



The

Criterion

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Growing deeper in love

Grace helps couples at all stages of married life, page 11.

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Archbishop Charles C. Thompson poses for a photo with Laura Jo and Glenn Tebbe, recipients of the archdiocese's 2025 Legacy Award during the Legacy Gala in Indianapolis on Feb. 7. (Photo courtesy of Denis Kelly)

Archdiocese honors a couple who exudes joy, generosity and a hope rooted in faith

By John Shaughnessy

For all couples, there is a beginning moment of wondrous connection.

For couples called to marriage, that connection leads to a joyous commitment to share a life together.

The connection between Glenn and Laura Jo Tebbe began as students at Brookville High School when he suddenly noticed how special she was during their history class as juniors.

Their commitment to each other now includes four children, 10 grandchildren and 53 years of marriage. And all through these years, their dedication to Catholic education and their Catholic faith has been just as strong, leading the couple to be honored with the Legacy Award during the archdiocese's Legacy Gala at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis on Feb. 7.

"It's wonderful to share this honor with her because we've been a team, and we've had to be a team in raising our kids, in

See GALA, page 8

Eucharistic Congress in 2029 will 'build on grace' of Indianapolis; host city not yet announced

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The 11th National Eucharistic Congress will be held in 2029, building "on the grace" received in Indianapolis at the 10th

congress, said Jason Shanks, CEO of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc.

The 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21, 2024, drew more than 50,000 attendees and included a eucharistic procession of tens of

thousands of Catholics through the city's downtown streets. The congress was a high point of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative by the U.S. Catholic bishops that will conclude in June.

"The National Eucharistic Congress Inc. is thrilled to share that we have begun the initial steps in preparing" for a 2029 congress, Shanks told OSV News in an e-mail late on Feb. 7.

"We look forward to reuniting as an American Church to celebrate our shared eucharistic faith," he said. "We are eager to build on the grace we received during our gathering in Indianapolis this past summer.

"We recognize that the success of the previous congress can be attributed to the countless individuals who prayed and interceded for the event," Shanks continued. "So, we invite the Church to join us in praying not only for the planning of this future Congress, but that we might continue to Walk with One through this year of missionary sending. We will provide more details about the 11th National Eucharistic Congress in

See CONGRESS, page 2



Jason Shanks

Faith leaders, lawmakers call for putting an end to death penalty in Indiana

By Victoria Arthur

Following the first execution that Indiana has carried out in 15 years, Catholic lawmakers and leaders are taking center stage in seeking a permanent end to the death penalty in the Hoosier state.

Bishops, a bipartisan group of state legislators and other advocates joined Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne) in a recent press conference at the Statehouse to support House Bill 1030, a measure introduced by the Catholic lawmaker that would eradicate capital punishment in Indiana.

On Feb. 3, just after 3 p.m.—the Hour of Mercy—Archbishop Charles C. Thompson took to the podium to address reporters gathered

See DEATH PENALTY, page 16

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson speaks during a Feb. 3 press conference at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis in support of a bill that would abolish the death penalty in the state. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



USCCB lays off a third of migration staff after Trump’s suspension of refugee resettlement program

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued layoff notices to about a third of the staff in its Migration and Refugee Services Office on Feb. 7 after it stopped receiving reimbursements from the federal government for its work with refugees who qualify for federal assistance, per an internal memo.

The move comes as the administration of President Donald Trump suspended a federal refugee resettlement program as part of its broader effort to enforce its hardline immigration policies.

First reported by The Pillar, USCCB general secretary Father Michael Fuller wrote in a Feb. 7 memo to members of the conference that executive orders recently signed by Trump “are causing confusion both within various agencies and with those who interact with them.

“This is true for the USCCB regarding cooperative agreements for both Refugee Resettlement Programs and our Children Services, which help care for unaccompanied children,” the memo, which was also obtained by OSV News, said. It added the cuts would impact Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief and development arm of the Catholic Church in the U.S., “even more harshly.”

The layoffs impact 50 individuals, the memo said.

The USCCB website states that its Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) “is the largest refugee resettlement agency in the world,” and that in partnership with its affiliates, it resettles approximately 18% of the refugees that arrive in the U.S. each year.

Father Fuller wrote in the

memo that the USCCB provides the staff to organize and administer its federal agreements to assist refugee populations that qualify for federal assistance “with local Catholic Charities and other agencies who care for the refugees directly.”

They expect these agreements to fluctuate with each administration, the memo said, and therefore so will the number of staff. But while “we expected we might have a reduction in force with the new administration, actions this significant and this immediate were not anticipated,” it said.

Reimbursements from the federal government for its work stopped on Jan. 15 for services completed in November, the memo said, meaning they are “awaiting reimbursement for services completed in December, an amount close to \$20 million.

“Like all other agencies, this has placed the conference in a difficult situation. The conference does not have the funds to continue operations in USCCB Refugee Services at the current levels,” it said. “As such, we must inform our local Catholic Charities and other subcontracting agencies that there will be a delay in payments until further notice. This will be a burden on them and the people they serve and will result in staff layoffs.”

Asked for comment on the layoffs, Chieko Noguchi, a spokesperson for the USCCB, said in a statement provided to OSV News, “As a result of the continuing uncertainty regarding refugee resettlement and the overall future of those programs, staff of the USCCB’s

which asks Catholics to identify one person whom they can accompany on their faith journey and deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The National Eucharistic Congress Inc. nonprofit was formed in 2022 to support the bishops’ vision for the revival. It oversaw not only the congress but also the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, two major components of the National Eucharistic Revival.

The pilgrimage involved 30 young adult “perpetual pilgrims” crossing the country during eight weeks with the Eucharist via four routes, which ended in Indianapolis ahead of the congress.

Pilgrimage-related events, such as Mass, eucharistic adoration and public processions, drew in some cases thousands of people, with the largest perhaps being the 5-mile procession in St. Paul, Minn., with crowd estimates



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 14–27, 2025

February 15 – 5 p.m.
Mass and Installation of pastor at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis

February 16 – 11 a.m.
Mass and lunch at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove

February 18 – 9:15 a.m.
Mass for students of St. Mark the Evangelist School, Indianapolis, at St. Mark the Evangelist Church

February 18 – 11 a.m.
College of Deans meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

February 19 – 10 a.m.
Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

February 19 – 6:30 p.m.
Celebration of Caring Gala for Peyton Manning Children’s Hospital at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, Indianapolis

February 20-23
Los Angeles Religious Education Congress at Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif.

February 25 – 1 p.m.
Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

February 27 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

Migration and Refugee Services Office were notified of a series of layoffs earlier today.

“Please pray for these dedicated men and women who have given so much of themselves in service to their sisters and brothers in need,” Noguchi said. “As this is a personnel matter, we will not be issuing a further statement out of respect for the impacted staff. In making these difficult decisions, we continue to work as best we can to lessen the impact on those families currently in the refugee resettlement program.”

The memo added that even “if/when the Federal Government reimburses the Conference, and after the 90-day review set by the Executive Orders, the landscape of both USCCB Refugee Services and Catholic Relief Services will have to dramatically change

and the Conference will face some difficult questions that will need to be addressed” about “how we can best serve refugees.”

Trump administration officials, including Vice President JD Vance and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, both Catholic, have recently made statements questioning the Church’s work with refugees and migrants, with Vance suggesting pushback from the U.S. bishops on some of Trump’s immigration policies had more to do with their “bottom line,” a claim the conference disputed.

William Canny, the U.S. bishops’ migration director, previously told OSV News that the refugees the conference serves are “highly vetted” by the U.S. government, and the conference does not profit from the arrangement. †

CONGRESS

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the future.” A host city has yet to be announced.

Shanks told the online news outlet The Pillar on Feb. 7 that a decision to hold the next national gathering in 2029 was made “in consultation with the bishops,” and that a formal presentation on plans for the congress will be presented to the body of the bishops during their fall plenary assembly in November.

The revival is now focusing on its Year of Mission, in which Catholics are encouraged to become “eucharistic missionaries” who share the reality and impact of Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist with others. This is especially realized through the revival’s “Walk with One” campaign,

exceeding 7,000 adorers.

At the conclusion of the congress, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., board chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., announced there would be another National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in 2025 from Indianapolis to Los Angeles and possibly an earlier National Eucharistic Congress than 2033.


2033 is when the Church will mark the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus’

passion, death and resurrection, which Pope Francis called “another fundamental celebration for all Christians.”

While the revival is slated to end with the feast of *Corpus Christi*, which is on June 19, the organization expects to build on its momentum beyond 2025 and continue to support Eucharist-centered efforts, including future national eucharistic pilgrimages and congresses. †

The Criterion’s Marriage supplement will be coming soon

The Criterion’s spring Marriage supplement, which will include wedding announcements for couples who have recently been married in the Church or soon will be, will be featured in our Feb. 28 issue. †



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Pope to U.S.: Migration policies built on force, not truth, ‘will end badly’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has urged Catholics in the U.S. and people of goodwill to not give in to “narratives” that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to migrants and refugees.

“I recognize your valuable efforts, dear brother bishops of the United States, as you work closely with migrants and refugees, proclaiming Jesus Christ and promoting fundamental human rights,” he said in a letter to the bishops in the U.S. published by the Vatican on Feb. 11.

Pope Francis said he was writing because of “the major crisis that is taking place in the United States” with the start of President Donald J. Trump’s “program of mass deportations.”

In his presidential executive order, “Protecting the American people against invasion,” released on Jan. 20, Trump said, “Many of these aliens unlawfully within the United States present significant threats to national security and public safety, committing vile and heinous acts against innocent Americans.”

Pope Francis said, “The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality.”

He also applauded the efforts of the bishops in the U.S. to assist migrants and refugees and to counter the arguments

of the Trump administration, saying that “God will richly reward all that you do for the protection and defense of those who are considered less valuable, less important or less human!”

“I exhort all the faithful of the Catholic Church, and all men and women of goodwill, not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters,” he wrote.

“With charity and clarity we are all called to live in solidarity and fraternity, to build bridges that bring us ever closer together, to avoid walls of ignominy and to learn to give our lives as Jesus Christ gave his for the salvation of all,” the pope wrote.

In his letter to the bishops, the pope said every nation has the right to defend itself and keep its communities safe “from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival.”

However, he continued, “the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the



Pope Francis receives a hug from a child as he meets migrants, refugees, orphans, the elderly and the sick at the apostolic nunciature in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sept. 3, 2024. On Feb. 11, the pope issued a letter to bishops in the U.S. urging them and all people of goodwill to advocate for immigration policies that protect the dignity of all people. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness.”

“This is not a minor issue,” he wrote. “An authentic rule of law is verified precisely in the dignified treatment that all people deserve, especially the poorest and most marginalized.”

Pope Francis also used the letter to respond to an assertion U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who is Catholic, made in a late January television interview about the Catholic concept of the “*ordo amoris*” (the order of love or charity).

The concept, Vance said, teaches that “you love your family, and then you love your neighbor, and then you love your community, and then you love your fellow citizens in your own country. And then after that, you can focus and prioritize the rest of the world.”

However, the pope said, “Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups. In other words: the human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings!”

“The true *ordo amoris* that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan,’ that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception,” the pope wrote.

The pope wrote that “worrying about

personal, community or national identity, apart from these considerations [of human fraternity], easily introduces an ideological criterion that distorts social life and imposes the will of the strongest as the criterion of truth.”

“The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all—as I have affirmed on numerous occasions—welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable,” he wrote.

That does not prevent or hamper the development of policies that regulate “orderly and legal migration,” he wrote. “However, this development cannot come about through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others.”

“What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly,” the pope warned.

