



The

Criterion

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Respecting human dignity

Chemical abortion, death penalty among key life issues for Indiana Catholic Conference, page 2.

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Worshippers fill SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on June 7, 2025, as seminarians and priests process out of the cathedral after a Mass in which three men were ordained priests for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Photo courtesy archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development)

Archdiocesan pastoral plan is ‘shared vision’ that allows ‘space for creativity’

By Natalie Hoefler

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... (Mt 28: 19)

This “great commission” of Christ is carried out today by each of us—his followers—and by the Church he founded.

Read the pastoral plan, pages 9-12.

“The Church itself is the body of Christ,” Archbishop Charles C. Thompson said in a recent interview

with *The Criterion*. “Everything about the Church that exists is a ministry of [Christ’s] mission. Whether it’s a parish, school, Catholic Charities, ... everything is geared toward that primary task of evangelization, leading people to the person of Jesus Christ.”

It’s a vast and perhaps daunting mission. But with input and involvement from some 1,000 people throughout the archdiocese, a five-year pastoral plan was just released to provide focus and guidance for parishes, schools and

archdiocesan ministries in carrying out that mission in central and southern Indiana.

Titled “Go Forth in Joy and Hope as Missionary Disciples,” the document lays out five areas, or “domains,” of focus, each with goals and objectives.

“But the specifics of how [they get] done, that’s going to vary from parish to parish” and for each school and archdiocesan ministry, Archbishop Thompson said.

See **PASTORAL PLAN**, page 8

Con la participación y la colaboración de unas 1.000 personas de toda la arquidiócesis, se acaba de publicar un plan pastoral quinquenal para proporcionar orientación y dirección a las parroquias, las escuelas y los ministerios arquidiocesanos.

Lea más en la página 13.

Indiana Mass, March and Rally for Life: ‘This is what being pro-life looks like’

By Natalie Hoefler

Roughly 1,200 people served as joyful witnesses to the sanctity of life during the eighth Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22.

The date is significant. “We march to be not only a voice for the babies, a voice for the pregnant moms, but also a voice to remember that on this day in January 1973, the Supreme Court ruled on *Roe v. Wade*,” legalizing abortion on demand in the U.S., said Right to Life of Indianapolis (RTL) president Marc Tuttle at a post-march rally. “It began an era that led to the death of 67 million innocent children.

See **MARCH FOR LIFE**, page 14

Clay Eckstein and Bridgette Ehrhard, seniors at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, smile in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis before joining the Indiana March for Life on the city’s downtown streets on Jan. 22. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Chemical abortion, death penalty among key life issues for ICC

By Victoria Arthur

As thousands joined the annual March for Life at both the state and national levels, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) was tracking bills related to the dignity of human life in this year's rapidly moving legislative session.

A bill related to the regulation of chemical abortion as well as two measures aimed at introducing new death penalty methods are of prime concern for the ICC as the 2026 Indiana General Assembly reaches its halfway point.

"Upholding the profound dignity of the human person from conception to natural death is of critical importance to the Catholic Church, and that principle also guides the ICC in our policy work," said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, the official public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Although we have seen great strides since the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, it's clear that there are still a lot of hearts and minds that need to be changed in our culture."

One such example is the ongoing debate over access to abortion in Indiana, particularly as it pertains to chemical abortion, also known as medication abortion. A measure moving through the Statehouse, Senate Bill 236, seeks additional oversight and regulation of abortion practices, including the use of mail-order abortion medications from other states.

In 2022, when the U.S. Supreme Court returned regulation of abortion to the states, Indiana placed significant restrictions on the practice that encompassed both surgical and chemical abortions.

While most abortions are now illegal in the state of Indiana, there are exceptions for fatal fetal anomalies, pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, or to save the life of the mother. Medication abortion, which involves the ingestion of two pills—mifepristone and misoprostol—over a 48-hour period, is not permitted past the 10th week of pregnancy for any reason and is prohibited by mail order from other states.

Yet increasing numbers of women in Indiana are seeking to obtain the combination of abortion pills from out-of-state sources. The author of Senate Bill 236, Sen. Tyler Johnson (R-Leo), is an emergency room physician in northeast Indiana who shared his

concerns about the safety of medication abortion during a recent hearing on his bill.

Johnson described how he had recently treated a woman in the emergency room suffering from serious complications of the abortion pills, and how she said no one had warned her about the potential side effects, which can include severe pain and bleeding.

"These drugs aren't safe to be mailed across Indiana," Johnson said in his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Jan. 21. "They're not safe to be given over telehealth [calls]. They're not safe to just randomly prescribe through an internet website. That's the heart of what we're getting to."

Senate Bill 236 also would allow for civil actions to be brought against manufacturers or distributors of abortion medications for what a plaintiff would consider personal injury or wrongful death from the use of the drugs.

In addition, the bill seeks to add oversight for terminated pregnancy reports (TPRs), which are routinely filed with the Indiana Department of Health for every abortion performed in the state. Senate Bill 236 proposes that TPRs, which keep patients' names confidential, also would go to the Office of the Inspector General.

Numerous opponents of the bill who testified before the committee, including some physicians, argued that the measure would have a chilling effect on doctors providing what they consider necessary medical care.

But the bill's co-author, Sen. Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne), maintained the opposite.

"The chilling effect will be on people who are providing abortions illegally and illegally prescribing and/or mailing these abortion pills into this state," Brown told the committee. "We're a pro-life state. We're always going to be a pro-life state as long as this legislature is the way it is today."

Despite the opposition to Senate Bill 236, the judiciary committee voted 7-4 to pass the measure and send it to the Indiana Senate floor.

In a recent ICC podcast, Mingus said he anticipates additional changes to the bill as the full Senate considers it.

"Conceptually, it's moving in the right direction," Mingus said. "If structured correctly, this bill will help close the gap on the regulation of chemical abortion for the sake of protecting women and pre-born babies."

He and Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC, are also carefully monitoring two bills aimed at expanding the methods that Indiana uses to carry out the death penalty.



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 1–11, 2026

February 1 – 2 p.m.
Annual Scout Award Ceremony at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

February 3 – 9:30 a.m.
Visit to Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School, Indianapolis

February 4 – 2 p.m.
Virtual Evangelization Summit Planning Team meeting

February 5 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

February 6 – 5 p.m.
Legacy Gala Dinner in Support of Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools and Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary at J.W. Marriott, Indianapolis

February 8 – 9 a.m.
Mass for Vietnamese Community at St. Joseph Church, Indianapolis

February 8 – 11 a.m.
Mass at St. Joseph Church, Indianapolis

February 10 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

February 11 – noon
Lunch Gathering with archdiocesan priests, Indianapolis

February 11 – 6:30 p.m.
Panel Discussion on "Pope Leo XIV in Context" at Marian University, Indianapolis

Senate Bill 11, authored by Sen. Mike Young (R-Indianapolis), proposes a firing squad as an alternative to the only current method of capital punishment in Indiana—lethal injection. Sen. Young argues that the high cost of the drugs involved along with their limited shelf life are complicating factors driving the need for an additional execution method.

The bill would authorize the death penalty to be carried out by firing squad if execution by lethal injection could not occur due to unavailability of the required drug—or if the condemned person requests it instead of lethal injection.

The ICC was among those testifying against the bill in a recent committee hearing. The measure never came up for a vote and has now stalled at the Statehouse.

But a more expansive death penalty bill is moving through the opposite chamber of the state legislature. House Bill 1119, authored by Rep. Jim Lucas (R-Seymour), proposes nitrogen hypoxia—lethal gas—as an additional method of execution for Indiana, along with the firing squad.

The House Courts and Criminal Code Committee passed the bill on an 8-5 vote, sending it to the full House for additional debate.

The ICC strongly objected to the bill during the Jan. 22 committee hearing. In her testimony, LaCoursiere reiterated the Catholic Church's opposition to the death penalty in any form and added that these proposed new methods only underscore

the "brutality and savagery" of capital punishment.

Currently, only five states allow firing squad as a legal execution method: Idaho, Utah, Oklahoma, Mississippi and South Carolina. An equal number permit the gas chamber: Alabama, Arizona, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

Although use of lethal gas is exceedingly rare even in the states that allow it, LaCoursiere pointed to a recent example in Alabama in which eyewitnesses reported a condemned man struggling for 30 minutes in the gas chamber before he was pronounced dead.

"[With nitrogen hypoxia], we would be asking the executioners to administer a method to humans that we do not even use to euthanize animals anymore due to the distress it causes them in the process," LaCoursiere said.

In their recent podcast, she and Mingus urged the Catholic faithful to stay engaged on these bills during this short session of the state legislature, which is set to conclude by the end of February.

"Above all, please pray for us and our state legislators and all those who are advocating for the dignity of human life," Mingus said.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org.

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

Catholic leaders call for peace, prayer after second person killed by federal agents

(OSV News)—Catholic leaders are calling for peace the day after a second person was killed by federal agents this month in Minneapolis. The deadly shooting of Alex Pretti, 37, comes amid increased federal immigration

enforcement actions in the Twin Cities metro area; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has referred to this activity involving the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as "Operation Metro Surge."

The shooting also comes 17 days after a shooting in Minneapolis involving an ICE agent left 37-year-old Renee Good, of Minneapolis, dead.

In a statement released on Jan. 25, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of

the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), echoed the words of Pope Leo XIV at the *Angelus* that morning, calling for peace and respect for all peoples.

"Today, Pope Leo XIV reminds us

See PEACE, page 19



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March for Life in Washington rallies thousands to build culture of life

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Tens of thousands of pro-life advocates descended on the March for Life, demonstrating their strong motivation to give witness to the importance of protecting the right to life for the unborn. This year's march stressed the theme "Life is a Gift," but the event also showed visible cracks emerging in the movement's political vision and frustration with the Trump administration.

For Catholics attending the march from all corners of the U.S., the motivations were as strong as ever.

At St. Jude Parish in Waltham, Mass., the bus ride of 30 parishioners of all ages is "a real pilgrimage," Father Jeremy St. Martin, who led it, told OSV News. The pilgrims left on Jan. 22, arriving 22 hours later—praying the Liturgy of the Hours along the way—at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington at 8 a.m. on Jan. 23, the day of the March for Life.

"We don't stop for breakfast or anything. Everyone knows it's a pilgrimage," he said.

Hallie Millerbernd, a senior nursing student at the University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D., told OSV News this is her third March for Life. The multi-bus pilgrimage from there takes 60 nonstop hours, making it a real test of endurance.

She said the sight of "thousands of people of all ages carrying signs with different colored hats, singing songs and chanting" inspired her. "It also showed me that there was hope for change and that there was a large movement against abortion."

Ruby Galatolo, who came to Washington from the Diocese of Orlando, Fla., said she has tried to come every year since her first march in 2010. The experience was a turning point in her life, seeing "so many young people here so happy and hopeful."

Galatolo said she "never imagined that I would see the day when *Roe v. Wade* would be overturned," referring to the Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson*

Women's Health Organization decision that returned the issue of abortion to states.

"Of course, there is still a long way to go," she said, adding that she continues to hope that ultimately abortion would become a thing of the past.

The Catholic Church was also strongly represented in Jan. 22-23 vigil events held around the 53rd March for Life, with thousands attending the National Prayer Vigil for Life held at the national basilica in Washington, the Life Fest event put on by the Knights of Columbus and Sisters of Life in nearby Oxon Hill, Md., and the Life is VERY Good event hosted by the Diocese of Arlington at the EagleBank Arena in Fairfax.

In his homily at the National Prayer Vigil for Life's closing Mass on Jan. 23, Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, who, with the exception of the COVID limitations in 2021, has been to every March for Life since the first one in 1974, exhorted participants to "look for opportunities to be apostles of life, building a civilization of love and ethic of care.

"We're here today to proclaim life is a gift. It's a precious gift from a loving God," said Cardinal O'Malley, archbishop emeritus of Boston. "Together we can protect and nurture that gift of life. ... The antidote to abortion is love, love manifest in community, compassion and solidarity."

Sister of Life Faustina Maria Pia told OSV News that she hoped the young people at Life Fest—which featured musical performances, eucharistic adoration, a eucharistic procession, Mass, confession and testimonies—would realize the gift of their own life.

"Today is a day that we really want to make a strong impact on our nation, to witness to this beautiful sanctity of human life," she said of the event. "There's no more powerful way than to pray."

At the March for Life rally itself, March for Life president Jennie Bradley Lichter reminded the crowd that what has "saved so many lives and moved countless hearts" on the abortion issue

over the years is the marchers' "unfailing hope," their "love for the littlest ones and for moms who need a hand," their joy and "the sheer number of you who are here year after year."

At the beginning of the rally, Lichter introduced the "Friends of Club 21" choir, a group of teens and young adults with Down syndrome, to sing the national anthem. She said the group embodied the theme of the march.

But this year's March event showed that amid the cultural unity, there was political fraying within the pro-life movement itself.

Lichter herself introduced Vice President JD Vance, who spoke in person at the rally, while President Donald J. Trump gave a video message reminding attendees of his role in helping overturn *Roe v. Wade*—"the greatest victory in its history"—and thanking "every single one of you who's out on this winter day, a beautiful day—but it's winter, nevertheless—to stand up for the unborn."

However, while Lichter praised the administration's pro-life policies, it was Vance who brought up "the elephant in the room," which he called "a fear" that "not enough progress has been made."

Various pro-life advocates and groups had begun to raise criticism of the second Trump administration, following a string of pro-life disappointments, such as Trump's recent comments to House Republicans telling them to be "flexible" on the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits public funding of elective abortions, in negotiations on health care subsidies.

Vance touted the administration's past accomplishments, citing actions including expanded conscience protection for health care workers, and "policies that make family life possible," such as "Trump accounts," government-backed savings accounts for newborns under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act."



Jesse Niesyty, an 18-month-old child from Buffalo, N.Y., holds a sign during the 53rd annual March for Life rally in Washington on Jan. 23. (OSV News photo/Leslie E. Kossoff)

Vance's speech was generally well received by the crowd, but some attendees chanted "Ban the abortion pill." Several national pro-life groups have called on the Trump-Vance administration to roll back the Biden administration's actions on mifepristone, a pill commonly but not exclusively used for early abortion, to the regulations in place during the previous Trump-Pence administration. But the administration has not delivered on this, while approving a new generic form of the pill.

Shortly before the final prayer and sending off the thousands gathered to march and advocate for life, Lichter said she had a message from an early alumnus of the March for Life who could not be with them due to an overseas work commitment: Pope Leo XIV.

She read the pope's letter to the march's participants, imparting his papal blessing and assuring them "of my spiritual closeness as you gather for this eloquent public witness to affirm that the protection of the right to life constitutes the indispensable foundation of every other human right."

After the final prayer, marchers—armed with a variety of signs with pro-life slogans—exited the rally space on the National Mall to walk through Washington's streets to the steps of the Supreme Court building. †

Archbishop Thompson and consultant discuss pastoral plan in new podcast

Members of the archdiocese are encouraged to listen to the ArchIndy Vox podcast featuring a discussion with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson about the newly released five-year archdiocesan pastoral plan.

He and consultant Daniel Conway share their reflections on the plan and the shared responsibility we all have as members of the Church to be active participants, living our faith as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

To listen, visit www.archindy.org/archindyvox. †

Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition

Feb. 13 issue of *The Criterion*

Couples who are planning to be married between Feb. 13 and July 16, in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between July 11, 2025, and Jan. 25, 2026, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming Feb. 13 Spring Marriage Edition. Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form at

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. Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). Photos may also be texted to 317-236-1585 with the couple's names.

If it is not possible to e-mail a photo, a photo can be mailed with the names of the couple to *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis 46202. Please no photocopies or laser prints. To have the photo returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on Jan. 30.

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Editorial



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson delivers a homily during a Mass in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Oct. 16, 2025. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)

A new pastoral plan for the Church in central and southern Indiana

In the spirit of synodality, successful planning requires broad consultation and teamwork. It requires a profound sense of openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit—as this is manifested both through the rich history of the Church in this region and in the present circumstances. —Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

The new pastoral plan for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, which was promulgated on Dec. 3, 2025, the Memorial of St. Francis Xavier, was begun during the time of the National Eucharistic Revival and formed, in a special way, during the periods of time that preceded and immediately followed the historic National Eucharist Congress held in Indianapolis in July 2024.

It's no wonder that this plan echoes themes from this time of concentration on the eucharistic mystery, which is the source and summit of the Church's mission.

