarah reached an impasse. Her family had just moved to Oxford, England, where her husband would be shepherd of two little Anglican churches. They were settling into an old brick vicarage. She knew her options: isolate herself for six weeks to complete

the book (and neglect her family) or ask for one more extension.

They were vacationing in Devon, a historic county in England’s Southwest Peninsula. Sarah retreated to the coast. Gazing at the water, praying furiously, her heart cried out with the gulls overhead. She ended up in a café, writing an impassioned letter to her publisher from Baker Books requesting another year.

Her publisher said yes—“a decision,” Sarah later wrote, “that brought the gift of quiet to my own life in a healing way.” In total, her deadline was pushed back 18 months, which allowed a very different—and better—book to be written.

*Reclaiming Quiet: Cultivating a Life of Holy Attention* is now in bookstores and book clubs, homes and hands across the globe. And now Sarah gets to hear from readers who are also thirsting for more quiet in a noisy world.

“I’m delighted by the enthusiasm and have a growing sense of the communal nature of this quest, the urgency of it for all of us, the way we can help each other to grit and courage by articulating our own work in this realm,” Sarah said.

Specifically, the book acknowledges the “clutches” of technology. She reflects on her first smartphone, which “slipped into spaces that used to be sacred” and stole moments of solitude.

The quiet, Sarah realized, was vital for creativity and imagination, for clarity and attention, for rest and for faith.

“That quiet,” she writes. “It was a living, benevolent thing, and in its presence, I felt myself waken, felt my skin and senses sharpen, felt something like grief stir in the deep places of my heart, a yearning that had not wakened in me for many days. I hungered for quiet, not just the cessation of noise but that deep inward hush in which the kindness of God is the light burning at the back of our eyes so that we look upon the world in the brightness of his companionship.”

As we set new habits for 2025, seek quiet. “If there is a season that summons us to attend, it’s winter in her bare-souled grace,” Sarah said. “I am learning to embrace the slowness, the impulse to draw inward, to rest, to shelter. And snow, ah! Anytime we have even a drop, I’m outside with the children to soak it in.”

In silence, Sarah writes, we can listen to Jesus. “Faith rests not primarily on gritted will or savvy choice but on response, on a honed and holy capacity to hear.”

What is he asking of you?

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

Called to Holiness/Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

## Falling to the enemies of hope leads to dire consequences for us

As a new year begins, it’s natural to look to the future with a sense of hope. But for Catholics, the holy year 2025 presents a unique opportunity to explore and cultivate hope—and to examine what makes it so difficult to hold onto.



Most of us know that hope is not wishful thinking or optimism. It does not lead us into delusion or comfort us with false promises or guarantees. But we still find it easier to articulate what hope is *not* than to define what hope *is*. That is largely because we cannot acquire the virtue of hope on our own power or become more excellently hopeful as we practice it over time. The virtue of hope is what we call a “theological virtue,” an infusion of pure grace.

But hope must have an object; that is, we must hope for something we do not yet possess. For hope to be genuine, it must be directed toward attaining what is good. But for hope to be Christian, it must be oriented toward the source of all goodness—God.

That is why hope draws us upward. It elevates and intensifies our desires, until the goods we once hoped for no longer attract us; until what we want most is nothing less than God himself. Today, that kind of hope appears to be in short supply.

Its enemies, on the other hand, are not. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies two principal sins (yes, sins!) against hope: despair and presumption. The fact that we can find these easily and everywhere betrays the deep and pervasive hopelessness that marks our current culture.

From the perspective of Christian virtue, despair is much more than mere negativity. Despair convinces us that we should expect nothing from God—neither assistance nor forgiveness. Despair, then, is an indictment against God, a charge against his goodness, his justice and his mercy. Those who despair lose hope for their own salvation. Increasingly convinced that their choices have no real effect, souls caught in despair tend toward idleness and sloth. They fail to persevere.

Many sincere believers struggle with despair. And when they do, they may hedge their bets by placing their hope in things like politics, money and even luck. That approach to life will always leave us disappointed and bereft. God alone is worthy of our trust; he is the sole source of genuine hope. And yet, the world we live in tells us that it is wise not to place all our eggs in one basket.

If despair is a deficit of hope, presumption is its excess. Presumption, however, takes two distinct forms. Some presume to achieve salvation without God’s assistance. These souls hope in the sufficiency of their own personal capacities. Relying on their strength and resources, they resist commending themselves to God’s grace. They are diligent in their pursuit of virtue but derelict in how they pursue it. They forget that we cannot save ourselves.

Others presume on God and take him for granted. Operating from a sense of entitlement, presumptuous souls demand God’s mercy without repentance. They expect to attain heaven without doing anything at all to merit it.

As *The Baltimore Catechism* explains, “Presumption is a rash expectation of salvation without making proper use of the necessary means to obtain it” (#1891, Question 1183). Chief among these “necessary means” are prayer and the sacraments.