While the pope did not name specific U.S. policies, his letter emphasized the Catholic Church’s longstanding closeness to and support of migrants and refugees.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had recently faced unfounded claims that it profited from its partnership with the U.S. government in assisting refugees who qualified for federal assistance. Vance questioned the bishops’ motives for criticizing new immigration policies in a Jan. 26 interview, asking whether the bishops were just concerned

about receiving federal resettlement funding.

At a time that is “so clearly marked by the phenomenon of migration,” the pope reaffirmed “not only our faith in a God who is always close, incarnate, migrant and refugee, but also the infinite and transcendent dignity of every human person.”

These words, he said, “are not an artificial construct.” Even a quick look at the Church’s social doctrine over the centuries clearly shows Jesus Christ “did not live apart from the difficult experience of being expelled from his own land because of an imminent risk to his life and from the experience of having to take refuge in a society and a culture foreign to his own.”

“The Son of God, in becoming man, also chose to live the drama of immigration,” he wrote.

Therefore, he wrote, “all the Christian faithful and people of goodwill are called upon to consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights, not vice versa.”

“Let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect individuals and families who live in fear or pain due to migration and/or deportation,” he wrote.

(To read the complete letter of Pope Francis’ Feb. 11 letter to the bishops in the U.S., go to cutt.ly/popemigration.) †

Providence Sister Connie Kramer led Terre Haute parish for 19 years

By Sean Gallagher

Providence Sister Constance Kramer, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Jan. 30 at Providence Hall on the campus of her religious community in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. She was 82.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 11 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception on the grounds of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Popularly known as “Sister Connie,” she served as one of the first parish life coordinators in the history of the archdiocese, leading the former St. Ann Parish in Terre Haute from 1993 until its closure in 2012.

While leading that faith community, Sister Connie started there the St. Ann Medical Clinic and the St. Ann Dental Clinic that was operated by volunteers and served uninsured people in need in western Indiana. The medical clinic continues today as the Wabash Valley Health Center.

Father Rick Ginther ministered in Terre Haute for the seven years before St. Ann Parish was closed, being appointed pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish and St. Patrick Parish there in 2005.

He admired Sister Connie’s pastoral leadership, ably taking

on and completing challenging projects like establishing St. Ann’s medical and dental outreach ministries.

“She was an excellent leader,” Father Ginther said. “She worked very hard to collaborate with the people of her parish. Once she got something into her head that needed to be done, it got done.”

At the time of St. Ann’s closure, Father Ginther saw another aspect of Sister Connie’s ministry—her ability to help people grieve.

“She was very compassionate,” Father Ginther said. “She was willing to address the emotions that people were feeling. She made it clear that this was not something to be fought but, rather, let’s move into the future. She provided them with a number of opportunities to grieve.

“She had had loss in her life. Because she wasn’t afraid to grieve, she helped people do that. That was very clear, especially in her very strong providence spirituality.”

Sister Connie later focused on grief ministry, often doing this in later years in programs and retreats at the archdiocese’s Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis.

Sister Constance Kramer was born on April 1, 1942, in Dayton, Ohio. She joined the Sisters of Providence on Sept. 12, 1964 after earning a bachelor’s degree in mathematics at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Sister Connie made her first profession of vows on Aug. 15, 1967, and final vows on Oct. 4, 1970. She earned a master’s degree in mathematics at Indiana

State University in Terre Haute and a master’s degree in pastoral ministry at Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C.

In the archdiocese, Sister Connie served in education at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1970-73 and the former Ladywood-St. Agnes High School in Indianapolis from 1973-75.

Beginning in 1980, she moved into parish ministry. Sister Connie ministered in Indianapolis as director of religious education at St. Simon the Apostle Parish from 1980-81 and St. Thomas Aquinas Parish from 1981-83 and as a pastoral associate at Holy Spirit Parish from 1984-89 and Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish from 1989-91.

She served at St. Ann Parish in Terre Haute from 1991-93 before being appointed its parish life coordinator, a position she held until the faith community was closed in 2012.

After a sabbatical, Sister Connie returned to Indianapolis where she served in grief ministry, spiritual direction and as a retreat leader, often at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House and at the Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, at St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

She continued these ministries after returning to the motherhouse in 2023 before her health declined quickly the following year.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. †



Sr. Connie Kramer, S.P.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
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Editorial



Migrants look through a border fence on Sept. 12, 2023, toward food brought by aid workers after gathering between the primary and secondary border fences at the U.S.-Mexico border to wait for processing by U.S immigration officials in San Diego. (OSV News photo/Mike Blake, Reuters)

Welcoming strangers is not optional

The Catholic Church in the United States has been advocating immigration reform for decades by teaching the principles of human dignity and social justice that should underlie our country’s policies. In addition, Catholic organizations have worked tirelessly to welcome individuals and families who come to the United States seeking a better, safer, and more productive future.

See related article, page 3

The bishops hope to create a world where immigrants, refugees, migrants and people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome and belonging. To achieve this, Catholic organizations must work with the government officials who enforce our laws. Unfortunately, this is difficult when our country’s immigration system is badly broken. The bishops acknowledge that sovereign nations have the right to control their borders. At the same time, the Church has consistently advocated for policies that defend the dignity and human rights of migrating people. As is so often true in Catholic teaching, the truth is a “both/and” not an “either/or.” In May 2007, Miami Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, then Bishop of Orlando, Fla., testified before Congress: *As providers of pastoral and social services to immigrants throughout the nation, we in the Catholic Church witness the human consequences of a broken immigration system every day in our parishes, social service programs, hospitals and schools. Families are divided, migrant workers are exploited and abused and human beings unnecessarily die in the American desert. As a participant in the public debate, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has attempted to point out the human suffering that occurs in our country each day as a result of an immigration system that lacks due process protections and fails to provide the legal status and legal avenues needed to protect immigrants from exploitation.* Last month, responding to a question about the Trump administration’s plans for the deportation of illegal immigrants, Archbishop Wenski said, “They do have the prudential judgment to enforce, and it’s their obligation to enforce the laws of the land. How they do it or the spirit

in which they do it should be one that promotes the common good and does not create more harm than good in the process of implementing the laws.” On January 25, 2025, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis issued a statement that affirms Catholic teaching on both the right to control our nation’s borders and the necessity of safeguarding human dignity. This statement says: *As pastors, we hear the concerns of our brothers and sisters, heightened by recent threats of aggressive immigration enforcement actions, who flee to escape various forms of injustice, such as violence, war, and persecution. These migrants and refugees are often beloved members of our communities, parishes, and schools who inspire by their faithful witness and devotion to their faith, commitment to their families and fruitful participation in the civic life of their communities. Using the foundational principles of the Church’s social and moral teaching, we will continue to advocate for the just and dignified treatment of migrants as well as for national immigration reform that includes targeted, proportionate, and humane enforcement, and reasonable pathways to citizenship for long-time residents with an emphasis on family unity. We are committed to accompanying those in need through prayer, advocacy, ongoing formation and education, legal remedies, and all proper means of support.* Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the USCCB said recently that the bishops have “always insisted on respect for the law, but we have to respond to the concrete situation. If there is someone who has come here even illegally and needs assistance we must help them because it is Christ himself who is asking us.” Archbishop Broglio also observed that “some provisions of the [Trump administration’s] immigration orders are deeply troubling and will have negative consequences, many of which will harm the most vulnerable among us.” As long as there are people in need of the Church’s pastoral care, Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools, hospitals and other service providers will be there for them. For Christians, “welcoming the stranger” is not optional. It is an essential requirement of the mandate we have been given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Daniel Conway

Reflection/Sean Gallagher

The Super Bowl commercial that could have and should have been

Because it’s been 15 years since the Indianapolis Colts have played in the Super Bowl, the attention of my boys and me when we watch it is often as much on the often-ballyhooed commercials played during it. Some commercials (not a lot) have stuck in my memory because they highlighted well faith and family. For, as much as I love football, I love faith and family so much more.

Which leads me to a Coca Cola commercial I saw on social media a few hours before Super Bowl LIX last Sunday. (You can view it here: cutt.ly/Coke.) It starts with a young married couple learning that they’re expecting their first child and then proceeds to show the challenges and changes they experience in their lives after their child is born. Being woken up—again—in the middle of the night to care for the baby. The pain of stepping on unseen toys. Watching a young childless couple jogging in a park while the couple with the baby is pushing a stroller and weighed down with a diaper bag and baby toys. Discovering a favorite LP is covered with slime. Grabbing the now-toddler that has decided to eat dog food. The commercial ends with the wife coming to her husband who is struggling to work while dealing with the demands of their toddler. She brings him lunch (including a Coke) and then holds before him a pregnancy test that shows that they’re expecting again. The viewer first sees a look of shock on the face of the husband. But it soon turns into an expression of pure joy. The couple embraces, both so much happier than they were when they learned that they were pregnant the first time.

Throughout the whole commercial, the 1967 Bee Gees song “To Love Somebody” plays. As the commercial comes to its climax, the viewer hears these words from the song, “You don’t know what it’s like to love somebody the way I love you.” When I saw the commercial, I hoped that it was going to be shown during the Super Bowl. But I soon learned that it was made in 2013 and aired in Argentina. That was disappointing, because the message of the commercial was one that so many people in our culture need to hear in the winsome way it was presented. Many young adults today hesitate to be open to the gift of life, or even consciously choose to avoid it, because they think that having a child will destroy their lives. But here’s the thing. These young people are right. So much of what young people think makes life great can often be boiled down to the autonomy to do what they want to do when they want to do it. And no doubt there can be a lot of good in that approach. But all of that goes out the window when a baby comes along. The demands of a helpless little one forever change life in a million ways. The amazing thing, though, is that it changes life in a million *good* ways that could never have been predicted before the baby came along. They’re not easy ways. They’re often very hard ways. But they’re *good* ways, ways that are joyful beyond our imagination. They’re ways that, because they’re so transcendently good and joyful, can only come from God as a pure unearned gift. A commercial that would highlight such a beautiful reality is the Super Bowl commercial that could have and should have been.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter and columnist for The Criterion.) †



Philadelphia Eagles running back Saquon Barkley (26) talks to the media with his daughter, Jada, alongside the Vince Lombardi Trophy after his team won Super Bowl LIX 40-22 at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans on Feb. 9. (OSV News photo/Kirby Lee-Imagn Images, Reuters)

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

The Beatitudes are a ‘roadmap’ to happiness in ‘communion with God’

The Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Lk 6: 17, 20–26) contains the eight Beatitudes preached by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), the Beatitudes represent “the heart of Jesus’ teaching” (#1716). They reveal the true path to happiness and lead always to joy.

There is a debate between those who prefer the 8 Beatitudes over the 10 Commandments. The Commandments are said to be negative proscriptions (“Thou shalt not”), whereas the Beatitudes are positive statements (“Blessed are you”). The reality is that both show us how to live well and avoid evil in a world that is colored by sadness, sin, and death.

The Commandments are warning signs. They identify behaviors that are destructive. By observing them, we can stay on the right path and keep from harming ourselves or others. The Beatitudes, on the other hand, are a roadmap. They reveal the way we should live if we want to be happy and reach our final destiny, the joy of heaven.

As our Church teaches, “the Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to

draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it” (CCC #1718). Everyone wants to be happy, but our innate sense of right and wrong has been distorted by sin. We need help to determine how we should live.

The Church teaches that “the Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts. God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith” (CCC #1719).

“Beatitude” is the state of supreme happiness that can only be attained in communion with God. Our Savior Jesus Christ has revealed that the way to the ultimate beatitude (heavenly joy) is through him and, particularly, through the experience of self-sacrificing death that alone leads to resurrection, the fullness of life.

That’s why Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that the only way to live fully is to die to self. The Way of the Cross is the only way to complete and everlasting happiness. Blessed are we when we say “no” to ourselves and “yes” to God.