"Go Forth in Hope and Joy as Missionary Disciples: A Pastoral Letter and Plan for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis" is the result of what Archbishop Charles C. Thompson calls "broad consultation and teamwork" conducted with a "profound sense of openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit." The plan expresses a clear sense of mission:

We are a Eucharistic community, a people gathered by Christ, formed in faith by the Word of God, united in communion with Christ and one another, and then sent out on mission to preach, to heal, to prophesy, and to console God's people here in our diverse regions of central and southern Indiana and beyond.

Within this broad "mission directive," the plan identifies a particular "pastoral charge" that calls attention to the "most prominent and far-reaching ministries" that exist in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis—namely the 125 parishes located throughout 38 counties of central and southern Indiana.

According to Archbishop Thompson, "the primary focus of our new pastoral plan is to develop vibrant parishes within which missionary disciples are called, formed through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and then sent out to proclaim the Gospel and minister to the needs of all God's people through word, sacrament and service."

Vibrant parishes are centers of evangelization. They are communities of faith which foster a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through parish life

and worship, through teaching, through stewardship of all God's gifts, through responding to the universal call to holiness (vocations), and through outreach to people in need.

The timeframe of this new pastoral plan is five years (2026–2031), but as Archbishop Thompson frequently said during listening sessions in various regions of the archdiocese, planning is a way of life for this local Church. "In the spirit of synodality," the archbishop observes, "we are constantly listening to one another, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and working together as co-responsible leaders carrying out our baptismal responsibility to go forth as missionary disciples and build up the Body of Christ in our 125 parishes throughout 38 counties of central and southern Indiana."

The new pastoral plan is not really new. It simply takes the mission entrusted to the Apostles by Christ 2,000 years ago and applies it directly to the needs of God's people here and now. By fostering the personal encounter with Jesus Christ that is absolutely essential to living as authentic disciples, vibrant parishes become places where evangelization flourishes through worship, teaching, stewardship, vocations and outreach. By means of genuine pastoral renewal, the Church in central and southern Indiana remains faithful to the missionary spirit reflected so powerfully by our co-patrons, St. Mother Theodore Guerin and St. Francis Xavier.

Archbishop Thompson's pastoral letter entrusts the implementation of the new pastoral plan to these co-patrons, but he includes the Blessed Virgin Mary as well.

"Mary is found at the heart of every vibrant parish and archdiocesan ministry," the archbishop says. "She is the one who leads us to her Divine Son through prayer and the sacraments. She facilitates the encounter with Jesus that is the true purpose of 'evangelizing catechesis.' Mary shows us how to answer the Lord's call to use our unique gifts to love and serve Jesus in and through others. Our Mother Mary accompanies us in our efforts to reach out to others. She shows us how to welcome strangers and carry out the principles of Catholic social teaching."

Let's embrace this new pastoral plan as an opportunity to renew our mission and to build up the Body of Christ here in our local communities and beyond.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Katie Yoder

'Life is a Gift': Let us always embrace the March for Life's 2026 theme

As I walked to my car to return home, I spotted it: A Ziploc bag with an assortment of M&M's and marshmallows taped to the door. "MeRRY ChRistMas," read the green sticky note attached to it.



I didn't see who put it here, but I had my suspicions. I was visiting my goddaughter's family and

noticed her momentarily disappear when I announced I was leaving. Her fingerprints were all over the surprise—a surprise given freely, without expecting anything in return. A gift.

I've been thinking about gifts, and the meaning of them, with the March for Life and its 2026 theme: "Life is a Gift."

For more than a decade, I've written about the national March for Life, which calls itself the "largest annual human rights demonstration in the world." The event held in Washington began in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion nationwide. The 53rd march on Jan. 23 marked the fourth one since the court overturned *Roe* with its 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which returned the abortion question to states.

While the March for Life still seeks to impact law, it also focuses on changing the culture until abortion becomes unthinkable. The 2026 theme reflected that cultural approach by recognizing every human person as a gift from the moment of conception. It also prompted pro-life marchers, particularly Christians and Catholics, to reflect on the question, "A gift from whom?"

It is a question the new pope—the first American pope, known to have attended the March for Life as a young man—recently addressed.

Consistent with Catholic Church teaching, Pope Leo XIV, who embraces a holistic approach to human dignity, condemned abortion as a practice that "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life" in remarks on Jan. 9. He called for "the protection of every unborn child and the effective and concrete support of every woman so that she is able to welcome life."

He said more on this in a Nov. 15 message where he also called the dignity of the human person a gift.

Letter to the Editor

Reader: ICC story reminds us of importance of addressing affordable housing

Thank you to the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) for its attention to the crucial issue of housing in the Jan. 23 issue of *The Criterion*. They note two pieces of proposed legislation: Senate Bill 285 and House Bill 1001.

SB 285 would result in people being fined or jailed for "street camping." The intent of the bill is to convince people to accept services or a trip to a shelter instead of being arrested.

While I believe this bill has good intentions and mental health is a very important issue, the root cause of homelessness is lack of affordable housing. See the book *Homelessness is a Housing Problem* by Gregg Colburn for the data.

A much better approach than arresting homeless people is being taken by the Streets to Home Indy initiative, in which people get both housing and access to

"Dignity is a gift from God, who created the human being in his own image and semblance [cf. Gen 1:26]," he wrote. "It is not something that is obtained by merit or effort; nor does it depend on what we possess or achieve. It is a gift that goes before us: it is born of the look of love with which God wanted us, one by one, and continues to want us."

He added that, "On every human face, even when it is marked by fatigue or pain, there is the reflection of the Creator's goodness, a light that no darkness can erase."

While human dignity is a gift, it does not promise a life free of suffering or pain, but it does guarantee a life where, in every moment, we are infinitely and eternally wanted and loved just as we are. It calls us to a life where we recognize that every person we encounter, born and unborn, is also wanted and loved.

Today, many threats to human life exist, but the pro-life movement identifies the most pressing one as abortion, which ends the lives of more than 1 million unborn babies nationwide each year. The pro-life movement sees, as Pope Leo said on Jan. 9, that "the protection of the right to life constitutes the indispensable foundation of every other human right."

At a time when the abortion rate is rising, access to abortion drugs is increasing and the Hyde Amendment prohibiting public funding of abortion is up for debate, a cultural approach to life beckons us to see the human persons involved. It begs us to ask why women are seeking abortion—and respond to that.

One person's response might look different from another's, but every person can contribute to building a culture of life. It might look like volunteering at or donating to one of the thousands of pregnancy centers that exist to help women in need. It might mean babysitting for a neighbor, cleaning an expectant mom's home, or knowing about available resources in case someone asks. It might be as simple as speaking a word of encouragement to pregnant and parenting families or being present when someone needs to talk. It could look like a prayer; it could look like marching. It might even look like a baggie of M&M's and marshmallows.

Life is a gift—a gift for us and, if lived well, a gift for others, too.

(Katie Yoder writes for OSV News from Maryland.) †

critical services. The city of Indianapolis, along with the philanthropic, business and faith communities are part of this effort.

As I write this letter, nearly 100 people have been moved from the street to supportive housing, and four homeless camps have been closed by this program.

I am very happy that my parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Indianapolis, has done much to help and we would be glad to have others help as well.

You can learn more at the website indymultifaith.org, or e-mail me at jsl2206@outlook.com.

HB 1001 looks much more promising. Few bills are "perfect," but this bill's goal is more much-needed housing that people can afford.

Scott Lowe
Indianapolis

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

In the Beatitudes, Christ challenges us to turn our lives inside out

The Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mt 5:1-12a) contains the Eight Beatitudes. These have been described as Christianity's fundamental ethical principles, and they certainly do proscribe for us a way of living that leads to goodness and a happy life. But the Beatitudes are much more than a set of moral guidelines.

The way of life presented to us by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount turns our whole understanding of ethics or righteousness inside out. Each of the eight Beatitudes is counterintuitive. From Christ's perspective, the way to happiness is different from what we expect it to be. Indeed, as the Beatitudes show us, the values that we assume are correct, and that are supported by our culture, need to be turned inside out.

In his *Life of Christ* (Chapter 11, "Beatitudes"), The Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen writes, "The Sermon on the Mount cannot be separated from [Christ's] crucifixion, any more than day from night. The day our Lord taught the Beatitudes, he signed his own death warrant."

Everyone wants to be happy, Archbishop Sheen says, but according

to Jesus, the only way to genuine happiness leads through the Cross.

The eight Beatitudes can be contrasted with what Archbishop Sheen calls "eight flimsy catchwords of the world: security, revenge, laughter, popularity, getting even, sex, armed might, and comfort" which the Lord turns upside down:

To those who say you cannot be happy unless you are rich, he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To those who say don't let them get away with it, he says, "Blessed are the patient." To those who say laugh and the world laughs with you, he says, "Blessed are those who mourn." To those who say if nature gave you sex instincts you ought to give them free expression, otherwise you will become frustrated, he says, "Blessed are the clean of heart." To those who say be popular and well known, he says, "Blessed are you when men revile you and speak all manner of evil against you falsely because of me." To those who say in times of peace prepare for war, he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

All so-called moral values which make happiness depend on self-expression,

license, having a good time, or "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die" are rejected by Jesus as dead ends. They do not lead to genuine happiness, but as Archbishop Sheen points out, they too often bring "mental disorders, unhappiness, false hopes, fears, and anxieties."

To be "blessed" is to live a life of openness to God's will (rather than our own) and to spend our lives in pursuit of the kind of self-sacrificing love that Jesus showed us through his words and example during his whole life, up to and including his death on the cross. Happiness is not self-generated (as if we had the power to "make ourselves happy"). It comes from the kind of self-emptying that Jesus demonstrated through his incarnation, through his life of humble service, and through his giving up his life as a ransom for our sins.

The second reading for the Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time (1 Cor 1:26-31) reinforces the idea that God's perspective about what is most important in life is often very different from our understanding of things. "God chose the foolish of the world," Saint Paul tells us, "to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the

strong." God chose the poor and lowly. He sought out those who were despised by the world, and those who count for nothing, "to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God."

This is what Jesus did when he became a man and when he freely chose to hand himself over to the religious and political leaders of his day as the sacrificial lamb who takes away the sin of the world. This is what it means to turn the world's values inside out and upside down—to be blessed by God for our fidelity to the way he has chosen for us rather than what we would choose for ourselves.

"Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters," St. Paul admonishes us. "Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." We are ordinary people chosen by God to live lives of extraordinary goodness, humility and kindness. We are called to be humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to God's will. Above all, we are challenged to be peacemakers who follow the only path that leads to authentic happiness: the Way of the Cross. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

En las Bienaventuranzas, Cristo nos desafía a dar un giro radical a nuestras vidas

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo del tiempo ordinario (Mt 5:1-12a) contiene las ocho bienaventuranzas que consideramos como los principios éticos fundamentales del cristianismo y que, sin duda, prescriben una forma de vida que conduce a la bondad y a la verdadera felicidad. Pero las bienaventuranzas son mucho más que un conjunto de pautas morales.

La forma de vida que Jesús nos presenta en su Sermón de la Montaña cambia por completo nuestra noción de la ética o la rectitud. Cada una de las ocho bienaventuranzas contradice la intuición. Desde la perspectiva de Cristo, el camino hacia la felicidad es diferente de lo que cabría esperar. De hecho, como nos muestran las bienaventuranzas, los valores que consideramos correctos y que están respaldados por nuestra cultura deben cambiar por completo.

En su obra *Vida de Cristo* (capítulo 11, "Bienaventuranzas"), el venerable arzobispo Fulton J. Sheen escribe: "El Sermón de la Montaña no puede separarse de la crucifixión [de Cristo], como tampoco se puede separar el día de la noche. El día en que nuestro Señor nos enseñó las Bienaventuranzas, firmó su propia sentencia de muerte." El arzobispo Sheen dice que todo el

mundo quiere ser feliz, pero según Jesús, el único camino hacia la felicidad auténtica pasa por la Cruz.

Las ocho bienaventuranzas pueden contrastarse con lo que el arzobispo Sheen llama "ocho eslóganes vacíos del mundo: seguridad, venganza, risa, popularidad, desquite, sexo, poderío armado y comodidad," que el Señor trastoca por completo:

A quienes dicen que no se puede ser feliz si no se es rico, él les responde: "Bienaventurados los pobres de espíritu." A quienes afirman que no hay que dejar que se salgan con la suya, les dice: "Bienaventurados los pacientes." A quienes sostienen que si uno ríe, el mundo ríe con uno, les dice: "Bienaventurados los que lloran." A quienes dicen que si la naturaleza le ha dotado de instintos sexuales, debe darles rienda suelta, porque de lo contrario se frustrará, Él les replica: "Bienaventurados los de corazón limpio." A quienes dicen que hay que ser popular y conocido, Él les responde: "Bienaventurados serán ustedes cuando por mi causa la gente los insulte, los persiga y levante contra ustedes toda clase de calumnias." A quienes dicen que en tiempos de paz hay que prepararse para la guerra, Él les dice: "Bienaventurados los que trabajan por la paz."

Todos los llamados valores morales que hacen que la felicidad dependa de la autoexpresión, la libertad, la diversión o "comer, beber y ser feliz porque mañana no estaremos aquí" son rechazados por Jesús como callejones sin salida. No conducen a la felicidad genuina, sino que, como señala el arzobispo Sheen, con demasiada frecuencia traen "trastornos mentales, infelicidad, falsas esperanzas, miedos y ansiedades."

Ser "bienaventurado" es vivir una vida abierta a la voluntad de Dios (en lugar de la nuestra) y dedicar nuestra vida a buscar el tipo de amor abnegado que Jesús nos mostró con sus palabras y su ejemplo durante toda su vida, hasta su muerte en la cruz. La felicidad no es algo que nosotros mismos podemos generar—no está en nuestras manos—sino que proviene del tipo de abnegación que Jesús demostró a través de su encarnación, de su vida de humilde servicio y al entregarla como rescate por nuestros pecados.

La segunda lectura del cuarto domingo del tiempo ordinario (1 Cor 1:26-31) refuerza la idea de que la perspectiva de Dios sobre lo que es más importante en la vida a menudo es muy diferente de lo que nosotros entendemos. "Dios escogió lo tonto del

mundo para avergonzar a los sabios, y escogió lo débil del mundo para avergonzar a los poderosos," nos dice san Pablo. Pero también eligió "lo más bajo y despreciado y lo que no es nada, para anular lo que es, a fin de que en su presencia nadie pueda jactarse."

Esto es lo que hizo Jesús cuando se hizo hombre y cuando eligió libremente entregarse a los líderes religiosos y políticos de su época como cordero sacrificial que quita el pecado del mundo. Esto es lo que significa transformar los valores del mundo, ponerlos patas arriba: ser bendecidos por Dios por nuestra fidelidad al camino que Él ha elegido para nosotros, en lugar del que nosotros habríamos elegido.

San Pablo nos dice: "Hermanos, consideren su propio llamamiento: no muchos de ustedes son sabios, según criterios meramente humanos; tampoco son muchos los poderosos ni muchos los de noble cuna." Somos personas comunes elegidas por Dios para vivir una vida de bondad, humildad y amabilidad extraordinarias. Estamos llamados a ser humildes, pacientes, puros y totalmente obedientes a la voluntad de Dios. Por encima de todo, se nos desafía a ser pacificadores que sigan el único camino que conduce a la auténtica felicidad: el Camino de la Cruz. †

Events Calendar

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

February 4, 11, 18, 25

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Corpus Christi Parish Hall, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Catholics in Recovery Support Group**, 7 p.m., meets every Wednesday, Catholic 12-step program serving those with addictions and unhealthy attachments. Information 317-557-8888, jjdav887@gmail.com.

February 6

JW Marriott, White River Ballroom, 10 S. West St., Indianapolis. **Legacy Gala**, 5:30 p.m., fundraiser for archdiocesan Catholic Charities, Catholic schools and Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Legacy Gala honoree Patricia Etling, \$150 ages 40 and older, \$75 ages 18-39, table sponsorships available. Information, registration: archindy.org/legacygala, 317-236-1411.

February 7

Maryland Community Church, 4700 S. Hwy. 46, Terre Haute. **Catholic Charities Terre Haute Annual Soup Bowl Benefit**, 3-5 p.m., one seating, guests select their own hand-crafted bowl and sample soups from local chefs, limited seating, \$31.20 (includes \$1.20 processing fee). Registration: tinyurl.com/2026SoupBenefit.

February 7, March 7

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

February 11

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 5333 E. Washington St., Indianapolis. **Sacred Music Concert**, 7 p.m., exploring religious narrative behind Robert Schumann's musical fairytale for piano "Forest Scenes" ("Waldszenen"), free, non-perishable food or money donations for St. Vincent de Paul food pantry requested. Information: parishsecretary@ollindy.org, 317-356-7291.