When we fall to the enemies of hope, the consequences are dire. Those who lose hope are left unmoored in the tides that swell around them and within them. Without hope, there is nothing to anchor our choices. In the absence of hope, there is no wind to fill our sails, no fuel to move us forward.

But God knows what to do when our hope wanes. Divine power completely upended the most hopeless circumstance in human history: the agonizing death of Christ on the cross. The Resurrection is the ultimate validation of the choice to place all our hope in God. It is proof that he keeps his promises. But sometimes, it’s good to know that this same God has placed a longing for eternal happiness in every heart. He does this not to leave us disappointed, but to inspire every one of us to seek—and find—our ultimate fulfillment in him.

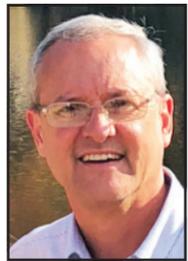
(Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.) †

*When we fall to the enemies of hope, the consequences are dire. Those who lose hope are left unmoored in the tides that swell around them and within them. Without hope, there is nothing to anchor our choices. In the absence of hope, there is no wind to fill our sails, no fuel to move us forward.*

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

## Could God love us in spite of our imperfections? An awesome God does!

Do you ever wonder what God could possibly see in you? Too often, I believe, individuals focus on their negative elements and don’t see the overwhelming positive evidence in the remainder of their total person.



Could it be that God looks at us and loves us because of the resemblance he observes? What if God sees that similarity between himself—God as Creator—and each of us, and still somehow loves us in spite of any imperfections there?

I am reminded of the story of King David in the Hebrew Scriptures in 2 Samuel 11-12:25. It could seem quite strange to many of us that God knew all that King David had done in acquiring Bathsheba and still considered David

special and worth loving after he had repented.

And we must never forget this element of repentance that is so necessary when we have fallen short—this ongoing need for reconciliation to our ever-loving Father.

In this way, God’s love is much like parents’ love for their children—but more perfect. Children require constant redirection as they mature.

As adults, we must seem similar in God’s eyes. And yet it seems that God still desires our love no matter what we have done or how we see ourselves.

I am also reminded of how imperfect Jesus’ Apostles were. And it is very easy to focus on these imperfections in the disciples rather than seeing the many strengths that each one eventually possessed.

Yet he worked with the “raw material” of these people to start a global movement. This spread

of Christianity would become the pivotal event in bringing his salvation to this broken world.

So it appears that God always sees each of us in our adopted role—as his very children. He continually waits for us to return to our proper place in his family.

And as a result of these facts and because of his never-ending and unconditional love, our challenge becomes one of continually using our talents and very lives to assist in the building of his kingdom because of that love.

And in doing this, we hope to one day hear those words: “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Mt 25:21)

What an awesome God we have!

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

Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, January 12, 2025

- Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
- Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38
- Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The feast of the Baptism of the Lord is important to the Church's process of bringing us to Christ, because it reveals



both the identity of the Lord and begins the Gospel's revelation of the Lord's work of salvation.

John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. The three synoptic Gospels—Matthew,

Mark and Luke—report this event. It is not recorded in John, although John's Gospel alludes to John the Baptist's baptisms in the Jordan, and in John's Gospel, John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29).

The first reading is one of the four passages from Isaiah known as the Songs of the Suffering Servant. These quite poetic passages are prominent in the liturgies of Lent, and indeed of Good Friday. Who was this Suffering Servant? To whom do these passages refer? The future Messiah? One of the prophets? The author? Was it a collective reference to the people of Israel? No one knows.

Regardless, the Christian liturgies throughout the centuries have seen Jesus in the Suffering Servant Songs. They convey an ominous overtone. Certainly, this is the message for this feast. In this passage, God reveals that a faithful and pure servant will come but will meet an outrageous fortune. Many will turn against him. Yet he will be steadfast.

Supplying the second reading is the Acts of the Apostles. After Easter, almost every liturgy contains a reading from this book,

but this source rarely furnishes readings at Mass in any other time. So, the appearance of Acts on this weekend is unusual.

This reading is important. St. Peter's identity is revealed. He speaks on behalf of all the Apostles. He is chief among them. He reaches out to gentiles, by teaching Cornelius, a Roman officer, a foreigner and a pagan. Peter proclaims Jesus, declaring that the saving ministry of Jesus began with the Lord's baptism. The Apostle's message is the continuation of the Lord's message.

St. Luke's Gospel provides the last reading. Luke's report of the baptism, as St. Mark's, highlights the Lord's divine identity and mission of salvation. In Luke, as in Mark, God announces that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is fulfilling the plan of God.

Certain images are important. In a distant echo of creation, the reading says that life comes from the water. Jesus emerges from the water to begin the mission of redemption. Looking ahead, it prefigures Christian baptism.

Another image is that of the sky. God speaks from the sky, an ancient image of divinity in the Old Testament.

## Reflection

In Advent, the Church called us to open ourselves to the gift of holiness that comes through God's grace. The Church joyfully has led us to Christmas, the anniversary of the Lord's birth. If we responded in Advent, Christmas was much more than a commemoration. It was a personal event in which faithful hearts and souls truly received Christ and were restored, healed and freed from the inevitability of death.