In his 2020 catechesis on the

Beatitudes, Pope Francis taught that each Beatitude is composed of three parts: the opening word “Blessed” followed by the situation in which those who are called blessed find themselves—poor in spirit, mourning, thirsting for justice—and finally the reason for which they are blessed.

The conditions that occasion blessedness are spiritual—hunger of the heart—that cry out for divine intervention. Blessed are we when our hearts are restless and we long for God to comfort us, heal us and lead us to repentance.

As Pope Francis observes, in its original meaning, the word “Blessed” does not indicate someone “with a full belly or who is doing well.” It refers to a person who finds himself or herself in a state of grace and who is going forward on the path indicated by God with patience, poverty, service towards others or consolation. “He or she who goes forward on that path is happy, and will be blessed.”

The reason for each Beatitude is not to be found in one’s present situation, but in the new condition that those who are blessed receive as a gift from God: “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven”, “for they

will be comforted”, “for they will inherit the land” and so on.

Here are the eight Beatitudes. As Pope Francis says, “It would be nice to learn them by heart and to repeat them in order to keep this law that Jesus gives us in our mind and in our hearts.”

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Las bienaventuranzas son una ‘hoja de ruta’ hacia la felicidad en comunión con Dios

La lectura del Evangelio del sexto domingo del tiempo ordinario (Lc 6:17, 20-26) contiene las ocho bienaventuranzas predicadas por Jesús en su Sermón de la Montaña. Según el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* (CCC), las Bienaventuranzas “están en el centro de la predicación de Jesús” (#1716). Revelan el verdadero camino hacia la felicidad y conducen siempre a la alegría.

Existe un debate entre quienes prefieren las ocho bienaventuranzas a los diez mandamientos. Se dice que los mandamientos son proscripciones negativas (“no harás”), mientras que las bienaventuranzas son afirmaciones positivas (“bienaventurados”). La realidad es que ambos nos muestran cómo vivir bien y evitar el mal en un mundo teñido por la tristeza, el pecado y la muerte.

Los mandamientos son señales de advertencia que identifican comportamientos destructivos. Al cumplirlos, podemos mantenernos en el buen camino y evitar hacernos daño a nosotros mismos o a los demás. En cambio, las bienaventuranzas son una hoja de ruta; revelan el modo en que debemos vivir si queremos ser felices y alcanzar nuestro destino final, la alegría del cielo.

Tal como nos enseña la Iglesia, “las bienaventuranzas responden al deseo

natural de felicidad. Este deseo es de origen divino: Dios lo ha puesto en el corazón del hombre a fin de atraerlo hacia Él, el único que lo puede satisfacer” (CCC, #1718). Todo el mundo quiere ser feliz, pero el pecado nos ha distorsionado el sentido innato del bien y del mal. Necesitamos ayuda para determinar cómo debemos vivir.

La Iglesia enseña que “las bienaventuranzas descubren la meta de la existencia humana, el fin último de los actos humanos: Dios nos llama a su propia bienaventuranza. Esta vocación se dirige a cada uno personalmente, pero también al conjunto de la Iglesia, pueblo nuevo de los que han acogido la promesa y viven de ella en la fe” (CCC, #1719).

“Bienaventuranza” es el estado de felicidad suprema que solo puede alcanzarse en comunión con Dios. Nuestro Salvador Jesucristo ha revelado que el camino hacia la última bienaventuranza (la alegría celestial) pasa por él y, en particular, por la experiencia de la muerte abnegada que es la única que conduce a la resurrección, la plenitud de la vida.

Por eso Jesús nos dice sin rodeos que la única manera de vivir plenamente es que el yo muera. El *vía crucis* es el único camino hacia la felicidad completa y eterna. Dichosos nosotros cuando nos decimos “no” a nosotros mismos y *«sí»* a Dios.

En su catequesis de 2020 sobre las bienaventuranzas, el papa Francisco enseñó que cada una se compone de tres partes: la palabra inicial “Bienaventurados,” seguida de la situación en la que se encuentran quienes son llamados bienaventurados—pobres de espíritu, los que lloran, los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia—y, por último, la razón por la que son bienaventurados.

Las condiciones que dan lugar a la bienaventuranza son espirituales, son las ansias del corazón que clama por la intervención divina. Dichosos nosotros cuando nuestro corazón está inquieto y anhelamos que Dios nos consuele, nos cure y nos lleve al arrepentimiento.

Como observa el papa Francisco, en su significado original, la palabra “bienaventurado” no indica a alguien “con la barriga llena o a quien le va bien,” sino que se refiere a una persona que se encuentra en estado de gracia y que avanza por el camino indicado por Dios con paciencia, humildad, servicio o consuelo para los demás. “Quien avanza por ese camino es feliz y será bendecido.”

La razón de ser de cada bienaventuranza no se encuentra en la situación actual de cada uno, sino en la nueva condición que los bienaventurados reciben como don de Dios: “Porque de ellos es el Reino de los

cielos,” “porque ellos serán consolados,” “porque ellos poseerán en herencia la tierra,” etc.

He aquí las ocho bienaventuranzas. Como dice el papa Francisco: “Sería bueno aprenderlas de memoria y repetirlas para guardar esta ley que Jesús nos da en nuestra mente y en nuestro corazón.”

Bienaventurados los pobres de espíritu, porque de ellos es el reino de los cielos.

Bienaventurados los que lloran, porque ellos serán consolados.

Bienaventurados los mansos, porque ellos poseerán en herencia la tierra.

Bienaventurados los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia, porque ellos serán saciados.

Bienaventurados los misericordiosos, porque ellos alcanzarán misericordia.

Bienaventurados los limpios de corazón, porque ellos verán a Dios.

Bienaventurados los que buscan la paz, porque ellos serán llamados hijos de Dios.

Bienaventurados los perseguidos por causa de la justicia, porque de ellos es el Reino de los cielos.

Bienaventurados seréis cuando os injurien, os persigan y digan con mentira toda clase de mal contra vosotros por mi causa.

Alegraos y regocijaos, porque vuestra recompensa será grande en los cielos. †

Events Calendar

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

February 19

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

February 20

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

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Virtual Sourdough Bread Baking Workshop**, 6-9 p.m., limited spots available, \$50, includes materials and a sourdough starter kit, register by Feb. 14. Information, registration: 812-535-2932, events.sistersofprovidence.org, wvc@spsmw.org.

February 21

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, WTHR 13 Meteorologist Chuck Lofton presenting “Finishing Strong,” rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Feb. 18. Information, registration: 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@e6catholicmensconference.com, e6catholicmensconference.com.

Concordia Lutheran Church, 305 Howard Road, Greenwood. **Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties 6th Annual Euchre Tournament**, 9 a.m., benefits local crisis pregnancy centers, first place \$150, runners up \$50, coffee and donuts provided, bring package of diapers to enter. Information: 317-697-2441, ebrookehaskins@gmail.com.

February 23

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

February 28

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Corpus Christi Hall, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Pro-life Film: The 1916 Project**, 6 p.m. doors open for pizza dinner, 6:30 p.m. film showing, panel discussion following, free-will offering for dinner. Information: 317-407-6881, smdye1@gmail.com. View trailer at the1916project.com.

March 1

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

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

St. Ann Parish, 6350 S. Mooresville Road, Indianapolis. **Mardi Gras Fundraiser**, 5-10 p.m., includes dinner, beverages, reverse raffle, games, silent auction, dinner plus reverse

raffle ticket \$40, raffle chance ticket only (for those who will not attend the event) \$20. Information, tickets: 317-821-2909, admin@stannindy.org.

March 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.

March 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 hope. Information, registration: events.sistersofprovidence.org, 361-500-9505, 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.

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.

March 8

St. Pius X Parish Hall, 7200 Sarto Dr., Indianapolis. **SPREAD Dinner Dance**, 6-8:30 p.m., optional Mass 5 p.m., hosted by archdiocesan Disabilities Ministry, RSVP by Feb. 3. Information, registration: archindy.org/specialneeds/events.html. Questions: Jenny Bryans, jbryans@archindy.org.

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, visit with elder sisters and help them with activities such as Bingo, exercise, baking and more. Information, registration: teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org, jluna@spsmw.org, 361-500-9505.

March 9

McGowan Hall, 1305 Delaware St., Indianapolis. **Mary Berry St. Patrick’s Day Celebration**, 2-7 p.m., live entertainment: St. Patrick’s Day Rogues Pipes

and Drums, Irish Dancers, The Irish Stew, Tullies at the Wakefield; full bar, corned beef and cabbage, soda bread, desserts, live auction and raffles; \$10 admission, children 12 and younger free. Information: 317-695-5421, kilcar57@gmail.com.

March 11

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, 812-535-2952.

March 15

Geddes Hall Auditorium, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. **“The Changing Face of Life-Limiting Prenatal Diagnoses: Clinical, Pastoral, and Ethical Considerations,”** 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., lunch included, \$50 physicians, \$30 nurses, midwives, and other health professionals, \$10 for diocesan/parish staff, parents, students, and clergy, register by March 1. Information, registration:574-234-0687, leverett@diocesefwsb.org, diocesefwsb.org/pnd-conference. †

Retreats and Programs

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

March 1

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis **Remembering Ourselves: A Lenten Mini-Retreat to Reconnect, Reflect, and Renew**, 9:30 a.m.-noon., teacher and artist Cory Lockhart presenting, includes retreat materials, \$40. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/remembering-ourselves, 812-923-8817.

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. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 8

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **‘Tis a Gift to Be Simple - Finding Hope and Peace of Mind in A Complex Time**, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Father Jeffrey Godecker and Mary Schaffner presenting, \$45. Registration: archindy.org/fatima-events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis. **Lenten Letting Go Retreat: Clearing the Path to God this Lenten Season**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., facilitated by Judy Ribar, includes lunch

and retreat materials, \$60. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/lenten-letting-go, 812-923-8817.

March 13

Virtual guided meditation series via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., every second Thursday of the month through May, offered by Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, free, registration required. Information, registration: events.sistersofprovidence.org, 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

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.

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, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

March 28-30

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Being True to the Path**, 6:30 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., president of Red Bird Foundation Paula D’Arcy presenting, \$275, includes single room, meals. Registration: archindy.org/fatima-events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

March 29

Mystics and Fellowship virtual program, 9-10:30 a.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence, last of four independent sessions, register by March 26, \$25 per session. Information, registration: events.sistersofprovidence.org, 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org. †

Formation day for lay ecclesial ministers will be on Feb. 25 in Bloomington

A day of formation for lay ecclesial ministers focusing on missionary discipleship will be offered at St. Paul Catholic Center, 1413 E. 17th St., Bloomington, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Feb. 25.

Catholic lay evangelist and speaker Michael Gormley (layevangelist.com) will be the key presenter at the event, which will guide parish lay ministers

in their role as missionary disciples. Lunch will be included.

There is no cost for an individual to attend. However, one’s parish is assessed \$30 for each attendee. Registration is required. To register, go to tinyurl.com/DayofFormation25. For more information contact Keri Carroll in the archdiocesan office of Parish Leadership at 317-236-1550 or kcarroll@archindy.org. †

Talk to help parents protect children from a hypersexualized culture will be on Feb. 26

A presentation entitled “Parenting Pioneers: Navigating the Hypersexualized Culture” will take place at St. Simon the Apostle Church, 8155 Oaklondon Road, Indianapolis, from 7-8:30 p.m. on Feb. 26.

Diocese of Lincoln priest and sexual addiction counselor Father Sean Kilcawley will present this talk for parents and any other adults who work with children. The presentation will cover how one can guide children around the pitfalls of a culture that seems regularly aimed at harming their innocence. Licensed in

sacred theology by the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family and in pastoral sexual addiction from the International Institute for Trauma and Addictions Professionals, Father Kilcawley has provided continuing education formation in over 40 dioceses around the United States.