February 16, March 16

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women's Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online monthly on third Monday, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, all women welcome. Meeting: tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp. Information: iowhosomaddox@archindy.org, 317-261-3381.

February 19-22

Providence Spirituality and

Conference Center, Foley Room, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Used Book Sale**, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., freewill donations. Information: 812-535-2947, events.sistersofprovidence.org, lindenleafgifts@spsmw.org.

February 21

East Central H.S. Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Place, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men's Conference**, 8 a.m.- 3:30 p.m., speakers include Ryan Olohan, Tim Francis, Devin Schadt, Kevin Wells and Father Jonathan Meyer, includes Mass, confession, adoration, lunch, adults \$48, group of 10 or more adults \$38 per person, students ages 14-25 \$18, clergy and religious free. Information, registration: 513-518-2728, contact@e6catholicmensconference.com, e6catholicmensconference.com.

February 28

Pike Performing Arts Center,

6701 Zionsville Road, Indianapolis. **Holy Fire Youth Retreat**, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m., for students in grades 6-8; cost is \$74.50 with lunch or \$64.50 without lunch; register by Feb. 8, sponsored by archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry. Information, registration: archindyym.com/holy-fire, 317-456-7076, rgilman@archindy.org.

St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis.

Healing Service, 7 p.m., sponsored by Encounter School of Ministry, free, no registration required. Information: indianapolis@encounterschool.org, 317-795-4912.

March 13-15

Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, 5440 Moeller Ave, Norwood, Ohio. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter**, \$75 non-refundable fee.

Registration: www.wwme.org. Information: Andy and Melanie Reinersman, 859-653-8464.

March 14-15

Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Pre-Cana Retreat**, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day, includes materials, light breakfast, box lunch and snacks, \$200 per couple, register by March 4. Information, registration: ccorona@archindy.org, 317-800-9306, tinyurl.com/ccprecana3-26.

April 24-26

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter in Spanish**, \$75 non-refundable application fee. Registration: www.wwme.org. Information: Ken and Ann Butt, 317-863-5680. †

Retreats and Programs

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

February 13-15

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Seasons of Us: Renewing Marriage Through Every Stage of Life**, married couples retreat, Josh and Angie Greulich presenting, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Ash Wednesday and The Contemplative Life**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, includes lunch, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

February 19, March 18

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, includes

February 20, March 27, April 17

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.

February 20-22

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Strong Marriage, Strong Parenting**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., EWTN personality and clinical psychologist Dr. Ray Guarendi presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple, commuter \$90, 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.

February 21

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Modern Day Saints**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., artist Gracie Morbitzer presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

February 24-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Women of the Bible**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611,

saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

February 24, March 3, 10, 17

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Blessed Are You**, 10 a.m.-11 a.m. CT, four-week workshop, Benedictine Father Kolbe Wolniakowski presenting, includes all four sessions, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 27-29

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Pilgrims of Hope**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 31, April 1, 2

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Holy Week Days of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55 per day, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and

grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

June 5-7

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$400 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

September 25-27

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$400 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org. †

Archbishop Thompson and others will speak on 'Pope Leo XIV in Context' at Marian University on Feb. 11

A panel discussion called "Habemus Papam: Pope Leo XIV in Context" will take place in Evans Center Lecture Hall at Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis, from 6:30-8 p.m. on Feb. 11. A reception from 6-6:30 p.m. in the Evans Center Atrium will precede the discussion.

The panel includes four Catholic scholars and Church leaders speaking on topics through the lens of Pope Leo XIV: —Archbishop Charles C. Thompson:

evangelism and catechesis within the Church in the United States.

—Seth Smith of Catholic University of America:

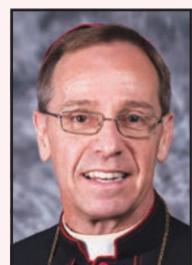
Pope Leo XIII's legacy and its relevance to Pope Leo XIV.

—Megan Gooley of Marian University: the legacy of Pope Francis.

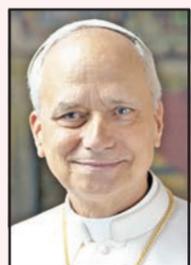
—Phil Thompson of

Marian University: the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in today's Church.

To register for this free event, go to tinyurl.com/PopeLeoInContext. †



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson



Pope Leo XIV

Eucharistic miracles exhibit will be offered at St. Mary Parish in Greensburg on Feb. 12-15

A "Eucharistic Miracles of the World" exhibit, created by St. Carlo Acutis, will be offered at St. Mary Parish, 1331 Hunter Robbins Way, in Greensburg, on Feb. 12-15. Hours are 2:30-5:30 p.m. and 6-8:30 p.m. on Thursday; 4-7 p.m. on Friday; before and after the 4:30 p.m. Mass on Saturday; and before and after the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses on Sunday.

Patrick Brueggen, International Marian Catechist coordinator and national coordinator for the Real Presence Association, will offer a presentation about

the exhibit at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday.

The exhibit includes a full-color display of photographs and historical information on eucharistic miracles from around the world. It was originally researched and compiled by St. Carlo Acutis. A first-class relic of St. Carlo will be available for veneration.

Sponsored by St. Mary's Adult Catechetical Team, the exhibit is free but donations will be accepted.

For more information, email anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.org or call 812-663-8427, ext. 204. †

Wedding Anniversaries

STEVE AND MAUREEN (SCANLON) BAUER, members of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Jan. 29.

The couple was married at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Beech Grove on Jan. 29, 1966. They have two children: Kathy Comado and Dan Bauer.

The couple also has five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. †



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

Teens at Youth Rally reminded of the God-given purpose of every person

By Sean Gallagher

Youth conferences can sometimes be marked by high-energy speakers who get an emotional rise from their teenage audience, getting them up on their feet to celebrate their faith with joyous screams and shouts.

But the keynote speaker at the Indiana Youth Rally for Life on Jan. 22 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis was different.

Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, a diminutive religious sister, wore her religious community's blue habit and spoke with a low, calm voice to the 1,600 teens and their chaperones who attended the rally from across the state.

A native of Iraq, Mother Olga, 59, came to the U.S. as an adult and founded the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth in the Archdiocese of Boston in 2011. She lives at present at St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, where two members of her community began ministry at the start of the year.

She told her audience at the rally that she came to speak to them, not because she's a great public speaker or because of her life as a religious and the foundress of a religious community.

"I'm here because I believe in the pro-life message," Mother Olga said. "I believe in the sanctity of life from the womb to the tomb. I believe that God has a purpose for every little tiny soul born from the womb of a mother."

'Life is a gift from the womb to the tomb'

In the first of two presentations she gave during the rally, Mother Olga reflected on the meaning of the lives of babies with many health challenges she's come to know in ministry in hospitals in Boston.

She shared how she brings the Blessed Sacrament with her in a small container called a pyx when she visits hospitals.

"I always bring Jesus with me. He is the divine physician," Mother Olga said. "He is the author of life, and he is the one who takes care of all these babies."

She also gives small rosaries to the babies she meets in neo-natal intensive care units (NICU).

"I always leave Mother Mary with every baby that I visit in a NICU," Mother Olga shared. "I tell them that she's the best mother to take care of them and to nurture the life that God has given them."

Among the stories of the babies she's met, Mother Olga gave special attention to Hendrix, a baby who is blind, deaf and cannot sit up.

"Yet, his joy is contagious," she said. "When he is in the room, he can fill the room with something beyond our understanding, beyond what we can ever explain. This boy ... has a presence that is bigger than all of us, bigger than this room."

To show Hendrix's unexplainable joy, Mother Olga shared a video of him bursting "into a spontaneous laugh."

"One of Hendrix's gifts to this world is the gift of laughter," Mother Olga said, "and the gift of joy that he brings to his family and friends and loved ones."

The story of Hendrix and the other babies Mother Olga spoke of was meant to remind her listeners that "every life from the womb to the tomb has a purpose, regardless of the life condition."

Mother Olga shared that she knows this from her own life. She had many health challenges when she was born in Iraq, leading doctors to tell her parents that they didn't expect her to live beyond her fifth birthday.

Yet as she grew well beyond age 5, Mother Olga came to know that "God has had a purpose for my life," leading her to serve as a missionary in 14 countries.

"I have seen many wars and a lot of suffering, yet I have seen the hand of God so present in all these places

and circumstances of my life," she said. "If God didn't have purpose for my life, I would have not lived what I have lived or survived what I have survived to be here with you today.

"So, please, my beloved children, my spiritual children in Christ, my brothers and sisters, I want you to believe in the gift of life and the purpose that God has for every child, for every person."

At the end of her first presentation, Mother Olga had a student from Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., in the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, to help her lead all of the those at the rally in repeating several times, "Life is a gift from the womb to the tomb."

"I really want baby Hendrix to hear us ... and even the babies in heaven to hear us," Mother Olga said.

"Can we say it in honor of every gift of life, whether that baby is in the womb, whether that baby is in a NICU, whether that baby is in heaven right now? Can we say it wholeheartedly? Life is a gift from the womb to the tomb."

'My life is a gift and my life has purpose'

In her second presentation, Mother Olga reflected on the ministry she and the sisters in her community do among the elderly residents of nursing homes in Boston, especially those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and dementia, emphasizing the importance of "simply being present" to them.

"I don't take their pain away. I cannot change their lives. I cannot bring their memory back. But I can make whatever they have left on this side of heaven meaningful."

This simple approach to ministry, Mother Olga said, is an example of the principle embodied in the lives of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Teresa of Calcutta "that not all of us can do big things, but we all can do small things with big love," a statement that she had her audience repeat several times.

To highlight this, Mother Olga shared the story of an elderly Puerto Rican woman in a nursing home. She had forgotten everything in her life except the music she loved and the dances that went with them. She even taught sisters in Mother Olga's community how to play maracas.

"We couldn't bring her memory back," she said. "We couldn't change her circumstances or her life. But if the only way that she can feel the love of God is to dance with the sisters, praise God. If the only way that she feels she still has purpose in life is to teach our sisters how to play the maracas, praise God. We all can do small things with big love."

Mother Olga summed up her message by saying that "there is a purpose for every life, even if people have no memories left. These residents, they fill our lives, the sisters and I, with so much joy. We all look forward to visiting them every week, all year long.

"I often tell our sisters that we are the only Jesus they see. But also for us, whenever we visit them, he is the Jesus that we visit."

She went on to tell them firmly that thinking that they can do nothing for the sick, the elderly, people suffering from addictions or terminal illnesses "is a lie."

"I want you to hear it from me: that is a lie," Mother Olga said. "You have so much to offer—your prayers for them, your love for them and most importantly, your presence to them. Try to see Jesus in them, in the wrinkly hands, or broken legs or blind eyes. We can see Jesus in each other.

"We are in the presence of Jesus all the time. Yes, sometimes the broken Jesus, sometimes the sick Jesus, sometimes the wounded Jesus."

After speaking of the dignity of babies with severe health challenges and elderly people who



Grace Fischer, a chaperone from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, left, and Kendall Schreck, a student at Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., right, stand with Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart at the end of the Indiana Youth Rally for Life on Jan. 22 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. Mother Olga was the keynote speaker at the rally. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



A priest hears a confession of a participant in the Indiana Youth Rally for Life on Jan. 22 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

have lost their memories, Mother Olga's closing words were a reminder to her young audience of their worth in God's eyes.

"You live in a very difficult time, in a way, because you live in a generation of social media," she said. "Your worth, your identity, is [determined] by the number of people who click likes or follow you on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or Twitter.

"But no, I want you to hear it from me, so loud in your heart. You are worth more than any numbers on social media. You don't need to be a social influencer. You are already a God-given gift as a divine influencer because you've been created in the likeness and image of God."

And similarly as she ended her first presentation, Mother Olga brought to the stage a group of young people to lead their peers in repeating, "My life is a gift and my life has purpose."

'The greatest joy of my life'

Elizabeth Taylor and Angel Morales attended the rally with about 50 other students from Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School in Madison.

Elizabeth, a sophomore at Shawe, was touched by Mother Olga's reflections on the dignity of people young and old with health challenges.

"It touched me because my dad was born premature and he was told that he wouldn't be able to have children," she shared. "I was the one that proved the doctors wrong."

This was the second rally that Angel, a junior at Shawe, has attended. He spoke of how he's impressed by spending time among so many pro-life peers from across the state.

"Not all of us know each other," he said. "But we all know that we want to speak for those who can't speak for themselves."

Jocelyn Rouch accompanied about 200 youths from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend as its director of youth and young adult formation.

This was her third rally, but the first as a mother. Coming along with Rouch was her 3-month old son Pio, whom she often held to her chest with a baby wrap.

"I feel like I appreciate [the pro-life message] more," Rouch said. "There are so many things that I didn't know. Yes, I was pro-life. But now that I have a baby, it's like this is the greatest joy of my life, and I want other people to experience that." †



Teenagers have fun while the Nico Cabrera Band plays praise and worship music after the Indiana Youth Rally for Life on Jan. 22 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

PASTORAL PLAN

continued from page 1

One member of the pastoral planning team encourages individuals to read the plan. “It’s relevant to every person in the pew,” said Gayle Schrank of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton. “We are all disciples, and we do have a mission. This is an opportunity to become more involved in our faith.”



Gayle Schrank

Her words support Archbishop Thompson’s

statement on the plan’s purpose: “To be intentional, to have a shared vision, and to work together toward that same common, shared vision.”

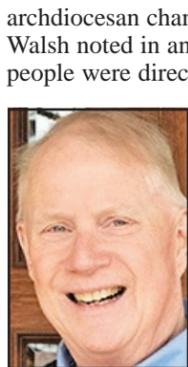
‘The Holy Spirit was definitely involved’

Archbishop Thompson is quick to note that this is no dictated, “top-down” plan.

Proof of that fact can be found starting two years ago when the archdiocese launched surveys and listening sessions in

English and Spanish throughout central and southern Indiana.

“The process was grounded in many hours of listening and prayerful discernment of where we are today, where God is calling us to be, and how we get there together,”



Christopher Walsh

archdiocesan chancellor Christopher Walsh noted in an email. “Close to 1,000 people were directly involved in the formation of this pastoral plan.”

Archbishop Thompson was present at each of the listening sessions.

“I think that’s very significant,” said Daniel Conway, the consultant who helped guide the archdiocese’s

two-year pastoral planning process. “It says this is not the *archbishop’s* plan, but it’s the *archdiocese’s* plan with the

archbishop. And that’s really significant.” A 22-member committee assisted in the pastoral planning process from the start.

Walsh credited the team’s effort in spending “the last two years working together to bring the feedback to life.”

While the archbishop and others in archdiocesan leadership were part of the committee, the entire team represented a demographic cross-section of the archdiocese in terms of age, race, ethnicity, vocation and locale.

Those who created the committee “were very intentional in inviting many, many different people on this team,” said committee member Schrank, who recently retired as pastoral associate of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton.

“There were priests, a [religious] sister, lay people, those who work for the Church, those who work in the community—a very diverse group of people, very holy people.”

She said a member of the team “wrote down every single thing that was spoken from all the parishioners” during the listening sessions throughout the archdiocese.

“People just want to be heard, and I feel like this group very much listened and addressed what was said,” Schrank noted.



Yadira Villatoro

Fellow planning team member Yadira Villatoro agrees. The administrator of religious education for St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis served on a subcommittee that selected the archdiocesan pastoral plan’s five domains of focus.

First, the subgroup prayerfully considered the listening session and survey results, Villatoro said. They also studied a few Church documents for insight, including Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel.”

When it came time to discern the final areas of focus, “It was easy to narrow down,” said Villatoro. “The five people on the [sub]committee had the same ideas. The Holy Spirit was definitely involved.”

The five domains of the plan are: parish life and worship, evangelizing catechesis, stewardship, vocations, and outreach and ministry.

‘At the core ... is evangelization’

The document describes each of

these domains as “key elements in the make-up of parishes, schools, and archdiocesan ministries that are Alive in Christ.”

It uses simple phrases to describe each domain’s purpose:

—Parish life and worship:

“Encounter the person of Jesus Christ.”

—Evangelizing catechesis:

“Teach as Jesus did.”

—Stewardship:

“Foster a culture of joyful and intentional stewardship.”

—Vocations:

“Respond to the universal call to holiness.”

—Outreach and ministry:

“Implement Catholic social teaching.”

“We felt it was very important that each domain specifically led us to the person of Jesus Christ, ... to answer Jesus’ call to holiness and to be people who reach out to others and share his love and his teaching,” Conway told *The Criterion*.