## Daily Readings

### Monday, January 13

St. Hilary, bishop and doctor of the Church  
Hebrews 1:1-6  
Psalm 97:1, 2b, 6, 7c, 9  
Mark 1:14-20

### Tuesday, January 14

Hebrews 2:5-12  
Psalm 8:2a, 5-9  
Mark 1:21-28

### Wednesday, January 15

Hebrews 2:14-18  
Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9  
Mark 1:29-39

### Thursday, January 16

Hebrews 3:7-14  
Psalm 95:6-11  
Mark 1:40-45

### Friday, January 17

St. Anthony, abbot  
Hebrews 4:1-5, 11  
Psalm 78:3, 4bc, 6c-8  
Mark 2:1-12

### Saturday, January 18

Hebrews 4:12-16  
Psalm 19:8-10, 15  
Mark 2:13-17

### Sunday, January 19

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10  
1 Corinthians 12:4-11  
John 2:1-11

In the great revelation of the Epiphany, celebrated last week, the Church continued to tell us about Jesus. Son of Mary and therefore human, the Lord also is God, as the Magi realized.

Now, on this feast, the Church instructs us further about Jesus. He is the instrument of God's love for us. Doomed by our sins, we find another chance in Jesus. He is our Savior. He reconciles

sinner with God. Union with Jesus is critical if we wish to be saved. We must be inseparably bonded to Christ. He is God. God is love. God forgives us and restores us to eternal life. However, we must accept the Lord.

Practically speaking, Jesus comes to us through Peter and the Apostles, the Lord's students, whom Jesus commissioned to bring salvation to all people. †

## Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

### Genealogy of Jesus is an important part of the story of his nativity

**Q**I'm a longtime daily Massgoer, and every year in the days leading up to Christmas we have that one Gospel reading that lists all the names of Jesus' ancestors. I can understand why things like this are included in the Bible for the sake of history, but why does it show up every year in the daily Mass readings? It doesn't seem to provide much food for spiritual reflection. (New York)



people, St. Matthew is telling his readers that Jesus has a kingly identity as a descendant of David's royal lineage.

Jesus did not succeed David as a literal earthly king running a human government. But as the chosen Savior of his people (and the rest of the world), Jesus fulfills his role as the "anointed one" in a deeper way, one which David's earthly kingship foreshadowed.

St. Matthew also tells us specifically that "the total number of generations from Abraham to David is 14 generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, 14 generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah, 14 generations" (Mt 1:17). In Scripture, the number seven is used to indicate completeness or perfection. So, the sets of fourteen generations, as a multiple of seven, is a subtle signal that Jesus came to Earth at a time perfectly preordained by God's providence, and that Jesus would be the perfect completion of the royal line that came before him.

What is most interesting to me personally, however, is some of the more surprising names mentioned. Normally a genealogy of this type would only list names in the paternal line, but St. Matthew mentions several women, all of whom might be seen as less-than-ideal ancestors to have. Tamar was an abandoned widow; Rahab was a prostitute; and Ruth was a foreign outsider to the people of Israel. Yet they were all direct maternal ancestors to King David, and hence a part of Jesus' known heritage.

By highlighting the names of these women in his genealogy, St. Matthew is telling us that they were a crucial part of God's plan for all of history. This underscores an important theme that runs throughout the Old and New Testaments: that God uses the lowly, the humble and the unexpected to achieve his purposes. It perfectly sets the stage for the greatest "surprise" of all, that the King of Kings should come to us in humble circumstances, born of a virgin and laid in a manger.

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

## Opening the Doors to Hope



U.S. Cardinal James M. Harvey, archpriest of Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, opens the Holy Door of the basilica before celebrating Mass on Jan. 5. Learn more about the Jubilee Year 2025 at [www.archindy.org/jubilee](http://www.archindy.org/jubilee). (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

# HOPE

continued from page 1

I promised Jesus that from this moment forward, I would listen and do everything that he asked of me, no matter what.”

As Ricke prayed, another challenge surfaced.

“It was decided that the helicopter couldn’t fly in the icy weather, so we prayed and waited for an ambulance with a paramedic on board for her to be transferred to Methodist,” Ricke says.

Amid the uncertainty and fear, Susan experienced a moment that gave her hope. During the ambulance drive to Methodist in the morning hours of Christmas day, she saw “a blue glow” and had “a feeling of peace and warmth,” experiences that led her to believe that the Blessed Mother and Jesus were with her.

That belief guided the couple through the tough times to come.

“Susan’s left side had become totally paralyzed,” Ricke recalls about her stay in Methodist. “When Susan wanted to get up, I would help her get her left arm around me, and Susan’s left leg and left foot would literally drag across the floor. During these times, sometimes we would laugh and sometimes we would cry, but we both knew and had no doubt that Jesus would take care of us.”

Following her stay in Methodist, Susan returned to Columbus Regional Hospital for eight weeks of in-patient physical therapy.