The talk will take place in the church sanctuary. There is no cost to attend. For more information contact Tim Seman, St. Simon director of evangelization and adult faith formation, at 317-826-6000, ext. 157 or email tseman@saintsimon.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

RONALD AND ROSALIE (SWAIN) HAWTHORNE, members of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Jan. 30.

The couple was married in St. Patrick Church in Indianapolis on Jan. 30, 1965.

They have two children: Rebecca Brici and Catherine Hawthorne-Kocak.

The couple also has four grandchildren. †



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



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



‘Intense interior life,’ ‘joyful humility’ help believers to wait patiently for God

The homily preached by Pope Francis on Feb. 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, reflected the fact that this feast day is also traditionally World Day for Consecrated Life. This is a day when our Church acknowledges the gift of women and men who dedicate their whole lives to living the Gospel according to the particular charisms of the different Religious Orders.

In his message for this World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis says:

Brothers and sisters, waiting for God is important for us, for our faith journey. Every day the Lord visits us, speaks to us, reveals himself in unexpected ways and, at the end of life and time, he will come. He himself exhorts us to stay awake, to be vigilant, to persevere in waiting. Indeed, the worst thing that can happen to us is to let “our spirit doze off,” to let the heart fall asleep, to anesthetize the soul, to lock hope away in the dark corners of disappointment and resignation.

This spiritual principle of patiently waiting for God is especially significant for those who have lived long and productive lives and are now in the final stages of their journey of faith. Older

people may be tempted to look back and regret the fact that they failed to take advantage of opportunities for spiritual growth. Or they may be impatient to complete this earthly pilgrimage and take their place with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints in Heaven.

The Holy Father counsels all of us to wait for God patiently. He observes that we are given the examples of Anna and Simeon in St. Luke’s Gospel (Lk 2:22–40) as assurances that God’s promises to us will be fulfilled.

Pope Francis goes on to identify two of the obstacles that prevent all of us who try to wait patiently for God, but especially those who are vowed Religious. These are, first of all, “neglect of the interior life,” and secondly, “adapting to a worldly lifestyle.”

The Holy Father says that neglect of our spiritual life happens “when weariness prevails over amazement, when habit takes the place of enthusiasm, when we lose perseverance on the spiritual journey, when negative experiences, conflicts or seemingly delayed fruits turn us into bitter and embittered people.” He admonishes

us to recover lost graces: to go back and, through an intense interior life, return to the spirit of joyful humility and silent gratitude.

A joyful heart is nourished by adoration, the pope says. It comes from what he calls “the work of the knees and the heart” and by intense prayer that struggles and intercedes, capable of reawakening our longing for God, that initial love, that amazement most women and men felt on the first day of their lives as Consecrated Religious!

A similar joy was felt on the day of every baptism—either by the newly baptized or by their parents and godparents. It is important to recover this joy now, the pope says, if we wish to progress in the life of the Spirit.

The pope’s second concern—about adopting a secular lifestyle—stems from his observation of the way the world seeks to dominate our daily lives causing excessive anxiety and impatience. Let us be careful, the Holy Father warns, “that the spirit of the world does not enter our religious communities, ecclesial life and our individual journey, otherwise we will not bear fruit.”

All baptized Christians, but especially those who have promised to live the Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience more intensely, need to be contemplative, to enjoy silence and meditative prayer even in the midst of active apostolates and busy lives.

Pope Francis says that “Christian life and apostolic mission need the experience of waiting.” He observes that “Matured in prayer and daily fidelity, waiting frees us from the myth of efficiency, from the obsession with performance and, above all, from the pretense of pigeonholing God, because he always comes in unpredictable ways. He always comes at times that we do not choose and in ways that we do not expect.”

Like Simeon and Anna, we need to wait for the Lord to manifest Himself to us. Then we can truly pray the “*Nunc Dimittis*” and allow our Heavenly Father to release us from our earthly responsibilities as He welcomes us into the Heavenly Jerusalem.

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

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

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

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Una ‘intensa vida interior’ y una ‘humildad gozosa’ ayudan a los creyentes a esperar a Dios con paciencia

La homilía del papa Francisco del 2 de febrero en ocasión de la Fiesta de la Presentación del Señor, reflejó el hecho de que tradicionalmente esta coincide con la Jornada mundial de la Vida Consagrada. Es un día en el que nuestra Iglesia reconoce el don de mujeres y hombres que dedican toda su vida a vivir el Evangelio según los carismas particulares de las distintas órdenes religiosas.

En su mensaje para la Jornada mundial de la Vida Consagrada de este año, el papa Francisco expresó:

Hermanos y hermanas, la espera de Dios también es importante para nosotros, para nuestro camino de fe. Cada día el Señor nos visita, nos habla, se revela de maneras inesperadas y, al final de la vida y de los tiempos, vendrá. Por eso Él mismo nos exhorta a permanecer despiertos, a estar vigilantes, a perseverar en la espera. Lo peor que nos puede ocurrir, en efecto, es caer en el “sueño del espíritu”: dejar adormecer el corazón, anestesiar el alma, almacenar la esperanza en los rincones oscuros de la decepción y la resignación.

Este principio espiritual de esperar pacientemente a Dios es especialmente significativo para quienes han vivido vidas largas y productivas y se

encuentran ahora en las etapas finales de su camino de fe. Las personas mayores pueden tener la tentación de mirar atrás y lamentar no haber aprovechado las oportunidades de crecimiento espiritual; o quizá estén impacientes por completar esta peregrinación terrenal y ocupar su lugar con la Santísima Virgen María y todos los santos en el Cielo.

El Santo Padre nos aconseja a todos esperar a Dios con paciencia. Observa que en el Evangelio de San Lucas (Lc 2:22-40) se nos dan los ejemplos de Ana y Simeón como garantía de que las promesas que Dios nos hace se cumplirán.

El papa Francisco prosigue e identifica dos de los obstáculos que nos impiden a todos los que tratamos de esperar pacientemente a Dios, pero especialmente a los religiosos consagrados. Estas son, en primer lugar, “el descuido de la vida interior” y, en segundo lugar, “la adaptación al estilo del mundo.”

El Santo Padre dice que el descuido de nuestra vida espiritual “ocurre cuando el cansancio prevalece sobre el asombro, cuando la costumbre sustituye al entusiasmo, cuando perdemos la perseverancia en el camino espiritual, cuando las experiencias negativas, los conflictos o los frutos, que parecen

retrasarse, nos convierten en personas amargadas y resentidas.” Nos exhorta a recuperar las gracias perdidas: a volver atrás y, mediante una intensa vida interior, retornar al espíritu de gozosa humildad y silencioso agradecimiento.

El Papa asegura que un corazón alegre se nutre de la adoración; proviene de lo que él llama “el empeño de las rodillas y del corazón” y por la oración intensa que lucha e intercede, capaz de despertar de nuevo nuestro anhelo de Dios, ese amor inicial, jese asombro que la mayoría de las mujeres y hombres sintieron el primer día de su vida como religiosos consagrados!

El día del bautizo, tanto los recién bautizados como sus padres y padrinos sentían una alegría similar. Es importante recuperar esta alegría ahora, afirma el Papa, si queremos progresar en la vida del Espíritu.

La segunda preocupación del Papa—la adaptación al estilo del mundo—surge de su observación del modo en que el mundo trata de dominar nuestra vida cotidiana, provocando una ansiedad e impaciencia excesivas. “Cuidemos, pues”—dice el Papa—“de que el espíritu del mundo no entre en nuestras comunidades religiosas, en la vida de la Iglesia y en el camino de cada uno

de nosotros, pues de lo contrario no daremos fruto.”

Todos los cristianos bautizados, pero especialmente los que han prometido vivir más intensamente los principios evangélicos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia, necesitan ser contemplativos, disfrutar del silencio y de la oración meditativa, incluso en medio de apostolados activos y vidas ajetreadas.

El papa Francisco asevera que “La vida cristiana y la misión apostólica necesitan de la espera, madurada en la oración y en la fidelidad cotidiana, para liberarnos del mito de la eficiencia, de la obsesión por la productividad y, sobre todo, de la pretensión de encerrar a Dios en nuestras categorías, porque Él viene siempre de manera imprevisible, viene siempre en tiempos que no son los nuestros y de formas que no son las que esperamos.”

Como Simeón y Ana, debemos esperar que el Señor se nos manifieste; entonces podremos rezar de verdad el *Nunc Dimittis* y permitir que nuestro Padre Celestial nos libere de nuestras responsabilidades terrenales mientras nos da la bienvenida a la Jerusalén Celestial.

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



An evening shared with family and friends results in an abundance of joy during the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7 at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis. (Photos courtesy of Denis Kelly)



The seminarians of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis sing a beautiful rendition of “*Salve Regina*” during the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7.

GALA

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our vocational work, in so many ways,” Glenn said.

Laura Jo was a beloved teacher at St. Mary School in Greensburg for 18 years and continues to volunteer there, helping students in one-on-one interactions while also serving as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at the parish church. And Glenn’s contributions to the archdiocese and the Church now extend to 50 years.

He served as a Catholic school teacher for three years, a Catholic school principal for 18 years, and the leader of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA) for 10 years. He was also the head of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in the state, for 16 years. And since retiring in 2020, he has volunteered for INPEA and done consulting for the ICC.

In a video shared at the gala, which was attended by about 1,100 people, the Tebbes, both 75, are shown holding hands like teenagers as they walked along the halls of St. Mary School in Greensburg. It’s the setting where Laura Jo continues to touch lives and where Glenn served 18 years as principal, after a year of teaching at St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg and two years of teaching at St. Louis School in Batesville.

“Looking back on the history of it, he certainly has been on the front line in working with Catholic education,” Laura Jo said about her husband. “It’s combined every part of his being to give to the Church. His brain, his heart, every part—he shares with others.”

Glenn nodded toward her and added with a smile, “You don’t go anywhere in this town that people don’t remember Mrs. Tebbe fondly.”

As a couple, the 1971 graduates of Marian University in Indianapolis often complete and complement each other’s thoughts, which led Laura Jo to say, “We’ve never had jobs that we weren’t involved with the Church. We’ve never wanted jobs other than ones where we were involved with the Church. And we’ve been lucky. We’ve been really lucky that that’s always happened for us.”

In its fifth year, the archdiocese’s Legacy Gala is a celebration of the gifts that the archdiocese shares with many people across central and southern Indiana—through its 68 Catholic schools, its extensive outreach of Catholic Charities agencies, and its formation of seminarians at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, where young men are prepared to become the next generation of priests.

These three ministries offer so much hope to people in central and southern Indiana, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson told the gala audience. He noted that emphasizing a focus on hope has been at the heart of the Church and the archdiocese in two other major celebrations in recent months.

“The National Eucharistic Congress was held this past summer in Indianapolis,” the archbishop said in his opening comments. “The theme of the Congress, ‘Go Forth,’ calls us to share God’s eucharistic presence with the world as pilgrims of hope. This gathering is a testament to that call as we come together as one family in faith to support the critical ministries that are shaping the future of our Church.”

He added, “Pope Francis has designated this year as

a special Jubilee Year of Hope, and we are reminded of God’s abundant grace and the opportunity to reflect on the richness of our faith and our shared journey. It’s a time of renewal, of rejoicing in the blessings we have received, and of looking forward with hope to the work that lies ahead.”

Those themes resounded throughout the gala.

It was an evening filled with joy, from the seminarians at Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary beginning the program with a beautiful rendition of “*Salve Regina*” to co-emcee Grace Trahan-Rodecap ending the program by leading a group in sharing “An Irish Blessing” with everyone at the gala.

