



The

# Criterion

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## ‘Pope Francis touched minds and hearts,’ offering the Church as ‘a home for all’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis was “a pope among the people, with an open heart toward everyone,” said Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, as he presided over the funeral of the pope, who died on April 21 at the age of 88.

And the people—an estimated 200,000 of them—were present as 14 pallbearers carried Pope Francis’ casket into St. Peter’s Square and set it on a carpet in front of the altar for the funeral Mass on April 26.

His burial was later the same day in Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major after being driven in a motorcade through the center of the city where he served as bishop from the day of his election to the papacy on March 13, 2013.

Security around the Vatican was tight, not only because of the number of mourners expected but especially because of the presence of kings, queens, presidents—including U.S. President Donald J. Trump—and prime ministers

from more than 80 countries and official representatives from scores of other nations.

Also present were the residents of a Vatican palace Pope Francis had turned into a shelter for the homeless and the 12 Syrian refugees he brought to Rome with him from a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos in 2016.

The Gospel reading at the funeral was John 21:15-19 where the risen Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” And when Peter says yes, Jesus tells him, “Feed my sheep.”

“Despite his frailty and suffering toward the end, Pope Francis chose to follow this path of self-giving until the last day of his earthly life,” Cardinal Re said in his homily. “He followed in the footsteps of his Lord, the Good Shepherd, who loved his sheep to the point of giving his life for them.”

The 91-year-old cardinal told the crowd that the image of Pope Francis that “will remain etched in our memory” was his appearance on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica the day before he died to give his Easter blessing “*urbi et orbi*” (to the city and the world) and then to ride in the popemobile among the people who had come to celebrate Christ’s victory over death.

“The outpouring of affection that we have witnessed in recent days following his passing from this Earth into eternity tells us how much the profound pontificate of Pope Francis touched minds and hearts,” Cardinal Re said. The Vatican estimated that 250,000 people—many of whom waited in line for three or four hours—filed past the late pope’s body in St. Peter’s Basilica on April 23-25.

Within the Church, the cardinal said, “the guiding thread” of Pope Francis’ ministry was his “conviction that the Church is a home for all, a home with its doors always open.”

For Pope Francis, he said, the Church was a “field hospital,” one “capable of bending down to every person, regardless of their beliefs or condition, and healing their wounds.”

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Above: A girl holds a picture of Pope Francis as she waits for the arrival of his casket ahead of his funeral Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 26. (OSV News photo/Mohammed Salem, Reuters)

Top of page: Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, incenses the coffin of Pope Francis as he leads the funeral Mass of the late pontiff in St. Peter’s Square on April 26. (OSV News photo/Kai Pfaffenbach, Reuters)





Cardinal Rolandas Makrickas, coadjutor archpriest of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, presides over Vespers with members of the College of Cardinals at the basilica on April 27. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

FUNERAL

continued from page 1

With President Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Olga Lyubimova, Russian minister of culture, seated near the altar, Cardinal Re said that, “faced with the raging wars of recent years, with their inhuman horrors and countless deaths and destruction, Pope Francis incessantly raised his voice imploring peace and calling for reason and honest negotiation to find possible solutions.”

“ ‘Build bridges, not walls’ was an exhortation he repeated many times, and his service of faith as successor of the Apostle Peter always was linked to the service of humanity in all its dimensions,” the cardinal said.

Cardinal Re also recalled Pope Francis’ constant concern for migrants and refugees from his first papal trip outside of Rome to pray for migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, his visit to Lesbos and his celebration of Mass in 2016 on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexican border.

At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Baldassare Reina, papal vicar of Rome, offered special prayers for the city’s deceased bishop, Pope Francis. Then Eastern Catholic patriarchs and major archbishops gathered around the casket and led funeral prayers from the Byzantine tradition in honor of the pastor of the universal Catholic Church.

Sister Norma Pimentel, a Missionary of Jesus and director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, had knelt in prayer before the body of Pope Francis on April 25 and was present for the funeral.

“The funeral of Pope Francis is a very important part of who we are as people of faith,” she told Catholic News Service. “We walk together, we cry together, we

work together ... doing what we believe is important in our lives as people of faith, and we say farewell together at the end.”

The funeral, she said, is a time “to join him in this last farewell and say thank you: Thank you for being you, for being there with us, and we’ll see you.”

Sister Norma is known especially for her work with migrants and refugees, a ministry close to the heart of Pope Francis.

“He was all about making sure that we understood the importance” of welcoming newcomers, she said. His message was: “Please open your hearts. Please care for them. That’s all they’re asking.”

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., also prayed alongside the pope’s body on April 25 as it lay in state in St. Peter’s Basilica. “It was an important moment of confirming the news that I had heard but did not want to believe”—that the pope had died.

Pope Francis “had played such an important role in my life as a mentor, as a teacher,” said Cardinal Tobin, formerly the archbishop of Indianapolis. “It was really a 20-year friendship.

“We have many reasons to grieve, but we have every reason to hope,” said the cardinal, who concelebrated the funeral Mass and would be among the cardinals voting to elect a new pope.

Cardinal Tobin said he thought Pope Francis’ lasting legacy would be the call to be “a synodal Church,” one where every person takes responsibility for the Church’s mission and where all members listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit.

“That kind of Church is really necessary to bring to fruition all of his other prophetic teachings,” the cardinal said.

“Without a synodal Church,” he continued, it will be difficult to put into practice Pope Francis’ teaching on the environment, on dialogue and human fraternity, and even on sharing the joy of the Gospel. †



Public Schedule of  
 Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

May 6–14, 2025

May 6 – 8 a.m.  
 Indiana Bishops and Major Superiors meeting, Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis

May 6 – 3:30 p.m.  
 Indiana Provincial Bishops’ meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

May 7 – 9 a.m.  
 Indiana Catholic Conference Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

May 8 – 8:15 a.m.  
 Virtual Judicatories meeting

May 8 – 10 a.m.  
 Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

May 8 – 6 p.m.  
 Circle of Giving Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, followed

by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

May 10 – 2 p.m.  
 Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus; Holy Trinity Parish, Edinburgh; Prince of Peace Parish, Madison; and St. Patrick Parish, Salem, at St. Bartholomew Church

May 13 – 10:30 a.m.  
 Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

May 13 – 6:30 p.m.  
 CYO Volunteer Awards at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

May 14 – 7 p.m.  
 Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Anthony Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

‘Moving Catholic Parishes from Maintenance to Mission’ is focus of May 19 evening of formation in Greenwood

Criterion staff report

“Moving Catholic Parishes from Maintenance to Mission” is the title of an evening of formation and fellowship from 7-9 p.m. on May 19 in Madonna Hall on the Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish campus, 335 S. Meridian St., in Greenwood.

Dr. Jonathan Reyes, senior vice president for communications for the Knights of Columbus, will explore what it looks like to evangelize in an apostolic age and what this means for parishes and families.

Reyes will delve into key concepts from Msgr. James Shea’s insightful books *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission* and *The Religion of the Day* to help transform traditional parish roles from mere maintenance to impactful mission-drive leadership.

The program is open to clergy, parish leadership teams, staff members and volunteers.

Those who attend will learn about understanding the transition from Christendom to the apostolic mission; engage in meaningful conversations about adapting to modern challenges; and gain practical strategies to transform parishes.

Mass will be celebrated in the church at 6 p.m., and doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for the program ,with drinks and appetizers available. A question-and-answer session will conclude the evening’s program.

Registration is free. For more information, go to [tinyurl.com/Maint2Mission](https://tinyurl.com/Maint2Mission), call 317-236-1466, or e-mail Anita Bardo, archdiocesan coordinator of evangelization and discipleship, at [abardo@archindy.org](mailto:abardo@archindy.org). You can also scan the QR code to register. †



Did Pope Francis help shape your faith life?

The Criterion is inviting you, our readers, to share your thoughts, tributes and stories about how Pope Francis influenced your life of faith during his papacy from 2013-2025.

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



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# Pope had ‘pastoral heart for all humanity,’ archbishop says at Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

A framed portrait of Pope Francis stood on a black-shrouded easel surrounded by flowers at the front of the sanctuary in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

For the roughly 350 people present and many others watching online, it stood as a visual reminder during a Mass celebrated for the late pope on April 24.

After the opening hymn, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson called to mind the solemn reason for the Mass.

“As we gather, we pray for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis,” he said.

“As I heard one cardinal mention, ‘We have had a death in the family—in the Catholic family.’

“This is a bittersweet moment for us. On one hand, we gather to express our grief. On the other hand, we gather to express our faith in Pope Francis’ gain of everlasting life, made possible through the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

### ‘A pastoral heart for all of humanity’

In his homily, Archbishop Thompson noted that many “have been asking or reporting on the so-called legacy of Pope Francis” since his death on April 21.

They have named many legacies, the archbishop said: “a witness of mercy and humility, a reformer, a pope of the people, expanding the role of women, not being one to judge, reaching out to those on the margins and peripheries, advocating for migrants and refugees, demanding greater care of creation, outlining a blueprint for greater synodality, exhorting us to be pilgrims of hope and missionary disciples.”

But, he continued, when asked about his own legacy during an interview with CBS’ Norah O’Donnell on April 24, 2024, Pope Francis responded that “the Church is the legacy. The Church not only through the pope, but through you ... every Christian ... everyone.”

In October that same year, Pope Francis wrote his fourth and final encyclical, “*Dilexit nos*” (“He loved us”) on the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ.

Archbishop Thompson quoted the pontiff’s words from the encyclical that, “... if love reigns in our heart, we become in a complete and luminous way the persons we are meant to be. For every human being is created above all else for love. In the deepest fiber of our being, we were made to love and to be loved” (#21).

The archbishop noted that, in this notion of love, “Pope Francis could be as firm as he was compassionate. He had a keen ability to read the signs of the times,

coin a catchy phrase like ‘the Church is a field hospital’ or ‘the smell of the sheep,’ to capture the imagination or frame the narrative.”

At the same time, the archbishop said, the late pope “was not afraid to speak frankly about such sins as arrogance, pride, selfishness, clericalism, abuse and other difficult issues. He did not shy away from challenging others, including bishops and priests.

“Authentic love, he understood, is not void of objective truth, but always seeking to speak truth in charity.”

Archbishop Thompson, who was appointed shepherd of the Church in central and southern Indiana by Pope Francis in 2017, noted the pope’s frequent call for “accompaniment, encounter, dialogue and respect for the dignity of persons.”

In doing so, he said, “Pope Francis sought to encourage a greater openness of hearts and minds to the transforming grace of encounter with Jesus Christ.”

This call follows the example of St. Peter in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Archbishop Thompson explained.

In the reading, “St. Peter exudes a boldness of witness following the curing of a crippled man,” he said. “He speaks truth and charity as he preaches the authentic identity of Jesus Christ ...

“Yet, in a spirit of accompaniment, however, he encouraged the people to repent and be converted while stressing the transforming grace and mercy of God very available to them.”

Pope Francis sought to extend that mercy to all on Earth. The dark, rainy evening of March 27, 2020, is an example.

“For many, the image of Pope Francis standing alone before the crucifix in St. Peter’s Square, praying for the world in the midst of COVID, is especially etched in our memories,” said Archbishop Thompson.

That love permeated his pontificate. “While holding fast to Church doctrine,” the archbishop noted, Pope Francis “exuded a pastoral heart for all of humanity, always anchored in the long-standing Catholic teaching of human dignity from the moment of conception to natural death, as rooted in the reality that every person is created in the image of God.

“He sought to welcome, embrace, unite, heal and reconcile—not in his name, but in the name of Jesus.”

### ‘Blessed and lucky to have had him’

After the Mass, several of the worshipers spoke with *The Criterion*



With a framed portrait of Pope Francis in the foreground, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson delivers a homily during a Mass for the late pope on April 24 in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

about their thoughts on the late pope. His love for and outreach to those on the peripheries was a common theme.

“He was very much focused on those who are at the margins and those who are forgotten by society,” said Andra Liepa, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. “His very first Holy Thursday, he did the Holy Thursday service at a prison and washed prisoners’ feet.

“That to me was just a description of his entire papacy. He went to where people are. I think that’s his greatest gift to us, to remind us that we’re called to do as Jesus did.”

Liepa’s fellow parishioner, Alma

Maldonado, also commented on Pope Francis going to “the most marginalized and to the poor.”

But she also noted how he “spoke on several topics that are very controversial. I feel like within those talks that he did about those topics that are very sensitive, he definitely showed God’s love toward people.”

Several members of the Little Sisters of the Poor and residents of their St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis were present at the Mass.

Sister Fatima Claire noted that in the special “spirit and charisma” of the last three popes, “I find that John Paul II is the

See **ARCHBISHOP**, page 23



## Endowment funds impact charities today and forever

Donors sometimes question whether they should support an endowment fund over an annual gift, thinking the latter will provide immediate support for the ministry they love. The truth is that both are important. Gifts for today and tomorrow help maintain the financial health of any one of our parishes, schools or ministries. Endowment funds can do both.

An endowment fund is perpetual. Establishing an endowment fund during your life or after your passing helps provide financial support for a charity forever. The principal of the fund is never touched. As the fund is invested, it grows. Each year, our Catholic Community Foundation endowment funds distribute 5% of their value to parishes, schools and ministries. In fact, in fiscal year 2024, we distributed more than \$10 million to Catholic organizations throughout the Archdiocese.

You can impact the future of the Catholic cause of your choice. To learn more about endowment funds, please contact us at 317-236-1482 or [ccf@archindy.org](mailto:ccf@archindy.org).

# Marriage

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Fall Marriage Edition

July 11 issue of *The Criterion*

Couples who are planning to be married between July 11, 2025, and Jan. 31, 2026, in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between Feb. 1 and June 14, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming July 11 Fall Marriage Edition. Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form at [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements).

### E-mailed photos

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

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

### Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on June 16.





Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher* Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*  
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial



Cardinal Angelo Comastri, retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, uses incense to venerate an icon of the risen Christ at the start of Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 20. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Let Easter’s light of faith shine through us as Christ’s instruments on Earth

“We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song!”  
—Pope St. John Paul II

That simple phrase spoken by then-Pope John Paul II during a Sunday *Angelus* address while in Australia in November of 1986—not during the Easter season—is worth repeating at any time during the liturgical year.

But Easter and the Easter season are especially appropriate times to remember that death has been defeated, hope has returned and light has overcome the darkness.

As the Lenten season recently progressed to Holy Week, we entered the Easter triduum. Darkness enveloped our world as we reached Good Friday, when Christ was crucified on the cross for our sake. No greater gift has been provided to humanity, but the finality of the Lord’s passion was the tragedy of all tragedies—an innocent man being put to a horrific death.

That darkness turned to light during the Easter Vigil, where Christ’s conquering sin and defeating death were marked by his resurrection. During Easter Vigil liturgies around the world, catechumens were baptized, confirmed, received their first Eucharist and entered into the full communion of the Church. Candidates who were baptized in other Christian traditions were also received into the full communion of the Church with a profession of faith, confirmation and first Eucharist during the liturgy.

But Easter weekend was also a time for all Catholics to renew their faith.

As the late Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein reminded us in a column in 2005, “On Easter Sunday, we Catholics renewed our profession of faith and recalled once more the decisive gift of our life—our baptism. At that decisive moment of baptism, we set out on the pathway which will lead us to the eventual passage to the kingdom and immortality.

“With baptism comes the responsibility to hand on the good news of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church that offer hope to our world,” Archbishop Buechlein wrote. “This is our Christian mission. This responsibility is shared according to our particular roles in life.”

That role, the late archbishop noted, goes beyond the clergy. “Not only are our priests responsible for carrying on the Church’s mission to our society, parents are also responsible for the Catholic upbringing of their children. Grandparents and godparents assist them,” Archbishop Buechlein wrote.

“Catechists and teachers also share the responsibility with parents who entrust their children to them for religious instruction and formation. Priests, with the help of pastoral leaders, share the responsibility for spiritual direction, especially making the sacraments of the Church available. The sacraments of the Church empower and strengthen us for our shared mission.”

As the late Pope Francis reminded us often during the 12 years of his pontificate—and as our faith teaches us—we are all disciples of Jesus and members of the body of Christ. Our call to missionary discipleship and shared mission includes evangelization—bearing witness to the message and work of Christ so that others may believe in him.

Our liturgical calendar reminds us that the Easter season lasts for 50 days.

“Alleluia! He is risen!” priests proclaimed on Easter Sunday.

At Easter, we celebrated the greatest victory in human history—the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His resurrection has defeated sin and death, and with his grace, we experience resurrected life.

As we continue celebrating this Easter season for the next several weeks, we are all challenged as an Easter people to demonstrate the risen Christ to everyone we meet.

Let Christ’s Easter light of faith shine through you. Build on the Easter message that we are stewards of the living God who can be his instruments on Earth.

Help build up Christ’s Church in your parish and in our world.

As St. John Paul II shared years ago, “We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song!”

May those words guide us during the Easter season and beyond.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Scott P. Richert

Beyond the veil, seeking Christ

The Canadian novelist Robertson Davies once described children as “literal-minded toughs.” Contrary to the common view that they have very active imaginations, children tend to take the world at face value, rarely looking beneath the surface. The recognition that one thing may be a sign of something else—much less that something material may be a sign of something spiritual—does not come easy to children.

While this has probably always been true of children, in the modern world, that recognition does not come easy to us older folks, either. We live our lives almost entirely on the surface. Social media influencers and public relations professionals speak of “image” and “optics” because they know that most of us believe, consciously or unconsciously, that “what you see is what you get.”

One of the chief delights I experience whenever I read the early Church fathers is the recognition that they saw the world quite differently. For them, everything is a symbol. Moses and Noah and David and Job are all symbols of Christ. The ark is a symbol of the Church, as is Israel and Mary, who is also a symbol of the temple and the tabernacle.

The earthly Jerusalem is a holy place because it is a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem. Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is a symbol of his passing from death into life—a symbol foretold by the symbols of the sacrifice of the lamb at Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea and the entrance of the chosen people into the promised land.

We tend to think of those who lived centuries or millennia before us as benighted souls, nowhere near as intelligent as we are, yet the early Church fathers, and the men and women to whom they were delivering their sermons on Scripture, held all of these symbols in their minds.

Untouched by the scientific revolution which, for us, has made everything a mere

object by stripping nature of any symbolic meaning, they understood that the colt upon which Jesus entered Jerusalem was, indeed, a colt, but it was also a symbol of the Gentiles who, after Christ’s resurrection, would carry him to the very ends of the Earth.

The cross was an instrument of torture but also a symbol of victory, because through it Christ—and all of those united to him through baptism, itself a symbol of death and resurrection—had passed through death into life.

The wind that accompanied the Spirit of God who descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost was, in moving as it willed, a symbol of the new life of grace, no longer bound by the chains of the Law.

The men and women who rose from their graves and walked about Jerusalem in the wake of Christ’s crucifixion were, like Lazarus, real people who had been truly resurrected. They are also signs of the resurrection of our bodies at the end of time and our spiritual resurrection, right here and right now, if we become the adopted sons and daughters of God by joining ourselves to the only begotten Son of God through our participation in the paschal mystery of the Easter Triduum.

“We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song!” St. John Paul II famously proclaimed, and we are so because of that paschal mystery. There is no Resurrection without the cross, no entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem without Jesus’ entry into the earthly Jerusalem. There is no everlasting joy, or even a foretaste of that joy in this life, without our suffering, which, if we approach it in faith, becomes a symbol of his way of the cross.