“I would work every day in Greensburg. And every day after work, Andrea, Luke and I would go to see her in the hospital,” Ricke notes.

“With sincere thankfulness and praise to God and his mercy, she was able to walk again. She was totally paralyzed. Now, she could walk. It’s miracles, miracles.”

## ‘We can actually see Jesus in each other’s eyes’

More than 34 years have passed since that Christmas Eve in 1990. Still, the experience has continued to leave its mark on the married couple of 46 years in this defining way:

Having clung to hope in one of the toughest moments of their married life, they have strived to bring a touch of hope into the lives of others through the years.

The couple has taken that commitment to an even higher level in the past two years as they have dedicated their efforts to improving the lives of people in Honduras.

Working through the “Adopt-A-Village” program of an organization called Food for the Poor, the Rickses are immersed in their parish’s desire to provide food, housing, training and economic empowerment to the Honduran community of Cucuyagua.

St. Mary Parish has pledged \$1 million to the effort, and more than \$900,000 has been raised so far, in just 15 months.

That investment has started to translate into the construction of homes and a community center, with 10 houses

expected to be ready for Honduran families this spring.

“The parish is not the only place that has given,” Tom Ricke says. “We’re reaching out to other churches in the archdiocese, reaching out to all kinds of schools. When we reach out with open arms and hands and give our lives in total surrender to God’s will, miracles happen.

When we pour out our loving, giving soul to each other, we can actually see Jesus in each other’s eyes. We can feel his loving arms wrapping around us.”

Susan’s joy overflows when she considers how much money has been raised so quickly for the community in Honduras.

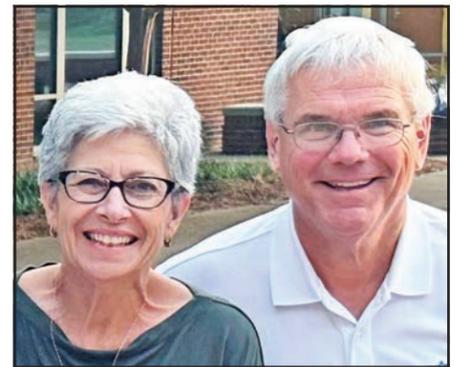
“This whole thing has been led by God!” she says. “God is just awesome!”

In the journeys to help the people of Honduras, one moment stands out to Tom Ricke.

“When we visited each individual family and their hut, we gave them beans, rice, flour and candies for the children,” he says. “While visiting one family in their hut, behind a plastic curtain, a grandmother was praying to Jesus. Our interpreter said she was praying for food for her family. When we gave her the beans, rice and flour, she immediately cried tears of joy and happiness in sincere gratitude to God for all of his blessings for her family.”

For Tom Ricke, it was another moment of hope fulfilled by God.

“I seek God in all things in my life by joining with Susan in daily morning and



Susan and Tom Ricke work together to provide food, housing, training and economic empowerment to the Honduran community of Cucuyagua. (Submitted photo)

bedtime prayer, asking him to lead us in the right path and giving us strength and courage to follow it,” he says. “We have surrendered to God and asked that his will be done.

“We know we are here on this Earth to help other people. We want to give people hope. And it’s been such a blessing, just one miracle after another.”

(If you’d like to share your story of hope, please send it to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto:jshaughnessy@archindy.org) or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. For more information or to donate to the effort of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, visit the website, [church.stmarysgreensburg.com](http://church.stmarysgreensburg.com).) †

## Jubilee Year offers several opportunities for plenary indulgences

By Natalie Hoefer

As the Church progresses through the 2025 “Pilgrims of Hope” Jubilee Year, *The Criterion* will periodically publish reminders of the conditions and four ways the Holy See has designated that Catholics may receive a plenary indulgence during the jubilee year, which concludes on Jan. 6, 2026.

An indulgence is the remission of temporal punishments due for sins already forgiven, according to #1478 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The paragraph states that an indulgence is “obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints. ... Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance and charity.” (For more information on indulgences, consult paragraphs #1471-1479 of the

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*.)

In his “Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee” published on May 9, Pope Francis explained that the jubilee indulgence is a “grace” which “allows us to discover how limitless God’s mercy is.”

### Spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements

The “Decree on the Granting of the Indulgence During the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 Called By His Holiness Pope Francis,” published by the Vatican on May 13, details the spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements for obtaining each jubilee plenary indulgence.

Emphasizing a desire for God’s mercy, the spiritual requirements for the jubilee indulgence state that those seeking an indulgence should be “truly repentant and free from any affection for sin.”

In answer to a [catholic.com](http://catholic.com) online question about affection for or attachment to sin, Father Charles Grodin explains it is when we “avoid [a] sin because we know it to be wrong or because we want to avoid punishment for the sin, but we still have an attraction or desire of the sin. ... As disciples of Christ [we] are called not to just avoid sin but also to truly love what is good and pleasing to God and to detest what is evil and sinful. This is not easy due to original sin, but with grace it is possible.”