The plan calls parishes the “most prominent and far-reaching” of the Church’s ministries. “That’s why the primary focus of our new pastoral plan is to develop *vibrant parishes*,” it states, with the two words intentionally italicized.

And “at the core” of a vibrant parish “is evangelization,” said Archbishop Thompson.

“How is it evangelizing to people within the walls of that church? How is it evangelizing to people outside the walls of that church, not just within the parish boundaries or the church’s property, but beyond ... ?”

The plan strikes a chord with archdiocesan vicar general Msgr. William F. Stumpf. A pastoral planning team member and pastor of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, he had this to say:

“In all the years I’ve been involved in archdiocesan planning, I feel this is a plan that really focuses on the primacy of the parish and its work in the life of the archdiocese.”

But the domains equally apply to archdiocesan schools and ministries in terms of their vibrancy in carrying out the Church’s mission.

“Again, it’s a shared vision,” Archbishop Thompson said.

‘Guidance, allowing space for creativity’

It may be a shared vision, but in an archdiocese that spans the majority of central and southern Indiana with parishes large and small, urban and rural, the implementation of that vision is bound to differ.

For that reason, the objectives and goals outlined under each domain are “pretty broad, and they’re meant to be broad,” the archbishop said.

“The action steps are where it becomes a little different” for each parish, school and archdiocesan ministry, he continued.

He gave an example of an objective for a parish to help its members develop a deeper relationship with Christ in the Eucharist. One possible action step might be to institute perpetual eucharistic adoration.

“That might work for a large parish,” Archbishop Thompson said. “But a rural parish that only has 50 households and is spread across half a county, that’s probably harder for them.

“We can all get behind what it means to strive to deepen our identity and appreciation for the Eucharist. But the specifics of how that gets done, that’s

By the Numbers

IN FAITH AND GRATITUDE

13,757.7 SQ MILES
current size of the
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

125 PARISHES



17th LARGEST DIOCESAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

69 SCHOOLS
OVER 23,000 STUDENTS
(PreK-12)

APPOINTED JUNE 13, 2017, BY POPE FRANCIS
ARCHBISHOP CHARLES C. THOMPSON is our 7th archbishop

Over 110,000 people were served by **Catholic Charities** across the archdiocese



The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has **6 agencies and 2 charitable outreach ministries** that provide **48 distinct services**

United Catholic Appeal has raised over **\$5.7M** from over 10,000 donors—funding teaching, serving and shepherding across the archdiocese



OVER 25 SEMINARIANS are currently studying for the priesthood

going to vary from parish to parish, from community to community,” perhaps even with some parishes or a deanery working on an action step together, he noted.

“Hopefully [the plan is] giving some direction, some vision, some guidance, allowing space for creativity as well.”

Conway agreed. “The genius of the Catholic Church is that we believe so strongly in the principle of subsidiarity, that what is done best is at the local level,” he said.

‘An invitation for each of us’

However the implementation looks in the end, Archbishop Thompson said the first two action steps are the same for every parish, school and archdiocesan ministry.

“The first one is to read it,” he said. “Secondly, how do we dialogue with others so that we can have others help us share insights and discern?”

Some pastors might choose a route like Msgr. Stumpf at St. Matthew.

“Our pastoral council will read it and engage in a synodal process to reflect on the plan and how we need to implement it,” he said.

Other parishes, schools or ministries might “create small groups to read and study the plan then come together in prayer to discuss and discern,” Conway suggested.

Whoever reads the plan, he said, should “read it prayerfully with an open mind and heart.”

Schrank encourages every member of the archdiocese to read the document in the same way, saying it is “not meant to be pie in the sky.”

“This [plan] is an invitation for each of us to get out there and do our part,” she said. “I would just invite people to read it and take personal steps to grow in their own life based on what’s in the plan.”

Msgr. Stumpf agrees. “The Church is really calling us to be missionary disciples and to evangelize and share the good news,” he said.

“That’s part of the mission to each of us as Catholics. It doesn’t rest with the institution but with each of us. The plan is a reminder and a way for us to help people take on that responsibility.”

His comments reflect the name of the document: “Go Forth in Joy and Hope as Missionary Disciples.”

“It’s offered to be a means of us sharing a vision together,” said Archbishop Thompson. “Working together, moving forward together, being together, being centered not on any particular ego or ideology or agenda but on Christ Jesus alone.”

(The pastoral letter and domains of “Go Forth in Joy and Hope as Missionary Disciples” can be found on page 9 of this issue. To read the goals and objectives, go to www.archindy.org/PastoralPlan.) †

Committee Members

- Kyle Brintnall, St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis
- Kenith Britt, St. Roch, Indianapolis
- Andrea Byrne, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
- John Duffy, St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis
- Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, O.S.B., Sisters of St. Benedict, Beech Grove
- Maxwell Hagan, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis
- Thomas V. Haley, Sr., St. Patrick, Terre Haute
- Annette “Mickey” Lentz, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis
- Dave Lobeck, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
- Sandi Patel, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis
- Gayle Schrank, St. Mary of the Annunciation, Navilleton
- Yadira Villatoro, St. Anthony, Indianapolis

Archdiocesan Representatives

- Daniel Conway, Consultant
- Fr. Jeffrey Dufresne, Pastor, St. Philip Neri, Indianapolis
- Fr. Tony Hollowell, Pastor, St. Paul, Tell City
- Sally Krause, Executive Director of Communications
- Jolinda Moore, Executive Director of Stewardship and Development
- Ken Ogorek, Executive Director, Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis
- Beth Roberts, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor
- Msgr. William F. Stumpf, Vicar General
- Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop
- Christopher Walsh, Chancellor



Go Forth

IN JOY AND HOPE AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

A Pastoral Letter and Plan for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

By The Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi Te* (I Have Loved You), Pope Leo XIV reflects on the importance of love for the Church's mission:

Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society. By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today. (Dilexi Te, #120.)



As we conclude the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope and, simultaneously, inaugurate a new pastoral plan for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we take these words to heart. We strive to be men and women who love God and our neighbor so much that, by the grace of God, what seems impossible actually happens. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us, and accompany us, as we renew our commitment to serving as Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ who “go forth in joy and hope” to proclaim the Good News of our salvation in Him.

A Vision Born of a Synodal Spirit

As Archbishop of Indianapolis, it is my responsibility to lead the archdiocese in assessing the needs of the Church in central and southern Indiana and planning for the future. In the spirit of synodality, successful planning requires broad consultation and teamwork. It requires a profound sense of openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit—as this is manifested both through the rich history of the Church in this

region and in the present circumstances. Ultimately, sound pastoral planning demands that we be willing to trust that although we cannot predict the future, Divine Providence will show us the way to carry out God's will for us in the years ahead.

For many years now, pastoral planning has been an important dimension of the life of our parishes, schools, and archdiocesan ministries. We are keenly aware that as baptized Catholics and children of God, we are co-responsible leaders called to holiness and to follow Jesus Christ as missionary disciples and pilgrims of hope. We accept this timeless invitation to proclaim the Gospel joyfully and to minister to all our sisters and brothers in Jesus's name as co-responsible witnesses. As one Body of Christ, we prayerfully discern God's will for the Church in central and southern Indiana through attentive listening to the Word of God, prayerful celebration of the Sacraments, ministry to the spiritual and temporal needs of others, and respectful dialogue with one another and with all members of God's family. We look forward in hope to a future that is rooted in the Gospel and Tradition that responds faithfully to the changing circumstances of our time.

A Mission Directive To Go Forth as Missionary Disciples

We believe that the Lord will prosper our efforts to manifest His kingdom as we share the joy of Christ, living in the Spirit of authentic holiness. We are confident in the future, knowing that Jesus offers us—His faithful disciples—the grace-filled gift of unending hope!

This confidence is what compels us to “go forth” as missionary disciples out to the margins, journeying together with all who need God's healing mercy and saving love. We are a Eucharistic community, a people gathered by Christ, formed in faith by the Word of God, united in communion with Christ and one another, and then sent out on mission to preach, to heal, to prophesy, and to console God's people here in our diverse regions of central and southern Indiana and beyond.

A Pastoral Charge to Develop Vibrant Parishes

As a Local Church, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis engages in many ministries, and provides diverse programs and services that are designed to meet the spiritual, educational, social, and temporal needs of God's people. The most prominent and far-reaching of these ministries are provided by our 125 parishes located throughout 38 counties in central and southern

Indiana. That's why the primary focus of our new pastoral plan is to develop vibrant parishes within which missionary disciples are called, formed through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and sent out to proclaim the Gospel and minister to the needs of all God's people through Word, Sacrament and service.

What is a vibrant parish? There are different ways that this question can be answered. Here is how the 2020 Vatican document titled “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church” responds to this question using the words of three recent popes:

Saint John Paul II specified that: “Whilst the Parish is perfected and integrated in a variety of forms, it

nevertheless remains an indispensable organism of primary importance in the visible structure of the Church whereby evangelization is the cornerstone of all pastoral action, the demands of which are primary, preeminent and preferential.” Subsequently, Benedict XVI taught, “the parish is a beacon that radiates the light of the faith and thus responds to the deepest and truest desires of the human heart, giving meaning and hope to the lives of individuals and families.” Lastly, Pope Francis recalled how “the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers.” (#12)

Evangelization—sharing our faith in the person of Jesus Christ—is the key to vibrant parishes and, indeed, to the vitality of the Church as it is lived concretely, day-in and day-out, in our 38 counties of southern and central Indiana. If we truly are “Spirit-filled Evangelizers,” the term favored by Pope Francis especially in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), our parishes, schools, and archdiocesan ministries will be “Alive in Christ,” vibrant centers of worship, formation in faith, pastoral care, outreach to the poor and vulnerable, and responsible stewardship of all God's gifts.

The pastoral planning committee appointed to lead the synodal process of prayer, attentive listening, and co-responsible leadership that has taken place over the past two years paid careful attention to the importance of evangelization for the current vitality and future spiritual health of our archdiocese. The committee read and discussed significant Church documents, including *Evangelii Gaudium*. They listened carefully as Catholics in diverse regions of our archdiocese gathered to share their experiences and hopes for the future. And they allowed themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit in giving shape and direction to our new pastoral plan.

The concrete answers that our planning process has given to questions about vibrancy and the importance of evangelization can be found in the five “domains” that guide our efforts to carry out the mission of this Local Church. We recognize the following as key elements in the make-up of parishes, schools, and archdiocesan ministries that are Alive in Christ:

Domain 1 | Parish Life & Worship Encounter the person of Jesus Christ.

We do this through prayer and meditation on God's Word, in the celebration of the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation), by serving the needs of all God's people, and by giving witness to Jesus in all aspects of our daily lives.

Domain 2 | Evangelizing Catechesis Teach as Jesus did.

We do this by forming missionary disciples who will “go forth” in joy and hope to introduce Jesus to others. Ongoing faith formation usually begins in the home, but there is a need for an additional emphasis on adult instruction. We recognize that a personal encounter with Jesus helps deepen the experience and effectiveness of catechesis.

Domain 3 | Stewardship Foster a culture of joyful and intentional stewardship.

Such a culture is rooted in gratitude, where every act of generosity reflects the joy of the Gospel and honors Christ in the poor, the vulnerable, and the forgotten—recognizing that in serving the least among us, we serve Jesus himself.

See PLAN, page 10

Heavenly Father,

you bless us with joy and hope,
and you call us to be missionary disciples of your Son,
Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Make your Holy Spirit powerfully present, we pray,
as we discern your will for our Archdiocese in the years ahead.
Eucharistic-centered in identity and mission, may we be a Church
that goes out to the margins, seeking the lost,
bringing your healing mercy to the people of central and
southern Indiana.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Star of the New Evangelization,
help us to advance the mission and ministry of Jesus,
by the unifying power of the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

PLAN
continued from page 9

Domain 4 | Vocations

Respond to the universal call to holiness.

Among these are the particular calls to ordained ministry, consecrated life, marriage and lay leadership. In Jesus's name, we seek to provide for the spiritual and temporal needs of all who exercise pastoral leadership in our archdiocese, especially our clergy and parish leaders. We commit to providing pastoral support for married couples and families through our parish and archdiocesan ministries while not overlooking those who answer God's call as single persons.

Domain 5 | Outreach & Ministry

Implement Catholic social teaching.

We affirm Church teaching on the fundamental dignity of every person by caring for the needs of all our sisters and brothers as diverse but unified members of the Mystical Body of Christ. We affirm our Church's teaching that the family is the fundamental social unit.

No two parishes will carry out the activities described in these five domain areas in exactly the same ways, but in order to be considered "vibrant" every parish—regardless of its size, geographic location, ethnic, economic, or cultural background—must reflect what the Vatican instruction referenced above calls "a spiritual dynamic of evangelization." If not, regardless of its circumstances, the parish "runs the risk of becoming self-referential and fossilized, offering experiences that are devoid of evangelical flavor and missionary drive, of interest only to small groups. (#17)

We drafted the new pastoral plan around these five Domain areas because, based on the broad consultation and prayerful discernment we have done, we believe that our archdiocese, and each of our parishes, must reflect these essential characteristics in significant ways in order to be considered "vibrant." With this in mind, every parish in our archdiocese, and all of our archdiocesan ministries, will be expected to participate in the Implementation Phase of our planning process and to assess their strengths and weaknesses in each of the five Domain areas.

I am deeply grateful to the members of the planning committee, but also to the nearly 1,000 others who participated in subcommittee meetings, attended Listening Sessions, completed the online survey, and provided feedback and advice. Together, we prayed, reflected, and sought to discern God's will for our archdiocese. The result is a plan that is designed to set direction for all the ministries of this Local Church for the next five years (2026–2031).

Domains 1-5: A Framework for Pastoral Planning

The five Domain areas provide a framework for the action plans that are designed to help us carry out the Church's mission here and now. Each of the Domain areas includes a series of Goals with corresponding Objectives. Detailed Action Steps and Accountability will be assigned to each of the plan's Objectives during the Implementation Phase of this process, which will begin in January 2026.

Encounter the person of Jesus Christ.

Domain 1 | Parish Life and Worship

The Goals and Objectives in our first Domain area seek to strengthen the personal encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ that is at the heart of Christian prayer and worship. Our parish communities are places wherein the relationship between worship, Eucharistic Adoration, and the lived experience of faith through service should be fully alive in Christ. Strong parish communities facilitate healing, reconciliation, and charity in order to repair the divisions among us and

strengthen our unity as Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ.

Teach as Jesus did.

Domain 2 | Evangelizing Catechesis

Our second Domain area calls attention to the fundamental role that evangelization and catechesis play in ecclesial ministry, especially at the parish level. We do not teach in a vacuum. Rather, we seek first to introduce our sisters and brothers to the person of Jesus Christ and to embrace our identity as His Missionary Disciples through a deeper understanding of His call, a more profound awareness of His presence among us, and a confident witness to our faith in Him. As a result of our encounters with Jesus in Word, Sacrament, and service, we seek to fulfill the Lord's Great Commission to "go out to the whole world and baptize all nations" in the name of the Holy Trinity (cf. Mt 28:19).

Foster a culture of joyful and intentional stewardship.

Domain 3 | Stewardship

Joyful and intentional stewardship rooted in gratitude and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, as the foundation for discipleship, is the dominant theme of our pastoral plan's third Domain area. Always with the intention of creating and renewing Missionary Disciples, we wish to grow in our understanding of the spiritual and material gifts that are present in our parishes and archdiocesan ministries. We want our administrative and pastoral services to reflect "best practices" for achieving unity and for developing the parish and archdiocesan resources required to serve the needs of others, especially the least among us. We believe that responsible stewardship of all our resources is not an optional, or secondary, dimension of Christian life, but is essential to our self-understanding as Missionary Disciples (cf. *Laudato Si'* On Care for our Common Home).

Respond to the universal call to holiness.

Domain 4 | Vocations

The universal call to holiness grounds our fourth Domain area in an understanding of the importance of Vocation, the unique call that every Baptized person receives to use her or his unique gifts, talents, and capabilities to serve the Lord and carry out His work in the world. Because today there are many distractions that prevent us from listening to God's voice and discerning His will for us, we want to create strategies and resources for formation in discernment to enable young people to learn how to listen and follow the movements of the Holy Spirit that lead them to answer the universal call to holiness through marriage, the single life, ordained ministry, consecrated life, or professional lay ministry. Similarly, we want to make sure that clergy and other parish ministers receive the support and assistance they deserve to meet their ongoing spiritual and temporal needs.

Implement Catholic social teaching.