As we leave Lent and once again boldly shout “Alleluia!” in the joy of Christ’s resurrection, may we make a conscious effort this Easter season to set aside our childish literal-mindedness and search for the symbols in our lives that allow us a glimpse beyond the veil of this material world to the kingdom that is both yet to come and, in Christ, already here.

(Scott P. Richert is publisher for OSV.) †

Letter to the Editor

Reader reflects on ‘Sight Unseen’ column and God’s existence outside of time and space in our lives

I recently read with interest the “Saving Judas” column by Brandon Evans in the April 18 issue of *The Criterion*. It mentioned in passing a thought which I feel is deserving of more attention:

Since God exists outside of time and space, all things at all times that can be in play are in play.

Indeed, God created time along with everything else that is. He is not bound by it. Thus, I am able to pray for things that are in my past.

While he is certainly not going to un-crash a car I heard about, so long as I don’t know what has happened, (thereby bringing an event into my present) it is still good to offer prayers.

For example, if I am in a meeting and unable to pray while a friend is having

surgery, I can still offer my prayers after the meeting and up until learning of the results. My prayer will be just as good then as it would have been previously.

Likewise, I could pray for a student to do well on a test that occurred earlier, for a safe journey for a neighbor who would have already arrived elsewhere, or for welcome news at a spouse’s earlier doctor visit.

I think of it something like this: At the time when something occurs, God knows that in the future I will be praying for that person and credits my love for that person to the time when it is needed. I can learn of the result later without hampering God’s hand.

Michael Kovatch  
New Albany

Letters Policy

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

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space

limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers. Concise letters are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org). †



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Meet Jesus in the daily moments of your life

The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Easter (Jn 21:1-19) recounts the story of the Risen Lord’s appearance to his disciples while they were fishing. At the break of dawn, after a long, disappointing night, they saw a figure standing on the shore. It was Jesus, but they did not recognize him.

The stranger said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.” So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something” (Jn 21:5-6). So, they cast it and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. And that’s when they realized it was Jesus who was giving them directions on how to do their work as seasoned men of the sea.

Then, St. John tells us, they saw a charcoal fire with some fish on it and some bread.

*Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.” So, Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.”*

*And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. (Jn 21:10-13).*

According to St. John’s Gospel, “this was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead” (Jn 21:14).

With this story, St. John is telling us some important things about the Risen Jesus, and about his disciples (us).

First, the Evangelist wants to emphasize how important it is for us to encounter the person of Jesus in the ordinary circumstances of our daily lives. It’s true that we meet the Lord in a profoundly personal way when we receive his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, but we also have to meet him in the ordinary moments of our lives.

Jesus is present—even if we don’t recognize him—when we are with family members, friends and even with people we don’t know. In fact, there’s a good chance that the stranger we meet in the grocery store, on the golf course, or in line at our parish food pantry, is Jesus himself.

Secondly, St. John wants to assure us that the Risen Christ is not a ghost. More importantly, he is not a figment of the disciples’ imagination, or a myth told by the early Christians to explain away his cruel death. This Jesus cooks breakfast for his friends. He breaks bread with them, and he enjoys their company.

Finally, this Gospel makes it clear that when Christ is present in our midst, wonderful things happen. His presence alone is a miracle—God-with-us in the ordinarieness of our daily lives. But what’s more, all the miraculous signs of healing, forgiveness and hope that he performed during his time on Earth are recalled and relived in and through his disciples (us).

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we, who are his missionary disciples, carry on his work in the world. If our faith is strong enough, we too can become miracle workers—missionaries of healing, forgiveness and hope.

The Gospel reading concludes saying:

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than*

*these?” Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to Simon Peter a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” Jesus said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” (Jn 21:15-17)*

The test of Peter’s loyalty that he failed so miserably at the time of the Lord’s crucifixion is passed successfully here. Jesus gives him a second chance to become his faithful disciple, the first among the servant-leaders of Christ’s Church. As St. Peter affirms his love for Jesus, he is told in no uncertain terms that the only way to prove his love and devotion is to “feed my sheep.”

As we continue this season of Easter joy, let’s learn to encounter Jesus in one another. And let’s prove our love for him by feeding his lambs. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Encontremos a Jesús en los momentos cotidianos de la vida

La lectura del Evangelio del tercer domingo de Pascua (Jn 21:1-19) narra la aparición del Resucitado a sus discípulos mientras pescaban. Al amanecer, tras una noche larga y decepcionante, vieron una silueta de pie en la orilla. Se trataba de Jesús, pero no lo reconocieron.

El forastero les dijo: —“Muchachos, ¿han pescado algo? Ellos contestaron: —“No. Él les dijo:

—“Echen la red al lado derecho de la barca y encontrarán pescado” (Jn 21:5-6). Así lo hicieron, y la red estaba tan llena que apenas podían moverla. Fue entonces cuando se dieron cuenta de que era Jesús quien les estaba dando indicaciones sobre cómo hacer su trabajo de pescadores experimentados.

Entonces, nos dice san Juan, vieron un fuego de carbón con unos peces encima y un poco de pan.

*“Jesús les dijo: —“Traigan algunos de los peces que acaban de pescar. Simón Pedro subió a la barca y sacó a tierra la red llena de peces; en total eran ciento cincuenta y tres peces grandes. Y, a pesar de ser tantos, no se rompió la red. Jesús les dijo:*

*—“Acérquense y coman. A ninguno de los discípulos se le ocurrió*

*preguntar: ‘¿Quién eres tú?’ porque sabían muy bien que era el Señor. Jesús, por su parte, se acercó, tomó el pan y se lo repartió; y lo mismo hizo con los peces” (Jn 21:10-13).*

Según el Evangelio de san Juan, “esta fue la tercera vez que Jesús se apareció a sus discípulos después de haber resucitado” (Jn 21:14).

Con este relato, san Juan nos dice algunas cosas importantes sobre Jesús resucitado, y sobre sus discípulos (nosotros).

En primer lugar, el evangelista quiere destacar lo importante que es para nosotros encontrarnos con la persona de Jesús en la cotidianidad de la vida diaria. Es verdad que nos encontramos con el Señor de un modo profundamente personal cuando recibimos su Cuerpo y su Sangre en la Sagrada Eucaristía, pero también debemos encontrarlo en los momentos ordinarios de la vida.

Aunque no nos percatemos, Jesús está presente cuando estamos con parientes, amigos e incluso con personas que no conocemos. De hecho, es muy probable que el desconocido con el que nos topemos en el supermercado, en el campo de golf o en la fila de la despensa de alimentos de nuestra parroquia sea el propio Jesús.

En segundo lugar, san Juan quiere

asegurarnos que Cristo resucitado no es un fantasma. Y lo que es más importante: no es producto de la imaginación de los discípulos, ni un mito contado por los primeros cristianos para explicar su cruel muerte. Se trata de un Jesús que cocina el desayuno para sus amigos, parte el pan con ellos y disfruta de su compañía.

Por último, este Evangelio deja claro que, cuando Cristo está presente en medio de nosotros, suceden cosas maravillosas. Su sola presencia es un milagro: Dios con nosotros en la cotidianidad de nuestra vida. Pero además, todos los signos milagrosos de curación, perdón y esperanza que realizó durante su estancia en la Tierra se recuerdan y reviven en y a través de sus discípulos (nosotros).

Por la fuerza del Espíritu Santo, nosotros, que somos sus discípulos misioneros, llevamos a cabo su obra en el mundo. Si nuestra fe es lo suficientemente fuerte, también nosotros podemos convertirnos en obradores de milagros: misioneros de la curación, el perdón y la esperanza.

La lectura del Evangelio concluye diciendo:

*Terminada la comida, Jesús preguntó a Pedro:*

*—“Simón, hijo de Juan, ¿me amas más que estos? Pedro le contestó:*

*—“Sí, Señor, tú sabes que te quiero. Jesús le dijo:*

*—“Apacienta mis corderos. Jesús volvió a preguntarle:*

*—“Simón, hijo de Juan, ¿me amas? Pedro respondió:*

*—“Sí, Señor, tú sabes que te quiero. Jesús le dijo:*

*—“Cuida de mis ovejas. Por tercera vez le preguntó Jesús:*

*—“Simón, hijo de Juan, ¿me quieres? Pedro se entristeció al oír que le preguntaba por tercera vez si lo quería, y contestó:*

*—“Señor, tú lo sabes todo, tú sabes que te quiero. Entonces Jesús le dijo:*

*—“Apacienta mis ovejas” (Jn 21:15-17).*

La prueba de la lealtad de Pedro, que fracasó tan estrepitosamente en el momento de la crucifixión del Señor, se supera aquí con éxito. Jesús le da una segunda oportunidad para convertirse en su discípulo fiel, el primero entre los siervos-líderes de la Iglesia de Cristo. Cuando san Pedro afirma su amor por Jesús, este le dice en términos inequívocos que la única manera de demostrar su amor y devoción es “apacientar mis ovejas.”

En este tiempo de alegría pascual, aprendamos a encontrar a Jesús en los demás y demostrémosle nuestro amor apacentando sus ovejas. †



Events Calendar

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

**May 7, June 4**  
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.

**May 7, June 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 joy. Information, registration: [events.sistersofprovidence.org](http://events.sistersofprovidence.org), 361-500-9505, [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

**May 12**  
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention**, 6:30-8 p.m., American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) flagship suicide prevention education program, presented by Father James Farrell and licensed therapist and AFSP Indiana Board Member Christine

Turo-Shields, free, registration required. Information, registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

**May 13**  
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: 812-535-2952, [Taize.SistersofProvidence.org](http://Taize.SistersofProvidence.org),

**May 15**  
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

**May 16**  
Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, David Bethuram, archdiocesan executive director of the secretariat of Catholic Charities, presenting “Catholic Charities: Now More than Ever!”, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast

and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by noon on May 13. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

**May 18**  
Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting**, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-432-0909, [jodymdalton@aol.com](mailto:jodymdalton@aol.com).

**May 21**  
Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

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

**May 21-26**  
Daughters of Charity, 9200 New Harmony Road, Evansville, Ind. (Diocese of Evansville). **Search**

**and Serve Discernment Week**, join Daughters of Charity in ministry while discerning a call to a life of serving the poor, for single Catholic women ages 18-40. Information, registration: [sisterliz@doc.org](mailto:sisterliz@doc.org), [daughters-of-charity.com/retreats](http://daughters-of-charity.com/retreats).

**May 24**  
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary Walk**, 10:45-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: [holyrosary.prolife@gmail.com](mailto:holyrosary.prolife@gmail.com).

**May 26**  
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Memorial Day Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

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

**May 29**  
Calvary Cemetery and Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Miscarriage Memorial**

**Service and Burial of Ashes**, 2 p.m., sponsored by Memories to Hold ministry of Franciscan Health Center for Women and Children. Information: 317-528-5199, [mmemoriestohold@franciscanalliance.org](mailto:mmemoriestohold@franciscanalliance.org).

**May 30-31**  
St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. **International Festival**, 5 p.m.-midnight, rides, music, raffles, free admission. Information: [eesparza@stgabrielindy.org](mailto:eesparza@stgabrielindy.org), 317-701-1451.

**June 3, 10, 17, 24**  
St. Patrick Parish, 950 Prospect St., Indianapolis. **“Know Your Fertility” Class in Spanish**, 7-9 p.m., series of four sessions, \$75. Information, registration: [ccorona@archindy.org](mailto:ccorona@archindy.org), 317-800-9306.

**June 6**  
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, [womenscarecenter.org](http://womenscarecenter.org).

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St.,

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

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

**June 7**  
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](mailto:julie3reyes@gmail.com). †

Retreats and Programs

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

**May 16, June 20, July 18**  
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437,

[oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).  
**May 16-18**  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **The Rosary Zone**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting,

\$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

**May 17**  
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Divine Mysteries**

**in the Universe**, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Jesuit Father Edward Kinerk presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

**May 31-June 1**  
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Flourishing in Seasons of Surrender**, 11 a.m. Sat.-noon Sunday, Teresa Venatta presenting, \$175 includes private room, Saturday lunch and dinner and Sunday breakfast. Information, registration: [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

**June 6-8**  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Praying the Mass: Eucharistic Spirituality**, Benedictine Father Lorenzo Penalosa presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg.

**Women’s Day Celebration**, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., keynote by Cory Lockhart, coffee, breakfast, crafts, chair yoga, essential oils, neck massages, door prizes, coffee bar, lunch, \$60. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

**June 10, July 9**  
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

**June 13-15**  
Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **St. Jacinta of Fatima: A Prophetess for Our Times**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Jacinto Chapin facilitating, \$241 for single,

\$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

**June 16**  
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Pilgrims of Hope and the Jubilee Year: Day of Reflection**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Father James Farrell presenting, \$45, includes Mass and lunch. Information, registration: [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

**June 17**  
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Pilgrims of Hope and the Jubilee Year: Evening of Reflection**, 5-9 p.m., Father James Farrell presenting, \$45, includes Mass and dinner. Information, registration: [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org). †

## Marian University will offer special camp for fathers and sons from July 11-13

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis, will offer a special camp for fathers and sons in first-fifth grade from 5 p.m. on July 11 through noon on July 13.

A variety of activities are planned, including games, canoeing, a soapbox derby race, worship and reflection, campfire and one-on-one time. The intention is to deepen the paternal bond, grow in faith, and create lifelong memories.

The camp is part of Marian University’s Fraternitas initiative, dedicated to building stronger fathers who raise stronger families.

The cost is \$100 for one father and son, and \$50 for each additional son. The cost includes meals and overnight lodging in a dormitory.

For more information or to register, go to [marian.edu/dadcamp](http://marian.edu/dadcamp) or e-mail Mark Bridenstine at [mbridenstine@marian.edu](mailto:mbridenstine@marian.edu). †

## Sisters of Providence accepting Providence Associate applications through June 30

The Providence Associate program of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, is accepting applications for Providence Associates through June 30.

If you are looking for spiritual enrichment, support, a community, or a sense of mission, God may be nudging you to become a Providence Associate of the Sisters of Providence.

Providence Associates are women and men of faith, ages 18 and older, who share their own unique gifts and talents with others while walking with the Sisters of Providence.

The Providence Associate relationship with the Sisters of Providence began in 2007. Currently, there are more than 300 Providence Associates in the United

States and Taiwan.

Accepted applicants spend a year meeting one-on-one on a regular basis with a Sister of Providence or another Providence Associate companion. During the meetings, the candidates and their companions learn and share about Providence spirituality.

Accepted candidates attend an orientation at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in November. Following the orientation, the candidate and companion usually meet once a month—in person, virtually or by phone—for the coming year.

For more information, go to [ProvidenceAssociates.org](http://ProvidenceAssociates.org) or contact Providence Associate Director Debbie Dillow at 317-250-3294 or [ddillow@spsmw.org](mailto:ddillow@spsmw.org). †

## Wedding Anniversaries

**TOM AND CAROL (FRY) SCHWENDENMANN**, members of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on May 3.

The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Greensburg on May 3, 1975.

They have three children: Shelley Schwendenmann Collins, Kristy and Aaron Schwendenmann,

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](http://cutt.ly/anniversaries) or call 317-236-1585.



# Conclave will begin on May 7; 10 U.S. cardinals eligible to vote

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The 135 cardinals eligible to elect the next pope will enter the Sistine Chapel to begin the conclave on May 7, the Vatican announced.



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin

The cardinals will first celebrate the “Mass for the Election of the Roman Pontiff” in St. Peter’s Basilica that morning before processing into the Sistine Chapel that evening.

The Vatican Museums announced that the Sistine Chapel would be closed to visitors beginning on April 28 to allow preparations for the conclave to begin. The preparations include the installation of a stove to burn the cardinals’ ballots and a chimney on the roof to signal the election results to the world.

The date for the conclave was set during the fifth general congregation meeting of cardinals on April 28, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, told reporters at a briefing later that day. The general congregation meeting was the first after a two-day pause to allow cardinals to participate in the funeral rites for Pope Francis.

More than 180 cardinals attended the April 28 meeting, including more than

100 cardinal electors. During the session, about 20 cardinals offered reflections on the state of the Church, its mission in the world, the challenges it faces, and the qualities needed in the next pope, Bruni said.

Topics addressed included evangelization, interfaith relations and the ongoing need to address clerical sexual abuse, he added.

As cardinals entered the Vatican for the April 28 morning session, Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm was asked by reporters if he expected a long conclave. “I think it will be,” he said, “because up to now we don’t know each other.”

Meanwhile, Cardinal Walter Kasper, former president of the former Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity who is past the age limit to vote in the conclave, told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* that he hopes the cardinal-electors “come to a consensus on the next pope very soon, in the footsteps of Francis.”

Ten cardinals from the United States are under the age of 80 and eligible to enter the conclave on May 7 to elect a new pope. They include:

- Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, retired prefect of the Apostolic Signature.
- Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago.
- Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, retired archbishop of Galveston-Houston.



Cardinals gather in the New Synod Hall at the Vatican for their fifth general congregation meeting on April 28. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

- Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York.
- Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life under Pope Francis.
- Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, retired archbishop of Washington.
- Cardinal James M. Harvey, archpriest

- of Rome’s Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.
- Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, archbishop of Washington.
- Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops under Pope Francis.
- Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J. †

## Papal conclave has the most cardinals, widest geographical mix in its history

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The conclave that begins on May 7 is expected to be the largest in history, with a wide geographical mix of cardinal-electors.

There are 135 cardinals under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a papal election. By contrast, 115 cardinals took part in the conclaves in 2005 and 2013.

The cardinals represent 72 different countries if one counts the nations where they are serving and not just where they were born. Take the example of three Italians: Cardinals Pierbattista Pizzaballa is the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem; Giorgio Marengo is the apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; and Mario Zenari is the apostolic nuncio to Syria.

The cardinals’ average age on April 28 was 70 years and 5 months. That is slightly younger than the average age of electors who participated in the last conclave in 2013, which was 71.8.

According to “*Universi Dominici Gregis*,” the document giving rules for the election of a new pope, cardinals who celebrate their 80th birthday before the day the Apostolic See becomes vacant—that is, with a papal death or resignation—do not take part in the election.

The oldest among current voters is Cardinal Carlos

Osoro Sierra, the retired archbishop of Madrid, who turns 80 on May 16.

The youngest member of the conclave is 45-year-old Ukrainian-born Cardinal Mykola Bychok of the Ukrainian Eparchy of SS. Peter and Paul of Melbourne, Australia. He is one of 17 Gen X cardinals, those born between 1965 and 1980.



St. John Paul II

Only five of the cardinals eligible to enter the conclave were created cardinals by St. John Paul II, and 22 were created by Pope Benedict XVI.

That means 27 of them took part in the conclave that elected Pope Francis, and five of those also participated in the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict.

But that also means voting in a conclave will be a brand new experience for 108 of the electors.

While the geographical breakdown of conclave voters has become more diverse since 1978, Europeans are still the largest block. Fifty-two of the electors, or 37%, come from Europe.

However, Asia is more represented now than ever before with 24 electors or almost 18% of the total. There are 23 cardinal-electors representing Latin America, about

17% of the total, followed by Africa with 18 electors. North America now trails behind Africa and Asia with 14 electors, representing about 10%, and Oceania has four voting-age cardinals, about 2.9% of the total.

In the country-by-country breakdown, Italy has 16 voting-age cardinals, followed by the United States with 10, representing 7% of the voting total.

Brazil has seven voting-age cardinals; Spain and France have five each, and Poland, Portugal, India, Argentina and Canada have four each. England, Germany and the Philippines have three cardinal-electors each. Fifty-nine countries are represented with one or two cardinal-electors.