In addition to this spiritual requirement, the following sacramental and prayer requirements must accompany each act to obtain a jubilee plenary indulgence via the four means listed in the following sections.

The sacramental and prayer requirements are:

- Make a profession of faith (either the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed).
- Pray an Our Father for the pope’s intentions and for the pope himself.

- Participate in the sacrament of penance during a period either 20 days before or after the plenary indulgence means listed in the following sections. A single participation in the sacrament of penance can apply to any reception of a plenary indulgence 20 days before or after going to confession. (Note: This particular requirement does not apply to those who are confined at home or elsewhere, as described below.)

Only one plenary indulgence may be received per day and can be applied to the person or the soul of a deceased person, but not toward another living person.

The May 13 document lists four ways—done in conjunction with the above spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements—that a jubilee plenary indulgence can be sought. Each is detailed below.

### Visiting a designated jubilee pilgrim site

Special pilgrimage sites have been designated in Rome and in dioceses around the world. A plenary indulgence can be obtained by visiting one of these sites and participating in Mass or any other public prayer, a time of adoration or a rosary while there, in addition to the spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements listed above.

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, three locations

have been designated as jubilee pilgrimage sites:

- SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.

- The Shrine of St. Mother Theodore Guérin and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary of the Woods.

- The Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad.

### For those unable to visit a jubilee pilgrimage site

According to the jubilee norms, those “who are truly repentant of sin” but are unable to visit a jubilee pilgrim site—“especially cloistered nuns and monks, but also the elderly, the sick, prisoners and those who, through their work in hospitals or other care facilities, provide continuous service to the sick”—can obtain the jubilee indulgence “in their homes or wherever they are confined” by making a profession of faith (the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed) and praying the Our Father for the pope’s intentions and for the pope himself, “offering up their sufferings or the hardships of their lives.”

### Visiting those in need

A jubilee plenary indulgence can be obtained by visiting “for an appropriate amount of time, brothers and sisters who are in need or in difficulty (the sick, prisoners, lonely elderly people, disabled people ...), in a sense making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them.” The standard spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements apply to each visit.

### Performing acts of penance

The document states that penance is, “in a sense, the soul of the jubilee.”

Therefore, with each act accompanied by the standard spiritual, sacramental and prayer requirements, a jubilee plenary indulgence can be obtained by:

- “abstaining, in a spirit of penance, at least for one day of the week from futile distractions (real but also virtual distractions, for example, the use of the media and/or social networks), from superfluous consumption (for example by fasting or practicing abstinence according to the general norms of the Church and the indications of the Bishops);

- “by donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor;
- “by supporting works of a religious or social nature, especially in support of the defense and protection of life in all its phases, but also by supporting the quality of life of abandoned children, young people in difficulty, the needy or lonely elderly people, or migrants from various countries ‘who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families’ (“*Spes non confundit*,” #13);” or

- “by dedicating a reasonable portion of one’s free time to voluntary activities that are of service to the community or to other similar forms of personal commitment.” †

According to statistics, 50% of marriages end in divorce.

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Feb 14-16, 2025

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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](mailto:victimassistance@archindy.org)

# JUBILEE

continued from page 1

cathedral, where Father Brockmeier celebrated a Mass marking the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

“It is the cross that led the eucharistic procession through the streets of Indianapolis [during the National Eucharistic Congress],” he explained of the cross that will reside in the cathedral during the jubilee year announced by Pope Francis. “That is why it is our cross of hope, reminding us to be pilgrims of hope, reminding us to be people who bring our Lord in the Eucharist out into the world.”

About 75 people attended the prayer service and took part in a procession, which originally was scheduled to go from the Catholic Center to the nearby Xavier Building on its campus, then to the cathedral. A steady rain led to a change of plans and shortened the procession’s route.

The prayer service also included a Gospel reading and a reading of a portion of “*Spes non confundit*” (“Hope does not disappoint,” Rom 5:5), the bull of indiction written by Pope Francis for the jubilee year:

“In the spirit of hope, the Apostle Paul addressed these words of encouragement to the Christian community of Rome. Hope is also the central message of the coming jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the pope proclaims every 25 years. My thoughts turn to all those pilgrims of hope who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local churches. For everyone, may the jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ [Jn 10:7-9] of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as ‘our hope’ [1 Tm 1:1],” Father Brockmeier read.

He continued, “Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope” (“*Spes non confundit*,” #1).

## ‘The cross of Christ is the way of hope’

In his homily during the Dec. 29 liturgy attended by approximately 200 people, Father Brockmeier told those gathered that all in the archdiocese are invited to visit the cathedral during the jubilee year to “pray before this cross of hope.”

During the National Eucharistic Congress, “tens of thousands of Catholics processed behind our Lord in the procession on the streets of Indianapolis,” he said. “Like that day, like today, we are invited to be pilgrims, following after our Lord, with our Lord, and his cross.