Domain 5 | Outreach & Ministry

The Catholic Church is blessed with a rich understanding of Christian anthropology that affirms the fundamental dignity of every person. Catholic Social Teaching provides concrete direction for responding to the needs of all people, especially those who are poor, vulnerable, and oppressed in any way. The fifth and final Domain of our pastoral plan seeks to increase the number of Catholics in central and southern Indiana who can participate actively in the Church's social ministry. With this in mind, we want to develop a network of people and resources that will connect parishes and deaneries. We also seek to increase awareness and understanding of God's call to build His kingdom through the principles and practices outlined in Catholic Social Teaching. One of our most important Goals is to create a culture of invitation and belonging for all ages, backgrounds and abilities by establishing welcoming ministries within each parish and the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center that focus on creating welcoming, caring and connected communities. Finally, we plan to develop

age-related activities to promote service with ties to Mass participation and companionship.

Mary, the First Missionary Disciple

These reflections on the mission of the Church as it is lived here in central and southern Indiana naturally lead us to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who inspires and guides us as we seek to proclaim the Gospel of Joy and to live her Son's mission of mercy, hope and salvation. Mary was the first missionary disciple. Her entire life was dedicated to fulfilling the promise she made when the Archangel Gabriel shared with her the unique vocation she had been given by God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary's "yes," in her lifelong commitment to accompany her Son, is the model we strive to follow as an archdiocese. Her closeness to Jesus encourages us to draw nearer to him through her. Her fidelity to Jesus's teaching and example makes Mary the perfect image of the Church—truly the Mother of Mercy, Mother of Holy Hope and Mother of our Savior.

As Pope Francis reminded us in his Letter of Introduction for the 2025 Jubilee Year:

Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God. In the Blessed Virgin, we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life....

At the foot of the cross, she witnessed the passion and death of Jesus, her innocent son. Overwhelmed with grief, she nonetheless renewed her "fiat," never abandoning her hope and trust in God. In this way, Mary cooperated for our sake in the fulfillment of all that her Son had foretold in announcing that he would have to "undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31).

In the travail of that sorrow, offered in love, Mary became our Mother, the Mother of Hope. (Spes non confundit, #24).

Mary is found at the heart of every vibrant parish and archdiocesan ministry. She is the one who leads us to her Divine Son through prayer and the Sacraments. She facilitates the encounter with Jesus that is the true purpose of "evangelizing catechesis." Mary shows us how to answer the Lord's call to use our unique gifts to love and serve Jesus in and through others. Our Mother Mary accompanies us in our efforts to reach out to others. She shows us how to welcome strangers and carry out the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Conclusion

As we conclude this two-year process of prayer, attentive listening, and collaborative planning, we entrust the next phase of this initiative—Implementation—to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to our archdiocesan patrons, Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Mother Theodore Guérin. The Implementation of this new pastoral plan will take place in every parish, school, and archdiocesan ministry in our archdiocese. It will challenge all of us to make the Church in central and southern Indiana more fully Alive in Christ by strengthening our prayer and worship, by encountering the person of Christ, by being joyful stewards of God's gifts, by discerning the Lord's call in our lives, and by reaching out to others and welcoming strangers in Jesus's name.

Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV reminds us that "to hope is to bear witness that the Earth can truly resemble heaven." May the Blessed Hope we await in a special way during this Advent season come to us now, as always, in the fullness of faith, hope and love. And may we welcome Him with great joy as we eagerly carry out His will for this Local Church.

Given in Indianapolis at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center on December 3rd in the year of Our Lord 2025, the memorial of St. Frances Xavier.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.
Archbishop of Indianapolis



Avancemos

CON ALEGRÍA Y ESPERANZA COMO DISCÍPULOS MISIONEROS

Carta y plan pastoral para la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis

del Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson, Arzobispo de Indianápolis

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

En su primera exhortación apostólica, *Dilexi Te* ("Te he amado"), el papa León XIV reflexiona sobre la importancia del amor para la misión de la Iglesia:

El amor cristiano supera cualquier barrera, acerca a los lejanos, reúne a los extraños, familiariza a los enemigos, atraviesa abismos humanamente insuperables, penetra en los rincones más ocultos de la sociedad. Por su naturaleza, el amor cristiano es profético, hace milagros, no tiene límites: es para lo imposible. El amor es ante todo un modo de concebir la vida, un modo de vivirla. Pues bien, una Iglesia que no pone límites al amor, que no conoce enemigos a los que combatir, sino sólo hombres y mujeres a los que amar, es la Iglesia que el mundo necesita hoy. (Dilexi Te, n.º 120).



Al concluir el Año Jubilar de la Esperanza 2025 y, al mismo tiempo, inaugurar un nuevo plan pastoral para la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis, nos tomamos estas palabras muy a pecho. Nos esforzamos por ser hombres y mujeres que aman tanto a Dios y al prójimo que, por la gracia de Dios, lo que parece imposible realmente sucede. Y rezamos para que el Espíritu Santo nos guíe y nos acompañe mientras renovamos nuestro compromiso de servir como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo que "avanzan con alegría y esperanza" para proclamar la Buena Nueva de nuestra salvación en Él.

Una visión nacida del espíritu sinodal

Como Arzobispo de Indianápolis, es mi responsabilidad dirigir esta Arquidiócesis en la evaluación de las necesidades de la Iglesia en el centro y el sur de Indiana y la planificación para el futuro. Fieles al espíritu de sinodalidad, una planificación exitosa requiere una amplia consulta y trabajo en equipo. Esto implica un profundo sentido de apertura a la guía del Espíritu Santo, como se manifiesta, tanto a través de la rica historia de la Iglesia en esta región, como en las circunstancias actuales. En definitiva, una planificación pastoral sólida exige que estemos dispuestos a confiar en que, aunque no podemos predecir el futuro, la Divina Providencia

nos mostrará el camino para llevar a cabo la voluntad de Dios para nosotros en los años venideros.

Desde hace muchos años, la planificación pastoral ha sido una dimensión importante de la vida de nuestras parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos. Somos muy conscientes de que, como católicos bautizados e hijos de Dios, somos líderes corresponsables llamados a la santidad y a seguir a Jesucristo como discípulos misioneros y peregrinos de esperanza. Aceptamos esta invitación imperecedera a proclamar el Evangelio con alegría y a servir a todas nuestras hermanas y hermanos en nombre de Jesús en nuestra condición de testigos corresponsables. Como un solo Cuerpo de Cristo, discernimos en oración la voluntad de Dios para la Iglesia en el centro y sur de Indiana al escuchar con atención la Palabra de Dios, celebrar piadosamente los sacramentos, atender las necesidades espirituales y temporales del prójimo y dialogar de forma respetuosa entre nosotros y con todos los miembros de la familia de Dios. Tenemos la esperanza de un futuro arraigado en el Evangelio y la tradición, que responda fielmente a las circunstancias cambiantes de nuestro tiempo.

Una directriz para avanzar como discípulos misioneros

Creemos que el Señor favorecerá nuestros esfuerzos por manifestar Su reino conforme compartimos la alegría de Cristo, y vivimos en el espíritu de auténtica santidad. Tenemos confianza en el futuro, sabiendo que Jesús nos ofrece a nosotros, sus fieles discípulos, el don lleno de gracia de la esperanza inquebrantable.

Esta confianza es lo que nos impulsa a "avanzar" hacia los márgenes como discípulos misioneros, acompañando a todos los que necesitan la misericordia sanadora y el amor salvador de Dios. Somos una comunidad eucarística, un pueblo reunido por Cristo, formado en la fe por la Palabra de Dios, unido en comunión con Cristo y entre sí, y luego enviado en misión para predicar, sanar, profetizar y consolar al pueblo de Dios aquí, en nuestras diversas regiones del centro y sur de Indiana y más allá.

La responsabilidad pastoral de desarrollar parroquias dinámicas

Como Iglesia local, la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis participa en muchos ministerios y ofrece diversos programas y servicios diseñados para satisfacer las necesidades espirituales, educativas, sociales y temporales del pueblo de Dios. Los ministerios más destacados y de mayor alcance son los que ofrecen nuestras 125 parroquias ubicadas en 38 condados del centro y sur de Indiana. Por eso, el objetivo principal de nuestro nuevo plan pastoral es desarrollar *parroquias dinámicas* en las que puedan surgir discípulos misioneros, formados a través de un encuentro personal con Jesucristo y enviados a proclamar el Evangelio y atender las necesidades de todo el pueblo de Dios a través de la palabra, los sacramentos y el servicio.

¿Qué es una parroquia dinámica? Hay diferentes maneras de responder a esta pregunta. El documento publicado por el Vaticano en 2020 y titulado "La conversión pastoral de la comunidad parroquial al servicio de la misión evangelizadora de la Iglesia a cargo de la Congregación para el Clero" responde a esta pregunta fundamentándose en las palabras de tres papas recientes:

San Juan Pablo II precisaba: "La parroquia ha de ser perfeccionada e integrada en muchas otras formas, pero ella sigue siendo todavía un organismo indispensable de primaria importancia en las estructuras visibles de la Iglesia", para "hacer de la

evangelización el pivote de toda la acción pastoral, cual exigencia prioritaria, preminente y privilegiada". Luego, Benedicto XVI enseñaba que "la parroquia es un faro que irradia la luz, de la fe y así responde a los deseos más profundos y verdaderos del corazón del hombre, dando significado y esperanza a la vida de las personas y de las familias". Finalmente, el Papa Francisco recuerda que "a través de todas sus actividades, la parroquia alienta y forma a sus miembros para que sean agentes de evangelización" (n.º 12).

La evangelización—compartir nuestra fe en la persona de Jesucristo—es la clave para que las parroquias sean dinámicas y, de hecho, para la vitalidad de la Iglesia, tal y como se vive concretamente, día tras día, en nuestros 38 condados del centro y sur de Indiana. Si verdaderamente somos "evangelizadores llenos del Espíritu", término preferido por el papa Francisco especialmente en su exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Gaudium* (La alegría del Evangelio), nuestras parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos, estarán "vivos en Cristo", serán centros dinámicos de culto, formación en la fe, atención pastoral, ayuda a los pobres y vulnerables, y gestión corresponsable de todos los dones de Dios.

El comité de planificación pastoral designado para dirigir el proceso sinodal de oración, escucha atenta y liderazgo corresponsable que se ha llevado a cabo durante los últimos dos años prestó especial atención a la importancia de la evangelización para la vitalidad actual y la salud espiritual futura de nuestra Arquidiócesis. El comité leyó y analizó documentos importantes de la Iglesia, entre ellos *Evangelii Gaudium*. Escucharon con atención a los católicos de diversas regiones de nuestra Arquidiócesis que se congregaron para compartir sus experiencias y esperanzas para el futuro, y permitieron que el Espíritu Santo nos guiara para dar forma y dirección a nuestro nuevo plan pastoral.

Las respuestas concretas que nuestro proceso de planificación ha dado a las preguntas sobre la vitalidad y la importancia de la evangelización se encuentran en los cinco "dominios" que guían nuestros esfuerzos para llevar a cabo la misión de esta Iglesia local. Reconocemos los siguientes elementos como fundamentales en la composición de parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos que están vivos en Cristo:

Dominio 1 | Vida parroquial y culto Encuentro con la persona de Jesucristo.

Lo hacemos por medio de la oración y la meditación de la Palabra de Dios, en la celebración de los sacramentos (especialmente la Eucaristía y el sacramento de la reconciliación), al atender las necesidades de todo el pueblo de Dios y al dar testimonio de Jesús en todos los aspectos de nuestra vida cotidiana.

Dominio 2 | Catequesis evangelizadora Enseñar como Jesús.

Lo hacemos al preparar discípulos misioneros que "avancen" con alegría y esperanza a dar a conocer a Jesús a los demás. La formación continua en la fe generalmente comienza en el hogar, pero es necesario hacer un énfasis adicional en la instrucción de los adultos. Reconocemos que un encuentro personal con Jesús ayuda a profundizar la experiencia y la eficacia de la catequesis.

Dominio 3 | Corresponsabilidad Fomentar una cultura de corresponsabilidad alegre e intencionada.

La raíz de una cultura así es la gratitud, donde cada acto de generosidad refleja la alegría del Evangelio y honra a Cristo en los pobres, los vulnerables y los olvidados, en el reconocimiento de que al servir a los más necesitados, servimos al mismo Jesús.

Ver PLAN PASTORAL, página 12

Learn More

Read more about the pastoral plan at www.archindy.org/PastoralPlan.

The page includes more specifics about the vision, mission directive, goals and objectives, and suggested action steps, as well as a link to a podcast with the archbishop about the plan.

You can also download a printable version in either English or Spanish.

Amén.



PLAN PASTORAL

continúa de la página 11

Dominio 4 | Vocaciones

Responder al llamado universal a la santidad.

Entre ellas se encuentran los llamados específicos a la ordenación, la vida consagrada, el matrimonio y el liderazgo laico. En nombre de Jesús buscamos atender las necesidades espirituales y temporales de todos los que ejercen el liderazgo pastoral en nuestra Arquidiócesis, especialmente nuestro clero y los líderes parroquiales. Nos comprometemos a brindar apoyo pastoral a las parejas casadas y a las familias a través de nuestros ministerios parroquiales y arquidiocesanos, sin descuidar a aquellos que responden al llamado de Dios como personas solteras.

Dominio 5 | Alcance comunitario y ministerio

Implementar la doctrina social católica.

Reafirmamos las enseñanzas de la Iglesia en cuanto a la dignidad fundamental de cada persona, al atender las necesidades de todas nuestras hermanas y hermanos como miembros diversos pero unificados del Cuerpo Místico de Cristo. Afirmamos la enseñanza de nuestra Iglesia de que la familia es la unidad social fundamental.

No hay dos parroquias que lleven a cabo las actividades descritas en estas cinco áreas de manera exactamente igual, pero para ser consideradas “vibrantes”, todas las parroquias—sin importar su tamaño, ubicación geográfica, contexto étnico, económico o cultural—deben reflejar lo que la instrucción del Vaticano mencionada anteriormente denomina “un dinamismo espiritual propio de la evangelización”. De lo contrario, independientemente de sus circunstancias, la parroquia “corre el riesgo de hacerse autorreferencial y de esclerotizarse, proponiendo experiencias desprovistas de sabor evangélico y de impulso misionero, tal vez destinadas solo a pequeños grupos” (n.º 17).

Hemos elaborado el nuevo plan pastoral en torno a estos cinco dominios porque, en base a la amplia consulta y al discernimiento en oración que hemos llevado a cabo, creemos que nuestra Arquidiócesis, y cada una de nuestras parroquias, deben reflejar estas características esenciales de manera significativa para poder ser consideradas “dinámicas”. Teniendo esto en cuenta, se espera que todas las parroquias y todos los ministerios de nuestra Arquidiócesis participen en la fase de implementación de lo planificado y evalúen sus fortalezas y debilidades en cada uno de los cinco dominios.

Estoy profundamente agradecido a los miembros del comité de planificación, pero también a las casi 1,000 personas que participaron en las reuniones de los subcomités, asistieron a las sesiones de escucha, respondieron la encuesta en línea y aportaron sus comentarios y consejos. Juntos oramos, reflexionamos y nos esforzamos por discernir la voluntad de Dios para nuestra Arquidiócesis. El resultado es un plan diseñado para marcar el rumbo de todos los ministerios de esta Iglesia local durante los próximos cinco años (2026-2031).

Dominios 1 al 5: Un marco para la planificación pastoral

Los cinco dominios proporcionan un marco de trabajo para los planes de acción diseñados con el objetivo de ayudarnos a llevar a cabo la misión de la Iglesia aquí y ahora. Cada uno de los dominios incluye una serie de metas con sus correspondientes objetivos. Durante la fase de implementación de este proceso, que comenzará en enero de 2026, se asignarán acciones y medidas de rendición de cuentas específicas para cada uno de los objetivos del plan.

Encuentro con la persona de Jesucristo.

Dominio 1 | Vida parroquial y culto

Las metas y objetivos de nuestro primer dominio tienen como fin fortalecer el encuentro personal con nuestro Señor Jesucristo, que es el centro de la oración y el culto cristiano. Nuestras comunidades parroquiales son lugares en los que la relación entre el culto, la adoración eucarística y la experiencia viva de la fe a través del servicio deben manifestarse plenamente en Cristo. Las

comunidades parroquiales fuertes facilitan la sanación, la reconciliación y la caridad con el fin de reparar las divisiones que existen entre nosotros y fortalecer nuestra unidad como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo.

Enseñar como Jesús.