In terms of influence, the Vatican as an institution will be heavily represented, with 27 members of the Roman Curia voting in the conclave—19.7% of the total.

Since a two-thirds majority of the cardinal-electors who participate is needed to elect a pope, if all 135 men were to attend, there would need to be at least 90 votes for one candidate to emerge as the winner.

Among the voting-age cardinals, there are 33 members of religious orders, including: five Salesians, four Jesuits, four Franciscans and three Conventual Franciscans. †



Pope Benedict XVI

## Past conclaves give an idea of when to watch for smoke from the Sistine Chapel

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The cardinals who enter the Sistine Chapel on May 7 to elect a new pope use smoke signals to communicate with the outside world.

Black smoke indicates they have cast their votes without anyone garnering the

necessary two-thirds majority, while white smoke confirms that the Catholic Church has a new pope.

The best time to be in St. Peter’s Square to see the smoke is just after 7 p.m. the first day of the conclave, May 7; and on the following days at 10:30 a.m. and noon, and again at 5:30 p.m. and just after 7 p.m. (All times are in local Rome time; Eastern Daylight Time is six hours earlier.)



White smoke billows from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel on March 13, 2013, at the Vatican signaling that Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who became Pope Francis, was elected the 266th Roman Catholic pontiff. The cardinals will again gather on May 7 to elect a successor to Pope Francis, who died on April 21. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Predicting when the smoke will rise from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel is not an exact science. The time needed for the cardinals’ prayers, discussions and vote counting can vary.

The rules for a conclave are contained in the apostolic constitution, “*Universi Dominici Gregis*” (“Shepherd of the Lord’s Whole Flock”), which was issued by St. John

Paul II in 1996 and amended by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 and again in 2013.

After the cardinals process into the Sistine Chapel to start the conclave and take their oaths of secrecy, the papal master of liturgical ceremonies proclaims “*extra omnes*” (“everyone out”), and the cardinals listen to 90-year-old Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, who they chose to offer a meditation “concerning the grave duty incumbent on them and thus on the need to act with right intention for the good of the universal Church.”

After that, there are prayers and an explanation of the rules for the election of a pope.

Then, the cardinals decide whether they want to cast their first ballots that same evening. The cardinals chose to have a first ballot in the evening during the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict and the 2013 conclave that elected Pope Francis.

The cardinals’ ballots, mixed with a chemical coloring, are burned in a stove in the Sistine Chapel.

In 2005, the black smoke from the first ballot was seen at 8:05 p.m. In 2013, black smoke from the first ballot was spotted at 7:41 p.m.

On the second day of the conclave and moving forward, there can be four rounds of voting each day, but only two smoke

signals. That is because if the first ballot of the morning or of the afternoon session does not result in an election, a second vote begins immediately, and the two ballots are burned together.

During the conclave that elected Pope Francis, the set schedule called for the cardinals to celebrate Mass each morning at 8:15 a.m. in the Pauline Chapel of the Apostolic Palace and then go into the Sistine Chapel at 9:30 a.m. After a brief prayer, the first ballot of the day was to be cast, meaning that if a pope were elected the smoke would be seen at about 10:30 a.m. If no candidate received the required two-thirds of the votes, the cardinals would vote again and the two ballots would be burned at about noon, before the cardinals were to return to the Domus Sanctae Marthae for lunch and an afternoon break.

If this conclave follows the schedule set in 2013, the cardinals would return to the Sistine Chapel at 4 p.m. and continue voting. If someone were to be elected on the first afternoon ballot, the smoke would be visible at about 5:30 p.m. If no one were elected, the smoke from evening ballots would come shortly before the cardinals were to return to the Domus Sanctae Marthae at about 7:30 p.m. for dinner and to sleep. †



# Religious in archdiocese found inspiration, challenge in Pope Francis

By Sean Gallagher

When Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected bishop of Rome on March 13, 2013, he was the first member of a religious order to be elected pope since Pope Gregory XVI was chosen by the College of Cardinals on Feb. 2, 1831.

Pope Gregory, who established the Diocese of Vincennes, Ind., in 1834, which later became the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, had previously been a Benedictine monk.

Cardinal Bergoglio, who became Pope Francis after his election, had previously been a member of the Society of Jesus and was the first Jesuit to be elected bishop of Rome.

When members of religious orders become bishops, they cease to be members of their order. But two Jesuits who serve at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis said that they saw clearly how the pope’s many years of life as a Jesuit still shone through in his ministry as universal shepherd of the Church.

In fact, Jesuit Father Adam DeLeon, assistant principal of Brebeuf, saw this in the new pope’s first public appearance on a balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican.



Fr. Adam DeLeon, S.J.

The new pontiff, who had taken the name of Francis, asked for the prayers of the people who filled St. Peter’s Square and those following the papal election on television and on the internet around the world. He then bowed to receive those prayers.

For Father DeLeon, this was characteristic of the Jesuits’ “reliance on prayer and the necessity of prayer” in their lives.

“In that moment, every person I knew and every person I didn’t know was praying for this man right in that moment,” Father DeLeon said. “He united us in prayer. That was so beautiful. That was so beautiful that he asked for that prayer as he begins his ministry.”

Father DeLeon, along with leaders of religious communities across central and southern Indiana, recently spoke with *The Criterion* about Pope Francis’ leadership of the Church and how he affected the life and ministry of their communities in the archdiocese.

## ‘It was more than I could take in’

Although he had been a member of the Society of Jesus, Cardinal Bergoglio took as his papal name the founder of the Franciscans, St. Francis of Assisi.



Fr. Martin Day, O.F.M. Conv

This astounded Conventual Franciscan Father Martin Day, provincial of his order’s Province of Our Lady of Consolation, which is headquartered in Mount St. Francis in the New Albany Deanery.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Father Martin recalled. “How could that be anything but a blessing for us? It was more than I could take in, and I couldn’t wait to learn more about this person who was already on day one amazing me.”

And Father Martin did just that as Pope Francis



Pope Francis bows his head in prayer during his election night appearance on the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on March 13, 2013. The crowd joined the pope in silent prayer after he asked them to pray that God would bless him. Pope Francis, formerly Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, died on April 21, at age 88. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

moved forward in his leadership of the Church. He saw this in the pope’s teaching documents, which he said showed forth many Franciscan qualities.

His 2015 encyclical letter “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,” was strongly rooted, Father Martin said, in how St. Francis “considered himself a fellow creature with all the other members of creation, not lording it over them, but praising God with them, each according to their nature.”

Father Martin said that Pope Francis’ living out Franciscan qualities in his life and ministry as the bishop of Rome was a welcome challenge to him and his fellow Franciscans.

“Lucky for us, Pope Francis exuded humility, which made it so much easier for us to acknowledge our own weaknesses and failings and ways in which we have fallen short,” he said. “When the pope began his pontificate with the acknowledgement that he was a sinner, he did so in such a way that you knew that he was not just saying that, but really knew it was true.

“It gave me the courage to recognize that truth about me, too, and to not let it paralyze me, but energize me to keep going, to keep walking the path ... into a future full of promise.”



Sr. Maureen Irvin, O.S.F.

Franciscan Sister Maureen Irvin, the leader of the Oldenburg Franciscan sisters as their congregational minister, was likewise challenged by Pope Francis.

“Some of the things that he wrote about hope and joy cause us to examine ourselves,” she said. “We’re in the Jubilee Year of Hope. Are we really pilgrims of hope? How can we be that in our world today with so much suffering and

all of the problems that we have in society?”

Sister Maureen, like Father Martin, also saw Franciscan qualities in Pope Francis’ teachings on care

for creation, something that she thinks will have a lasting effect on the Church and the world.

“It’s not like people have read it and put it on the shelf,” she said. “There seem to be a lot of groups, parishes and organizations that are trying to keep ‘*Laudato Si’* “going and to improve on it.”

## Hospitality and synodality

Two Benedictine leaders in the archdiocese found much to be inspired by in the leadership of Pope Francis.

Benedictine Archabbot Kurt Stasiak of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, spoke about the light that Pope Francis shed on his 1,500-year-old religious order’s charism of hospitality.

“His emphasis on the needs of the marginalized helped us try to be more aware of the marginalized, of the wounded in the Church and the world,” Archabbot Kurt said. “His famous image of the Church as a field hospital has had some kind of an impact upon our hospitality. We’re more aware than ever of what we can offer to people who come looking for strength, looking for spiritual sustenance.”

Benedictine Sister Julie Sewell serves as prioress of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. She saw a connection between the emphasis that Pope Francis placed on solidarity and hospitality.

“We feel at home with his teachings on this topic,” Sister Julie said. “In the monastery, all guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, O.S.B.



Sr. Julie Sewell, O.S.B.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

# Pope’s shared heritage, focus on heaven inspire Latinos around the world

By John Shaughnessy

The moment remains etched in the mind of Felix Navarrete, a moment in which he felt even more closely connected in faith and a shared Latino heritage with Pope Francis.



Felix Navarrete

The emotion of being in the presence of the pope filled Navarrete as he stood among the hundreds of thousands of people during the opening ceremony of World Youth Day in August of 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal.

“Although I could only see him from a distance, his presence was so powerful that it filled the entire Eduardo VII Park,” recalls Navarrete, the coordinator of Hispanic ministry for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

“That day, I witnessed for the first time that his presence alone had brought the joy of the Gospel to thousands of people. It wasn’t just the euphoria of young people, but something more, something

greater than emotions. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and you could feel it.”

While that moment has had a powerful, personal impact on Navarrete, he views the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pope in 2013 as a momentous time in the lives of Latinos and the history of the Church.

“The joy that flooded the Latin American Church was indescribable,” recalls Navarrete, a native of Nicaragua. “For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, a Latino cardinal assumed no less than one of the world’s major leadership roles.”

Even more, Navarrete believes that Pope Francis’ 12 years as pope revealed him as a leader who energized the Latino Catholic community while leading the Church toward “a new form of discipleship.”

“With Pope Francis, we can see the resurgence of strong Latino leadership, not only in the Church, but also in other structures around the world,” he says. “His leadership has profoundly impacted our Latino community.

“His simplicity and determination have created a new form of discipleship, based on closeness and companionship with the

entire Church, but with special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized.”

Navarrete also offered this praise, “Pope Francis fulfilled his mission of being a herald of Christ’s Gospel and, with humility and courage, confronted a polarized world that clearly demands change.”

Navarrete has personally known the challenges of a polarized world. Committed to their Catholic faith, he and his wife Paholla fled Nicaragua in 2018 with their four children—escaping a Nicaraguan government that increasingly cracked down on the Church in their homeland.

Ever since, after securing visas from the U.S. government, they have created a new life in Indianapolis. Now in his third year of serving the archdiocese, Navarrete is inspired by the way Pope Francis’ strove to serve the Church and the world.

“In our ministry to the Hispanic community, accompaniment is crucial,” Navarrete says. “Working with migrants and people of different social and cultural backgrounds makes our mission even more challenging.

“However, Pope Francis’s invitation to go out to the peripheries has encouraged

me to continue the work God has entrusted to me. Francis has helped me see my ministry not only as a job, but as an opportunity to be the Church for others and to heed the call to be a missionary disciple.”

Toward that goal, Navarrete’s initiatives have included training Hispanic lay leaders in evangelization efforts in predominantly Spanish-speaking parishes and in faith communities where Latinos are in the minority.

He has also started an annual Hispanic Family Camp in the hope of drawing families even closer together and into a deeper relationship with Christ

Most of all, his focus is on helping people receive the eternal reward that he believes Pope Francis has received.

“The more I reflect on the life and legacy of Pope Francis, the more I realize that we are made for heaven,” Navarrete notes.

“His passing on Easter Monday, though somewhat unexpected, fills my heart with joy and hope—hope in the resurrection, hope in the eternal life to which we are all invited. Now, it is up to us how we respond to it. The heavens are open.” †



# Archdiocesan priests reflect on how Pope Francis shaped their ministry

By Sean Gallagher

Pope Francis was a part of Father Anthony Hollowell’s priestly life and ministry from the beginning.

He was weeks away from being ordained a priest when, on March 19, 2016, he stood as a transitional deacon by Pope Francis at the high altar of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican during a Mass on the third anniversary of the pontiff’s inauguration as bishop of Rome.

Three years earlier, he had been a new seminarian at the Pontifical North American College in Rome when he was asked to proclaim the first reading at the Mass at the start of the conclave at which Pope Francis was elected.

The reading began:  
“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord” (Is 61:1-2).

Now an archdiocesan priest for nine years, Father Hollowell sees this passage as a lens through which he views his own priestly life and ministry and the effect that Pope Francis had on it.

“Every time I hear it, it feels more intensely directed toward me and is a reminder of what God is asking of me to do as priest and how he’s asking me to serve,” said Father Hollowell, pastor of St. Mark Parish in Perry County and St. Paul Parish in Tell City.

For him, Pope Francis “lived that reading in a very concrete way. For me, he showed me incarnationally what it is like to go out and to bring comfort to those who are afflicted and to proclaim a year of liberty in the Lord.”

Father Hollowell and two other archdiocesan priests, Father John McCaslin and Father Christopher Wadelton, spoke with *The Criterion* about the effect that Pope Francis, who died on April 21 at age 88, had on their priestly ministry in the Church in central and southern Indiana.

**‘Walking in a direction toward Christ’**

When Pope Francis was elected in 2013, Father John McCaslin was pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis, shepherding a congregation made up largely of Hispanic immigrants to the city.

He felt a connection to the pontiff from Argentina immediately, responding to the new pope’s request for prayer as he stood on a balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica after his election.

“I remember kneeling down while watching it on television and praying for him,” recalled Father McCaslin, now pastor of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.

While Father McCaslin appreciated Pope Francis’ care for migrants around the world and his call for the faithful to give them aid, the priest also valued the pontiff’s understanding of the Church as a whole.

“It was a broad vision where the Church was for everybody, no matter



Fr. John McCaslin

where they may be at this moment in their lives,” Father McCaslin said. “When they walk in the door, we know that they’re walking in a direction toward Jesus.

“Maybe where they are in their journey is at a different place

than where someone else is. But here in the Church, we encounter the risen Lord in the mystical body of Christ, in the sacraments and all the ministries that we do. I value that vision of welcoming everybody.”

Father Christopher Wadelton currently leads the culturally diverse parish of St. Bartholomew in Columbus. At the time of Pope Francis’ election, he was pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish on Indianapolis’ near east side, which has a large Hispanic community.



Fr. Christopher Wadelton

So, like Father McCaslin, he also appreciated Pope

Francis’ consistent care for migrants who face so many challenges.

“He recognized the dangers that people are going through as immigrants,” Father Wadelton said. “That was comforting to our immigrant community.

“It’s a divisive issue in some regards. So, to have the support and the great writings of the pope was beneficial. It was nice to have a model to look to who was living his faith in a powerful way, even in the face of people who sometimes don’t feel the same way. So, having his life reflect his beliefs was inspiring.”

**‘I’m picking Mongolia’**

Like his immediate predecessors, Pope Francis made apostolic journeys to countries around the world. But, like missionaries from the Society of Jesus in which he had previously been a priest, he made it a regular practice to visit countries where the Church is very small to nearly non-existent.

That included places like the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Thailand and Mongolia. In this central Asian country with a population of nearly 3.5 million,

there are only some 1,400 Catholics.

Father Hollowell felt challenged by this witness from Pope Francis, even if he, as parish priest, had a much narrower geographic horizon for his ministry.

“He’s personally influenced me in that encouragement to go out,” Father Hollowell said. “That doesn’t mean to travel far. It means to travel where Christ is not [present], where he hasn’t been established.”

For Father Hollowell, that has meant serving as an assistant track and field coach at Tell City High School in addition to carrying out his pastoral duties at St. Mark and St. Paul.

“It’s been a priority for me pastorally to be there because it’s kind of my version of Mongolia,” he said. “I view that as part of who I am because part of my responsibility is to be sent.

“I’ve retained it because there’s that example there from the Holy Father. Don’t be afraid. When you have to pick between Mongolia and Venice, I’m picking Mongolia.”

**‘We’re foot washers’**

Pope Francis has affected all three priests’ understanding of the nature of ordained ministry in the Church.

In 2013, just two weeks after he was elected, the pope told priests in the Diocese of Rome at its annual chrism Mass during Holy Week that they should have “the smell of the sheep” by being out among the people they serve instead of remaining largely in their offices.

“That’s the best summary of how he’s reflected my priesthood,” Father Hollowell said. “He described a sense of insulation in the Church and encouraged us to go out. It’s actually more comfortable to answer e-mails than to go to a [track and field] practice.”

With nearly 1,800 households in his parish in Columbus, Father Wadelton knows that his days could be dominated by the necessary administrative aspects of his ministry. The example of Pope Francis, though, has been a spur for him to maintain a greater balance in the way he cares for his parishioners.



Pope Francis and then-transitional Deacon Anthony Hollowell exchange a sign of peace on March 19, 2016, during a Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. (Submitted photo)

“I try to balance the administrative part with being with the people,” he said. “My e-mail inbox probably has 12,000 unanswered e-mails in it. I do my best. But it’s impossible. I don’t want to be sitting at my desk answering e-mails all day. I want to be out with the people.”

In the end, for Father McCaslin, Pope Francis demonstrated clearly the way that priests are to approach their ministry by the way he would wash the feet of people on the margins of society— inmates, migrants and those struggling with addictions—during the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, the day on which the Church celebrates the institution of the priesthood by Christ.

“I’ve always believed in the image of Jesus washing feet on Holy Thursday,” Father McCaslin said. “That’s what we are. We’re foot washers. We want to encounter people where they are and help them experience God’s mercy and grace and to find hope in that.”

For Father Wadelton, Pope Francis’ loving care for those at the margins of society was also expressive of his personal humility, something that the priest said would be a lasting legacy for him.

“I think his humility is going to stand out,” Father Wadelton said. “It will inspire people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The Church is here to save the whole world, not just the Catholics. He was a great model for that.” †

**CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE**

“Guests can arrive at any time, and this is not an inconvenience but an opportunity for encounter, for sharing Christ with those who come to our door. It is listening to the stranger, really hearing them, listening with an open mind and heart—it is synodality.”

Synodality—the spiritual practice of the faithful listening prayerfully to each other to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church—was a focus of Pope Francis in the last few years of his ministry as bishop of Rome.

Providence Sister Dawn Tomszewski, the superior general of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, sees synodality as the “greatest legacy” of Pope Francis.

His death, Sister Dawn noted, “certainly shifts the



**‘Radical inclusion, shared belonging and deep hospitality are recognized as the result of the listening that is at the heart of the synodal process.’**

—Providence Sister Dawn Tomszewski, the superior general of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

responsibility to us to carry out his deep desire that we be a listening Church, a collaborative Church, a Church worthy of the Christ who called it into being.

“Radical inclusion, shared belonging and deep hospitality are recognized as the result of the listening that is at the heart of the synodal process,” said Sister Dawn.

**Supporting ‘a brother who’s got a difficult assignment’**

Although when he became a bishop, he was no longer strictly speaking a member of the Society of Jesus, Pope Francis kept in close touch with Jesuits both in Rome and around the world during his many apostolic journeys.

Jesuit Father Chris Johnson, who is the superior of the members of his religious community that serve at Brebeuf, says that this connection that the late pontiff maintained with his order gave its members “a warm feeling, a feeling of being in the family, an ability to support a brother who’s got a difficult assignment.”