“The cross is a central symbol for this year of hope, because the cross of Christ is the way of hope,” Father Brockmeier added.

On the feast of the Holy Family, the cathedral rector encouraged those in attendance to love their family as “Christ loves us.”

“During this year, may we dedicate ourselves to following behind the cross of Christ that is our hope,”

Father Brockmeier said. “May we never tire of pouring ourselves out as he did in love so that we, followers of the cross of Christ, may be hope in our world.”

## The Church’s jubilee tradition

A jubilee or holy year is a special year in the life of the Church currently celebrated every 25 years. The most recent ordinary jubilee was in 2000, with Pope Francis calling for an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy in 2015-16.

Jubilee years have been held on regular intervals in the Catholic Church since 1300, but they trace their roots to the Jewish tradition of marking a jubilee year every 50 years.

According to the Vatican website for the jubilee, these years in Jewish history were “intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields.”

On Dec. 24, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican to launch the holy year. Coinciding with other diocesan celebrations on Dec. 29, Cardinal Baldo Reina, vicar general of the Diocese of Rome, opened the Holy Door at St. John Lateran, the pope’s cathedral.

Holy Doors were also opened at Rome’s other two major basilicas, St. Mary Major and St. Paul Outside the Walls, on Jan. 1 and on Jan. 5, respectively. Pope Francis also opened a Holy Door on Dec. 26 at Rome’s Rebibbia prison, which Vatican officials said was a papal first. Unlike the practice in the Year of Mercy, diocesan cathedrals will not designate their own holy doors.

More than 30 million pilgrims are expected in Rome during the course of the jubilee year, with many of them seeking a special indulgence offered in the Holy Year. However, according to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship, the jubilee indulgence may be obtained in Catholics’ local dioceses by visiting cathedrals or other churches or sacred places designated by the local bishop.

Three Jubilee of Hope pilgrimage sites have been established in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis (*see related story on page 10*):

—SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.

—The Shrine of St. Mother Theodore Guérin and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary of the Woods.

—The Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad.

The Holy Year will end at St. Peter’s on Jan. 6, 2026, with diocesan celebrations ending on Dec. 28, 2025.



Father James Brockmeier, rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis, holds a crucifix aloft for veneration at the entrance of the cathedral to open the archdiocesan 2025 Jubilee Year. Pictured with him at the cathedral doors are Deacon Steven Hodges, left, and altar server Joaquin Legasti. (Photos by Mike Krokos)

## Focusing on the message of hope

Victor Creed, who is participating in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish’s Order of Christian Initiation for Adults in hopes of being received into the Church at the Easter Vigil, said attending the Dec. 29 prayer service, taking part in the procession and attending Mass were all helpful as he continues on his journey of faith. He especially appreciates how the jubilee year focuses on hope.

“We are in a very detrimental time for people all around—mentally, emotionally, worldly—and I think focusing on the message of hope spiritually and hope throughout the world is a very touching message,” he said.

Cathedral parishioner Pat Maher said the message of hope in this jubilee also resonated with him.

“I think right now we need more hope than any time in history. It’s amazing that it’s starting now,” he said.

Maher said each year he and his family try to choose a word to focus on. Last year, his word was “chaos, because everything just seemed to be in chaos. That’s the way the world was before it began. God gives us that order that we need, so we need to avoid the chaos.

“I’m trying to decide [among three words] for this year, either ‘hope,’ ‘mercy’ or ‘truth.’ ... Things keep coming up about those, but hope is leading the way right now.”

(OSV News contributed to this story.) †

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### Employment

#### Director of Operations

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, is seeking a full-time Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will serve to manage the business operations of the parish, including the oversight and administration of its financial resources, facilities, and personnel.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral is a small and growing parish in downtown Indianapolis dedicated to growing in faith and community, serving the Archdiocese of Indianapolis through hospitality and liturgical ministry, and serving the local community through our main charitable outreach, the Cathedral Kitchen.

Position responsibilities include:

- Oversight of the parish budget, accounting, and financial reporting
- Preparation and Coordination of parish activities
- Oversight of parish facilities and maintenance
- Supervision of parish staff members

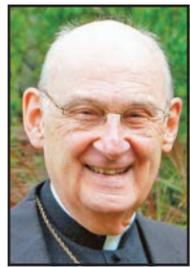
A preferred applicant will have a bachelor’s degree and practical experience of 3+ years in a related field. An applicant must seek to foster the mission of the Catholic Church and its ministries.

This is a full-time position with comprehensive benefits package offered. Interested applicants should send a cover letter, resume, and references to Fr. James Brockmeier, Rector of the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, at  
[jbrockmeier@archindy.org](mailto:jbrockmeier@archindy.org).

# Bishop Emeritus William L. Higi of the Diocese of Lafayette dies at 91

By Sean Gallagher

Bishop Emeritus William L. Higi, the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind., died on Jan. 3 at the St. Anthony Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Lafayette. He was 91.