It was also an evening marked by generosity as the fifth annual event raised nearly \$540,000—aided by co-emcee Rafael Sanchez overseeing a spirited and competitive live auction of a guitar played and signed by music megastar Taylor Swift, which eventually sold for \$7,000.

And most of all, it was an evening of hope—the hope, rooted in faith, that people can give each other, the hope that makes a difference in someone’s life, the hope that Catholics, at their best, try to bring into people’s lives not just during a special Jubilee year but in every year.

And all the joy, generosity and hope that marked the evening fittingly led to the spotlight being focused on the Tebbes, who have strived to live their lives with joy, generosity and a hope rooted in faith.

In its Legacy Award, the archdiocese’s gala also celebrates people who have made outstanding contributions to living the faith and sharing the faith in a way that has touched the lives of so many. And the Tebbes have done that individually and together, Archbishop Thompson told the gala audience.

“Glenn and Laura Jo have devoted themselves not only to their professional vocations but also to the mission of the Church in very meaningful ways,” the archbishop said as the Tebbes stood nearby, holding hands.

“Together, Glenn and Laura Jo have made a legacy of service that extends from the classrooms of St. Mary’s to the halls of our state legislature, from the pews of their home parish to the hearts of all who have been touched by their work. Their lives are a living testament to the power of faith, service and commitment to the greater good, always with their eyes fixed on Jesus Christ.

“Their efforts to advance Catholic education, support the Church and lift up those around them will inspire generations to come, because they’ve always been Christ-centered.”

As the archbishop presented the award to the Tebbes, the gala audience rose to a standing ovation for the couple.

A short while later, Trahan-Rodecap ended the program with the singing of “An Irish Blessing,” sharing its final lyric with gusto, “And everywhere you go, may the peace of the Lord follow you!”

That last lyric seemed to capture the feeling that the Tebbe had about the evening and the journey of their life together.

Laura Jo said the best part of the evening was sharing it with family and friends, including all of their children and grandchildren.

“It’s just overwhelming,” Glenn said with a huge smile. “There have been so many people who have been gracious and giving. Laura Jo and I are just humbled by it all.

“We loved what we did. What more can you ask than that?” †



Grace Trahan-Rodecap and Rafael Sanchez share emcee duties during the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7, bringing touches of grace and joy to the celebration. (Photos courtesy of Denis Kelly)



Joel Vachon and his wife, Regina Martinez, of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, enjoy the Legacy Gala on Feb. 7 at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis.



An electric guitar that was played and signed by Taylor Swift during her recent tour stop in Indianapolis sold for \$7,000 during a live auction at the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7.

‘The Best Gift Ever’ is featured in three different ways of hope at the gala

By John Shaughnessy

The phrase “The Best Gift Ever” often means a different reality in the lives of people.

For Meredith Austin, those words lead to a huge smile for her, knowing that from a personal nightmare came a dream that keeps touching her life.

The nightmare takes her back to her first year in college.

“I wasn’t in a very healthy relationship, and I found out I was pregnant,” Austin recalled. “I didn’t know what to do as a 19-year-old. I had lost hope.”

That feeling changed when she came to St. Elizabeth Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services, part of Catholic Charities Indianapolis. She wanted to continue her pregnancy and offer the child for adoption when it was time.

“Getting to know everybody at St. Elizabeth, they really made me just feel at ease—very accepted, very at home,” she said. “They could answer all my questions, and I knew I wanted a Catholic family. I wanted a mom and dad.”

Both those dreams were fulfilled for her child who is now 10.

“I actually get to go down and see her

now and then,” Austin said, her smile growing wide again. “It felt really good knowing she was going to be raised and be able to go to a Catholic school like I did. She was going to have the full attention of whatever she needed.”

Her thoughts soon turned to a memory from one of her child’s first Christmases.

“She was real little, and [the parents who adopted her] just put a bow on her head. And her little outfit said, ‘The Best Gift Ever.’ And they always have expressed how thankful they are for the decision I made. Because I could have made any number of other decisions that we wouldn’t have the little girl that we all have.”

Austin shared her story in a video that was shown at the archdiocese’s Legacy Gala at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis on Feb. 7. The video also shared other variations of “The Best Gift Ever” when it comes to the Catholic faith.

‘It’s a real gift’

Tracy Jansen’s face beams when she talks about the joy of seeing the second-grade students at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County prepare to receive the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist for the first time.

“I think the number one thing that parents look for when they come to St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, or any of our Catholic schools, is the faith,” said Jansen, the school’s principal. “Second grade and when they start to receive their sacraments is where it really all comes together for them.

“When they receive the sacraments of first reconciliation and the sacrament of first Communion, then they’re really starting to get involved as Catholics. It’s the beginning and the early part of their faith journey. And there’s so much opportunity for them to grow in our Catholic faith and to embrace it, love it and learn more about it as they come through our Catholic schools.

“We have this wonderful opportunity to nurture that in our students. And it’s a real gift.”

‘The hearts of servants’

Father Andrew Syberg also taps into that theme of gift when he talks about the formation that young men receive at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis as they prepare for the priesthood.

“We need priests because God wants there to be priests,” said Father Syberg,

the seminary’s rector. “He wants there to be men to stand up and serve his people. The guys that we have in the house right now really do possess the hearts of servants. The driving force of love of the Lord, love of his Church, the desire to serve, this is authentic.”

Antonio Harbert shares his view of that authentic gift among his fellow seminarians, saying, “The holiness and love that we have for each other is what make this place awesome.

“I really look forward to the countless number of souls I’m going to save. I look forward to the sanctity, the holiness I’m going to grow in and receive. I’m not perfect. I know that. But I know that every day is a step closer to the saint that God’s calling me to be.”

Father Syberg realizes that helping Harbert and other seminarians become priests requires “an investment of time and money and energy”—all connected to the generosity of people who support that formation.

“That people are willing to donate so freely to that is just a testament to the generosity of the people in our diocese,” Father Syberg says. “And it turns out, that can change the world.” †



The smile of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson reflects the joy that often marked the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7.



Following the program of the archdiocese's Legacy Gala on Feb. 7, the talents of the musical group The Bishops lead people to the dance floor.



If you would like to contribute to the work of Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools and Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, use the QR above or visit www.archindy.org/LegacyGala.



This is a view of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris during a light show for its reopening service ceremony on Dec. 7, 2024. The celebration of the restoration of the cathedral “is a powerful example of just how essential sacred spaces are to humanity,” Catholic Extension said in a recent article on its website about the more than 13,000 churches the Chicago-based nonprofit has helped restore or rebuild in U.S. mission dioceses. It anticipates supporting 40 more sacred spaces in 2025. (OSV News photo/Christian Hartmann, Reuters)

Celebrating Notre Dame’s restoration shows ‘how essential sacred spaces are to humanity’

CHICAGO (OSV News)—The Chicago-based Catholic Extension Society has learned a thing or two through the years about the importance of sacred spaces.

Since its founding in 1905, the nonprofit that supports U.S. mission dioceses has helped build and repair more than 13,000 church structures in the country. And it anticipates supporting 40 more sacred spaces in 2025.

“Sacred spaces are a prophetic message to future generations, and a love note to generations passed,” a statement from Catholic Extension noted. “They offer us beauty, which is essential to our survival, as they help us transcend a world where there are often-sobering realities. They are where we find our existential bearings amid the twists and turns of life.”

Catholic Extension posted a reflection on its website, www.catholicextension.org, prompted by the grand reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in December, following five years of pains-taking restoration work

after a catastrophic fire ripped through the iconic Gothic structure in 2019. Renovations are to continue through 2026.

“Notre Dame Cathedral’s restoration signals the immense importance of our work to rebuild and repair churches,” it stated, adding that the celebration of the church’s reopening “is a powerful example of just how essential sacred spaces are to humanity. Notre Dame has captured the hearts and minds of people of many nations, believers and non-believers alike.

“A sacred space is not a luxury item, but rather a response to a basic human need. In addition to food, shelter, and clothing, humans naturally crave and require beauty in their lives as a matter of survival. Beauty, which is made accessible to us in sacred spaces, elevates our gaze to see that there is a deeper dimension to our lives than what appears on the surface. Sacred spaces allow us to locate the divine in our midst.”

The “towering Gothic arches” of Notre Dame “invite its visitors to keep looking upward toward greater heights,” the reflection from Catholic Extension added. “Its architecture is the perfect metaphor for the transcendent impact that all sacred spaces have on humanity. ‘Keep your head up!’ they tell us.”

Catholic Extension’s mission since its founding has been to build up Catholic faith communities in underserved regions by raising funds to help these communities. In addition to helping rebuild and restore churches, it provides other resources in mission dioceses, many of which are rural and/or cover a large geographic area and have limited personnel and pastoral resources.

Accompanying the Extension article is a U.S. map covered with dots representing the churches Catholic Extension has helped restore or rebuild. In Texas alone, there are more than 1,400 churches that Catholic Extension has helped restore or rebuild across the state’s 15 Catholic dioceses.

One of these is Sacred Heart Church in Hidalgo, Texas, in the Diocese of Brownsville. The parish needed a bigger church to accommodate a rapidly growing Catholic community in an area where nearly a third of the people live below the poverty level. In 2018, the faithful gathered with bishops, priests and deacons for a special Mass celebrating the parish’s new church.

The church “stood as a permanent reminder that this was truly ‘their house’ where God’s presence and beauty would dwell among them,” the reflection from Catholic Extension noted.

In 2023, St. Peter Claver Parish in Lexington, Ky.—a parish in the Lexington Diocese founded many years ago by emancipated slaves—was building a new church to accommodate its growing and diverse community, which included African Americans, Filipinos, Koreans and a Congolese community.

Among the sacred spaces—or more “Notre Dames”—set to be reopened in the coming year is the worship space for the faithful at San Juan Diego Mission in Adair County, Okla., one of the state’s “poorest counties,” according to Catholic Extension.

The Catholic community there has been worshipping in a run-down storefront for decades. Adair County is in the Diocese of Tulsa in eastern Oklahoma.

In Wenatchee, Wash., in the Yakima Diocese, a community of mostly agricultural workers has grown so large that they no longer fit in their 180-seat church. “On weekends, when 1,400 people regularly show up for Mass, more people fit outside than inside,” the statement from Catholic Extension noted. “Their sacred space” is being expanded “so that all may enter.”

“The structures we help build are often quite simple, architecturally speaking,” the mission organization said. “But the effect of these sacred spaces on the lives of their communities is equal to—if not greater than—that of Notre Dame Cathedral.” †



Construction is underway on Sacred Heart Church in Hidalgo, Texas, in 2017 with help from Catholic Extension Society, a Chicago-based nonprofit that supports mission parishes. Sacred Heart Parish in the Diocese of Brownsville needed a bigger church to accommodate a rapidly growing Catholic community. (OSV News photo/Rich Kalonick, courtesy Catholic Extension)

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Grace helps couples grow deeper in love in all stages of married life

By Heidi and Cory Busse

The great marriage myth of our time is that happy marriages “just happen.” When we were first married, we—like many young couples—were under the impression that true love was all that was required to live “happily ever after.” We certainly didn’t believe that we needed to put any work into our marriage, because only unhappy couples work on their marriages.

Wow—were we wrong. The images of love and marriage that surround us in popular culture reinforce the idea that real love is easy and experiencing hardship means you’ve married the wrong person. The reality is, we are all human beings struggling to find our way through relationships. Successful spouses know that putting time and energy into marriage is essential in building the foundation of a lasting love.

The Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament. When a baptized man and a baptized woman freely consent to marry one another, their bond becomes sacramental—that is, it is a living and effective sign of God’s love. Christian marriage is more than a signed piece of paper and a shared checking account. Sacramental marriage means that the couple shares together in the life of grace by the very fact of being married to one another.