Father Johnson saw

Jesuit qualities in Pope Francis in his continuing its tradition of taking the Gospel to the ends of the Earth.

One of the first Jesuits, St. Francis Xavier, a co-patron saint of the archdiocese, did this in missionary work in India, Malaysia and Japan before dying on the shores of China.

While popes before Pope Francis travelled widely, he often visited countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Mongolia, where the number of faithful remain tiny.

And not only did Pope Francis travel to such places—some of the men in the College of Cardinals who will elect his successor come from some of these countries as he greatly expanded the countries represented in it.

“Bringing in cardinals from these far-flung places recognizes the universality of the Church,” Father Johnson said. “I think that it’s going to have ramifications that are going to be different than anybody is expecting or even he would have expected.

“There was a certain courage in that. He wasn’t trying to put his stamp on the Church ideologically so much as to bring more people in.” †



Fr. Chris Johnson, S.J.



# Pope’s theme for spouses, families: ‘Be missionary disciples’—and Church should help

By Natalie Hoefer

When Gabriela Ross and her fiancé were preparing for the sacrament of marriage, they had a unique and memorable opportunity—the engaged couple worshiped at the closing Mass of the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia.



Gabriela Ross

The celebrant was unique and memorable, too: the Holy Father, Pope Francis. His homily left a lasting impression on Ross. “As a young adult preparing to enter into my vocation of marriage and family life, I remember listening to Pope Francis and having a clear sense that families were about going on mission,” she recalls. “That marriage was not just for myself and my spouse to be happy, but also that we had an important role to play in our family, neighborhood and in the life of the Church.”

Ross felt called to help spouses and families live out that mission. The married mother of two is now in her sixth year heading the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life.

In this article, Ross reflects on Pope Francis’ overarching messages on—and to—married couples and families, as seen through writings and actions during his pontificate.

## ‘Primary agents of evangelization’

Pope Francis addressed marriage and family life throughout his papacy. But the focus he gave the topic particularly in his first few years seems to indicate a sense of urgency:

—He convened a rare, extraordinary (not regularly scheduled) meeting of the Synod of Bishops in 2014 to focus on families and evangelization—only the third extraordinary assembly since the Synod of Bishops was established in 1965.

—He offered 30 general audience talks on the family between December 2014 and September 2015 that were gathered into a book called *The Family: The World’s Generating Force*.

—He attended each of the World Meeting of Families during his pontificate: Philadelphia in 2015, Dublin in 2018 and Rome in 2022.

—He set “the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world” as the theme of the ordinary meeting of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015.

—He canonized Louis and Marie-Azélie “Zélie” Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, in October 2015—the first time a husband and wife were canonized together.

—He wrote *“Amoris Laetitia”* (“Joy of Love”), a post-synod apostolic exhortation “on love in the family,” in March 2016.

Ross sees something unique from past popes in the message Pope Francis was sending to families.

“He emphasized the need to be missionary disciples, and he certainly included families in that calling,” she says. “While the Church in recent years has celebrated the vocation of the family, Pope Francis in a special way sent them on mission.”

In the first years of his papacy and beyond, says Ross, he “continued to invite families to be primary agents of evangelization within their home and in their neighborhoods, to ‘take up their role as active agents in the family apostolate’ [*Amoris Laetitia*, #200].”

## ‘Church as a field hospital’ for families

That call became a particular focus again when, for the fifth anniversary of *“Amoris Laetitia,”* Pope Francis

declared a Year of the Family from March 19, 2021, through June 26, 2022.

When speaking about the Year of the Family during his *Angelus* address on Dec. 27, 2020, Pope Francis spoke of the special love within families.

He also admitted that “there are problems, and at times arguments in every family. ... But we are human, we are weak, and we all quarrel within the family at times.”

Ross appreciates his openness about marriage and family life. One of her favorite quotes on quarrels between spouses comes from Pope Francis’ address on July 28, 2016, during World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland:

“‘There are always problems and disagreements in married life. It is normal, it happens that husband and wife argue. They raise their voices, they squabble, and even plates go flying! So don’t be afraid of this when it happens.’”

But in such candid admissions, she sees a call for healing.

“I think that Pope Francis did a beautiful job of painting the Church as a field hospital and including the family in that need for healing and forgiveness,” she says. “Pope Francis uniquely entered into the messiness and brokenness of marriage and family life, calling the faithful to trust in God and work toward peace, even in those places. His ability to enter into the broken realities of the human family and call Christians toward courage and hope are some of the lasting lessons that he has left for us through his pontificate.”

Ross sees that message reinforced through the Martins’ 2015 canonization and the first beatification of an entire family in 2023.

The Martins “embodied the mission of the family as a domestic Church, raising a whole joyful family,” says Ross. But there was pain, too.

“Zelie suffered from child loss and died of breast cancer, and Louis struggled with mental illness later in life,” she says. The couple’s canonization by Pope Francis shows “how the suffering and brokenness of family life can also be a path to holiness.”

The beatification of the Ulma family by Pope Francis in 2023 sends the same message, Ross says. Jozef and Victoria Ulma and their seven children—including one *in utero*—were martyred in their home in Poland in 1944 for hiding Jews.

## ‘Authentic accompaniment’

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis spoke of the need for Christians to accompany others to bring them to an encounter with Christ.

Those two words “were echoed in his teachings on marriage and family,” says Ross.

She cites his promulgation of “Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life,” published in 2022 by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Laity Family and Life, as an example. It offers guidelines for parishes on providing marriage preparation with “authentic accompaniment of couples ... that would lead to an encounter with Christ and a deepening of that relationship,” Ross explains.

Pope Francis also wrote in the document’s preface of the need for parishes to accompany couples after the wedding.

“‘This is a form of pastoral accompaniment and truly a moment of ongoing evangelization and catechesis,’” says Ross.

She sees the document’s influence in central and southern Indiana.

“Around the archdiocese, I have seen a renewed energy for marriage conferences and parish ministries, as well as family catechesis, and eucharistic adoration holy hours geared toward families with young children,” she says. “I think these are fruits of taking to heart the call to engage families in the life of the Church, as Pope Francis taught us.”



Leigh and Benjamin Sargeant and their five children—Rose in front, with Peter, left, Dominic and Samuel behind her, and Isaiah, held by Leigh—serve as an image of the family as a “domestic Church” as they pose in Memorial Plaza in Indianapolis on July 20, 2024, after adoration there during the National Eucharistic Congress. (File photo by Natalie Hoefer)

## ‘Rebel against this culture’

Pope Francis’ messages on married couples and families throughout his papacy—their role as missionary disciples, the holiness that can come through brokenness and suffering, and the need for parish accompaniment to help them encounter Christ—point to the Church’s call for spouses and families to live counter-cultural lives.

Ross remembers sensing that same call as she listened to Pope Francis’ homily during the World Meeting of Families closing Mass nearly 10 years ago.

“A few years later, he wrote the apostolic exhortation, *‘Christus Vivit’* [‘Christ Lives’],” she says. “It contains one of my favorite quotes that captures the spirit of that day at the World Meeting of Families:

*Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion. ... They say that it is not worth making a lifelong commitment, making a definitive decision. ... I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, incapable of true love. I have great confidence in you, and for this very reason, I urge you to opt for marriage.* (#264) †

# ‘Acutis brought us here’: Pilgrims pivot from canonization to papal funeral

ROME (OSV News)—Pilgrims of all ages and from around the United States are making what one archbishop called “an absolute pivot,” as they find themselves in Rome for a papal funeral, rather than the canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis.

“It’s really interesting to see,” Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez of Philadelphia told OSV News. “I think Acutis brought us here, as if the world needed to be here to celebrate Pope Francis’ life.”

The archbishop said the group of close to 75 pilgrims he’s leading are experiencing “a great sense of somberness enveloped in joy.”

For months, the group had prepared for

an April 23-29 journey centered on the planned April 27 canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis, the 21st-century Italian teen whose short life was marked by a profound devotion to the Eucharist, a spirit of evangelization and a love for the Church.

With Pope Francis’ death on April 21, Blessed Carlo’s canonization was suspended by the Vatican; however, the April 27 Mass for the close of the April 25-27 Jubilee of Teenagers was still celebrated.

But “no one even blinked” when plans changed, said Marisally Santiago, director

of the Philadelphia Archdiocese’s Office for Ministry with Youth.

“Everyone is in mourning; and at the same time, everyone is happy and joyful to be here and to be able to have this very once-in-a-lifetime experience,” she told OSV News on April 25, as the group—whom she described as “a little Catholic family that’s traveling around”—enjoyed a gelato break in Rome.

Leading a group of about 50 pilgrims, Father Simon Eshshaki, a Chaldean Catholic priest from the Eparchy of St. Peter the Apostle near San Diego, told OSV News on April 25



Blessed Carlo Acutis

how his group had just paid their respects to Pope Francis on the final day of his lying in state. Walking with their group and posing for photos with them was His Beatitude Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, the Chaldean Catholic Church’s patriarch, from Iraq.

The group had planned to come for Blessed Carlo’s canonization, but instead rearranged their plans to attend the April 26 papal funeral. The following day, the group of young people attended Sunday Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major, where Pope Francis was entombed, before they continued their pre-planned trip throughout Italy.



# Lessons from Pope Francis on human dignity through the lens of mercy

By Natalie Hoefer

When Brie Anne Varick thinks of Pope Francis, she is stirred by many emotions and by memories of encountering him at points around the globe.

“When I think of Pope Francis, I remember the joy I felt when it was announced that he would be our new pope,” she says.



Brie Anne Varick

“I remember the love I immediately felt for him as our shepherd as I went to World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro [in Brazil] and Krakow, Poland, and saw him greeting and welcoming the pilgrims with pastoral and fatherly joy and love.

“I remember seeing him in Rome and had the closest view as I gathered with friends in St. Peter’s Square for Palm Sunday Mass.”

But for Varick, Pope Francis’ “lasting legacy” will be how “his heart conformed to the Father’s merciful heart. He was a pope who exhorted his people, especially the shepherds, to go out to the margins and seek the vulnerable and always extend the mercy of the Father.”

That same mercy is the lens through which she frames her ministry as director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity.

### ‘Let us not look the other way’

Looking back on Pope Francis’ papacy, Varick recalls times when he highlighted the dignity and needs of particular marginalized groups.

For instance, in 2015 he established an International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, to be observed annually on Feb. 8. In his 2013 apostolic exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (“The Joy of the Gospel”), he called all to awareness and action against human trafficking: “Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone!” (#211).

Pope Francis also reached out with mercy time and again to people in prison. Almost every year of his papacy, he celebrated the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday in a prison, where he would wash the feet of 12 inmates.

Even while still recovering from

his recent critical lung issues and hospitalization, Pope Francis was present on Holy Thursday, April 17, at Regina Coeli Prison in Rome. He was unable to celebrate the Mass or perform the washing of the feet. But he greeted 70 inmates personally, offering them words of encouragement and gifting each of them with a rosary and a pocket-sized Gospel.

Varick recalls Pope Francis also reaching out in a unique way to those marginalized by abortion—a sin that causes immediate excommunication from the Church.

To break barriers to forgiveness, Pope Francis bestowed on priests the ability to forgive the sin of abortion during the 2015-16 extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy—an authority previously reserved for bishops.

Through the pope’s mercy on those hurting from the sin of abortion, says Varick, he “extended indefinitely the ability for priests to give absolution to anyone seeking forgiveness in the sacrament of confession for the sin of abortion.”

### Opposed to ‘our modern culture of death’

That pronouncement did not diminish abortion as an evil act against life and human dignity—an act Pope Francis opposed.

“Archbishop Joseph [F.] Naumann mentioned once that he told the pope about U.S. bishops being criticized for identifying the protection of the unborn as a pre-eminent priority,” Varick says, referring to a Sept. 24, 2020, statement by the archbishop, who at the time was chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pro-Life Committee. He currently serves as apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan.

His statement noted the pope’s “support for our efforts, observing that if we fail to protect life, no other rights matter. Pope Francis also said that abortion is not primarily a Catholic or even a religious issue, it is first and foremost a human rights issue.”

The pope’s approval in 2024 of “*Dignitas Infinita*” (“Infinite Dignity”), a declaration on human dignity by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, shows more than his promotion of each person’s God-given dignity, says Varick.

With sections denouncing abortion,



Pope Francis washes the feet of an inmate during a Holy Thursday celebration at Velletri Correctional Facility, 36 miles south of Rome, on April 18, 2019. (CNS photo/Vatican Media, via Reuters)

surrogacy, gender theory and sex change as attacks on dignity, the pope’s approval of the document also “shows his faithfulness in professing Church teachings that are controversial in our modern culture of death,” she says.

“But he always started with pointing us back to the Father’s love. He knew the importance of healing and removing barriers so the faithful could receive the fullness of truth that the Catholic Church holds, including our beautiful teaching on human life and dignity.

“Pope Francis exhorted the faithful to have mercy on the marginalized in front of us and to evangelize Christ to them first, knowing that a relationship with Christ must be the foundation to understand and receive the Church’s teaching.”

### A ‘heart conformed to the Father’s’

Nothing revealed for Varick the importance the pope placed on mercy more than his declaration of an extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy from Dec. 8, 2015, through Nov. 20, 2016.

“Pope Francis commonly shared his

view of the Church as a field hospital where we should be focused on healing the wounded,” she says. “That’s what the Year of Mercy was about.

“It revealed Pope Francis’ love for the people. It revealed Jesus’ heart of mercy speaking through Pope Francis. And it revealed how his heart conformed to the Father’s merciful heart.

“He wanted souls to seek that mercy and be healed. He once said [during a March 28, 2014, homily], ‘The God of mercy: he does not tire of forgiving. We are the ones who tire in asking for forgiveness, but he does not tire.’ ”

Human dignity seen through the lens of mercy—this is the approach Varick says she learned from the late pope.

“What I will take from Pope Francis is this: We should be seeking the lost and the marginalized, meeting people where they’re at, offering Christ’s healing and accompanying them to the fullness of the Church,” she says.

“We should be open to the Holy Spirit’s prompts to open wide the doors of mercy and to do so with the joy that comes from an encounter with Christ.” †

## Youth minister: Pope emphasized ‘the gift young people are to the Church’

By Mike Krokos

It should come as no surprise that Rachel Gilman has fond memories of the times she was in the presence of Pope Francis.

What might be surprising is the fact that the archdiocesan director of youth ministry saw the late



Rachel Gilman, center, director of youth ministry for the archdiocese, shares the joy of taking part in World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2023 with her friends, Marissa Paradiso, left, and Jen Linder. (Submitted photo)

pontiff on multiple occasions during overseas journeys.

“I got goose bumps every time,” said Gilman, who has been in her position with the archdiocese for nearly two years. Previously, she was the director of youth ministry at Holy Spirit at Geist Parish in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.

While studying abroad in England, she travelled to Rome in 2013 after Pope Francis was elected, attended Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter’s Square and took part in a papal audience. In 2023, she was among the estimated 1.5 million people who attended World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. She also was among a group from Holy Spirit Parish who went on a pilgrimage to Rome a few years ago, where they also attended an audience.

“Our pilgrimage company, the director knew his stuff and got us into the front row of our section, and [Pope Francis] drove by in his popemobile right in front of us,” Gilman said, smiling as she reminisced about that day. “That was awesome! It was the first time I got to see him up close.”

Gilman, 33, also got to see the pope “up close” during World Youth Day in Portugal. As she and her group were camping out for the Vigil Mass, “he drove by all the sections, and he drove by our section a couple of times.”

The director of youth ministry admitted seeing the pope in person still has a profound impact on her. “There’s something ... it’s like no other feeling to be in the presence of the leader of your Church who feels so far away normally,” she said, “but then, it feels so real, all of a sudden.”

Gilman remembered feeling that way when she was in St. Peter’s Square for Palm Sunday Mass with Pope Francis in 2013.

“I remember feeling like, ‘Holy cow, this is the universal Church,’ ” she said. “It made more sense being

in his presence ... of realizing this person exists, not just this idea of this leader, but he’s a humble man right in front of me.”

During World Youth Day in Portugal, Gilman especially recalled how the late pope connected with those in attendance through his simple, yet profound, words.

“I remember his emphasizing the gift young people are to the Church and that we should be heard, and that the Church needs us,” she said. “As a young adult, and working for the Church as a young person, to hear our pope say that in your presence, that was really powerful. It was a reminder of my place and my importance in the Church.”

Gilman said the pontiff will also be remembered for the witness he offered through his ministry to the entire Church. “He felt very human to me, in the sense of [how] he was always very accessible to people,” she said.

“He also recognized the lost, the vulnerable and the outsiders so much that you couldn’t help but feel valued,” she continued.

At World Youth Day in Portugal, Pope Francis reminded those in attendance, “In the Church there is room for everyone. ‘Father, but I am a wretch, is there room for me?’ There is room for everyone! All together now, everyone, repeat with me in your own language: Everyone, everyone, everyone!”

As she reflected on Pope Francis’ papal ministry from 2013-25, Gilman was grateful for the time he led the Church as its universal shepherd. She also said the unusual way into which he was elected into his role—after Pope Benedict XVI unexpectedly resigned in 2013—will be remembered as well.

“The gifts of Pope Benedict [XVI] were right for his time,” she said, “and I feel the gifts of Pope Francis were right for his time.” †





*‘Pope Francis chose to follow this path of self-giving until the last day of his earthly life. He followed in the footsteps of his Lord, the Good Shepherd, who loved his sheep to the point of giving his life for them. And he did so with strength and serenity, close to his flock, the Church of God.’*

—Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re’s Homily for the funeral of Pope Francis on April 26, 2025



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state under Pope Francis, signs the “rogito” or scroll describing the late pope’s life, ministry and papacy on April 25, during a prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



A single white rose sits on the tomb of Pope Francis in Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major early on April 27. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



Pope Francis’ casket is driven past the Colosseum on its way toward his burial place in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on April 26. (CNS photo/Justin McLellan)



A religious sister prays the rosary before the funeral Mass for Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 26. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)



Pallbearers carry the casket of Pope Francis into the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on April 26 ahead of his burial. The pope requested to be buried in the Marian basilica following his funeral Mass at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



An estimated 200,000 people gather in St. Peter’s Square and the neighboring streets to attend the funeral Mass for Pope Francis at the Vatican on April 26. (CNS Photo/Stefano Spaziani, pool)



Cardinals concelebrate the funeral Mass of Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 26. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)



A woman prays during the funeral Mass of Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 26. (OSV News photo/Susana Vera, Reuters)





An estimated 200,000 people gather in St. Peter’s Square and the neighboring streets to attend the funeral Mass for Pope Francis at the Vatican on April 26. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

# Cardinal Re’s homily for the funeral Mass of Pope Francis

(Editor’s note: This is the English translation of the prepared text of the homily, delivered in Italian by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, for the funeral of Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 26. It is provided by the Holy See Press Office and lightly edited for style by OSV News.)

In this majestic St. Peter’s Square, where Pope Francis celebrated the Eucharist so many times and presided over great gatherings during the past 12 years, we are gathered with sad hearts in prayer around his mortal remains. Yet, we are sustained by the certainty of faith, which assures us that human existence does not end in the tomb, but in the Father’s house, in a life of happiness that will know no end.

On behalf of the College of Cardinals, I cordially thank all of you for your presence. With deep emotion, I extend respectful greetings and heartfelt thanks to the heads of state, heads of government and official delegations who have come from many countries to express their affection, veneration and esteem for our late Holy Father.