Bishop Emeritus William L. Higi

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated beginning at 11 a.m. on Jan. 10 at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, 1207 Columbia St., in Lafayette. Burial will follow at St. Mary's Cemetery in Lafayette.

Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Lafayette in 1959, Bishop Higi served as the shepherd of the Church in north central Indiana from 1984 until his retirement in 2010.

He came to serve as the bishop of the diocese in a time of crisis. Its previous shepherd, Bishop George A. Fulcher, had died in an automobile accident on Jan. 25, 1984, just 11 months after he had been appointed to lead the diocese. Bishop Higi was then selected to serve as its administrator.

On April 7 of that year, he learned that St. John Paul II had selected him as the Lafayette Diocese's next shepherd. He was ordained and installed as bishop on June 6, 1984, with Indianapolis Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara serving

as the principal consecrator in the liturgy.

In a 2010 interview for Catholic Radio Indy that was published as an article in *The Criterion*, Bishop Higi spoke of the blessings and challenges of serving as the bishop of the diocese in which he grew up and served as a priest.

"I didn't think that I had what it took," Bishop Higi reflected. "But I was reminded that when I was ordained a priest, I had made a promise of obedience.

"I had, in effect, pledged that I would accept whatever I was asked to do for the good of the Church as discerned by my superiors. I never really dreamed that the pope would be the one making those kinds of decisions for me."

He also reflected on his 51 years of ordained ministry, expressing gratitude for the blessing of ordaining dozens of priests. Among them were five priests for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis ordained in 1992 after Archbishop O'Meara had died, but before his successor, Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, had been appointed.

"There have been so many moving experiences," Bishop Higi said. "But I tend to focus on the privilege of ordaining men to the priesthood. It's really at the top of my list. It's a tremendous privilege."

At the time of Bishop Higi's death, Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette reflected in a column in *The Catholic Moment*, the newspaper of the Lafayette Diocese, on the man he succeeded.

"He was humble about his own

opinions, and affectionately respected because of that," Bishop Doherty wrote. "He was who he was not because he loved being a bishop [he did, even in difficult times], but because he loved Christ and the Church. And now, we commend him to God's eternal love and kindness, and to the company of the saints."

Bishop Doherty also recalled how, in recent years, he would sit next to Bishop Higi at the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Lafayette.

"We revered the wood of the cross as pilgrims," Bishop Doherty reflected. "No matter our years in ministry, we are pilgrims who desire to know the unreachable depth of Christ's love radiating from his self-surrender. That liturgy is a gateway to Easter assuring us that the object of our desire is indeed attainable. Why? Because the resurrection is God's telling us that God has desired it first."

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson expressed his appreciation for Bishop Higi at the time of his death.

"Bishop Higi was a good and faithful servant to the people of God, evidencing great care for the clergy, religious and laity throughout the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana," he said. "He served his 65 years as a priest with a pastoral heart.

"Through constant prayer and a deep understanding of the opportunities in an

ever-changing local and universal Church, he brought people and resources together to advance the mission of Jesus Christ on Earth. Bishop Higi led with great humility and gentleness, and he will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace."

William Leo Higi was born on Aug. 29, 1933, in Anderson, Ind., to William and Helen (Vickery) Higi. Becoming a seminarian for the Diocese of Lafayette in his last year of high school, he was ordained a priest in 1959 by Bishop John J. Carberry.

In addition to serving in parishes across the diocese, Bishop Higi served as Bishop Carberry's secretary starting in 1962, as the diocese's vice chancellor starting in 1965 and as chancellor two years later.

St. Paul VI named Bishop Higi a prelate of honor in 1976. Bishop Raymond J. Gallagher of Lafayette appointed Bishop Higi vicar general of the diocese in 1979.

In leading the Diocese of Lafayette for 26 years, Bishop Higi dedicated several new parish churches and approved of the founding of St. Theodore Guérin Catholic High School in Noblesville, Ind.

Pope Benedict XVI granted him permission to retire in 2010, at which time Bishop Doherty was appointed to succeed him.

Bishop Higi is survived by a sister, Linda Rochelli.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Diocese of Lafayette's Foundation Fund for the Future at [cutt.ly/LafDiocFFF](http://cutt.ly/LafDiocFFF). †

## Cardinal McElroy chosen to succeed retiring Cardinal Gregory in Washington

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Hours after Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego was announced on Jan. 6 as the new archbishop of Washington, the prelate praised his new archdiocese as "truly sacramental in the rich diversity of its traditions and perspectives."

He also pledged to "show reverence for the grace of God which is already present in your midst and in the commitment to discipleship that underlies this local Church.

"I come as your bishop seeking to know and understand this magnificent community of faith," Cardinal McElroy said. "As your pastor, an essential element of my mission is to encounter the hearts and the souls of the disciples who form our local Church."

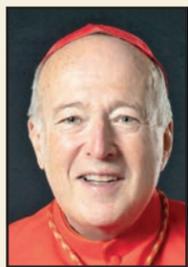
In a virtual news conference at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, Cardinal McElroy addressed his new flock via the Archdiocese of Washington's YouTube channel because a major snowstorm shut down the city.