Dominio 2 | Catequesis evangelizadora

Nuestro segundo dominio destaca el papel fundamental que desempeñan la evangelización y la catequesis en el ministerio eclesial, especialmente a nivel parroquial. No enseñamos en el vacío; por el contrario, buscamos primero presentar a la persona de Jesucristo a nuestras hermanas y hermanos y abrazar nuestra identidad como sus discípulos misioneros mediante una comprensión más plena de su llamado, una conciencia más profunda de su presencia entre nosotros y un testimonio firme de nuestra fe en él. Como resultado de nuestros encuentros con Jesús en la Palabra, los sacramentos y el servicio, buscamos cumplir la Gran Comisión del Señor de “ir por todo el mundo y bautizar a todas las naciones” en el nombre de la Santísima Trinidad (cf. Mt 28,19).

Fomentar una cultura de corresponsabilidad alegre e intencionada.

Dominio 3 | Corresponsabilidad

La corresponsabilidad alegre e intencionada, basada en la gratitud y en una relación personal con Jesucristo, como fundamento del discipulado, es el tema central del tercer dominio de nuestro plan pastoral. Siempre con la intención de forjar y renovar discípulos misioneros, deseamos comprender mejor los dones espirituales y materiales presentes en nuestras parroquias y ministerios arquidiocesanos. Queremos que nuestros servicios administrativos y pastorales reflejen las “mejores prácticas” para lograr la unidad y desarrollar los recursos parroquiales y arquidiocesanos necesarios para atender las necesidades del prójimo, especialmente de los más desfavorecidos. Creemos que la gestión responsable de todos nuestros recursos no es una dimensión opcional o secundaria de la vida cristiana, sino que es esencial para conocernos a nosotros mismos como discípulos misioneros.

(cf. *Laudato Si'* Sobre el cuidado de la casa común).

Responder al llamado universal a la santidad.

Dominio 4 | Vocaciones

El llamado universal a la santidad sustenta nuestro cuarto dominio sobre la comprensión de la importancia de la vocación, el llamado particular que toda persona bautizada recibe para usar sus dones, talentos y capacidades únicos para servir al Señor y llevar a cabo Su obra en el mundo. Dado que hoy en día existen muchas distracciones que nos impiden escuchar la voz de Dios y discernir su voluntad para nosotros, queremos crear estrategias y recursos de formación en el discernimiento para que los jóvenes aprendan a escuchar y estar atentos a las acciones del Espíritu Santo que los lleven a responder al llamado universal a la santidad, ya sea mediante el matrimonio, la vida en soltería, la ordenación, la vida consagrada o el ministerio laico profesional.

Del mismo modo, deseamos asegurarnos de que el clero y otros ministros parroquiales reciban el apoyo y la ayuda que merecen para atender continuamente sus necesidades espirituales y temporales.

Implementar la doctrina social católica.

Dominio 5 | Alcance comunitario y ministerio

La Iglesia católica tiene la bendición de contar con un profundo conocimiento de la antropología cristiana, que afirma la dignidad fundamental de cada persona. La doctrina social católica proporciona directrices concretas para responder a las necesidades de todas las personas, especialmente de los pobres, los vulnerables y los oprimidos de cualquier forma. El quinto y último dominio de nuestro plan pastoral busca aumentar el número de católicos en el centro y el sur de Indiana que puedan participar activamente en el ministerio social de la Iglesia. En este sentido, queremos desarrollar una red de personas y recursos que conecte a las parroquias y decanatos. Asimismo, buscamos concientizar y promover la comprensión del llamado de Dios a construir Su reino a través de los principios y prácticas descritos en la doctrina social católica. Uno de nuestros objetivos más importantes es crear una cultura de bienvenida y pertenencia para personas de todas las edades,

orígenes y capacidades, mediante el establecimiento de ministerios de bienvenida en cada parroquia y en el Centro Católico Arzobispo Edward T. O'Meara, que se centren en crear comunidades acogedoras, solidarias e interconectadas. Por último, tenemos previsto desarrollar actividades específicas para grupos de distintas edades con el fin de promover el servicio vinculado a la participación en la misa y al compañerismo.

María, la primera discípula misionera

Estas reflexiones sobre la misión de la Iglesia, tal como se vive aquí en el centro y el sur de Indiana, nos llevan naturalmente a la Santísima Virgen María que nos inspira y guía mientras buscamos proclamar el Evangelio de la Alegría y vivir la misión de misericordia, esperanza y salvación de su Hijo. María fue la primera discípula misionera; toda su vida la dedicó a cumplir la promesa que hizo cuando el Arcángel Gabriel compartió con ella la vocación única que le había sido dada por Dios Padre a través del poder del Espíritu Santo.

El “sí” de María, en su compromiso de por vida de acompañar a su Hijo, es el modelo que nos esforzamos por seguir como Arquidiócesis. Su cercanía a Jesús nos anima a acercarnos a él a través de ella; su fidelidad a las enseñanzas y al ejemplo de Jesús hacen de María la imagen perfecta de la Iglesia, la Madre de la Misericordia, la Madre de la Santa Esperanza y la Madre de nuestro Salvador.

Como nos recordaba el papa Francisco en su Bula de convocación al Jubileo Ordinario del año 2025:

La esperanza encuentra en la Madre de Dios su testimonio más alto. En ella vemos que la esperanza no es un fútil optimismo, sino un don de gracia en el realismo de la vida. (...) al pie de la cruz, mientras veía a Jesús inocente sufrir y morir; aun atravesada por un dolor desgarrador, repetía su “sí”, sin perder la esperanza y la confianza en el Señor. De ese modo ella cooperaba por nosotros en el cumplimiento de lo que había dicho su Hijo, anunciando que “debía sufrir mucho y ser rechazado por los ancianos, los sumos sacerdotes y los escribas; que debía ser condenado a muerte y resucitar después de tres días” (Mc 8,31), y en el tormento de ese dolor ofrecido por amor se convertía en nuestra Madre, Madre de la esperanza (Spes non confundit, n.º 24).

María se encuentra en el corazón de cada parroquia y ministerio arquidiocesano dinámico. Ella es quien nos guía hacia su Divino Hijo a través de la oración y los sacramentos; ella facilita el encuentro con Jesús, que es el verdadero propósito de la “catequesis evangelizadora”. María nos muestra cómo responder al llamado del Señor para aprovechar nuestros dones únicos para amar y servir a Jesús en los demás y a través de ellos. Nuestra Madre nos acompaña en nuestros esfuerzos por acercarnos a los demás; nos muestra cómo acoger a los extranjeros e implementar los principios de la doctrina social católica.

Conclusión

Al concluir este proceso de dos años de oración, escucha atenta y planificación colaborativa, encomendamos la siguiente fase de esta iniciativa—la implementación— a la Santísima Virgen María y a los patronos de nuestra Arquidiócesis, san Francisco Javier y la santa madre Teodora Guérin. La implementación de este nuevo plan pastoral se llevará a cabo en todas las parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos. Nos desafiará a todos a hacer que la Iglesia en el centro y el sur de Indiana esté más plenamente viva en Cristo, mediante el fortalecimiento de nuestra oración y adoración, el encuentro con la persona de Cristo, al ser administradores alegres de los dones de Dios, al discernir el llamado del Señor en nuestras vidas y al acercarnos a los demás y acoger a los extranjeros en nombre de Jesús.

Nuestro Santo Padre, el papa León XIV, nos recuerda que “esperar es dar testimonio de que la tierra puede realmente parecerse al cielo”. Que la Bendita Esperanza que aguardamos de manera especial durante este tiempo de Adviento nos llegue ahora, como siempre, en la plenitud de la fe, la esperanza y el amor, y que lo recibamos con gran alegría mientras llevamos a cabo con entusiasmo su voluntad para esta Iglesia local.

Dado en Indianápolis en el Centro Católico Arzobispo Edward T. O'Meara, el 3 de diciembre del año de Nuestro Señor 2025, memorial de san Francisco Javier.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.
Arzobispo de Indianápolis

El plan pastoral de la Arquidiócesis es una ‘visión compartida’ que deja ‘espacio para la creatividad’

Por Natalie Hoefler

Por tanto, vayan y hagan discípulos de todas las naciones ... (Mt 28:19)

Esta “Gran Comisión” de Cristo es una misión que llevamos a cabo hoy cada uno de nosotros, sus seguidores, y la Iglesia que fundó.

“La Iglesia misma es el cuerpo de Cristo” —afirmó el arzobispo Charles C. Thompson en una entrevista reciente con *The Criterion*—. “Todo lo que existe en la Iglesia es un ministerio de la misión [de Cristo]. Ya sea una parroquia, una escuela, Caridades Católicas ... todo está orientado a esa tarea primordial de evangelización, llevar a la gente hacia la persona de Jesucristo.”

Es una misión vasta y quizá desalentadora, pero gracias al aporte y participación de unas mil personas de toda la Arquidiócesis, se acaba de publicar un plan pastoral quinquenal para proporcionar orientación y guía a las parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos en el desempeño de esa misión en el centro y sur de Indiana.

Titulado “Avancemos con alegría y esperanza como discípulos misioneros,” el documento establece cinco áreas, o “dominios,” de interés, cada uno con metas y objetivos.

“Pero los detalles de cómo se implementarán variarán de una parroquia a otra” y para cada escuela y ministerio de la Arquidiócesis, aclaró el arzobispo Thompson.

Un miembro del equipo de planificación pastoral anima a las personas a leer el plan.

“Es relevante para cada feligrés” —señaló Gayle Schrank, de la parroquia de Santa María en Navilleton—. “Todos somos discípulos, y tenemos una misión. Esto nos brinda la oportunidad de involucrarnos más en nuestra fe.”

Sus palabras refuerzan lo expresado por el arzobispo Thompson con respecto a la finalidad del plan: “Ser intencionales, tener una visión compartida y trabajar juntos en pos de esa misma visión común.”

‘El Espíritu Santo sin duda intervino’

El arzobispo Thompson se apresura a señalar que no se trata de un plan impuesto jerárquicamente.

Prueba de ello se encuentra en las encuestas y sesiones de escucha que la Arquidiócesis llevó a cabo hace dos años en inglés y español en todo el centro y sur de Indiana.

“El proceso se basó en muchas horas de escucha y discernimiento en oración sobre dónde nos encontramos hoy, hacia dónde nos llama Dios y cómo llegar juntos hasta allí” —destacó el canciller de la Arquidiócesis, Christopher Walsh, en un correo electrónico—. “Cerca de mil personas participaron directamente en la elaboración de este plan pastoral.”

El arzobispo Thompson estuvo presente en todas esas sesiones.

“Creo que eso es muy significativo,” expresó Daniel Conway, el consultor que ayudó a guiar el proceso de planificación pastoral de dos años de la Arquidiócesis. “Afirma que no es un plan del arzobispo, sino un plan de la Arquidiócesis junto con el arzobispo. Y eso es verdaderamente trascendental.”

Un comité de 22 miembros colaboró en el proceso de planificación pastoral desde el principio.

Walsh reconoció el esfuerzo del equipo por haber dedicado “los últimos dos años a trabajar juntos para materializar las opiniones recabadas.”

Aunque el arzobispo y otros líderes

de la Arquidiócesis formaban parte del comité, todo el equipo era una muestra representativa de la Arquidiócesis en términos de edad, raza, origen étnico, vocación y ubicación.

Los que crearon el comité “tuvieron la intención deliberada de invitar a distintas personas a formar parte de este equipo,” comentó Schrank, miembro del comité, que recientemente se jubiló como asociada pastoral de la parroquia de Santa María en Navilleton.

“Estaba conformado por sacerdotes, una hermana [religiosa], laicos, personas que trabajan para la Iglesia, personas que trabajan en la comunidad ... un grupo muy diverso de personas muy santas.”

Dijo que un miembro del equipo “anotaba todo lo que decían los feligreses” durante las sesiones de escucha en toda la Arquidiócesis.

“La gente quiere que se le escuche, y creo que este grupo escuchó mucho y abordó lo que se dijo,” señaló Schrank.

En esto también está de acuerdo Yadira Villatoro, miembro del equipo de planificación y administradora de educación religiosa de la parroquia de San Antonio en Indianápolis, quien formó parte de un subcomité que seleccionó los cinco dominios clave del plan pastoral de la Arquidiócesis.

Villatoro explicó que, en primer lugar, el subgrupo analizó detenidamente en oración los resultados de las sesiones de escucha y las encuestas.

Además, estudiaron algunos documentos de la Iglesia para obtener información, incluida la exhortación apostólica del papa Francisco *La alegría del Evangelio*.

Cuando llegó el momento de discernir y definir finalmente las áreas de enfoque, “fue fácil reducir la lista”—recuerda Villatoro—. “Las cinco personas del [sub]comité tenían las mismas ideas. El Espíritu Santo sin duda intervino.”

Los cinco dominios del plan son: vida parroquial y culto, catequesis evangelizadora, corresponsabilidad, vocaciones, y alcance comunitario y ministerio.

‘La evangelización como el núcleo’

El documento describe cada uno de estos dominios como “fundamentales en la composición de parroquias, escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos que están vivos en Cristo.”

Utiliza frases sencillas para describir el propósito de cada dominio:

—Vida parroquial y culto: “Encuentro con la persona de Jesucristo.”

—Catequesis evangelizadora: “Enseñar como Jesús.”

—Corresponsabilidad: “Fomentar una cultura de corresponsabilidad alegre e intencionada.”

—Vocaciones: “Responder al llamado universal a la santidad.”

—Alcance comunitario y ministerio: “Implementar la doctrina social católica.”

“Nos pareció que era muy importante que cada dominio nos condujera específicamente a la persona de Jesucristo, [...] para responder a Su llamado a la santidad y ser personas que se acerquen a los demás y compartan su amor y sus enseñanzas,” declaró Conway a *The Criterion*.

El plan considera que las parroquias son el ministerio “más destacado y de mayor alcance” de la Iglesia. “Por eso, el objetivo principal de nuestro nuevo plan pastoral es desarrollar *parroquias dinámicas*,” afirma, con las dos palabras intencionadamente en cursiva.

Y “en el núcleo” de una parroquia dinámica “está la evangelización”—

apuntó el arzobispo Thompson—.

“¿Cómo se evangeliza dentro del perímetro de esa iglesia? ¿Cómo se evangeliza más allá de los muros de esa iglesia, no solo dentro de los límites de la parroquia o del terreno de la iglesia, sino más allá ...?”

El plan coincide con la opinión del vicario general de la Arquidiócesis, el monseñor William F. Stumpf, quien como miembro del equipo de planificación pastoral y párroco de San Mateo Apóstol en Indianápolis, expresó lo siguiente:

“En todos los años que he participado en la planificación arquidiocesana, creo que este es un plan que realmente se centra en la primacía de la parroquia y su labor en la vida de la Arquidiócesis.”

No obstante, los dominios se aplican igualmente a las escuelas y ministerios arquidiocesanos en términos de su vitalidad para llevar a cabo la misión de la Iglesia.

“Una vez más, se trata de una visión compartida,” aseguró el arzobispo Thompson.

‘Orientación y espacio para la creatividad’

Aunque se trate de una visión compartida, en una Arquidiócesis que abarca la mayor parte del centro y el sur de Indiana, con parroquias grandes y pequeñas, urbanas y rurales, la puesta en práctica de esa visión sin duda adoptará distintas formas.

Por ello, los objetivos y metas de cada dominio son “bastante amplios, y esto es intencional”—señaló el arzobispo y añadió que—“en las medidas de acción es donde se notan algunas diferencias” para cada parroquia, escuela y ministerio arquidiocesano.

Puso como ejemplo el objetivo de una parroquia de ayudar a sus miembros a desarrollar una relación más profunda con Cristo en la Eucaristía. Una posible medida podría ser instituir la adoración eucarística perpetua.

“Eso podría funcionar en una parroquia grande”—dijo el arzobispo Thompson—. “Pero para una parroquia rural que solo tenga 50 hogares y esté repartida por medio condado, probablemente resulte más difícil.”

“Todos podemos estar de acuerdo en cuanto a lo que significa esforzarnos por profundizar en nuestra identidad y aprecio por la Eucaristía. Pero los detalles de cómo llevarlo a la práctica variarán de una parroquia a otra, de una comunidad a otra, e incluso es posible que algunas parroquias o decanatos trabajen juntos en una iniciativa”—apuntó—. “Esperemos que de algún modo [el plan esté] señalando la dirección, la visión, brindando orientación, pero también dejando espacio para la creatividad.”

Conway estuvo de acuerdo.

“La genialidad de la Iglesia católica es que creemos firmemente en el principio de subsidiariedad, que la mejor forma de actuar es a nivel local,” afirmó.