The outpouring of affection that we have witnessed in recent days following his passing from this Earth into eternity tells us how much the profound pontificate of Pope Francis touched minds and hearts.

The final image we have of him, which will remain etched in our memory, is that of last Sunday, Easter Sunday, when Pope Francis, despite his serious health problems, wanted to give us his blessing from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica. He then came down to this square to greet the large crowd gathered for the Easter Mass while riding in the open-top Popemobile.

With our prayers, we now entrust the soul of our beloved pontiff to God, that he may grant him eternal happiness in the bright and glorious gaze of his immense love.

We are enlightened and guided by the passage of the Gospel, in which the very voice of Christ resounded, asking the first of the Apostles: “Peter, do you love me more than these?” (Jn 21:15). Peter’s answer was prompt and sincere: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you!” (Jn 21:17). Jesus then entrusted him with the great mission: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). This will be the constant task of Peter and his successors, a service of love in the

footsteps of Christ, our Master and Lord, who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).

Despite his frailty and suffering toward the end, Pope Francis chose to follow this path of self-giving until the last day of his earthly life. He followed in the footsteps of his Lord, the Good Shepherd, who loved his sheep to the point of giving his life for them. And he did so with strength and serenity, close to his flock, the Church of God, mindful of the words of Jesus quoted by the Apostle Paul: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

When Cardinal Bergoglio was elected by the conclave on March 13, 2013, to succeed Pope Benedict XVI, he already had many years of experience in religious life in the Society of Jesus and, above all, was enriched by 21 years of pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires [Argentina], first as auxiliary, then as coadjutor and, above all, as archbishop.

The decision to take the name Francis immediately appeared to indicate the pastoral plan and style on which he wanted to base his pontificate, seeking inspiration from the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

He maintained his temperament and form of pastoral leadership, and through his resolute personality, immediately made his mark on the governance of the Church. He established direct contact with individuals and peoples, eager to be close to everyone, with a marked attention to those in difficulty, giving himself without measure, especially to the marginalized, the least among us. He was a pope among the people, with an open heart toward everyone. He was also a pope attentive to the signs of the times and what the Holy Spirit was awakening in the Church.

With his characteristic vocabulary and language, rich in images and metaphors, he always sought to shed light on the problems of our time with the wisdom of the Gospel. He did so by offering a response guided by the light of faith and encouraging us to live as Christians amid the challenges and contradictions in recent years, which he loved to describe as an “epochal change.”

He had great spontaneity and an informal way of addressing everyone, even those far from the Church.

Rich in human warmth and deeply sensitive to today’s challenges, Pope Francis truly shared the anxieties, sufferings and hopes of this time of

globalization. He gave of himself by comforting and encouraging us with a message capable of reaching people’s hearts in a direct and immediate way.

His charisma of welcome and listening, combined with a manner of behavior in keeping with today’s sensitivities, touched hearts and sought to reawaken moral and spiritual sensibilities.

Evangelization was the guiding principle of his pontificate. With a clear missionary vision, he spread the joy of the Gospel, which was the title of his first apostolic exhortation, “*Evangelii Gaudium*.” It is a joy that fills the hearts of all those who entrust themselves to God with confidence and hope.

The guiding thread of his mission was also the conviction that the Church is a home for all, a home with its doors always open. He often used the image of the Church as a “field hospital” after a battle in which many were wounded; a Church determined to take care of the problems of people and the great anxieties that tear the contemporary world apart; a Church capable of bending down to every person, regardless of their beliefs or condition, and healing their wounds.

His gestures and exhortations in favor of refugees and displaced persons are countless. His insistence on working on behalf of the poor was constant.

It is significant that Pope Francis’ first journey was to Lampedusa, an island that symbolizes the tragedy of emigration, with thousands of people drowning at sea. In the same vein was his trip to Lesbos, together with the ecumenical patriarch and the archbishop of Athens, as well as the celebration of a Mass on the border between Mexico and the United States during his journey to Mexico.

Of his 47 arduous apostolic journeys, the one to Iraq in 2021, defying every risk, will remain particularly memorable. That difficult apostolic journey was a balm on the open wounds of the Iraqi people, who had suffered so much from the inhuman actions of ISIS. It was also an important trip for interreligious dialogue, another significant dimension of his pastoral work.

With his 2024 apostolic journey to four countries in Asia-Oceania, the pope reached “the most peripheral periphery of the world.”

Pope Francis always placed the Gospel of mercy at the center, repeatedly emphasizing that God never tires of forgiving us. He always forgives, whatever the situation might be of the

person who asks for forgiveness and returns to the right path.

He called for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in order to highlight that mercy is “the heart of the Gospel.”

Mercy and the joy of the Gospel are two key words for Pope Francis.

In contrast to what he called “the culture of waste,” he spoke of the culture of encounter and solidarity. The theme of fraternity ran through his entire pontificate with vibrant tones. In his encyclical letter “*Fratelli Tutti*,” he wanted to revive a worldwide aspiration to fraternity, because we are all children of the same Father who is in heaven. He often forcefully reminded us that we all belong to the same human family.

In 2019, during his trip to the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis signed “A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” recalling the common fatherhood of God.

Addressing men and women throughout the world, in his encyclical letter “*Laudato Si’*” he drew attention to our duties and shared responsibility for our common home, stating, “No one is saved alone.”

Faced with the raging wars of recent years, with their inhuman horrors and countless deaths and destruction, Pope Francis incessantly raised his voice imploring peace and calling for reason and honest negotiation to find possible solutions. War, he said, results in the death of people and the destruction of homes, hospitals and schools. War always leaves the world worse than it was before: It is always a painful and tragic defeat for everyone.

“Build bridges, not walls” was an exhortation he repeated many times, and his service of faith as successor of the Apostle Peter always was linked to the service of humanity in all its dimensions. Spiritually united with all of Christianity, we are here in large numbers to pray for Pope Francis, that God may welcome him into the immensity of his love.

Pope Francis used to conclude his speeches and meetings by saying, “Do not forget to pray for me.”

Dear Pope Francis, we now ask you to pray for us. May you bless the Church, bless Rome, and bless the whole world from heaven as you did last Sunday [April 20] from the balcony of this basilica in a final embrace with all the people of God, but also embrace humanity that seeks the truth with a sincere heart and holds high the torch of hope. †



# Pope’s emphasis on care for creation spurs work in environmental advocacy

By Sean Gallagher

On March 13, 2013, John Mundell was driving to his home in Indianapolis from South Bend, Ind., when he heard the news that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires had been elected pope and had taken the name Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi.

“My heart literally jumped out of my body as tears came to my eyes while pulling over to the nearest parking lot,” Mundell recalled. “I got out with the car still running, jumping up and down while circling the car with fists pumping over my head.”

He had such a strong reaction because, at that moment, he “had this deep feeling that something wonderful was going to happen as a result of this name of the new pope.”

By that time, Mundell had worked as an environmental consultant for about 30 years. He had also, as a member of the Catholic lay movement Focolare, been involved with the Church at the local, national and international levels in efforts to create a more just society and economy for people in need.

But his passion for the care of creation had not been brought into the mix.

Now, with the name of a saint so well known for his love of creation being taken by the new pope, Mundell thought that he might in the future be able to bring his faith and his knowledge of environmental science together in service to the Church.

Little did he know just how much he’d be called to do.

Almost as soon as Pope Francis issued his encyclical letter “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home” in 2015, Mundell, at first through Focolare, started working with various Vatican officials and leaders in faith communities, businesses, education and governments around the world in seeking to implement the principles of the teaching document.

In 2022, Mundell was appointed the global director of the Holy See’s *Laudato Si’* Action Platform, an organization that helps individuals and organizations around the world take concrete action in caring for creation.

“I had a premonition that something was going to happen that may involve the work I was doing,” said Mundell, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. “But I never thought that I would be involved at this level.”

Mundell is one among many people across central and southern Indiana whose lives have been shaped during the past 12 years by Pope Francis’ development of the Church’s teachings on the care for creation and its connection to the care for those in need.

Parishes, schools and religious communities across the archdiocese have taken actions since the issuing of “*Laudato Si’*” to make care for creation a part of the ordinary way they operate, encouraging other communities and individuals along the way to do the same.

Mundell, Benedictine Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick and Franciscan Sister Susan Marie Pleiss recently spoke with *The Criterion* about these efforts and the effect that Pope Francis had on bringing faith together with environmental advocacy.

### ‘A paradigm shift’

Sister Susan Marie credits her parents for instilling in her more than 50 years ago a passion for care for creation.

“[They] were both avid gardeners, recyclers, and champions of public spaces like parks,” she recalled. “I still remember marching down the street with a homemade sign as a seventh-grader at Immaculate

Conception School in Dayton, Ohio, on the very first Earth Day celebration on April 22, 1970.”

In her life as a member of the Oldenburg Franciscans, Sister Susan Marie had long been involved in her community’s Care of Creation Task Force, promoting a range of initiatives to further respect for the environment.

But when Pope Francis issued “*Laudato Si’*,” a “paradigm shift” occurred for her when she saw the pope connect “care for the Earth with care for the poor.”

She quoted the pope’s encyclical to shed light on this: “We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor” (#49).

Sister Susan Marie looks to youths and young adults to put further into action in the years to come the pope’s principles on care for creation.



Sr. Susan Marie Pleiss, O.S.F.

woke up to the global ecological crisis to actually begin to make significant and lasting changes in their lifestyles.”

### Learning a new language

Sister Sheila Marie, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Been Grove, also had a love for the care of creation planted in her heart from a young age. And it was a desire she brought with her when she entered religious life.



Sr. Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, O.S.B.

“I looked immediately for ways that the community conserved and sought out new ways that I could help,” she said. “When like-minded people from different organizations and churches in the city came together, I wanted to take part.”

That led Sister Sheila Marie to become a member of the archdiocese’s Care of Creation Ministry, which was formed after the issuing of “*Laudato Si’*.”

The encyclical, and the pope’s 2023 apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis, “*Laudate Deum*,” gave Sister Sheila Marie “the language that I have always sensed, of the interconnectedness of all of creation, of integral ecology, and the need for us humans to change our ways.”



John Mundell, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis, greets Pope Francis during a June 2024 meeting at the Vatican. He serves as the global director of the Vatican’s *Laudato Si’* Action Platform. (Submitted photo)

“The pope’s teaching has continued to challenge me to be an advocate for the created world and all creatures,” she added.

Pope Francis’ integration of the Church’s teaching on care for creation with a broader moral theology gave a deeper foundation to her previous convictions about the environment.

“I have come to a deeper awareness of our role and responsibilities as human beings,” Sister Sheila Marie said. “We are at the top of the pyramid. Jesus tells us the first shall be last.

“We have a grave responsibility to serve and care for creation. I pray that Pope Francis’ lasting legacy will lie in the actions that people across the world take to change our culture of consumption by making the necessary sacrifices and take responsible actions to allow all of God’s creation to thrive.”

### A ‘mark that won’t go away’

During the past nearly 10 years in which he has been involved in promoting the teachings of “*Laudato Si’*,” Mundell has visited the Vatican on many occasions. He last visited Pope Francis in December.

As a result of those meetings, he came to have a great respect for the hard work that the relatively few people who work at the Vatican do to care for the Church around the world. He also experienced that his expertise as a lay Catholic was highly valued, even when he was the only lay person in the room.

“I was listened to,” Mundell said. “A lot of people didn’t have the environmental background that I did. There was a trust in me there, and it helped me realize that the Church is a Church for everyone. Every person can make a contribution.”

Now that Pope Francis has died, Mundell is filled with “an immense gratitude” for him and his ministry as the Church’s universal pastor and a hope that his teachings on care for creation, rooted firmly in the Gospel, will continue on well into the future.

“It changes you forever,” Mundell said. “It allows you to have resiliency, strength and faith. We can overcome a lot of difficulties. The vision of the Gospel that is there is something worth dying for. It is. I’m so grateful that it’s left its mark that won’t go away.”

(For more information on the archdiocesan Creation Care Ministry, go to [ourcommonhome.org](https://ourcommonhome.org).) †

## ACUTIS

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Father Eshshaki described it as “a once-in-a-lifetime moment for us.

“A lot of our people were very confused, and they were sad that there was going to be no canonization,” he said. “But seeing the events that we’re able to participate in now is such a beautiful and amazing thing—that we get to come and bid farewell to Pope Francis, our spiritual father of the Church, and to also pray with the Church as we await a new pontiff.”

The Lynch family—Jordan and Katie, with their four boys Micah, Jackson, Caleb and James—from Denver, Colo., also had planned their trip to Rome for Blessed Carlo’s canonization. The turn of events meant they instead spent Friday

afternoon waiting in line to see Pope Francis one last time.

“It was a beautiful experience,” said Katie Lynch.

Jordan Lynch recounted how coming to Rome on a previous trip and going on the *Scavi* tour—the guided tour into the excavations under St. Peter’s Basilica, where lie the bones of St. Peter the Apostle, the first pope—played a big role in his conversion to Catholicism.

“Seeing [then] that the Church was truly built where St. Peter was and is, and now to see the succession all the way through Pope Francis, was really powerful,” he said. “Then to know that my boys are walking right in front of me and experiencing it with me was very special.”

The four boys also enjoyed the visit.

“I’ve never been in St. Peter’s Basilica before, so that was really crazy to me because I’ve only seen pictures of it, and

seeing it up close is really special,” said Jackson Lynch, 11. “And then seeing Pope Francis’ body was next level. It was hard to believe that this was happening.”

Not everyone was pivoting, though. Some were just fortunate.

Daniela Rodriguez, 23, from Inglewood, Calif., had planned a vacation to Rome with her sister for this week not centered around a Vatican event. The death of the pope changed their experience.

“There’s no other sensation like it,” Rodriguez told OSV News, after waiting in line for three hours. “It was ethereal. Everyone just really just wanted to pay their respects to the pope because of how amazing he was.”

Wrapping up the gelato break, Archbishop Pérez reflected on how Holy Week and the Easter Triduum, with their rapid arc from tears to triumph, provide

the model for balancing grief and joy amid the sudden changes of life.

“As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, [he showed] the only way through it is through it,” Archbishop Pérez said. “And what I reflected a lot this past Holy Week was his strength, his boldness, and his courage.”

Archbishop Pérez and Santiago noted that their group still intended to continue after the papal funeral to Assisi, Italy, where Blessed Carlo’s remains lie encased in glass for public veneration at the Church of St. Mary Major. St. Francis of Assisi, whose name the late pope took upon his election to the papacy in 2013, lies in the town’s basilica.

Santiago said the pilgrims are letting God be their tour guide.

“If this is God’s will at this moment for us, then we’re going to embrace it and enter fully into it,” said Santiago. †



# Ecumenical, interfaith leaders saw pope as a humble bridge builder

By Sean Gallagher

In 2004, Dr. Robert Welsh was serving as the president of the Council on Christian Unity for the Indianapolis-based Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and



Dr. Robert Welsh

was taking part in an ecumenical meeting in Buenos Aires.

He and the other participants were taken to the residence of the Catholic archbishop of the capital of Argentina to meet with them him, but he wasn’t there.

About 15 minutes after they arrived, there was a knock on the front door. Seeking entrance was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, the archbishop of Buenos Aires at the time.

“He had chosen not to live in the residence but in an apartment in a modest neighborhood,” Welsh recalled in a recent interview with *The Criterion*. “And he walked there. He didn’t come in a limousine. He greeted each of us.

“It was unbelievable, his humility, his honesty. He was very simple.”

Welsh was then astonished when nearly a decade later Cardinal Bergoglio was elected pope.

“It was absolutely amazing,” he said. “I was thrilled.”

Welsh, leaders of other faith communities in Indianapolis and Father Rick Ginther, director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs, spoke with *The Criterion* about how Pope Francis built bridges among faith communities around the world and fostered peace and mutual respect among all peoples.

## The power of an ‘act of humility’

Welsh, now the president emeritus of the Council on Christian Unity for the Disciples of Christ, met Pope Francis on various occasions after he became bishop of Rome in 2013.

His impressions of the new pope were consistent with those he had when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Welsh was an ecumenical observer at a meeting of the Synod of Bishops in 2015. During a break in a meeting, the pope invited Welsh to come with him to get coffee. As they entered the room together, there were several bishops in line seeking the same thing. They all deferred to the pope, offering to let him go first.

“‘And he said, ‘Oh no. Please, you all go ahead,’ ” Welsh recalled.

For Welsh, that simple “act of humility” was impressive. “He never thought that he was special and should get special

treatment. That is how I most remember him, for his humility, his solidarity with the rest of humanity and his graciousness.”

About a year later, Welsh was back in Rome for an ecumenical meeting and attended a general audience of the pope. After the audience, the pope came and greeted him and other meeting attendees, along with people suffering from illnesses and disabilities and couples who had recently been married.

Welsh recalled how attentive Pope Francis was to everyone, each of them coming to the audience for different reasons.

“He was present with each one of his sheep,” Welsh remembered. “He was there to meet their needs. He acknowledged who that person was. He cared about people. He was more of a shepherd than somebody who thought of himself higher than others.”

For Welsh, this way that Pope Francis was present to others was a witness of how people of all faiths should act.

“He tried to give a witness to what he thought others should be doing,” Welsh said. “You can’t dictate that. He couldn’t issue an executive order to have everybody be nice to everybody else. Just by his example, he showed what it meant.

“‘At the end of the day, we’re all in this together, and we need to learn the humility that treats one another with respect. It’s not about who’s got positions of power or what your title is. I think that influenced my own ministry as I moved forward.”

## A breath of ‘fresh air’

Michael Saahir, imam of the Nur-Allah Islamic Center on Indianapolis’ east side, met Pope Francis less than a year ago on June 3, 2024, while in Rome for an interfaith dialogue meeting sponsored by Focolare, an international lay movement in the Church.

“This encounter was special because the overall audience included individuals of every major faith in the world, yet Pope Francis’ openness and warmth was freely extended to everyone,” Saahir recalled. “This display of inclusiveness by Pope Francis was and is very encouraging.”

Saahir said that Pope Francis, like the name of the Argentine city in which he was born and later served as archbishop, Buenos Aires, “represented hope and the aspiration of ‘fresh air’ to people the world over—a renewal of our souls and spirits—especially through mutually respectful dialogue.”

The Muslim leader in the Black community in Indianapolis also appreciated the pope’s efforts at promoting peace around the world.

“He spoke out for reconciliation and justice in Gaza and Israel as well as in

other challenged areas such as the Balkans, Sudan, Ukraine and many other countries around the world,” Saahir said. “If other world leaders readily displayed the moral courage shown by Pope Francis, our world would be a much better place to live in.”

## ‘May his memory be a blessing’

Rabbi Aaron Spiegel serves as the executive director of the Greater Indianapolis Multifaith Alliance. He spoke of how Pope Francis’ respect for people of other faiths was deeply rooted within himself.

“Francis seemed to relate to other faith communities the same way he related to all—as fellow human beings, inherently valuable, inherently complete and as if all are created in the image of the Divine,” Spiegel said.

“‘He didn’t have to ‘outreach’ to other faith communities since he seemed to simply accept us.” Spiegel also appreciated the pope’s concern for the poor and those in need, something he said is emphasized in his Jewish faith and that of other faith communities around the world.

“My tradition demands that, rather than ‘do’ justice, I must ‘be’ justice,” he said. “Francis emulated this with humility, openness, grace and compassion, the key attributes of one who lives one’s faith.”