"I want to give thanks to God for the grace-filled life of this local Church and to our Holy Father, Pope Francis who today makes me a member of that Church," Cardinal McElroy said.

Earlier that morning, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, Washington's archbishop since 2019, and named the San Diego prelate as his successor. As required by Church law, Cardinal Gregory had submitted his resignation to the pope when he turned 75, which was two years ago, on Dec. 7, 2022.

Cardinal McElroy will be installed as Washington's eighth archbishop at 2 p.m. on March 11 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The new archbishop of Washington said he has embraced Pope Francis' emphasis on synodality and its call for the faithful to "build up a Church centered in the Eucharist and devoted to the word of God and the sacraments which sustain us.



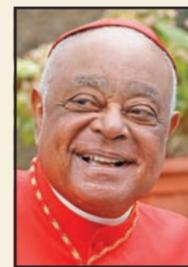
Cardinal Robert W. McElroy

"Synodality calls us to walk humbly as a Church, acknowledging our faults and sinfulness, and seeking forgiveness," said Cardinal McElroy, who is 70. "It seeks the participation of every disciple in the Church's journey in this earthly pilgrimage, and is oriented toward the building of unity in society rooted in God's justice, which cares especially for the unborn, the poor, the marginalized and the dispossessed."

He said that in the Archdiocese of Washington, "for the past 85 years, the Catholic community has radiated the light of Christ throughout the District of Columbia and the surrounding five counties in Maryland."

The archdiocese is home to more than 671,000 Catholics in D.C. and Maryland's Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Calvert and Charles counties.

Cardinal McElroy praised the archdiocese for its "rich parish communities of faith" and its "path-breaking development of lay ministries and apostolates, and the nurturing in lay leadership in the Church that is genuinely participative and inclusive."



Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory

The Washington Archdiocese, Cardinal McElroy said, boasts "ministries of the African American community, which is so foundational for the entire life of this local Church, and the ministries to the multitude of peoples that seek and find God's presence in this place—from Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America; Europe, Asia and Africa."

The people of his new archdiocese, the cardinal said, are "men and women who form the people of God, struggling in a world filled with turbulence, hardship and illusion, to follow the pathway of Jesus Christ ... [and are] called to be both dispensers and receivers of mercy and forgiveness."

Cardinal McElroy said Cardinal Gregory—appointed by Pope Francis in 2019 as the seventh archbishop of Washington and elevated to the College of Cardinals the following year—displayed "courage, a deeply pastoral heart and abiding faith in God and the dignity of the human person" as he "made critically important contributions at crucial moments in order to bring the Gospel of Jesus to the heart and the soul of the Catholic community here in Washington.

"This enduring legacy will long remain a treasure for us all," Cardinal McElroy said of Cardinal Gregory.

At the Jan. 6 virtual news conference, Cardinal Gregory said, "As I reflect upon the past nearly six years in this wonderful local Church of Washington, my heart is filled predominantly with joy and gratitude for the many blessings, always appreciated but rarely deserved that God has granted me." †

## Vatican approves plan to continue Marian University's ties to its Catholic, Franciscan traditions

Special to *The Criterion*

Marian University in Indianapolis and the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg have jointly announced that the Vatican has approved a plan that will ensure, in perpetuity, the sponsorship of the university in the Catholic, Franciscan tradition.

The same plan applies to the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Ill., and the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Joliet.

"This historic development, approved on the feast of St. Clare of Assisi, marks a transformative step for Catholic, Franciscan higher education—to ensure both institutions will continue thriving in the Catholic, Franciscan tradition

for generations to come," noted a press release in early December of 2024 from Marian University.

The sponsorship model—technically called a "public juridic person" (PJP)—was created by the Vatican's Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated and Societies of Apostolic Life.

"We are overjoyed that, once again, the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg have had the courage to venture boldly into something new," said Franciscan Sister Maureen Irvin, congregational minister of the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg. "We are proud that we and the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate together requested a pontifical PJP for our sponsored Marian University and their University of St. Francis.

"Knowing that our strong tradition as Catholic, Franciscan universities is assured into the future fulfills the long-standing hope of our sisters, as well as the entire Marian University community."

The sponsorship model "will have minimal impact on the operations and governance of each individual university," according to a statement from Marian officials. At the same time, "it provides a critical path by which both universities will be able to retain Franciscan sponsorship."

Marian University president Daniel Elsener noted, "This PJP is specifically structured to be able to admit additional Franciscan higher education institutions

in the future—in collaboration with their sponsoring congregations."

The PJP sponsorship model for the Franciscan universities drew a rave review from Donna Carroll, president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in Washington.

"Rome's approval of the Franciscan higher education PJP is a statement of confidence—both in the continuity of mission and the vitality of sponsorship," Carroll said. "The Franciscan sisters and their academic ministries have established a structure that helps ensure the Catholic identity and charism of the universities into the future.

"It is a courageous and generous effort." †