‘Una invitación para cada uno de nosotros’

Independientemente de cómo se lleve a cabo finalmente la implementación, el arzobispo Thompson afirmó que las dos primeras medidas son las mismas para todas las parroquias, escuelas y ministerios de la Arquidiócesis.

“La primera es leerlo”—dijo—. “En segundo lugar, ¿cómo dialogamos con los demás para que otros nos ayuden a compartir percepciones y discernir?”

Algunos pastores podrían elegir una ruta como la del monseñor Stumpf en San Mateo.

“Nuestro consejo pastoral lo leerá y participará en un proceso sinodal para reflexionar sobre el plan y aplicarlo,” aseguró.

Otras parroquias, escuelas o ministerios podrían “crear pequeños grupos para leer y estudiar el plan y luego reunirse en oración para analizarlo y discernir,” sugirió Conway.

Afirma que quien lea el plan, debe “leerlo en oración con la mente y el corazón abiertos.”

Schrank anima a todos los miembros de la Arquidiócesis a leer el documento de la misma manera, diciendo que “no pretende ser una quimera. Es una invitación para que cada uno de nosotros salga a la calle y ponga de su parte”—aseveró—. “Invitaría a las personas a que lo lean y adopten medidas personales para crecer en su propia vida basándose en lo que se incluye en el plan.”

El monseñor Stumpf está de acuerdo:

“La Iglesia nos llama realmente a ser discípulos misioneros y a evangelizar y compartir la buena nueva. Eso forma parte de la misión de cada católico. La responsabilidad no recae en la institución, sino en cada uno de nosotros. El plan es un recordatorio y una forma de ayudar a la gente a asumir esa responsabilidad.”

Sus comentarios reflejan el nombre del documento: “Avancemos con alegría y esperanza como discípulos misioneros.”

“Se nos ofrece como un medio para compartir una visión conjunta”—afirmó el arzobispo Thompson—. “Trabajar, avanzar y estar juntos, centrados no en ningún tipo de ego, ideología o agenda en particular, sino únicamente en Cristo Jesús.”

(La carta pastoral y los dominios de “Avancemos con alegría y esperanza como discípulos misioneros” se encuentran en la páginas 11-12 de este número. Para leer las metas y objetivos, visite www.archindy.org/PastoralPlan) †

Aprende más

Lea más sobre el plan pastoral en www.archindy.org/PastoralPlan.

La página incluye información más detallada sobre la visión, la misión, los objetivos y las metas, así como las medidas de acción sugeridas.

MARCH FOR LIFE

continued from page 1

“So, we march partly to remember. But we march partly also to continue to make progress in building the culture of life right here in Indiana,” where most abortions are now illegal, he added.



Marc Tuttle

The Church in the U.S. also solemnly observes Jan. 22 annually as a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.

Before the march, 1,900 people worshiped in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis at a Mass for Life, with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. He was joined by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese and Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of the Lafayette Diocese.

Bishop Rhoades offered the homily. He thanked God for the Supreme Court’s July 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision overturning *Roe*, returning the legalization of abortion to the state level.

But, he noted, “we still gather on this day because we know that we still have much work to do to promote a culture of life in our country and also here in our state of Indiana.”

Real love ‘must be shown by our actions’

During his homily, the bishop recalled Genesis 4:8-9 in which Cain killed his brother Abel and God asked Cain where his brother was.

“He lied,” the bishop noted. “He said, ‘I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’”

The answer is, “Yes, I am,” said Bishop Rhoades.

“As fellow human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we are to be in solidarity with one another, especially with those who are weakest among us,” he said, including the unborn, elderly, disabled, poor, hungry, homeless, migrants, refugees, victims of war and violence and those on death row.

“There’s a lot of indifference in the world to the plight of those who are vulnerable, whose lives are at risk,” said Bishop Rhoades. “... You know how delighted Satan is when we are indifferent to the plight of our brothers and sisters in need, especially the little ones in their mother’s womb.”

The bishop also addressed a passage from the first reading: “If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?” (1 Jn 3:17).

“Our love for one another isn’t just a feeling or an idea,” he explained. “To be real love, it must be shown by our actions.”

Such actions include respecting and protecting the gift of life from conception to natural death, he said, because “in his wisdom and love, God transmitted his image to us when we were conceived.”

In closing, Bishop Rhoades recalled Christ’s command to “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34).

“And it’s right here at the altar that we see how much Jesus loves us,” he added. “And he loved us to the end—his body broken for us and his blood poured out for us in his sacrifice on the cross that’s made present at every celebration of the holy Eucharist.”

Through Christ’s “life-giving body and blood in holy Communion,” said Bishop Rhoades, “he gives us the grace and strength to love as he loved, to serve our neighbors in need, to bear witness to the Gospel of life with courage.”

Shortly after the Mass, many of those present went out on the streets of downtown Indianapolis to joyfully “witness to the Gospel of life” during the Indiana March for Life.



Students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, carry a banner at the head of the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 22. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

‘This is what being pro-life looks like’

Among those participating in the march—organized by RTLI—were Ana Hudspeth and Mason Schnarr. Both are juniors at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis and members of the school’s Royals for Life club.

Ana has participated in the Indiana March for Life before.

“Growing up hearing about *Roe v. Wade* and then when it was overturned, I started researching more and more and have just become passionate” about defending the life of the unborn, she explained.

Ana believes participating in the march is “important [for] us as young Catholics to show how important [the cause] is to us. And it kind of makes us feel a little bit more heard, too.”

As for Mason, he said defending the right to life “hits my heart.” While pregnant with him, his mother was told her unborn child had Down syndrome.

“She was given the option to abort me—and here I am today,” said Mason who was not born with Down syndrome. “There was an opportunity for me not to be here, but she chose to have me, and I was fine—I feel like that’s powerful.”

Mason was excited to experience his first Indiana March for Life.

“I know a lot of people believe [in the pro-life cause], but the idea that a lot of people, especially our age, come together and show that they believe, not just hide it—I’m awestruck,” he said. “It’s very powerful, seeing everyone come together for one purpose.”

Clay Eckstein shared Mason’s enthusiasm—and his closeness to the cause.

“I am adopted, so I kind of have a personal connection to it more than most,” said the senior of Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg.

“I feel like it’s my duty as a Catholic to stand up for life. It feels like it comes down to me to stand up and help other people to get that opportunity [for life].”

As the march was about to begin, Clay admitted that, with a temperature around 30 degrees, he was glad the day wasn’t “as cold as years before. ... But honestly, I just feel good about [participating in] it. I feel like I’m doing something good for other people.”

This year marked the fourth time his senior classmate Bridgette Ehrhard participated in the march.

Like Clay, she feels “really passionate that everybody



Mason Schnarr and Ana Hudspeth, juniors at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, smile after the Mass for Life in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Jan. 22.

should get the right to life and get to have the chance to be born.

“And I also want to support women who are in crisis pregnancies and who need that love, and to support all people at all stages of life,” Bridgette added.

She believes the march and those joining it make a difference—even though most abortion is illegal in the state.

“I think we’re setting an example to some extent to the other states in America that this is what being pro-life looks like,” said Bridgette. “I think it shows people that this is important and that abortion is an issue in our country, that there are people who love babies and love women and who aren’t afraid to stand up for the truth.”

Six speakers fired up the crowd in an outdoor, RTLI-sponsored rally before the march. Then Ana, Mason, Clay, Bridgette and some 1,200 others began their loud and proud procession “to stand up for the truth.”

Your voice does ‘make a difference’

The roughly 1-mile march ended on the south lawn of the Indiana Statehouse. There, 14 pro-life state administrators, legislators and others shared encouraging words for a second rally organized by RTLI.

Among them was Indiana Gov. Mike Braun. He said that, with the state’s current administrators and legislators, “this is as pro-life as it’s ever been in the state of Indiana. And we’re only going to take it to the next level” with policies “lined up with the sanctity of life.”

Indiana House Speaker Todd Huston noted that legislation has been passed “investing more than \$83 million to support pregnant women and their children.”

One speaker emphasized the importance of also supporting fathers.

“Over 80% of the time when we come alongside the dads and support them and the father supports the mother, the mother chooses life,” said Dawn Lang, executive director of the Life Centers network of pregnancy care centers in central Indiana.

Mike Fichter, president and CEO of Indiana Right to Life, recalled attending a pro-life rally at the Indiana statehouse four decades ago.

“And here we are 40 years later,” he said. “Every abortion clinic is closed in the state of Indiana. ... Don’t ever let anyone tell you that your voice doesn’t make a difference.” †



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, far left, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, center and Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of the Lafayette Diocese, far right, say the prayer of consecration during the Mass for Life at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Jan. 22. Assisting are Deacon James Wood, second from left, and Deacon Thomas Hosty, second from right.



Dawn Lang, executive director of Life Centers in central Indiana, addresses those present at a rally outside of the Indiana Statehouse following the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 22. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



Young women from the New Albany Deanery pause for a photo during the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 22.



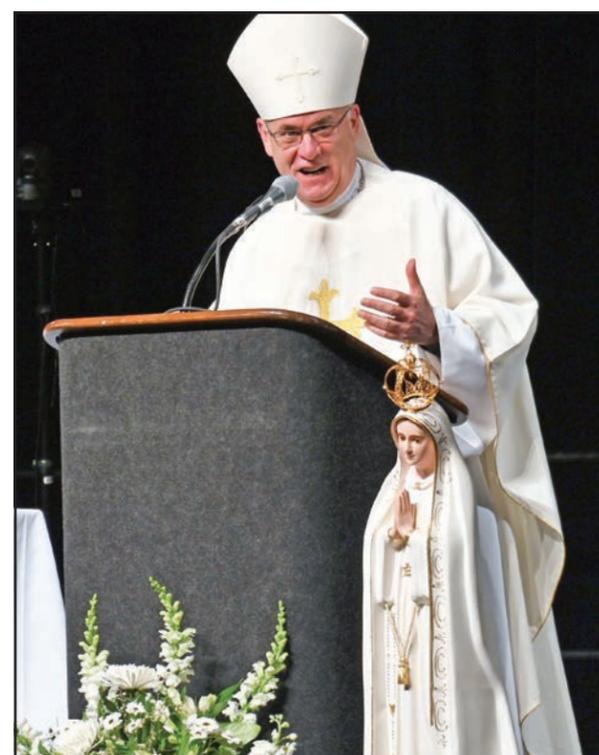
Members of the Crusaders for Life club of Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis pose outside the Indiana Statehouse on Jan. 22 after participating in their first Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis. At far right on the third step is Abigail Lemming, a Spanish teacher at Scecina. Behind her is Christopher Helle, who teaches theology at the school.



A woman holds a sign with a powerful message as she participates in the Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22 in Indianapolis.



On the streets and sidewalks of downtown Indianapolis, women and men stand up for life during the Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22.



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese offers a homily during the Mass for Life in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis on Jan. 22.

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Father's reaction to a son's touchdown is a lesson in self-giving love in marriage

Those of us who are sports fans to any degree have been there. We might have been in a large stadium watching our favorite college or professional team play.



Maybe we were in a school gym, parking lot or at a football field for a child's CYO game. Or we might simply have been sitting on a couch at home following a big game on TV.

Whatever the setting, it's a natural human reaction to jump up and celebrate when our team makes a big play.

That would have been the natural reaction of Fernando Mendoza, Sr., when he saw his son, Fernando Jr., make a powerful run through multiple would-be tacklers and then dive into the endzone for a touchdown for the Indiana University football team in the fourth quarter of the College Football Championship on January 19 in Miami.

But while IU fans in the stadium and across the country jumped up with joy after the play, Fernando Sr. stayed seated to celebrate his son making a crucial play that led the Hoosiers to a 16-0 record and its first championship.

That's because his wife Elsa is bound to a wheelchair after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2007. He wanted to be right by Elsa's side rejoicing with her when their son achieved success.

In a past interview with ESPN, Fernando Jr. said that it takes a "conscious effort" on the part of his father to stay seated by his mom. The IU Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback went on to note that he "gets emotional" when he thinks about how much he's learned about love from his parents.

Love in marriage is expressed in lots of ways. But perhaps the most important way, and certainly the most Christlike way, is when husbands and wives make sacrifices in their own lives for the good of their spouse.

Fernando Sr. expressed his love for Elsa by staying in his seat next to her during one of the biggest moments of their son's life. Millions of people across the country and around the world saw him do it.

Most of the time, when a husband or wife makes sacrifices for their spouse, no one on Earth sees it, maybe not even their spouse. But our Lord sees it. And he sees himself in such self-giving love.

Such self-sacrifice is only possible for us through the grace of God, a share in the life of God, poured into our

hearts at our baptism and in the Eucharist. It is renewed in the sacrament of penance when spouses confess their failings in their married relationship.

This grace flows from the heart of one spouse to the other in the sacrament of marriage when they give of themselves to each other.

If spouses are blessed with children, then that grace also flows from God through their relationship to them as they see their mother and father day by day over the years loving each other through many small and sometimes large acts of self-sacrifice.

Fernando Jr. seems to have taken that lesson of love from his parents to heart. It perhaps could be seen in the way that he sacrificed himself for his team in taking so many hits, even in just the one play on which he scored a touchdown.

Self-giving love in marriage isn't there just for the benefit of the spouses and their children. Every sacrament in the Church is there for the good of all the faithful.

Let all of us, then, give thanks for the grace that God pours into our lives through all marriages in the Church. And let us pray for all spouses and all those preparing for marriage, asking God to strengthen them in the grace of self-giving love. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

The penitential seasons of Lent and Ramadan begin on the same day this year

There are some coincidences in time that are attention getters. This year, we have one such: Christian Lent begins the same day as Islam's Ramadan.



Our season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. But the date varies from year to year. To find that date, we count backwards from Easter Sunday.

Easter Sunday arrives on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox (the first day of spring). It is tied to the lunar calendar, and so it's variable.

Ash Wednesday can occur as early as February 4 and as late as March 11.

Ramadan's beginning is noticeably more variable.

The Islamic calendar is lunar. It spans 354 days. That is 11 days shorter than the Gregorian solar calendar of 365 days.

This difference causes Ramadan to occur in all four seasons over a 33-year period!

Both Ramadan (29-30 days) and Lent (40 days) are deeply reflective periods of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

On Ash Wednesday, we hear the Lenten call to these practices in the Gospel reading for Mass that day (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18).

Our prayer is to be more frequent, with an emphasis on penitential conversion of heart. Added devotional prayers (e.g., Stations of the Cross) are encouraged.

Our fast is to be focused—from something pleasurable, with an emphasis on discipline, leading to letting go into the Spirit.

Additionally, prescribed days of fasting are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Abstinence from meat days are Ash Wednesday and all Fridays before Easter.

Our almsgiving is to be intentional—often focused on hunger (e.g., Operation Rice Bowl) or the needs of others (e.g., visiting the sick, lonely neighbors, etc.).

For Muslims, the Ramadan fast is daily: no food or drink from dawn to sunset. Before the fast, there is a pre-dawn meal (*suhur*), while a meal at sunset (*iftar*) breaks the fast.

This fasting is to redirect the heart away from worldly activities and to cleanse the soul by freeing it from harmful impurities.

Fasting is not required for those who are ill, pregnant or breastfeeding. The elderly and pre-pubertal children are also exempt. Those traveling or menstruating are exempt but are obliged to fast later to make up the missed days.

Muslims devote more time to prayer during Ramadan. They are encouraged to read the entire Quran over the 30 days as a commemoration of the Prophet's reception of the Muslim holy book.

During Ramadan, Muslims practice sacrifice and empathy for those who are less fortunate. They are encouraged to practice actions of generosity and compulsory charity (*zakat*).

Zakat, or "the poor-rate," is the annual fixed percentage of income a believer is required to give to the poor; the practice is obligatory as one of the pillars of Islam. Many Muslims donate a large portion—or even all—of their yearly *zakat* during Ramadan.

Among Muslims, common greetings during Ramadan are "*Ramadan mubarak*" and "*Ramadan kareem*": (have a) "blessed Ramadan" and "generous Ramadan" respectively.

Among Christians, there seems to be no common Lenten greetings. However, on Ash Wednesday the late Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein was in the habit of saying "Happy Lent" as he met someone. I don't know if this is or was of Benedictine origin. But it seems to me it is jarring enough to encourage a more joyful embrace of our Lenten practices as we move toward Easter.

Let us pray this Lent for our own good practices to bring us to Easter.

Let us also pray for our Muslim neighbors: that their good Ramadan practices bring them to Eid-ia-Fitr, the joyous celebration that ends Ramadan.