Upon Pope Francis’ death on April 21, Spiegel expressed his prayer that the pope would live on in the hearts of Catholics around the world.

“‘In Judaism, we believe that eternal life is based on memory,” he said. “When we mention someone who’s died, we say ‘*zichronah livrachah*,’ ‘may his memory be a blessing.’ I hope that for my Catholic brothers and sisters, Pope Francis’ memory is truly a blessing.”

## ‘He planted so many seeds’

Father Rick Ginther began his leadership of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in



Michael Saahir, imam of the Nur-Allah Islamic Center in Indianapolis, greets Pope Francis on June 3, 2024, at the Vatican during an interfaith dialogue meeting held in Rome. (Submitted photo)

2012, the year before Pope Francis was elected as bishop of Rome.

He’s found encouragement in this ministry through the pope’s putting such a high priority on building bridges among

other Christians and people of various faiths through his 12 years as pontiff.

“‘It was encouraging and uplifting,” said Father Ginther, who also ministers as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. “In all of his encyclicals

and writings, Pope Francis referred to all people of faith, not just Catholics. I found that very encouraging. That’s really what we’re supposed to be about, encouraging each other.”

He saw the pope’s Jesuit background as the foundation for his ecumenical and interfaith efforts.

“‘He was a missionary,” Father Ginther said. “The Jesuits are typically noted for cultivating relationships with other faiths, other Christians and even those who have no specific faith tradition. That’s just part of what Jesuits do.”

Father Ginther believes that Pope Francis’ bridge-building efforts will continue to have a positive effect on the Church’s relationship with other Christians and people of other faith traditions in the years to come.

“‘He planted so many seeds of good relationships and listening,” said Father Ginther. “That’s just not going to go away. Especially for those of us who have to deal with divisiveness on so many other fronts in our culture and among nations, it’s a breath of hope that he breathed into us in Christ. It’s going to keep going.” †

# Pope spent pontificate going to peripheries; at funeral, they came to him

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—When Pope Francis was elected as the first Latin American pontiff, he said his brother cardinals went out of their way to pick someone from the “ends of the Earth.”

He spent the rest of his pontificate going back to those peripheries, traveling to more than 65 nations, preferring those that were poor, marginalized, forgotten and scarred by war. Then the peripheries came to him on the day of his funeral in St. Peter’s Square.

More than 160 nations sent delegations on April 26, headed by kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, government officials and ambassadors.

Several nations were geographically far-flung, like the South Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

Many were nations on the fringes of the world’s attention, where the pope never visited, including Iceland, El Salvador, Angola, Gabon, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Togo, Zimbabwe, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Qatar, Oman and Vietnam.

All the countries the pope visited in his 12-year pontificate were represented except Kazakhstan and South Korea, according to the list of confirmed delegations the Vatican press office released late on April 25.

The nations on the peripheries the pope visited that came to Rome to return the honor included: Albania, Timor-Leste, Cuba, Madagascar, Central African Republic, Congo, South Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique, Morocco, Mongolia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, the Philippines, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Palestine and many others.

But of course, political elites and nations at the center of power were present, too: U.S. President Donald J. Trump and his wife Melania, French President Emmanuel Macron, Argentine President Javier Milei, Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Britain’s Prince William and Mary Simon, the governor-general of Canada.

Delegations also were present from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Sudan. Taiwan was represented by Chen Chien-jen, who served as vice president and premier of Taiwan. Only a dozen countries, including Vatican City State, officially recognize Taiwan as an independent sovereign state while China maintains its claim over the island.

Vatican protocol for a papal funeral places cardinals, bishops and ecumenical delegates to the left of the casket and heads of state to the right.

Of the nearly 40 ecumenical delegates, there were Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople; Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, head of external Church relations for the Moscow Patriarchate; Catholicos Karekin II, the patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church; as well as representatives of the Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Evangelical communities.

Protocol also determines the seating arrangements within the VIP section for political leaders. The large delegations from Italy and Argentina, the pope’s home

country, were in the front row, followed by royalty, then international leaders in order of political hierarchy and in alphabetical order of their country’s name in French.

That meant U.S. President Trump was nowhere near Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Representing “*États-Unis*,” Trump was invited to sit near Estonia, Finland and France.

World leaders had a chance to pray at the pope’s closed casket in the basilica before the funeral started. Zelenskyy and Trump sat down briefly for a “very productive” talk, according to the White House. Zelenskyy said on the social media platform Telegram it was a “good meeting. One-on-one, we managed to discuss a lot. We hope for a result from all the things that were said.”

The “very symbolic meeting,” he said, “has the potential to become historic if we achieve joint results. Thank you, President Donald Trump!” A photo of Zelenskyy, Trump, Macron and Starmer meeting and speaking together in the basilica was also published on social media.

Nonetheless, the complex seating arrangements for the funeral meant many traditional enemies and nations at war were not seated near each other.

For example, Zelenskyy, who is a head of state, was seated ahead of Russia’s representative, Olga Lyubimova, who is the minister of culture.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohamed Mustafa was also seated far from Israel’s ambassador to the Vatican, Yaron Sideman, who attended even though official



# Universal school choice crosses the finish line in Indiana

By Victoria Arthur

All Hoosier families will have access to school choice beginning in the 2026-27 academic year after a dramatic conclusion to the 2025 legislative session and



the passage of Indiana’s next two-year budget. Following a marathon session at the Statehouse extending to 1:30 a.m. on April 25, the Indiana General Assembly passed a biennial \$45 billion budget that Gov. Mike Braun said will “keep Indiana among the top states in the nation to raise a family,” and “empower parents to take the lead in their children’s education.”

Nearly half of the budget supports K-12 education statewide, including a provision to expand school choice eligibility to 100% of Indiana families with no restrictions beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

Advocates for school choice, including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and its allies, hailed the milestone following years of effort.

“We did it—we got it across the finish line,” said John Elcesser, executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA), which represents the state’s more than 400 non-public schools, including Indiana’s 175 Catholic schools. “It took everybody, including principals and families who traveled to Indianapolis to testify in front of committees. This was truly a team effort, and now very soon all families in Indiana will have the ability to choose the school that they believe is the right fit for their child.”

In the last budget year, 2023, the Indiana General Assembly expanded school choice eligibility to 97% of families statewide. While advocates celebrated the move to near-universal school choice for Indiana, they continued to point to the administrative burden that has remained for both families and schools to determine income eligibility for participating.

Now, beginning in year two of the new biennial budget, the income cap will be removed entirely on Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program, more commonly known as the voucher program.

This will allow every Indiana family to take 90% of the portion of the state’s budget allotted for their children to attend their local public school and apply it to tuition at a non-public school if they choose, according to Elcesser. At the conclusion of his 18th and final legislative session at the helm of the INPEA, he described the journey to universal school choice as a rollercoaster ride to the end.

While the Indiana House of Representatives had included universal school choice in its proposed budget early in the legislative session, the Indiana

Senate did not in its version, amid cost concerns. More recently, the state revenue forecast projected a \$2.4 billion budget shortfall for the next three years, further complicating the picture.

“The revenue forecast put a cloud over what we thought we were going to be able to accomplish,” Elcesser said. “But we were still hopeful. We knew we had strong support in the governor’s office and strong support among House leadership. Even with the challenging economic forecast, we were still hearing that the commitment [to universal school choice] was there.”

Ultimately, in the final hours of the legislative session, lawmakers agreed to include universal choice in the budget, although they postponed implementation by one year to save costs. The new biennial budget includes a 2% increase in state tuition support across all K-12 education, which will also have a positive impact on school voucher amounts.

“A lot of important items in the budget took cuts, but we are thankful that K-12 education did not,” said Elcesser, whose organization has always emphasized that Indiana needs strong public schools because they educate the majority of the state’s children. “For many years, the General Assembly has said that we fund students, not systems, and the newly passed state budget reflects that.”

The ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana and a longtime ally of the INPEA, shared in the advocacy efforts to attain universal school choice.

“We believe in parental choice in education,” said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, in a recent podcast. “It’s a fundamental right that parents have, and the Church has had this understanding for much longer than our modern debates over school choice. Equally so, we also want public schools to thrive because we know that there are countless Catholic and non-Catholic students alike who go to public schools.”

Universal school choice was among numerous priorities for the ICC in the 2025 legislative session.

“Like any session of the Indiana General Assembly, we work to promote the common good and encourage lawmaking that aligns with the moral law,” said Mingus, who just completed his first legislative session at the helm of the ICC. “We are grateful for many good outcomes this session. In addition to reaching universal school choice, we welcome the defeat of expansions to predatory lending and punitive approaches to homelessness and immigration.”

A number of legislative maneuvers aimed at criminalizing homelessness in Indiana ultimately failed at the Statehouse. These efforts, which would have prohibited camping in public spaces and resulted in misdemeanor charges



**‘A lot of important items in the budget took cuts, but we are thankful that K-12 education did not. For many years, the General Assembly has said that we fund students, not systems, and the newly passed state budget reflects that.’**

—John Elcesser, executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association

for repeated violations, were backed by a Texas-based think tank that has had legislative successes in other states.

The ICC and other advocates for the poor had spoken strongly against the many iterations of this legislation and welcomed their defeat in Indiana.

“In these times of economic volatility, the most vulnerable Hoosiers and the community organizations that serve them can sleep a little better knowing their elected officials chose not to force local law enforcement to fine and jail people just for not being able to afford a place to lay their heads,” said Andrew Bradley, senior director of policy and strategy for Prosperity Indiana and a steering committee member for the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition.

Another measure that had posed concern to the ICC and its allies was House Bill 1174, which would have expanded predatory lending in Indiana. The legislation proposed new loan products with triple-digit annual percentage rates (APRs)—well above the 72% APR that Indiana currently considers criminal loansharking.

The ICC had issued an action alert on the bill, urging the Catholic faithful to contact their lawmakers to oppose the measure, which ultimately stalled in the Senate.

“Without further amendments and guardrails, this bill would have exploited the poor, who too often turn to high-interest loans and then become entrapped in a cycle of debt,” said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC. “We are grateful to everyone who reached out to their legislators on this and other issues that have an impact on the most vulnerable people in our state.”

Another victory for the ICC was the defeat of House Bill 1044, which would have legalized the so-called “water cremation” process of alkaline hydrolysis as an additional service that could be offered by the funeral industry in Indiana. Proponents wanted Indiana to become the 29th state to offer this option, which involves dissolution of a deceased body by water and a chemical solution instead of fire.

The ICC was the lone voice of opposition to the bill, with Mingus testifying at the Statehouse about the

Catholic Church’s views concerning proper reverence and respect for the deceased and how alkaline hydrolysis did not meet these criteria. The measure passed the House, but did not move forward in the Senate.

One measure that the ICC had hoped would advance at the Statehouse was House Bill 1030, which aimed at eradicating capital punishment in Indiana. A Catholic lawmaker, Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), had authored the bill following the first execution carried out by the state of Indiana in 15 years.

The ICC had helped to arrange a press briefing highlighting the bill early in the legislative session, bringing together bishops, other advocates and a bipartisan group of state lawmakers.

Despite the measure not moving forward this year, leaders of the ICC expressed hope for increased attention on the death penalty as a pro-life issue in the future, particularly with another state execution scheduled. The Indiana Supreme Court recently set May 20 as an execution date for death-row inmate Benjamin Ritchie.

Mingus and LaCoursiere said that the long history of Catholic social teaching will continue to serve as the ICC’s guide on the death penalty and other issues, including the just treatment of migrants and the undocumented population in Indiana.

“The dignity of the human person, so beautifully articulated in 2,000 years of Catholic social doctrine, will always serve as the basis for our position on important issues and legislation in our state,” Mingus said. “We call on the Catholic faithful and all people of good will to join us in speaking for the marginalized and most vulnerable among us.”

To follow priority legislation and issues of the ICC, visit [www.indianacc.org](http://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.) †*

## The next Holy Father: Candidates abound, but certainty does not

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—After the funeral and burial of Pope Francis on April 26, the attention of the world turned to who would be the next pope.

The news media, blogs, pundits and people on the street all seem to have their favorite candidate or a list of “probable” next popes, but the College of Cardinals as a whole does not.

The conclave to elect a new pope is scheduled to begin on May 7 in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican.

The cardinals who were in Rome when Pope Francis died on April 21 began meeting in general congregation the next morning. Each day, more cardinals arrived.

The general congregation is open to all cardinals, including those who are over 80 years of age and not eligible to enter the conclave to vote for a new pope.

The general congregation handles important matters in the continued operation of the Roman Curia, but it also is the place where cardinals from across the globe have an opportunity to speak about the needs of the Church and the world and the kind of person who could respond to those challenges as pope.

In the four daily general congregation meetings before Pope Francis’ funeral, 67 cardinals spoke during the “shared reflection on the Church and the

world,” according to Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office. Another 20 spoke in the morning on April 28.

Comments from cardinals who elected Pope Benedict in 2005 and Pope Francis in 2013 indicated that the final vote depended largely on what they had said during those pre-conclave meetings. Pope Benedict’s prominent role as dean of the college during the “*sede vacante*” following St. John Paul II’s death also gave him a platform for speaking out about the needs of the Church.

Most lists of the “*papabile*” or potential popes were compiled while Pope Francis was alive and have nothing to do with the current discussions in the general congregation.

In fact, as the cardinals arrived in Rome and joined the meetings, they were required to take an oath to “promise, pledge and swear, as a body and individually,” to observe the rules for the meeting and the coming conclave and “to maintain rigorous secrecy with regard to all matters in any way related to the election of the Roman Pontiff.”

The lists compiled and published before Pope Francis’ funeral had five names in common:

—Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, 70, Vatican secretary of state under Pope Francis.

—Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, 67, who had been pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization.

—Hungarian Cardinal Peter Erdo, 72, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest.

—Italian Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, 60, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem.

—French Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, 66, archbishop of Marseille.

When Pope Francis was hospitalized in March, Catholic News Service spoke about the process of electing a new pope with Kurt Martens, a professor of canon law at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Making lists of “*papabile*,” he said, “is a nice hobby.”

The lists, Martens said, usually are prompted by the concerns and viewpoint of the person making the list.


But to know “who is a possible pope in the eyes of the cardinals,” he said, “you have to ask yourself the question: What are they looking for? How do they look at the Church and the world today? And what is the best profile of someone to become a pope then?” †



Investing with Faith/Fr. Eric Augenstein

Gifts to vocations endowments help form our future priests

Being a priest is complicated. At heart, the priestly vocation is a call from God to stand in the person of Christ and serve the people of a local community.



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The Church takes seriously her responsibility to form healthy and integrated priests who can mediate Christ’s presence through word, sacraments and pastoral ministry. We are committed to providing our seminarians with a rich variety of experiences that help prepare them for the complex life of a priest.

The Vocations and Seminarian Endowments through the archdiocesan

Catholic Community Foundation help us make this formation possible.

Take the summers, for instance. It can be tempting to imagine the life of a seminarian as being spent entirely within the walls of the seminary, taking classes, praying, living and working together. But there is much of priestly formation that happens outside the formal seminary setting, especially during the summer months.

This summer, many of our seminarians will be living in rectories and ministering full time in our parishes. Others will be spending the summer in Cuernavaca, Mexico, participating in a Spanish language and cultural immersion. Two of our seminarians will be deepening their spiritual lives at the Institute for Priestly Formation in Omaha, Neb.

A group of our men will spend extended time this summer serving the poor in our local communities. And we often have seminarians working in hospitals in the summer months

as chaplain interns. These summer formation programs supplement the ongoing human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation that takes place in our seminaries.

So where do our endowments come in? We are blessed in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to have several endowments that support seminarian education and formation. In addition, we receive support from the United Catholic Appeal and an annual second collection in our parishes for seminarian education.

These three funding sources provide the financial resources needed to form the future priests of our archdiocese, from seminary tuition to summer Spanish language courses, from spiritual retreats to hospital chaplaincy programs. Our endowments ensure that we have a consistent source of financial support for these formation ministries. They have become an ongoing gift to our local Church in providing solid and faithful formation for our seminarians.

During the seven or eight years

of seminary formation, it costs about \$350,000 to educate and form one priest for our archdiocese. No one person can fund this on their own. The generous support of many people throughout our archdiocese makes this priestly formation possible.

I invite you to prayerfully consider if a planned gift to an endowment might be one way you can support our future priests and help build up the Church in central and southern Indiana. Our seminarians will be better priests because of the formation provided through your generosity.

*(Father Eric Augenstein is archdiocesan director of seminarians. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. For more information on the Catholic Community Foundation, visit [www.archindy.org/CCF](http://www.archindy.org/CCF), e-mail [ccf@archindy.org](mailto:ccf@archindy.org), or call 317-236-1482.)* †

PERIPHERIES

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representatives of Israel are normally prohibited from participating in formal activities on the Jewish Sabbath.

“In this case, an exception was granted because of its importance,” Sideman told Ansa, the Italian wire service, on April 24. “Israel attaches great importance to expressing its condolences and joining the Catholic world in mourning the passing of the pontiff.”

Even though alphabetically close, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are locked in an ethnic and territorial conflict over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, were seated far apart since Armenia sent its president and

Azerbaijan sent the speaker of its national assembly.

Because he is not an active head of state, former U.S. President Joe Biden, a Catholic, was seated in a separate VIP section and not near Trump.

In another section, numerous representatives of other religions were present such as Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Muslims and Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, the chief rabbi of Rome.

The presence of so many world leaders at Pope Francis’ funeral and their praise and accolades after his death on April 21 sparked accusations of hypocrisy, especially in Italy, where the government has taken a hard line against immigration.

Achille Occhetto, an Italian politician, said, “Now that Francis is dead, all the floggers of migrants, champions

against welcoming, in short, all shades of bullies and authoritarians in the world, pretend to bow to him.”

Cardinal Domenico Battaglia of Naples told the Italian daily, *La Repubblica*, on April 26, “There is a risk of beatifying him in words, only to forget him in deeds.”

Pope Francis “spoke plainly: without mincing words as all prophets do,” he said. The cardinal compared the situation to King Herod and John the Baptist. Herod “welcomed him, listened to him and then did the opposite of what John preached.”

The pope’s funeral provided a rare opportunity for enemies and friends to come together as one and be reminded of his invitation to “build bridges and not walls.” But he also warned that the world needed action and not words. †





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# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Pope’s burial place is a church dedicated to Mary the Mother of God

By D.D. Emmons

(OSV News)—Each year on Aug. 5, the Church commemorates the dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major (in Italian, *Santa Maria Maggiore*), one of the five great ancient basilicas in Rome, and the place where Pope Francis chose to be entombed.

Why would that event be a feast day for the universal Church? What is our connection to the dedication of a building that took place in Italy more than 1,500 years ago?

The history of this Church is rooted in the role of Mary as the Mother of God. Its story begins with a fourth-century tradition.

According to it, a wealthy couple who were childless lived in Rome around 350. It was their choice that, upon their death, their earthly possessions would be used to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. They prayed earnestly for divine guidance. Mary appeared to the husband in a dream, requesting that a church be built for her on a site where snow would fall in midsummer.

The couple quickly reported Mary’s request to Pope Liberius (who served as bishop of Rome from 352-366). He claimed to have had a similar dream. On Aug. 5, at the height of the summer heat, snow miraculously fell on the Esquiline Hill in Rome specifically where the church would later be built.

Here, the tradition concludes, was built one of the earliest Christian churches in honor of the Virgin Mary. It was called the Liberian Basilica after Pope Liberius.