The Church goes even further, teaching that the sign of God’s presence in marriage is the couple themselves. While a bishop, deacon or priest is an essential witness at a Catholic marriage ceremony, the spouses are the true ministers of the sacrament of matrimony.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the new covenant” (#1617). As spouses, we are called to be signs of God’s love and presence through our words and actions, by raising our children in the faith and through the way we show love for one another.

Christian marriage is a holy vocation in which each spouse is called “to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life [Christ] gives them here on Earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb” (CCC 1642). Married life gives us a glimpse of the eternal union of Christ and his Church and calls each spouse to build the other up, with the help of sacramental grace, for everlasting life in heaven.

Think of the shape of an hourglass. Wide at the top, continually tapering, tight at the middle and flaring out again to its widest point on the other side. That’s the shape of a marriage. At times, we’re far apart. At other times, we’re as close as we could be. The only thing constant in marriage is change.



A bride and groom pose for a photo outside St. Paul the Apostle Church in New York City following their wedding in 2022. The grace of the sacrament of matrimony helps couples grow deeper in love throughout the many stages of married life. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

In most marriages, there are four main seasons: the honeymoon, young parenthood, middle age and empty nesting, and the later years. Each season or cycle has unique joys and challenges.

—The honeymoon: The heady, early days of romance are like “living on a breath mint,” because it seems like it takes almost no effort to keep your marriage happy and healthy. As time goes by, novelty is replaced by familiarity. It’s critical to navigate this transition because you want it to breed satisfaction instead of contempt. Falling in love is a wonderful blessing. Staying in love is a choice we make every day (and it takes a lot of work).

—Young parenthood: Children often give a marriage greater meaning and some amazing stuff to post on social media. Kids can be a source of joy and fulfillment. But this phase of marriage is also among the toughest—and it can last two decades or more. So, finding joy in one another and your blossoming family is critical.

—Middle age/empty nest: During this phase, your careers are probably flowing well and the house is paid off (or getting closer to it). Now that the kids are grown and gone, you can refocus your time and energy

on one another. The world is your oyster—so long as you’ve taken care to stay connected and interested in one another.

—The later years: Couples that age together often find a deepening love. Many couples who have been married for 20, 30 or 40 years say that they are even more in love in the later years of marriage than in their early days. This phase of marriage may also be called the “best friend” phase because spouses rely on one another and enjoy spending time together. One couple in their later years summed it up this way: “We simply can’t imagine life without each other!”

It is important to foster closeness with your spouse through all cycles of marriage. Parenting often becomes the main connection while the “couple relationship” is no longer prioritized. Spending time together alone as a couple is essential to staying connected.

Date nights may seem trite, but they really do work! If a babysitter isn’t forthcoming, turn off your devices and share the news of the day with each other. A friend of ours who was married for more than 40 years says that the secret to a lasting marriage is “to periodically learn something new about your spouse.”

Difficult times visit every marriage. Unexpected challenges arise: illness, job loss or death in the family. But that doesn’t mean your marriage is doomed—far from it. Even the happiest and most successful marriages you can think of have had troubles—many of them big troubles.

Couples in sacramental marriages work through the tough times. When marital conflicts arise, it is helpful to remember there are no “winners” because you are always on the same team. Being “right” is not so much the goal as being heard and understood. And listening is just as important as talking. It is important to respect your spouse enough to listen and consider his or her side of the conflict. The best marriages are a union of two “forgivers.”

Nourishing your faith life together is also essential to a lasting union. Praying together at bedtime and at mealtimes is a great way to keep God at the center of your marriage (and serves as a faith model for children and friends as well).

It is a great gift to journey through life together as a married couple. There will be “ups and downs,” and as you move through the many phases of married life, it is most important to remember that you’re not alone. The Church is there for your marriage long after the flowers have faded and the dress no longer fits.

In times of joy and in times of trouble, remember that you have an entire faith community that wants your marriage to succeed and is committed to helping you in any way it can. Count your blessings and they will flow.

(Heidi and Cory Busse write from Minnesota.) †



Bill and Evelyn Schulte of Dodge, Neb., seen in a 2016 photo, hold a portrait of themselves taken on their wedding day in 1946. The Church teaches that married couples are the ministers of the sacrament of matrimony and that grace flows from the spouses to each other throughout their marriage. (CNS photo/Kathy Kauffold, Dodge Criterion)

Joyful Witness/
Kimberly Pohovey

How to bring Jesus to others? Follow the guide of a carpenter who shaped lives

Jesus ministered to thousands, but he invested in 12. He ministered to large crowds but invested deeply in a small group. That’s how a grassroots effort begins. While society tells us everything bigger is better, Jesus knew the exponential impact his 12 Apostles would have on our world.



Think of the influence those 12 men had far and wide throughout the Roman Empire of the day. It’s staggering to think of the effect of their being taught by Jesus himself has had on our world. I read an article some time ago that likened Jesus’ leadership style to that of a successful corporate leader. Jesus knew he needed an effective leadership plan that would translate into the growing and thriving Church of the future.

He ministered to thousands of people. He identified 72 disciples to spread his word extensively. He specifically chose 12 men to mentor and empower. He then centered on three of those Apostles—Peter, James and John—to, in essence, be his leadership team and closest confidants. And of course, we all know that Jesus chose Peter to be his right-hand man and the future leader of the Catholic

Church, thus establishing the primacy of the pope. In most corporate structures, there is a large workforce. Then a cross-section of that workforce makes up the mid-level managers. There is an upper-management team, and finally, the leadership team closest to the CEO. It takes the whole organization moving in one direction together to accomplish goals. The structure suggests the CEO invests in a small group whom he or she trains and empowers to then pass along the message to the next largest group in the business and so on.

Jesus created a similar structure in order to establish the Church and spread God’s word and message of love. And when his message was carried out to the farthest reaches of society, it was done by an army of disciples. But each individually impacted their corner of the world by converting minds and hearts one person at a time.

That is the challenge we are given today. When it comes to evangelization, we are today’s army of disciples. And like the early disciples, we, too, are called to spread Jesus’ message of love. Catholics are oftentimes hesitant to evangelize. I hear folks say they do not feel equipped to evangelize, they find the task daunting, are afraid to offend others or simply do not understand what is expected of them.

According to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, evangelization means bringing the good news of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. This means, on a grassroots level, we are called to infuse God in every human interaction. We naturally evangelize through the example we set in living a life of faith. We also evangelize by simply speaking witness to our faith by not being afraid to invoke God when speaking with and serving others.

It’s easier than we think. If we believe in our faith, then evangelizing is really just a matter of walking the walk and talking the talk. And it all began with a grassroots effort by a carpenter more than 2,000 years ago. Jesus began by teaching 12, who then spread to 72 and on to thousands. Today, we Catholics number one billion around the world. But every convert comes from someone initially introducing them to Jesus. How can you bring Jesus to others?

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Our Works of Charity/
David Bethuram

Removing the stigmas around mental health can lead to healing and hope

For too long, mental health has been clouded by stigma and misunderstanding, making it a difficult subject to discuss openly. However, as awareness grows and mental health issues are increasingly recognized, the need to dismantle harmful taboos and foster supportive conversations has never been more urgent.



Mental health stigma often arises from fear, misinformation and deep-seated societal beliefs. Cultural perspectives, historical misconceptions and even the words we use can contribute to the discrimination faced by individuals with mental health conditions. In some cases, stigma leads to lost opportunities. Employers may hesitate to hire or promote someone with a history of mental illness. Because mental health conditions are often invisible, those who haven’t experienced them firsthand may struggle to understand their impact. Overcoming stigma requires education and a commitment to humanizing mental health experiences. When public figures share their struggles, they help challenge misconceptions. But there is still much work to be done.

Stigma has profound consequences, affecting both mental and physical health. Many individuals internalize negative stereotypes, leading to self-stigma that lowers self-esteem and discourages them from seeking the support they need. Without access to proper care, mental health challenges can escalate, leading to greater distress and isolation. This is why Archdiocesan Catholic Charities Counseling Services is dedicated to providing accessible, high-quality mental health care for individuals, families, children and couples of all faiths. Our compassionate team offers a safe, supportive environment where clients can explore their thoughts, emotions and challenges without fear of judgment.

Understanding the additional burdens faced by those living in poverty, Catholic Charities ensures that financial limitations never prevent someone from receiving care. We offer a sliding fee scale based on family size and income and accept Medicare, Medicaid and third-party insurance to make mental health services accessible to all. Gabriel was one of our clients. He felt increasingly disconnected from friends and family, and when he did spend time with others, he dreaded it. His vision for his future became unclear and self-doubt took hold. Gabriel was struggling with severe social anxiety and uncertainty about his identity. Determined to make a change, he reached

out to Catholic Charities’ Counseling Program. At first, Gabriel was remarkably quiet during his sessions. But over time, he began to share more about his experiences—his struggles with low self-esteem, negative outside influences and the stress he faced at home. With the support of his therapist, Gabriel worked on building confidence, setting goals and exploring new interests. Through their weekly sessions, Gabriel discovered a passion for music and growing plants. He gained the courage to pursue his dreams, eventually graduating with a degree in information technology. To prepare for his career, Gabriel and his therapist practiced mock interviews, which helped him land a full-time position. Today, Gabriel continues to achieve the goals he once doubted he could reach. His therapist is incredibly proud of his progress, and their sessions now focus on catching up about his newfound confidence and exciting opportunities—like taking a train ride to visit friends or attending a professional conference overnight, things he now looks forward to with enthusiasm.

Depression can affect anyone and often presents both emotionally and physically. Common symptoms include:

- Persistent fatigue and low energy
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Irritability or restlessness
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Changes in appetite (overeating or loss of appetite)
- Persistent sadness, anxiety or a feeling of emptiness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Guilt, worthlessness or helplessness

If you or someone you know is struggling, remember help is available. Seeking support is a sign of strength, and no one should have to face mental health challenges alone.

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

“Called to Holiness”/
Jaymie Stewart Wolfe

Stories untold: Black Americans and the richness they bring to the Catholic faith

Black History Month is officially observed every February, but there’s something unfortunate about that. Don’t get me wrong: it’s great to recognize the contributions of Black Americans. But dedicating a specific month to doing so seems to have had the unintended side effect of limiting the recognition they’ve earned to a paltry 28 days of the year.



Here in New Orleans, the gifts of Black Americans are more visible than they are in other places. Flavorful food, soulful music, deep community and lively joy: nearly everything both locals and visitors love about our city has roots in Black culture beautifully expressed.

Louisiana’s story of colonialism, race and culture is unique and complex. And as it turns out, African American history is not merely synonymous with the history of slavery. New Orleans bears the tragic distinction of having had the largest slave market in North America. But at the same time, the city was also home to the largest community of free Black people, a community few Americans even know existed.

Most free people of color were French-speaking Catholics; some arrived in New Orleans already free, others purchased their freedom or acquired it through government or military service or manumission. A middle class of merchants and skilled artisans, free people of color attended school, owned property, and were able to build generational wealth. By 1810, 29% of the city’s population was free people of color. They lost many of the freedoms they had enjoyed under French and

Spanish rule when the United States purchased Louisiana in 1803. Nevertheless, this thriving community had a lasting impact on New Orleans and well beyond it.

As restrictions increased and the imposition of Americanized racial policies took hold in the 1830s and 1840s, free people of color created their own religious, cultural, mutual aid and educational institutions. Their examples are inspiring.

When Henriette Delille (1812-1862) had a religious experience at the age of 24, she believed that God was calling her to religious life. Although she was well educated and had been born free, women of color were disqualified from joining the established orders.

Instead, Henriette and seven other young women founded a community that later became known as the Sisters of the Holy Family. Permitted to take only private vows and prohibited from wearing a habit, the sisters cared for the sick, helped the poor, taught both free and enslaved children. Taking elderly women into their home, they established the first Catholic nursing home in the United States. Serving as godmother to hundreds of newly baptized Catholics, Mother Henriette’s influence is still felt here. She was declared venerable in 2010.

Eugène Warburg (1825-1859) was born into slavery but was freed as a young child by his Jewish father. He apprenticed as a marble cutter under a French artist, then established his own sculpture studio in the French Quarter. Warburg earned commissions for religious statuary, portraits and gravestones. The checkered marble floor he designed and created for the expansion and beautification of St. Louis Cathedral in 1850 still testifies

to the quality and precision of his work. A fourth-generation free man of color, Edmond Dédé (1827-1901) began playing the clarinet as a child, then quickly moved to the violin. He was considered a young musical prodigy. Working as a cigar-maker to earn his passage to Europe, Dédé enjoyed a successful music career in France. He composed many pieces of classical music and is the first African American to compose a full-scale opera. *Music from Morgiane* debuted in 2025 at St. Louis Cathedral, where Dédé was baptized. Homère Plessy (1862-1925), a French-speaking free man of color, grew up during Reconstruction, when Louisiana schools were racially integrated, Black men were able to vote, interracial marriage was legal, and more than 200 Black men held elected office. A lifelong member of St. Augustine Parish, Plessy became politically active when Louisiana began passing Jim Crow legislation. Plessy challenged segregation laws with an act of civil disobedience. He is best known as the unsuccessful plaintiff in the famous Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* which established the “separate but equal” legal doctrine that was ultimately overturned in 1954. The lives of these four free, Black, French-speaking Catholics from 19th-century New Orleans are worthy of our attention. The nobility of their enduring contributions to American society, despite the difficulties they faced as people of color, is nothing less than miraculous.

(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.) †

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 16, 2025

- Jeremiah 17:5-8
- 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
- Luke 6:17, 2-26

For its first reading, this weekend’s Mass presents a selection from the Book of Jeremiah. This prophet must have been intense in his personality. First of all, he was strongly committed to his calling to be a prophet. He keenly felt that God had called him personally to this role. And he believed that, as a prophet, he made real

God’s protection of the chosen people. The spiritual sluggishness, if not the downright sinfulness, of the people upset him. Instead of following God’s will, they followed the fads of the time or the demands and thoughts of earthly leaders.

Jeremiah continually and eloquently insisted that true peace and well-being exist only by obeying God and by listening to his word in making decisions about life.

To use a simile, life may seem to be like standing alone in a wasteland. Knowing God and following his will provide an oasis.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians supplies the second reading. Paul’s two existing letters to them, both of which are in the New Testament, show us how challenging he found their tendency to accept the Gospel half-heartedly or with reservations.

In a way, it is understandable that they were difficult to convince and to convert. They lived in a city renowned across the Roman Empire for its material excesses. The name of Corinth was a synonym for a place where sexual promiscuity was rampant and celebrated. Being in such surroundings surely made attention to the spiritual foundations of the Christian Gospel anything but quick and easy.

Paul calls the Corinthians to spiritual values, insisting that these values alone endure and truly satisfy.

For its last reading, the Church this weekend gives us a passage from

St. Luke’s Gospel. This passage is part of the synoptic tradition, similar to stories about Christ found in the gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Luke’s approach to religion was similar to that of Jeremiah. It was urgent and bold. Luke minced no words. He cut to the chase—in modern day terms.

So, the situations in the life of Jesus that appealed to Luke were those in which the Lord was emphatic and the most direct. Such directness at times took the form of warnings, as is the case in the latter part of this reading. On other occasions it appeared in a lesson or in a compliment.

Jesus makes clear that true discipleship involves the spirit. The things of Earth come and go. They may well be a mirage, with no permanent reward in them. People who set their sights on material goals, or live only for material advancements, play a fool’s game.

Reflection

The Church in this liturgy, and through these readings, is beginning to prepare us for Lent, just more than two weeks away. Lent will be a time of reflection. But to benefit us, our reflection must be completely focused and starkly realistic.

It will be useless if we do not face facts. In these three readings, ending with the words of Jesus, the Church presents as the most fundamental facts the reality that earthly incentives are fleeting in survival and rest on quicksand.

Only the spirit is everlastingly alive. Thus, only judgments based on spiritual motives have lasting effects. In these quite somber teachings, the Church leads us down no primrose path. Instead, it honestly warns us that we are of this world, so the enticements of the world are especially appealing to us. Nevertheless, they ultimately bring us only emptiness and maybe eternal death.

What is our hope? Our only assurance? It is the Lord Jesus.

Choosing our future is our decision. The Church, through these readings, calls us to decide, thinking about reality. †

Daily Readings

Monday, February 17

The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order
Genesis 4:1-15, 25
Psalm 50:1, 8, 16bc-17, 20-21
Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday, February 18

Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10
Psalm 29:1a, 2, 3-4, 9c-10
Mark 8:14-21

Wednesday, February 19

Genesis 8:6-13, 20-22
Psalm 116:12-15, 18-19
Mark 8:22-26

Thursday, February 20

Genesis 9:1-13
Psalm 102:16-18, 19-23, 29
Mark 8:27-33

Friday, February 21

St. Peter Damian, bishop and doctor of the Church
Genesis 11:1-9
Psalm 33:10-15
Mark 8:34-9:1

Saturday, February 22

The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle
1 Peter 5:1-4
Psalm 23:1-3a, 4-6
Matthew 16:13-19

Sunday, February 23

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23
Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13
1 Corinthians 15:45-49
Luke 6:27-38

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Church law regulates how Communion can be received more than once in a day

Can a Catholic receive holy Communion twice in one day? Also, is it possible to ask to receive



Communion outside of Mass under normal circumstances, or is this something that is only possible for the sick? (New York)

To start with the second part of your question, the short answer is yes, it is possible for a Catholic to receive holy Communion licitly outside of Mass, even if they are not ill or homebound.

As we read in Canon 918 of the *Code of Canon Law*: “It is most strongly recommended that the faithful receive holy Communion in the course of a eucharistic celebration. If, however, for good reason they ask for it apart from the Mass, it is to be administered to them.”

Canon 918 does take care to underscore the importance of the relationship between the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice—which takes place “in real time” at Mass—and our own personal participation in this same sacrifice via holy Communion. Especially since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has always taken care to foster a lively awareness of this connection in the minds and hearts of the faithful.

Yet even if receiving holy Communion during Mass is the ideal, reception of holy Communion outside of Mass is still straightforwardly permitted by law. Holy Communion can be administered more privately to members of the faithful as long as they have a good reason for making this request.

Canon law does not give us a definition of what constitutes a “good reason,” but here the Church trusts us to use common sense. One concrete example that comes

readily to my mind of a good reason for requesting holy Communion outside of Mass is a situation where a daily communicant cannot make it to the regular parish daily Mass because of a travel schedule. But of course, there can be many other similarly reasonable scenarios.

Turning back to the first part of your question, a faithful Catholic may indeed receive holy Communion twice in one day—but the second reception must be within the context of a Mass.

As we read in Canon 917 of the *Code of Canon Law*: “One who has received the blessed Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only within a eucharistic celebration in which that person participates.”

To give a practical example of how this might play out in real life, a Catholic who received holy Communion in something like a “word and Communion” service could receive holy Communion a second time if they had a chance to go to an actual Mass later that day. But the reverse would not be true. That is, a Catholic who received holy Communion at Mass in the morning could not receive a second time that day at a non-Mass Communion service.

Or, to suggest another scenario, a Catholic could go to a regular daily Mass, then attend an additional Mass for a wedding or funeral, and receive Communion at both Masses. This is allowed because the second reception of Communion took place as part of a eucharistic liturgy.

However, it’s important to note that there is one exception which allows a Catholic to licitly receive holy Communion up to three times in one day: danger of death. Canon 921 says: “Christ’s faithful who are in danger of death, from whatever cause, are to be strengthened by holy Communion as viaticum [...] Even if they have already received holy Communion that same day, it is nevertheless strongly suggested that in danger of death they should communicate again.”

So, even if a Catholic already had attended two Masses and received holy Communion at both, if they were in a serious accident or fell deathly ill later that day, they could still receive Communion once again. And reception of holy Communion as viaticum would typically take place outside of Mass, due to the nature of the circumstances.

(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.) †

Holy Door



A visitor passes through the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Feb. 8, 2025, during the Jubilee of the Armed Services, Police and Security Personnel. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Caritas Internationalis calls U.S. foreign aid freeze ‘ruthless’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The “ruthless” and “callous” decision of the Trump administration to freeze U.S. humanitarian and development aid “threatens the lives and dignity of millions” of people around the world, according to Caritas Internationalis.

Stopping programs funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and recalling overseas staff “will jeopardize essential services for hundreds of millions of people, undermine decades of progress in humanitarian and development assistance, destabilize regions that rely on this critical support, and condemn millions to dehumanizing poverty or even death,” Caritas said in a statement on Feb. 10.

Caritas Internationalis is the Vatican-based confederation of 162 national Catholic relief, development and social service agencies that operate in more than 200 countries and territories around the world. The U.S. bishops’ Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA are members of the confederation.

President Donald J. Trump announced a 90-day freeze on foreign aid on Jan. 20.



The Caritas statement said it recognizes “the right of any new administration to review its foreign aid strategy,” but “the ruthless and chaotic way this callous decision is being implemented threatens the lives and dignity of millions.”

A statement from the United Nations on Jan. 27 said, “The U.S. government is the largest single donor of aid in the world, disbursing around \$72 billion in assistance during 2023. It also reportedly provided more than 40% of all humanitarian aid accounted for by the U.N. during 2024.”

Alistair Dutton, secretary-general of Caritas Internationalis, said that aid programs globally will be forced to close or reduce staff and services, and “the resulting harm to people, particularly the poorest all around the world, will be catastrophic, threatening the lives and dignity of millions.”

USAID, which began in 1961, “has been a vital partner of Caritas and the Church globally, supporting vulnerable communities worldwide, providing lifesaving assistance for people affected by crises, alleviating hunger, delivering basic health care and education,

improving access to clean water, sanitation, shelter and protection, and addressing the root causes of poverty,” Caritas said.

“This is an unhuman affront to people’s God-given human dignity that will cause immense suffering,” Dutton said.

Caritas Internationalis is working with its partners to find ways “to reduce the impact of the freeze and ensure continued support for as many vulnerable people as we can,” he said. “The lives and dignity of millions hang in the balance.”

Caritas called on the Trump

administration “to reaffirm its commitment to compassion and peace by supporting the most vulnerable people worldwide.”

Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told The Associated Press on Feb. 9 that while any government had a right to review its spending, it also had an obligation to keep promises already made.

“There are programs underway, and expectations and we might even say commitments. And to break commitments is a serious thing,” the cardinal said. †

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Employment

Director of Operations

Our Lady of Grace, Noblesville, a Pastorate of the Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana, is currently seeking candidates for the position of Director of Operations.

Job Summary: The Director of Operations will serve as professional administrator and strategic leader. This position will work closely with the Pastor and Principal to drive positive financial performance for the parish and school. The Director of Operations assists the Pastor with the stewardship of the human, financial, and physical resources of the parish, in accordance with diocesan policies and guidelines. This role will have responsibility for leadership of operations staff (accounting, parish office, technology, administration, human resources, and facilities). Position is available in April 2025.

Education/Experience:

- Bachelor’s degree in business, accounting, finance or related area, or equivalent experience. Advance degree preferred.
- At least 3 years’ experience in accounting, finance, business, or related area.
- Experience with a non-profit organization or in Church management is preferred.
- Prefer the candidate to be a practicing Catholic.
- Possess initiative and a strong desire to achieve results.
- Experience in project management preferred.
- Experience with Microsoft Office and an ability to learn diocesan software programs.
- Able to honor & maintain confidentiality.
- Able to pass and maintain diocesan child safety protocols.