Archaeological and other evidence suggests that the tradition has no historical basis. No mention is made of the story until several hundred years later. Even the dedicatory inscription of St. Sixtus III, placed on the church in the fifth century, says nothing about it.

Nevertheless, this basilica, rebuilt and magnificently adorned through the centuries, has been a rallying point for popes and lay Catholics, for Romans and pilgrims alike, to venerate the maternity and life of the Blessed Mother.

Extensive reconstruction and expansion of the original basilica took place following the ecumenical Council of Ephesus held in 431. That assembly dealt with a controversy in the Church about Christ having both a divine and human nature.

Nestorius, who had become the patriarch of Constantinople in 428, had used his prominent position to preach the heretical doctrine that Mary was only the Mother of Christ (in Greek, “*Christotokos*”), not the Mother of God (in Greek, “*Theotokos*”; literally, “God-bearer”).

He and others claimed that there were two separate persons, one human and one divine, within Jesus Christ; and that the human person Mary bore—who was crucified, died, buried and resurrected—was not divine.

Consequently, Nestorius and his followers argued that Mary could not be called “Mother of God,” because she

was the mother only of the human person in Jesus, not the divine Person.

Leading the opposition to the Nestorian heresy was St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt. Cyril helped to clarify the Church’s understanding that Jesus is not two persons. Rather, he was born one person in whom are united two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. That one person is the divine, eternal Son of God.

When Mary gave birth to the Word made flesh, she was giving birth to that one divine Person in two natures. Accordingly, Mary is rightfully called the Mother of God.

This controversy was brought to a head at the council in Ephesus during June and July of 431. Nearly 200 bishops gathered there. They deposed Nestorius and declared that Mary is truly the Mother of God.

The decision of the council was widely acclaimed and increased the veneration of Mary throughout Christendom. In her *Magnificat*, Mary had said, “All generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48). Now, and for all eternity, not only would she be called blessed, but she would be duly known by the name of highest dignity, Mother of God.

Though the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius and the heresy he promoted, the controversy continued to fester. Accordingly, Pope St. Sixtus III (who died in 440), who became pope one year after the council ended, immediately began to rebuild the Liberian Basilica. Upon completion of the renovations, he dedicated it to Mary, the Mother of God.

This action by Pope Sixtus further affirmed the Holy See’s approval of the council’s dogmatic declaration in Ephesus. It also linked forever this Roman basilica to Our Lady’s divine motherhood.

For a while the basilica was known as St. Mary of the Crib after it obtained a relic of the Holy Crib, believed to be the one in which Jesus was laid at his nativity. This relic was carried to Rome by Christian refugees from the Holy Land fleeing the Muslim invasion of the seventh century. The basilica still hosts a procession of the Holy Crib every year on Christmas Day.

Upon his election in 1566, Pope St. Pius V had the responsibility to implement and enforce the decisions of the Council of Trent (which met in sessions from 1545-1563). They included condemnation of Protestant errors and affirmation of Mary as the Mother of God. In response to the Protestant Reformation, renewed and increased Marian devotion began to spread among the Catholic faithful.

Seeking to perpetuate this renewal, Pope Pius introduced the feast of the Dedication of the Church of Our Lady of the Snows onto the Church’s liturgical calendar, which further emphasized and continually honored the divine motherhood of Mary. While such a feast day had long been observed locally in Rome, it was not part of the universal calendar until 1568.

To commemorate this event, each year on Aug. 5 white rose petals are dropped from the basilica’s ceiling during the festive Mass.

The basilica was fully restored and renovated in the 18th century. Its present façade and most of its interior decorations date from this period. Even so, it still contains elements from its ancient beginnings, including a number of marble columns and several fifth-century mosaics. It also features a 240-foot medieval bell tower, the highest in Rome.

The church finally was named St. Mary Major because it is the largest and most eminent of all the 26 churches now in Rome named in honor of the Blessed Mother.



People gather on June 2, 2024, outside the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome for Benediction at the end of a *Corpus Christi* procession from Basilica of St. John Lateran, also in Rome. Pope Francis, who died on April 21, was buried at his request in the basilica, which dates back to the fourth century. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

In 1969, following the Second Vatican Council, the name of the Aug. 5 celebration was revised to “The Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major.”

Simultaneously, the feast was identified as an optional memorial, meaning the celebration is not obligatory but at the discretion of the priest celebrating Mass. The feast day is always observed in Rome.

Since St. Mary Major is a patriarchal basilica, it contains a papal altar used only by the pope himself or a priest to whom he has given special permission. Customarily, the pope celebrates Mass here each year on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Aug. 15.

Some relics of the true cross are preserved in the church, housed in a 14th-century cross-shaped reliquary. An urn on the altar contains the relics of St. Matthew and other martyrs of ancient times.

St. Jerome (c. 341-420), a doctor of the Church who first translated the entire Bible into Latin, is buried here. Several popes are buried here as well, including the aforementioned St. Pius V. The most recent was Pope Clement IX, buried in 1669.

Pope Francis said he wanted to be buried at St. Mary Major because of his devotion to Mary, which he expressed through his particular affection for the basilica’s celebrated icon of the Blessed Virgin known as “*Salus Populi Romani*” (“Health of the Roman People”). This name comes from a miracle in which the icon helped shield the city from the approach of a plague. A tradition claims that it was painted by St. Luke the Evangelist, but most scholars agree that it dates from the 13th century.

Pope Francis stopped to pray at the icon before and after international papal trips. St. Mary Major was also the first place he visited the morning after being elected pope.

In his final testament, issued after his death on April 21, Pope Francis confirmed his request, writing, “I wish my last earthly journey to end at this very ancient Marian shrine where I would go to pray at the beginning and end of each apostolic journey to confidently entrust my intentions to the Immaculate Mother and to thank her for the docile and maternal care.”

He wished that his tomb “be prepared in the niche in the side aisle between the Pauline Chapel—the Chapel of the *Salus Populi Romani*—and the Sforza Chapel” and “be in the Earth; simple, without special decoration and with the only inscription: *Franciscus*.”

The basilica reminds Christians throughout history that they have believed and continue to believe that the young Jewish girl named Mary, chosen among all women to be the fleshly tabernacle of Jesus, is indeed the Mother of God.

This belief is an established truth, a dogma of the Catholic faith. St. Mary Major Basilica stands as an earthly symbol of that transcendent reality.

(D.D. Emmons writes from Pennsylvania.) †



Pope Francis prays in front of the Marian icon “*Salus Populi Romani*” during a visit to pray the rosary at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on May 31, 2022. He prayed before this icon at the start of and after concluding all of his international pastoral journeys. Pope Francis died on April 21 at age 88. He was entombed at the basilica, according to his own wishes. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

## Traveling mercies: over the river, through the woods on a path of kindness

The journey from a suburban Home Depot to our new country home spanned 11 miles and three helpers, winding over the river and through the woods. In the end, three crabapple trees successfully reached their destination—their trunks, an inch wide, their potential, infinite.



It started in the parking lot, where I collapsed seats and unrolled windows in my Honda Accord. I tried one configuration after another, but the trees weren’t fitting. I was about to return them to the lot when a man walked up and posed four blessed words: “Do you need help?”

He asked if I lived in town, offering to drive them to my house for me, then helped me devise a plan for the trees, clearing out my trunk and suggesting a backroads route home. Soon I was on my way. The crabapples were mine because of a stranger’s kindness. Helper #1.

A mile later, the trees began sliding precariously. I was about to pass a friend’s home, so I made an emergency exit. Being able to unload the trees there brought such

relief. Helper #2: an old friendship coming through in a pinch.

For the last leg, I was armed with confidence and a larger vehicle. I called my grandma as I crossed the river, knowing how much she loves her crabapple. “Could you do me a small favor?” she asked. “Would you let me buy them for you?” Helper #3.

It called to mind the title of an Anne Lamott book: *Traveling Mercies*. The crabapples are now blooming, and wrapped into their beauty is a layered story of kindness.

This spring has been a time of change. Moving a family takes enormous work and many helping hands. I feel God inviting me to grow in humility, to accept the help with an open heart and no ledger. Grace doesn’t operate as a quid pro quo. It flows freely, multiplying on its own.

Hardworking Catholics are often led to believe that self-sufficiency is a virtue. I remember hosting a big Christmas party where a guest offered to serve food. It felt like the correct answer was “No, thanks, I’ve got it.”

I had to pause and re-examine that instinct. Would she have offered to help if she didn’t want to?

I smiled brightly. “Yes, please!”

May has become so busy, earning the nickname “Maycember” for its ability to rival December’s madness.

So many families are coasting on fumes until the last day of school.

It is time to welcome aid. As Catholics, we recognize the intricate network of carpools and casseroles as the body of Christ. “We are one body, one body in Christ, and we do not stand alone” (1 Cor 12:12).

It is good to be the helper, and it is holy to be the helped.

That’s the parting wisdom shared posthumously by a 49-year-old Catholic mom here who, as she would put it, recently won her battle with cancer by escaping it and joining the Lord. Her words were quoted in her obituary and read by a priest at her funeral Mass. “It’s hard to be humble and ask for help,” Angela wrote, “but I loved being a vessel that helps people be their best selves when they help me.”

That’s the crux of it, the big opportunity: How can we be a vessel of God, letting others in so they can become better? It takes humility, transparency—acting as a window for God’s light to shine through. In the process, we are all made better.

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

Guest Column/Robert Fastiggi

## Pope Francis had a great love and devotion to the Blessed Mother

Pope Francis must be remembered for his deep Marian piety. In speaking to a group of young people in Rome on June 29, 2014—the Solemnity of St. Peter and Paul—he famously said: “A Christian without the Madonna is an orphan.”



In his general audience of Sept. 3, 2014, he emphasized again the importance of having Mary as our mother and the Church as our mother: “We understand, then, how the relationship which unites Mary and the Church is so deep: by looking at Mary, we discover the most beautiful and most tender face of the Church; and by looking at the Church, we recognize the sublime features of Mary. We Christians are not orphans, we have a mama, we have a mother, and this is great! We are not orphans! The Church is mother, Mary is mother.”

Mary as the Mother of the Church was a theme dear to the heart of Pope Francis. In her recent book, *Mary & the Church at Vatican II* (2024), Dr. Laurie Olsen shows that some bishops at Vatican II wished to avoid the Marian title, *Mater Ecclesiae* (Mother of the Church). St. Paul VI, however, in his address of Nov. 21, 1964, formally proclaimed Mary Mother of the Church.

On Feb. 11, 2018, Pope Francis highlighted the importance of this title by establishing the obligatory Memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church, for the Monday after Pentecost.

Pope Francis developed a profound devotion to Mary during his childhood in Argentina. On several occasions, he mentioned the influence of his grandmother, Rosa, who pointed to Our Lady under the cross as a model for enduring sickness, pain and grief. Pope Francis also cultivated a devotion to Our Lady of Lujan, honored at the national Marian shrine of Argentina, which contains an almost 400-year-old statue associated with numerous miracles.

Later in his life, Pope Francis promoted devotion to Mary, the Undoer of Knots, inspired by a German painting of 1700 A.D. that has theological roots going back to St. Irenaeus (c. 135-202 A.D.).

Pope Francis manifested his Marian devotion in many other ways during his pontificate. On Oct. 7, 2019, he added the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto to the general Roman calendar as an optional memorial to be celebrated on Dec. 10. In 2020, he added three new titles to the Litany of Loreto: *Mater Misericordiae* (Mother of Mercy), *Mater Spei* (Mother of Hope) and *Solacium Migrantium* (Solace of Migrants).

Pope Francis had a special devotion to the Marian icon, *Salus Populi Romani* (Salvation or Health of the Roman People), which is located in the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major. Even before becoming pope, he would often venerate the icon—believed by some to have been painted by St. Luke—during his visits to Rome.

As the Roman pontiff, he prayed before the *Salus Populi Romani* icon more

than 100 times and before and after apostolic trips abroad. On March 27, 2020—during the coronavirus pandemic—Pope Francis had the *Salus Populi Romani* icon brought to St. Peter’s Basilica for a special prayer service before an empty and rain-soaked St. Peter’s Square. In light of this devotion, it is not surprising that Pope Francis chose to become the eighth Roman pontiff buried in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the first since Clement IX, who was pope from 1667 to 1669.

Pope Francis’ Marian devotion was profound, heartfelt and authentically Catholic. He always promoted the recitation of the rosary. On Sept. 29, 2018, he asked Catholics to recite the “*Sub tuum praesidium*” prayer along with the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel after every rosary during the month of October to help protect the Church against the devil.

Pope Francis was a strong believer in the power of Marian consecration. On March 25, 2022, after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, he made a solemn act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary saying: “Therefore, Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. Accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love.”

Although Pope Francis did not believe the Church needed any new Marian dogmas, he embraced and promoted traditional Marian doctrines. In his Jan. 1, 2020, homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, he highlighted Mary’s cooperation in the work of salvation. From Mary, he said, “salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without the woman.”

Pope Francis also affirmed Mary as the Mediatrix between God and the human race. In his homily of Jan. 1, 2021, he referred to Mary as “the bridge joining us to God.” He also described her as “the road that God travelled in order to reach us, and the road that we must travel in order to reach him.”

In his May 13, 2023, message to Archbishop Gian Franco Saba of Sassari, Sardinia, Italy, Pope Francis wrote that “one of the most ancient titles by which Christians have invoked the Virgin Mary is precisely ‘the Mediatrix of all graces.’ ”

In his Aug. 5, 2024, homily at St. Mary Major’s Basilica—in celebration of the memorial of Our Lady of the Snows—Pope Francis stated that, “she [Mary] is the Mediatrix of the grace that flows always and only through Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit.”

As we mourn the death of Pope Francis, let us give thanks for his great love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Following his example, we know we are not orphans, for we have the Virgin Mary as our mother and the Mother of the Church.

(Robert Fastiggi is a professor of theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and former president of the Mariological Society of America.) †

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

## How would you define your commitment to living your Catholic faith?

In what hobbies, sports, organizations or lifestyles do you metaphorically have your “toe in the water” or have minimal commitment or involvement? In which ones are you “fully in”?



Take a brief moment to consider how you utilize any free time as well as any discretionary money when either is available as you begin answering this question.

If you are like many others, you will probably find that there are some pursuits that use larger blocks of time, but other endeavors that you have minimally committed yourself to.

There is a wonderful story about a professor who entered a classroom one day with a large mason jar and a considerable number of rocks.

The professor puts several of the rocks into the jar and then asks the students if the jar is “full.” The students agree unanimously that it was in fact full.

Then the professor adds several smaller pebbles to the jar and again asks, “Now is the jar full?” Again,

the students agree that the jar was quite full.

At this point, the professor adds a good deal of sand to the jar. (Some versions of this story continue with pouring water into the remaining space in the jar.)

The parallel that is often drawn from this story is: what are the large rocks (or activities) in one’s life that limit the number of smaller pebbles (additional lesser pursuits), and eventually, the sand particles (even smaller) that will still fit into one’s personal schedule?

As you ponder these questions, where is your current commitment to your faith? Is it a large rock for which you make sure that there is time and energy daily? Or is it a small rock, or even sand, that simply fills in whatever space is still available?

In the Gospel of Luke, we hear Jesus tell Simon Peter, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4). (A person eventually has to ask if there has been too much fishing in shallow water in his or her life.)

It is very clear to me that the specific level of commitment to faith that the Church’s martyrs have

given—absolutely everything—includes the ultimate sacrifice of death for their beliefs. And there are many people who have taken very public commitments to holy orders (priests or deacons) and religious life (sisters or brothers) that require a number of personal sacrifices to walk faithfully each day.

But there are also many examples of lay individuals who have made selfless sacrifices of service to family, Church and the greater community.

I ask again, where is your faith in this discussion of personal pursuits—is there a large rock filling much of your jar? A much smaller rock or piece of sand? Or another affiliation or club that somewhat defines who you are?

Are you pleased with what you see when you reflect on your current commitment? Why not take this issue to prayer and ask God to show you where he would have you go “deeper” as you journey on “the Way”?

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



Third Sunday of Easter/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, May 4, 2025

- Acts of Apostles 5:27-32, 40b-41
- Revelation 5:11-14
- John 21:1-19

Again this weekend, the Church presents a passage from the Acts of the Apostle as the first reading for Mass in this Easter season.



The mere construction of Acts is a lesson. It is a continuation of St. Luke’s Gospel. Its underlying lesson is that access to the salvation achieved by the Lord Jesus and his presence in the world

did not end with his ascension. The risen Lord, ascended into heaven before the eyes of the remaining Apostles. He lives and acts through the Church, a community with a visible structure and critical functions.

This reading reports a conflict between the Sanhedrin, led by the high priest, and the Apostles. The Sanhedrin was the ruling council of Judaism at the time of Jesus. Its agenda was primarily religious, but its authority touched virtually every aspect of life. Important to note, St. Peter is the spokesman for all the Apostles. He was their leader.

Ordered to cease preaching about Jesus, the Apostles boldly reaffirmed their intention to continue to do so. No earthly power could deflect them in fulfilling their commission from the Lord. Speaking for the group, Peter offered a capsulized story of the life and mission of Christ.

The Book of Revelation is the source of the second reading. Probably no other book of the New Testament, and few in the Old Testament, perennially leave readers in wonder as Revelation does.

(Revelation is not the more ancient, nor literarily precise, title for the book. The older, and better, term is Apocalypse. However, most English-speaking biblical scholars have adopted the better-known name of Revelation.)

Revelation is clear. Again, and again, it refers to Jesus as the sinless lamb of God, the title used by St. John the Baptist for the Lord. It insists that Christians stand with one foot on Earth, and the other in heaven,

for they stand in and with Christ, the Son of God and also son of Mary, a woman.

St. John’s Gospel supplies the last reading. It is a resurrection narrative, wondrous and consoling. Jesus, risen from death, appears to the Apostles as, without luck, they are fishing on the Sea of Galilee. At dawn, recalling the time of the resurrection, Jesus speaks to them from the lake shore. He tells them exactly where to cast their nets. They obey, and a huge catch comes. The beloved disciple recognizes Jesus, but Peter is central to the story. He rushes to Jesus.

Then, at a meal, Jesus asks Peter if Peter really loves Jesus. It is a question put to Peter three times, with three affirmative responses. In ancient Jewish symbolism, three represented what was complete, final and absolute. To each answer, Jesus commissions Peter to love the Good Shepherd’s flock. His commission is exact, final and unqualified. It sent Peter to continue the Lord’s work.

### Reflection

It would be difficult indeed to find three readings from the New Testament that individually are so beautiful and expressive in teaching such the marvelous lesson of the unfolding of salvation.

Setting the stage is the reading from Revelation. Disciples live with one foot on Earth and the other in heaven. Nowhere else is this reality better seen than in the Eucharist.

The combination of Acts with Luke’s Gospel reminds us that the salvation accomplished by Christ continues today. So, it was with the early Christians around the Apostles. It is with us still with the Apostle’s successors in the Church. The trial before the Sanhedrin recalls Peter’s fervor beside the sea, when Peter saw Jesus risen from the dead, and professed his love for him.