Interested and qualified candidates should submit a cover letter and resume, including at least three references, to Larry Kunkel, ljunkel@ologn.org.

Employment

Assistant Director of Communications

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking an Assistant Director of Communications for its central office. The assistant director reports to the director of communications and will be responsible for implementing the communication strategy for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, aligning with the mission of evangelizing catechesis and the new Archdiocesan pastoral plan. This role oversees internal and external communications as well as the execution of marketing initiatives. The ideal candidate will also develop and manage content creation across all platforms, ensuring adherence to brand standards. Additionally, this position leads media relations, supports crisis communication efforts, and is prepared to step in for the Director of Communication when needed.

Qualifications include: active practicing Catholic in full communion with the Church; minimum of bachelor’s degree, master’s degree preferred in communications, public relations, mass media, marketing, journalism or related field; 10 or more years practical work experience; comfortable with various forms of electronic communications; demonstrated experience with community relations and issues management; knowledge and awareness of issues of importance in the Catholic Church; exceptional oral, written and interpersonal communication skills; knowledge of maintaining brand standards across an organization. For a complete list of requirements, go to: tinyurl.com/archindyasstdircomm25.

To apply, please email a resume, cover letter, and list of references to Andrea Wunnenberg, Director of Human Resources, at awunnenberg@archindy.org. Applications will be accepted until March 3rd with an anticipated start in April/ May of 2025.

Employment

PRINCIPAL

St. Theodore Guerin High School, located in Noblesville, Indiana, is accepting applications for a **Principal**.

Guerin Catholic, recognized as a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School as well as for its Catholic identity, is a diocesan (Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana) school serving diverse learners, forming the whole person through faith development, excellence in academics, and student life to live out the gospel message.

The Principal at Guerin Catholic reports to the President and provides direct supervision to the directors of academics, student services, counseling, athletics, campus ministry, student life, and fine arts, as well as to the chaplain.

The Principal is a member of the Operations Team and works collaboratively with the directors of the school Advancement, Technology, Facilities, Enrollment, Finance, and Communications.

Thus, the successful candidate will:

- Be practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church.
- Assume spiritual and academic leadership in a Catholic school.
- Be forward-thinking and strategic.
- Be current and well-read in regard to educational best practice.
- Have an inclination toward inclusion and collaboration with internal and external communities.
- Have budgeting and financial management experience.
- Hold a valid State of Indiana Administrative license

The candidate will also have achieved at least a Masters Degree in Education and 3-5 years of classroom teaching experience.

For a more detailed job description, please visit GuerinCatholic.org.

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‘The Chosen’ actor shares how portraying an apostle rebooted his faith

(OSV News)—In the past four years, the TV show “The Chosen” has taken the Catholic world by storm, as thousands eagerly await the debut of the fifth season.

“The Chosen” is a popular historical drama that follows the lives of Christ and his disciples. The show is currently in its fourth season. The fifth season will be released in theaters across the country this March.

Through their participation in “The Chosen,” many of the show’s crew members and actors—including Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus—have rediscovered faith.

One such actor is Giavani Cairo, who portrays Jude Thaddeus, one of the Twelve Apostles in the show.

Cairo was raised Catholic in Michigan, but he fell away from his faith.

“Growing up, the faith just seemed like it was something you just did,” Cairo told OSV News. “You go through first Communion and confirmation, and then you go to church on the weekends. But I never felt like I had a relationship with Christ.”

Cairo never wanted to become an actor until he took a class his senior year of high school

“We needed a speech class to graduate, so I took an acting class,” Cairo said. “I found that it was a great way to express myself through it, and it gave me the desire to learn more about the acting business, and so I moved to LA.”

By 2018, though, Cairo was growing tired of the actor’s life.

“In 2018, I had been in Los Angeles for a few years chasing this dream, but for the wrong reasons,” Cairo

said. “I wanted to be an actor so that I could be on TV or could be in the spotlight, and it just wasn’t fulfilling.”

“I was missing family back home, and my relationship with them was deteriorating,” he said. “I just wasn’t talking to them as much and just feeling really lost.”

A friend suggested that Cairo begin to volunteer in his free time and to set specific goals for that year.

Cairo began praying regularly again and within months was cast for a TV show.

“I made a pact to read the Bible every day. I started praying every day, even though I didn’t think I was doing it right,” Cairo said. “What is crazy is that about a few weeks before the new year I had auditioned for ‘The Chosen’ after I heard that they were looking for actors.”

Acting in “The Chosen” has been a life-changing experience, he said.

“It has made me want to be a better person,” he said. “My character that I portray, Thaddeus, is a peacemaker, and he really tries to see people for who they are and really wants people to feel seen. That is the kind of friend I always wanted and always wanted to be growing up. So, what I’ve really learned is to really love people for who they are.”

Like Cairo, many viewers find that they can relate to characters in the show

“If you watch the show, you start seeing pieces of yourself in them,” he said. “You see Simon Peter getting frustrated or feeling like he’s going to lose everything because they gave him taxes. You see Jesus laughing and cracking jokes at a wedding with his disciples. People feel that in person, we do these things

with our friends. We relate to the characters.”

When Cairo and the writers began discussing how to portray Thaddeus, also known as St. Jude, they had little to go on. Little is known about Thaddeus other than that he is a saint and that he seemed to be an observer. This gave Cairo the leeway to mold and craft the character to make him relatable.

“He’s a little bit more quiet than a lot of the other disciples are; he is an observer, as I am, too,” Cairo said. “But the one thing is, I didn’t really have the confidence growing up to speak my mind or to stand up for others. But Thaddeus does. Thaddeus is teaching me how to be a better person to myself; therefore, I can be a better person to so many other people.”

Over the course of the past seven years, “The Chosen” cast and crew have formed a tight-knit community as they try to portray the life of Christ.

“They have become my family, my brothers and my sisters,” he said. “We have gone through so many trials and so many wins together. We’ve laughed together; we’ve cried together.”

While the show is nearing Christ’s death and resurrection, Cairo knows that “The Chosen” will always remain relevant, as it tells the most timeless story.

“This is the most important story that’s ever been told. We all know where this story is headed, but in the grand scheme of things, we all have the responsibility to share it, and that will never end. This is just the very beginning of what we can do as disciples—to show one another love and to spread the Gospel.” †

DEATH PENALTY

continued from page 1

for the press briefing organized by the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

“The Catholic Church has consistently sought to protect human life from the moment of conception to natural death,” Archbishop Thompson said. “The bishops of Indiana have joined in this call for several decades, as have leaders of other religions in this state. St. John Paul II reminded us in 1999 that the new evangelization calls us to be unconditionally pro-life, and that modern society has the means to protect itself without denying criminals the chance to reform.”

The archbishop told those gathered that, more recently, Pope Francis underscored the Church’s opposition to capital punishment. In a 2018 revision to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Pope Francis declared the death penalty “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

“Our witness to respect for life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each other and every human life, including the lives of those who fail to show that respect for others,” Archbishop Thompson further quoted from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. “The antidote to violence is love—not more violence.”

Debate over the death penalty in

Indiana was recently reignited in the wake of the recent execution of 49-year-old Joseph Corcoran for the murders of four people in 1997.

The death-row inmate’s legal team and other advocates had cited Corcoran’s long history of mental illness as reason to delay the execution and have his case undergo further review, but those efforts failed. Corcoran died by lethal injection at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City before dawn on Dec. 18.

Following Corcoran’s execution, there are now seven other men on death row in the northwest Indiana prison.

“This was the first time in my 15 years since being elected that a person was executed in our state,” Morris told those gathered at the press conference, where he was joined by many colleagues from both the Indiana House and Senate. “As I look at the seven other inmates currently sitting in our state prison set for execution, one of the great concerns I have is for the employees of our Department of Corrections who are charged with the duty to execute a prisoner—the same prisoner they spend many hours with, making sure they’re fed and housed in appropriate conditions.”

The Catholic lawmaker—a one-time supporter of capital punishment—has been open about the faith journey that led him to strongly oppose the death penalty and the grave concerns he has about the process.

“It’s a very small room, and not many people can witness it,” Rep. Morris said.

“Today we’re actively counseling those who were in that execution room over the struggles they have from what they witnessed. We’re taking the life of another human being.”

Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Diocese of Gary, in which Michigan City is located, was among those praying outside the prison on the morning of the execution. On Feb. 3, he traveled to Indianapolis to add his voice to the press briefing, explaining to reporters that he stood in solidarity not only with those on death row, but also with murder victims and the grieving family members they leave behind.

“To be supportive of the abolition of the death penalty is not to discount the pain and the suffering of victims of heinous crimes,” Bishop McClory said, citing a 2019 letter issued by the bishops of Indiana and the ICC. “In seeking to end the use of the death penalty, we do not dismiss the evil and the harm caused by people who commit horrible crimes, especially murder. We share in the sorrow and the loss of family and victims of such crimes, and we call upon our faith community and all persons of good will to stand with the victims and to provide spiritual, pastoral and personal support.”

Bishop McClory said that the system of capital punishment has been proven to be flawed in numerous cases and that it offers only “the illusion of closure and vindication.”

“No act—even an execution—can bring back a loved one or heal terrible wounds,” the bishop said. “The pain and the loss of one death cannot be wiped away by another death.”

Indiana is one of 27 states that allow capital punishment. House Bill 1030, which at press time was still awaiting a committee hearing, would bring an end to the practice in the state.

Another faith leader at the press conference—Demetrius Minor, a pastor from Tampa, Fla.—travels across the country advocating for repeal of the death penalty, often in partnership with Catholic organizations such as the ICC. Minor also serves as the national manager of Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty, a nationwide group of conservatives who question whether capital punishment is consistent with conservative principles and values.

“The money spent on the death penalty would be better spent on training and resources for law enforcement, services for victims’ families, on mental health services and violence prevention initiatives,” said Minor, a minister at Tampa Life Church. “When we say we are pro-life, we must be committed to improving and preserving people’s lives,

across the country and right here in the Hoosier state.

“We can do so much more to meet the needs of family members of murder victims,” Minor continued. “The death penalty causes those families to face uncertainty through years of litigation and appeals processes, making life unbearable while ensuring the recycling of pain and trauma. The death penalty has also claimed the lives of too many innocent people.”

Public support for the death penalty continues to decline in the United States, according to Minor. He cited a 2023 Gallup poll revealing that for the first time in history, more than half of Americans either opposed the death penalty or had serious concerns about it.

Opposition to the death penalty has traditionally been considered a cause supported more by Democrats. In fact, 15 Democratic members of the Indiana House of Representatives have drafted and signed a letter of support for House Bill 1030.

The bill’s sponsors and co-authors are all Republican, however, which Minor says is evidence of a nationwide trend.

“Over the last several years, we have seen a political shift to where more conservatives are embracing the push to end the death penalty,” Minor said. “It’s happening for multiple reasons, but the pro-life reason is of paramount significance. I do believe that the pro-life generation is going to carry us across the finish line.”

Alexander Mingus, the executive director of the ICC, echoed that sentiment and expressed his appreciation to Minor for his help in orchestrating the press conference at the Statehouse.

“This conversation about capital punishment has ignited a renewal of commitment to a consistent vision of the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death,” Mingus said. “As Catholics, we must profess and uphold a consistent ethic of life and stand up against all attacks on life. We are hopeful that our continued efforts will change hearts and minds on this important issue.”

To follow this and other priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus [Little Flower] Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †



Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), right, addresses the media at a Feb. 3 press conference at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis calling for repeal of the death penalty in the state. He was joined by Alexander Mingus, left, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference; Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis; Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Diocese of Gary, Ind.; and Demetrius Minor, national manager of Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)