After the betrayal, healed by Christ’s divine forgiveness, Peter was worthy of his calling. We can follow him. We, too, can be healed. No matter what our past, we can be saved. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, May 5

Acts 6:8-15  
Psalm 119:23-24, 26-27, 29-30  
John 6:22-29

### Tuesday, May 6

Acts 7:51-8:1a  
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6ab, 7b, 8a, 17, 21ab  
John 6:30-35

### Wednesday, May 7

Acts 8:1b-8  
Psalm 66:1-3a, 4-7a  
John 6:35-40

### Thursday, May 8

Acts 8:26-40  
Psalm 66:8-9, 16-17, 20  
John 6:44-51

### Friday, May 9

Acts 9:1-20  
Psalm 117:1b-2  
John 6:52-59

### Saturday, May 10

St. John of Avila, priest and doctor of the Church  
St. Damien de Veuster, priest  
Acts 9:31-42  
Psalm 116:12-17  
John 6:60-69

### Sunday, May 11

Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Acts 13:14, 43-52  
Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5  
Revelation 7:9, 14b-17  
John 10:27-30

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

## God’s will and human freedom mysteriously work together in conclaves

How do God’s will and the Holy Spirit play a role in a conclave?



I think ultimately, events in the life of the Church like conclaves bring us to the mysterious place where God’s providential ordering of history intersects with human free will.

On one level, there is nothing miraculous

about a conclave. That is, the assembled cardinals are human men who use their human powers of reason and prudential judgment to vote on a decision. In real life, I think it’s fair to assume that the vast majority of cardinals today are essentially good men who will undertake this responsibility with the care it deserves. But, in theory, there is nothing to stop the cardinals from making a careless or deliberately bad choice of a new pope.

And indeed, although in the past century we as the Church have been “spoiled” with a number of saintly popes, the Church’s 2,000-year history has unfortunately seen some popes who were cowardly, faltering or even notoriously immoral.

At the same time, we also believe that God loves and continues to guide the Church. Jesus himself said that he would “be with [us] always, until the end of the age,” (Mt 28:20) and that “the Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” (Jn 14:26).

We also believe that God’s guidance of the Church is manifested in the concept of papal infallibility, meaning that in certain specific circumstances, when a pope is teaching on faith and morals specifically in his role as pope, God will protect him

from error. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #892.)

While papal infallibility as applied to the teaching of Catholic doctrine is different from the process of electing a pope in the first place, it still serves to underscore how God “will not leave us orphans” (Jn 14:18).

There is also some scriptural suggestion that God would have a hand in choosing bishops at least. In the Acts of the Apostles, after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the remaining 11 Apostles gathered to choose a successor and replacement to Judas Iscariot, who had taken his own life after betraying Jesus.

After determining two suitable candidates, the final decision was made by casting lots, with the idea that God would take advantage of that occasion of randomness and chance to put forth his own preferred candidate (Acts 1:15-26).

Even today, in our liturgy, we can sometimes glean hints of the idea that God himself chooses bishops. For example, in the Good Friday liturgy, during the general intercessions we pray for the current Holy Father with the words: “Let us pray also for our most Holy Father Pope [name], that our God and Lord, who chose him for the Order of Bishops…”

Yet, this sense that God calls and chooses bishops still co-exists today with a rather prosaic administrative process for determining candidates for the episcopate, involving such mundane things as recommendations and “short lists” of names. So here, too, it seems that the Church expects God to make his will known, but usually through ordinary means rather than by extraordinary divine intervention.

This dynamic interplay between God’s will in all its perfection and our fallible human capacities for discernment is one reason for the many special customs surrounding a conclave. For example, the cardinals pray explicitly to the Holy Spirit before their voting and deliberation.

The solitude and isolation of the conclave is meant to foster almost a retreat-like atmosphere, which should make it easier for cardinals to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. And in St. John Paul II’s apostolic constitution “*Universi Dominici Gregis*,” which spells out the official rules for a conclave, it is noted that: “the election will continue to take place in the Sistine Chapel, where everything is conducive to an awareness of the presence of God, in whose sight each person will one day be judged.”

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

## My Journey to God

### In the Middle of the Night

By M. Lynell Chamberlain

Thinking of you in the middle of the night,  
Watching shadows race in the soft moonlight.  
Yearning upward, toward heaven I gaze,  
And I’m filled with joy, peace and praise.  
The grandeur and majesty of all that I see  
Is only a speck in God’s infinity.  
So small and insignificant I feel,  
And yet I exist; I know I am real;  
Just a dot in the midst of infinity,  
A blink in the midst of eternity.  
The miracle that I exist at all  
Pales when I realize that you know all  
The darkness and bleakness in my soul  
Yet you deigned to incarnate and console  
We specks and dots that blink and then go.  
How unworthy am I of all that you give,  
How grateful am I for this chance to live,  
To grow closer to you and to understand  
The purpose of this creature that we call man.

(M. Lynell Chamberlain is a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. Photo: This photo, released on Sept. 7, 2023, shows a cluster of stars in the Milky Way galaxy as seen from the Hubble Space Telescope.) (CNS photo/Roger Cohen, NASA/ESA/Hubble)









# ARCHBISHOP

continued from page 3

life, and then Benedict [XVI] is the way. “And then Pope Francis is the truth—to see the reality of the people he served, the poor who he loved so much.”

The death of Pope Francis is “very sad” for Charlene Fletcher, especially since she was just welcomed into the full communion of the Church on April 20 at St. Rita Church in Indianapolis.

“Even before I was Catholic, I paid attention to Pope Francis,” she said. “I’ve just watched him over the years and have been just in awe of the kind of person that he was. He was a man of the people. And so, as a brand new Catholic, it’s very sad.”

Donning an “I love Pope Francis” shirt, Melissa Wakefield was sad, too, her eyes tearing up as she spoke.

“He was such an extraordinary man,” said the member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. She admired his “openness to all people in the world, his acceptance of all people, no matter where they came from, what their race was, their economic position or anything, just his complete acceptance.”

Wakefield never met Pope Francis. But as a flight attendant, she worked with other flight attendants who had served on the pope’s flight to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families in 2015.

“He gave every person on that crew the time to sit with him privately on the plane to talk with him,” she said they told her. “He said they could ask him whatever they wanted. They could do confession or they could just talk to him. I thought that was really amazing.”

“We are all so blessed and lucky to have had him for the time that we did.” †



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson poses with Brian Ramirez, left, infant Jude Ramirez, Alma Maldonado and Sasha Ramirez in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis after the Mass for Pope Francis on April 24. The family are members of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

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The Parish Business Manager is a senior staff member in support of the Pastor’s responsibilities to St Patrick Catholic Church, St Margaret Mary Catholic Church, and St Patrick School of the Terre Haute Deanery. The Business Manager, with the Pastor, is the principle steward of administrative, financial, physical, and human resources. The Business Manager is responsible for the business, banking and daily operations of the parishes and school.

Please email your resume to: [MarkFuson@drivefuson.com](mailto:MarkFuson@drivefuson.com)

#### Part-time Music Director

Our Lady of the Springs and Our Lord Jesus Christ the King parishes are looking for a part-time Music Director to serve at both parishes. The qualified candidate needs to be a practicing Catholic and experienced keyboard player. The position will be responsible for selecting and playing music for our weekend and other special liturgies at the parishes. This would include weddings and funerals.

Interested persons should send or email their resume to:

Rev. Randall Summers  
Our Lady of the Springs Church  
8796 W. State Road 56, French Lick, IN 47432  
[rsommers9027@gmail.com](mailto:rsommers9027@gmail.com)

#### Youth and Young Adult Coordinator

St. Pius X Catholic Church and School in Indianapolis IN, is currently seeking a full-time Youth & Young Adult Ministry Leader, to facilitate the evangelization, formation, and discipleship of Middle School, High School Students and Young Adults in our parish. The Coordinator of Youth & Young Adult Ministry provides leadership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of ministry programs for youth and young adults within the parish community. The ideal candidate will be able to work independently and demonstrate flexibility, creativity, and responsibility.

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### Employment



#### Job Opening Campus Minister

The Muncie Catholic Pastorate of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Lawrence, and St. Mary, is seeking a dynamic and mission-driven Campus Minister to serve the students of Ball State University. This full-time position works collaboratively on a vibrant pastoral team under the leadership of the Director of Evangelization to foster an active culture of discipleship and faith formation among college students. The ideal candidate is passionate about the Catholic faith, highly organized, and gifted in relational ministry and evangelization.

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For more information, please visit [munciecatholic.com](http://munciecatholic.com) or to apply, please submit your resume and letter of interest to Mr. Jason Hart, Director of Evangelization at [jhart@parish.dol-in.org](mailto:jhart@parish.dol-in.org).

#### CYO PARISH ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

St. Pius X parish, located on the Northside of Indianapolis is looking for a full-time Athletic Director to effectively plan, organize and manage the St. Pius X Parish Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) Athletic Program. To work closely with the Parish Business Manager, St. Pius Athletic Committee (SPAC), volunteer coaches and leadership. The Athletic Director will also be responsible for oversight of the concession supplies, sales, inventory and coordination of volunteers to operate concession stand with the help of the Athletic Committee.

Collaborates with members of the Administrative Staff, the Pastoral Staff, and other groups and individuals as needed.

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS** – Manages St. Pius X participation in (CYO) activities by: Communicating the availability of CYO sports to Saint Pius X Catholic School and the Saint Pius X Faith Formation program; Informing the parish at large of CYO programs by use of bulletin, School and Faith Formation publications, and the parish web site; Encouraging all parish youth – those in our Catholic school and those who attend other private or public school – to participate in CYO activities; Determining and overseeing the player evaluation and team selection process; and Organizing and scheduling the various practice, game, and tournament schedules. Recruits, trains, supervises, and evaluates a talent pool of volunteer coaches, assistant coaches, and other support staff by selecting the best suited volunteers and matching them to appropriate duties. Providing proper training for all volunteers, including, but not limited to, CYO coaches training and Safe Parish training. Supervising and conducting regular evaluations of volunteer coaches, including a summary of evaluations from sports participants; and Recognizing and rewarding the efforts of volunteers. Contact for more information.

For Immediate Consideration, Send applications or inquiries to:  
[parish@spxparish.org](mailto:parish@spxparish.org) and [communication@spxparish.org](mailto:communication@spxparish.org)



## Archdiocese of Indianapolis Maintenance Technician

This full-time, hourly, position is responsible for the maintenance of several buildings.

Duties include:

- Completing repairs, preventative maintenance and maintenance tasks on buildings and grounds.
- Responding, in a timely manner, to internal equipment repair needs.
- A verifiable background in building maintenance.
- A working knowledge of all building systems and components.
- The ability to evaluate and repair existing equipment.
- The ability to work with contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.
- An ability to work with the Archdiocesan staff.
- Basic computer skills.
- Good organizational and communication skills.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume to:  
[dherbertz@archindy.org](mailto:dherbertz@archindy.org).



# A mom’s best recipe: Add humor, faith and love to flavor life

*(Editor’s note: The Criterion invited you, our readers, to share your stories and tributes about motherhood from two perspectives—the gift of having your mom and the gift of being a mom. We’ve received so many wonderful responses that we will share them throughout May, the month of Mother’s Day and a month dedicated to the Blessed Mother. Here is the first story.)*

By John Shaughnessy

The humor of 93-year-old Mary Gin shows in the sign that has long had a prominent place in her kitchen, “Many people have eaten in this kitchen and gone on to lead normal, healthy lives.”

The wisdom of this mother of nine children shows in the way she answered someone who asked her if she had a favorite child: “I loved the one in most need at the time. You love them all, but when you see one who has a problem, you want to fix that right away—do what you can.”

As for the faith and the love she has shown throughout her life—often in the face of heartbreak and challenge—it will take a while to share all the examples that capture that spirit.

“My mother learned resilience at a young age,” says Ginny Maher, Gin’s daughter. “Born during the Great Depression, Mom was the youngest of eight children, growing up on a farm. Her older brother, Lawrence, was killed in World War II when she was 13 years old. A year later, her mother died of pancreatic cancer.”

Later, there were tough times of a different kind when she married a man of Chinese descent whom she met at the restaurant where she worked as a waitress and he as a cook.

“In 1955, interracial marriages were not initially accepted by friends or relatives,” Maher says about her parents’ wedding. “In time, of course, my wonderful dad diffused those biases.”

For Gin, one of the many great blessings of her marriage to her husband Gan was that she had found someone who shared her approach to life.

“There was always room for someone else,” says Gin, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. “We could always accommodate something that needed to be taken care of. We didn’t put us first. It was the kids, family and friends.”

That approach shined through in remarkable ways.

**‘Just do it’**

“Our parents sponsored dad’s brother’s

family of five, who arrived from China to the U.S.A. in need of temporary housing. Mom and Dad opened a bedroom in our home for their use. They just did it,” says Maher about the family’s three-bedroom, 1 ½ bathroom house.

“When my Chinese grandma’s cancer returned and she became terminally ill, Mom converted our dining room into a hospice area. We cared for her at home, where she spent her final days on Earth.

“When Mom’s older sister also experienced the diagnosis of terminal cancer, Mom converted a room for her care, allowing her to be surrounded by family before she passed.

“When Dad experienced a neuromuscular disease that in three years took away his ability to swallow, talk and walk, after 52 years of marriage, she cared for him at home, too. We said goodbye to him in the living room of their southside home in the company of family members.”

For Gin, her philosophy toward addressing life’s challenges all comes down to, “Just do it.”

“I had great parents,” Gin says. “They always taught us to look at things, make a decision and go forward with it. There are a lot of things I had to make decisions on quickly. I’m sure my faith had a lot to do with this. I prayed and thought about it, but then you have to make a decision.”

Maher adds, “Mom’s motivation and actions refuse to dwell on the problem or consider the inconveniences. Instead, she resolutely moves onto what is needed in any given circumstance.”

She took the same approach of faith and love with her children.

**Hospitality, generosity, extended family**

“When I asked how in the world she raised nine children during a time when microwaves, automatic washers and dryers, and many modern-day conveniences were not yet invented, she said, ‘I just did it,’” says Maher, a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis. “Mom and Dad sent all nine of their children to Catholic grade school and high schools, no small or inexpensive feat. They just did it.”

The couple’s approach of putting others first also extended to neighbors as Gin shared meals and holiday gifts with them.

That sense of hospitality, generosity and extended family continues every Sunday afternoon as she invites family and friends to her home. There, she usually places a beef roast in a crockpot, adding potatoes, carrots and onions, then complementing that main dish with a



Ginny Maher, left, praises the way her mom, Mary Gin, has always put her children, family and friends first, with a love that embraces all, especially during the challenges of life. (Photo courtesy of Pat Maher)

salad for everyone to enjoy. Times of playing Euchre or watching sports follow.

“Mom’s kitchen is her space for welcoming and feeding guests who were expected or just stopped by,” Maher says. “Our family has a few ‘adopted siblings’ who came into our family not by birth, but via Mom’s nurturing, listening ears and words of wisdom. Almost no one leaves Mom’s kitchen without eating and/or taking home leftovers.”

Gin downplays the praise, describing her cooking as “down-to-earth, not fancy, just fills the stomach.”

She has the same down-to-earth feeling about her success as a mother.

“I don’t think I was the best mother, but I was the best mother I could have been at the time,” she says. “I tried.”

Still, there is no downplaying the way she and her husband helped to feed and nurture the dreams and the futures of their children—Benjamin, Catherine, Florence, Lawrence, Gan Arthur, Theresa, Michael, Dianna and Ginny. Eight of them have college degrees, four have added graduate degrees, and all have found success in their own way.

**‘You know what is important in life’**

Maher describes her mother’s success as living life on a foundation of faith, family and love.

“The gifts of having my mom and being a mother are summed up in the

song, ‘They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love,’ ” she says. “Mom’s decisions and actions consistently demonstrate her dedication to my dad, their marriage, family members and friends, and her devotion to her faith.”

They’re the gifts that Maher has shared with her daughters, Kathleen and Lizzie.

“In our daughters’ upbringing, I endeavored to instill the importance of being resilient, living authentically and doing what is right. Daily, I seek to love unconditionally and serve others generously—just like Mom,” Maher says.

As for Gin, she has her thoughts set on the best gift she hopes to receive on this Mother’s Day.

“To have all the kids come and bring their families,” says Gin, who is also a grandmother of 19 and a great-grandmother of 13. “I like to sit back and observe. I don’t have to be a partaker anymore. I just like to see them all get along. And I love it when the cousins get together, really interact and keep up.

“As you grow older, you know what is important in life. I think the family core needs to be strengthened very much.”

Toward that goal, the crockpot will be warming up in the kitchen where a sign reads, “Many people have eaten in this kitchen and gone on to lead normal, healthy lives.”

Lives that have also been filled by a mother’s love. †

# A time to celebrate! Graduates will receive their college degrees from three Catholic colleges in central and southern Indiana

Compiled by John Shaughnessy

Graduation day!

It’s always a special time of celebration in the lives of the graduates and the people who have supported them in their journey toward a college degree.

Once again this May, college students—and their families, friends and the educators who helped shape and guide them—will celebrate this defining accomplishment.

Here is a glimpse of the graduation ceremonies that will take place at the three Catholic colleges in the archdiocese.

**MARIAN UNIVERSITY**

Marian University in Indianapolis will award degrees in three commencement ceremonies on the weekend of May 2-4.

During the commencement weekend, 963 students will earn their degrees.

Students at Marian’s Ancilla College campus in Plymouth, Ind., will receive their undergraduate degrees during a May 2 ceremony at 5 p.m. in the Ancilla Domino Chapel. The commencement address will be delivered by Suzi Light, retired chief executive officer of the Kosciusko County Community Foundation.

A commencement Mass will be celebrated at 2:30 p.m. on May 2 in the chapel.

Undergraduates at Marian’s Indianapolis campus will

receive their degrees during a 1:30 p.m. commencement ceremony on May 3 in the university’s Arena and Convocation Center in Indianapolis. The commencement speaker will be Vop Osili, the president of the Indianapolis City-County Council.

A commencement Mass will be at 10 a.m. on May 3 in the Arena and Convocation Center.

Graduate students and medical students will receive their degrees during a 10 a.m. ceremony on May 4 in the Arena and Convocation Center of Marian’s Indianapolis campus. The commencement speaker will be former Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, who served in that role from 2017 to 2025.

Graduation events will be streamed live at [marian.edu/livestream](http://marian.edu/livestream).

## SAINT-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS-COLLEGE

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods will celebrate its commencement on May 10 for 373 graduates, including the largest campus graduating class in the college’s history.

There will be two commencement ceremonies—one for on-campus students receiving their bachelor’s degrees, while the other will be for graduates of Woods Online and graduate degree programs.

Both ceremonies will be in the college’s Hamilton Arena in the Jeanne Knoerle Sports and Recreation Center.

The commencement ceremony for on-campus students will be at 10 a.m. The speaker will be Jonathan Hayden, who has earned a bachelor’s degree in theology.

The commencement ceremony for graduates of Woods Online and graduate degree programs will be at 3 p.m. The speaker will be Eleni Miller, a registered nurse who has earned a master’s degree in nursing.

During this ceremony, the first doctorate degrees in the history of the college will be awarded—a Ph.D. in Global Leadership.

As part of the commencement, the college will also have a Mass at 1 p.m. in the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The ceremonies will be livestreamed, and they can be viewed on [smwc.edu](http://smwc.edu).

## SAINT MEINRAD SEMINARY AND SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Thirty-five students will earn master’s degrees when Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad will hold its graduation ceremony on May 10.

The ceremony will be at 11 a.m. Central Time in St. Bede Theater on the Saint Meinrad campus.

The commencement speaker is Dr. Clayton Jefford.

As part of the commencement, a Mass for the graduates and their guests will be at 9 a.m. Central Time on May 10 in the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln. †