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Inter-religious Affairs. He is retired from full-time pastoral ministry, yet is active as a priest of the archdiocese.) †

Guest Column/Elizabeth Scalia

Dilbert creator Scott Adams and the legitimacy of imperfect confession

"What happens next is between me and Jesus." —Scott Adams, January 4, 2026

Only days after announcing a planned-upon, heavily hedged conversion to Christianity, Scott Adams, creator of the "Dilbert" comic strip, author, political commentator and professed agnostic died of metastatic prostate cancer at the age of 68.



What happens next is, indeed, between him and Jesus, and far beyond our knowing. That hasn't stopped the post-addicted denizens of social media from ruling (some with embarrassing certainty) on the state of Adams' soul and whether he has been

admitted into the beatific vision or stands outside the pearly gates, guilty of making an imperfect confession of Christ.

Certainly, Adams' announced conversion plan was not a typically pious one. "I've not been a believer, but ... I have great respect for people who care enough that they want me to convert ... it's coming so you don't need to talk me into it."

Respect aside, Adams admitted that complaints from Christians about his approach to Christ had almost talked him out of it, and made it clear that he would judge the ripest moment for his move. "I still have time, but my understanding is, you're never too late." He added, "If it turns out that there's nothing there,

I've lost nothing. ... If it turns out there is something there and the Christian model is the closest to it, I win."

Only upon the announcement of his death, in his own written remarks, did Adams give his Christian followers the words they wanted to hear, delivered respectfully but with honest dollops of hope and hedging: "I'm not a believer, but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks so attractive to me, so here I go: I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and look forward to spending an eternity with him. The part about me not being a believer should be quickly resolved if I wake up in Heaven. I won't need any more convincing than that. I hope I still qualify for entry."

Given that his "Dilbert" cartoon spoofed corporate life, it seems fitting Adams approached the idea of religious conversion as a dryly analytical risk-return computation. To some his thinking recalled "Pascal's wager," in which 17th-century mathematician Blaise Pascal reasoned that a 50% probability of God's existence represented a bet worth making.

The question for many—offered in Dilbert-speak—is: Can such a calculated conversion, so full of risk management, "close the deal" and bring a heavenly reward? Some consider his action insufficient, lacking a true encounter with Christ. Others argue that simply saying the words is enough to provide an opening for divine mercy.

Two books can help us with these questions. In the

Gospel according to Luke, we read of a prodigal son who demands his inheritance and, after wasting it, reasons that a return to his father will fill his belly and serve his needs: "I will get up and go to my father, and will tell him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants'" (Lk 15:18-19).

Even if they were not heartfelt, the self-interested son's words met the formula of apology. We may consider it an inadequate confession, and yet Luke tells us, "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him" (Lk 15:20).

A deathbed conversion, almost by definition, suggests a soul that is "still a long way off"—we are all of us, always, a long way off—and yet the Father, who has been waiting and watching, comes running, accepting our confessions even when they are weakly made, or looking for a win.

Rumer Godden's classic novel *In This House of Brede* gives us another thought to chew on, as an abbess counsels, "Most of us die in our sins, but no one knows what happens in those last few moments. God is infinitely merciful ..."

It is certainly a mercy worth betting on. RIP, Scott Adams.

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

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 1, 2026

- Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
- Matthew 5:1-12a

The first reading for Mass this weekend is from Zephaniah. These details are known about this prophet: he was the son of Cushi and a descendant of Hezekiah, presumably King Hezekiah, who reigned as king of Judah, the southern Hebrew kingdom centered on Jerusalem, from 715-687 BC.

Royal ancestry is important. If indeed Zephaniah descended from a king, he may more easily have had access to the royal court and, consequently, more familiarity with the politics of his day.

Whatever the exact time frame in which this prophecy was written, the plight of the Hebrews, both those in the kingdom of Judah and those in the northern kingdom of Israel, was uncertain. The two kingdoms were insignificant and weak. They were easy prey for their mightier neighbors. As history unfolded, powerful neighbors repeatedly overran them.

The prophets, Zephaniah included, saw the peril facing the chosen people not so much because of policies for conquest of hostile neighboring powers, but rather as a consequence of the people's sin.

Sin was the root of all problems. If the chosen people would remain faithful, regardless of particular circumstances, God's protection would prevail.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians furnishes the next reading. This reading presents to us a paradox. The weak will be exalted. The mighty will be laid low. This paradox is deep and profound, teaching us a fundamental fact of life. But it runs utterly counter to the human presumption of reality. So, we cannot judge our lives or the world by earthly, human standards, but only by Jesus.

For its last reading, the Church this weekend offers us the presentation of

the Beatitudes from the Gospel of St. Matthew. (The only other Gospel to offer the Beatitudes is St. Luke, which differs slightly from Matthew's account of them.)

These verses are reminiscent of the Psalms. This fact seats them well in the history of God's people and their experiences. It places them clearly in the history of God's revelation of himself to his people.

Always strong in the Old Testament was the hope that one day God would lead his people into life in a wonderful kingdom where he would reign, and peace, love and justice would prevail.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus is the one and only guide to this kingdom, the only access.

Reflection

The readings for this weekend, culminating in the Beatitudes, both celebrate the revelation of God to us, bringing us genuine wisdom about life, and challenge us to be strong and active witnesses to Jesus and to the truth of the Gospel.

Zephaniah builds the case that living without regard for God reaps the whirlwind. Paul adds another lesson: the judgments of the world are inevitably unsure if not altogether false. If we follow the world's assessment of things, we at best dance on the edge of the cliff.

The Beatitudes reveal to us the joy and perfection of life with God, and they summon us to do our part in redemption. This summons applies to us personally and collectively. We must accept the Lord, the Son of God, the Redeemer, born of Mary at Christmas, seen as God at the Epiphany, the Savior manifested at the Baptism of the Lord.

Then, beyond ourselves, we are called upon to live the Gospel in our lives in all that we do.

As we look for the coming of Lent not that long away, the Church gently guides us to question ourselves. We have learned of Jesus. Now, how do we respond? †

Daily Readings

Monday, February 2

The Presentation of the Lord
Malachi 3:1-4
Psalm 24:7-10
Hebrews 2:14-18
Luke 2:22-40
or Luke 2: 22-32

Tuesday, February 3

St. Blasé, bishop and martyr
St. Ansgar, bishop
2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30-19:3
Psalm 86:1-6
Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday, February 4

2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17
Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7
Mark 6:1-6

Thursday, February 5

St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12
(Response) 1 Chronicles 29:10-12
Mark 6:7-13

Friday, February 6

St. Paul Miki and companions, martyrs
Sirach 47:2-11
Psalm 18:31, 47, 50-51
Mark 6:14-29

Saturday, February 7

1 Kings 3:4-13
Psalm 119:9-14
Mark 6:30-34

Sunday, February 1

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 58:7-10
Psalm 112:4-9
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-16

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

The Church allows females to assist in liturgies in the role of altar server

Q I am a 14-year-old boy. Growing up, I learned to serve at Mass. At first, I never served with girls (my old church did not allow it). They stated that serving was a gateway to the priesthood and since girls cannot be priests, they should not be servers.



Recently I started serving at two new churches. The first is a different church that allows female servers. What does the Church have to say about whether or not females can be altar servers?

A The short answer is that yes, female altar servers are officially allowed in the Church today.

It is true that prior to the late 20th century girls and women were not permitted to be altar servers in the way we currently understand this role.

For instance, one of the jobs of

pre-Vatican II altar boys was to make the Latin responses at Mass. But back in our grandparents' day, it wasn't unheard of for trained girls to "assist at Mass outside the rail," meaning that they prayed the Latin responses while kneeling at the altar rail, even if they didn't actually enter the sanctuary or handle the sacred books and vessels during Mass.

I think historically, the connection between altar serving and the priesthood, and thus masculinity, came about because an "acolyte" (a canon law term for altar serving) was one of the four "minor orders" that a seminarian would receive as part of his progress towards the priesthood.

After the Second Vatican Council, St. Paul VI did away with the minor orders as such, although echoes of them remain in the practice of instituting seminarians into the ministries of lector and acolyte.

"Instituting" someone into the ministry of lector or acolyte means to establish them in this role in a more stable, permanent and ongoing way. This is different from how most parish lectors and altar servers serve on what is understood as an "as needed" basis.

Perhaps as a reflection of the role these instituted ministries have in priestly formation, the current *Code of Canon Law*, which was published and took effect in 1983, explicitly allowed lay men to be instituted as lectors and acolytes in Canon 230, 1 as it was originally written.

However, the code was silent on the subject of women serving at the altar as non-instituted acolytes. In 1994, Pope St. John Paul II stated that girls and women could fulfill this role.

So, practically speaking, altar girls have been specifically allowed since 1994. There was a further clarification regarding the background theology of this in 2021, when Pope Francis issued the *motu proprio "Spiritus Domini"* ("The Spirit of the Lord"), changing the text of canon 230 to allow lay persons of either gender to be formally instituted in the roles of lector and acolyte.

"*Spiritus Domini*" was especially interesting to theologians and canon lawyers since it specified that participation in these ministries was rooted in baptism, meaning they are therefore applicable to male and female members of the faithful equally, as opposed to being fundamentally an anticipation of holy orders, which would have made them properly male.

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

My Journey to God

The Eucharist: More Than A Touch of Jesus

By Maria Harr

She touched the fringe of His shawl
He made her well
Her faith saved her

Longing to touch Him that closely
Praying for even one moment like that
Jesus, save me

Desiring Him to sit by my side
So I can feel Jesus more nearly
Something only to imagine

Why Lord, can I not get as close as she
who touched your garment
and was set free?

He then whispers in a still small voice
You have been touching me fully
More than the woman who I healed

The Body of Christ
The Eucharist
The One who lets us touch Him

Amen



(Maria Harr is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis. This is a corrected reprint of her poem in the Jan. 16 issue. Photo: Father Liam Hosty, left, U.S. Military Services Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio and archdiocesan seminarian Lucas LaRosa kneel in adoration before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 21, 2025, during the National Catholic Youth Conference.)

(Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Rest in peace

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

BANET, Marilyn P., 91, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Jan. 4. Mother of Brenda, JoAnn, Carl and Rex Banet. Grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother of several.

BENDER, Mark J., 66, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 19. Husband of Kerry Bender. Father of Joseph and Michael Bender. Brother of Jeanette Burman, Laura, Chuck, Jim, John and Paul Bender.

BEST, Robert L., 79, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 25. Father of Tracy Ruble, James and Robert Best. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of several.

BRAND, Jacqueline, 94, All Saints, Dearborn County, Dec. 21. Mother of Julie Grove and Jeff Brand. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of 11.

CHESTERTON, Edgar T., 90, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Jan. 4. Husband of Maryann Chesterton. Father of Carla Knight, Joanne Soller and Daniel Chesterton. Brother of Jodi Erlenbaugh and Ruthann Kiermeyer. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of four.

CREWS, Robert M., 67, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Dec. 20. Husband of Sandy Crews. Father of Megan Mariner, Christopher, Eric and Matthew Crews. Brother of Cindy Fesselmeyer, Jim and Tony Crews. Grandfather of four.

DIERCKMAN, Ronald F., 78, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 28. Father of Leslie and Monique Dierckman. Brother of Anna Mae Callahan, Myrtle Hillenbrand, Carol Knue, Thelma Schornick, Arnold and Roger Dierckman.

FICHT, William E., 83, American Martyrs, Scottsburg, Dec. 22. Uncle of several.

FITZGERALD, Patricia A., 89, St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis, Dec. 23. Mother of Brian, Daniel and Timothy Fitzgerald.

HAPP, Kristi J., 75, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 31. Wife of Linus Happ. Mother of Aaron Happ. Sister of Jenny and Terry.

HEINES, Mary C., 93, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 2. Mother of Diana Tyree, Shirley Wright, Patricia and Stephen Heines. Grandmother of two.

HICKS, Mary Margaret, 87, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Dec. 25. Mother of Pamela Jusice, Patty Jo Waddell and Mark Hicks. Grandmother of 11. Great-great-grandmother of one.

HORNEK, Norbert J., 90, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 18. Husband of Mary Lynn Hornek. Father of Terri Rogier, Alan, Daniel, James, Mark and Michael Hornek. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of five.

HUTCHINS, Patricia, 84, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bright, Dec. 26. Mother of Patrick and Sean Hutchins. Sister of Peggy Darling. Grandmother of six.

JOHNSON, Paula S., 91, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Mother of Tammy Gregg, Daniel, David and Terry Johnson. Sister of Jay Norris. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 16.

KITE, Helen C., 81, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 17. Mother of Karen Sensney and James Kite. Sister of Mary Rose Rorick. Grandmother of three.

KRAUS, Mildred, 79, All Saints, Dearborn County,

Dec. 27. Mother of Krista Ferry-Wilbur, Heather Walter, Michael and Patrick Ferry. Stepmother of Melissa Hoffman and Teresa Reksel. Sister of Carol Anthony, Wilma Minger, Dale and Roy Barth. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of three.

MCDANIEL, Catherine, 70, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Jan. 1. Mother of Erin and Paul McDaniel. Sister of Cindy Lawrence and Tommy Rogers. Grandmother of one.

MILLER, Joyce, 86, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Dec. 13. Wife of Ralph Miller. Mother of Terri Stein, Merri Stephens, Sheri Works, Jim and Jon Miller. Grandmother of 23. Great-grandmother of 40.

MUNN, Ronald L., 88, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 7. Father of Linda Chapman, Christina LaRoche, Rhonda Leardi, David, Dean, John and Steven Munn. Stepfather of Danny King. Grandfather of 19. Great-grandfather of 18.

POOLER, Phyllis J., 81, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Dec. 14. Sister of Cheri Begley. Grandmother of three.

REA, James B., 70, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 18. Husband of Jane Rea. Father of Katie DeBrotta, Jennifer Klee, Karen McCann, Matthew, Mickey and Stephen Rea. Brother of Julie Hedlund, Mary Anne Kelley, Pauline Rea-Turner, Helen Secor, Cathy Wagner, Joe and Tom Rea. Grandfather of seven.

SCHARFENBERGER, Dee Ann (Kinney), 89, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Jan. 1. Mother of Janis Boltz, Jodee Crace, Julianna Newland, Jennifer Snyder and James Scharfenberger. Sister of Maurice Kinney. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of two.

SCHOETTNER, Diana S., 79, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 24. Mother of Bernard Schoettner II. Grandmother of three.

SHREFFLER, Patricia, 94, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Dec. 13. Mother of Rita Cobbs and Daniel Shreffler. Sister of Nancy Fernandes. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of nine. Great-great-grandmother of six.

SIMS, John, 86, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Dec. 9. Husband of Joyce Sims. Father of J.R. II, Rex and Robin Sims. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of five.

SOWDER, Eleanor L. (Fisbel), 92, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Dec. 20. Mother of Vicki Day. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of one.

SPANKE, David L., 67, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 12. Husband of Margaret Spanke. Father of Katherine Spanke. Brother of Mary Ellen Boerner and Jane Walker.

STULLER, Paul A., 88, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 19.



A man walks on Jan. 25 in Nyack, N.Y., in heavy snowfall as a major winter storm spread across a large swath of the United States. (OSV News photo/Mike Segar, Reuters)

Husband of Helen Stuller. Father of Angie Moss and Shane Stuller. Stepfather of Mary Davis, Michelle Fagan, Theresa Hoffman, Larry and Ray Littleton. Step-grandfather and step-great-grandfather of several.

TRUMPEY, Judith V., 84, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Dec. 25. Mother of Julie Avellana and Joe

Trumpey. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of four.

TUCKER, Harold J., 79, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Husband of Patricia Tucker. Father of Molly North, Margaret Sullivan, Kathleen Tamayo and Bridget Tucker. Brother of Marilyn Tucker. Grandfather of eight.

VANDIVER, Mary V., 77,

St. Ambrose, Seymour, Dec. 21. Mother of Sherilyn Locke. Sister of Clara Imlay and Donald French.

VARGO, Barbara J., 93, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Dec. 27. Aunt of one.

WETHINGTON, Mary Jean, 79, All Saints, Dearborn County, Dec. 29. †

Franciscan Sister Jan Kroeger served in Catholic schools for 36 years

Franciscan Sister Jan Kroeger died on Dec. 7 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 88.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 29 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Jan was born on Oct. 6, 1937, in Cincinnati. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1963, and professed final vows in on Aug. 12, 1969. Sister Jan studied at Marian University in Indianapolis and Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Sister Jan ministered for 36 years in Catholic schools in Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Ohio. The last 16 years of her ministry before she retired to the motherhouse in 2016 were at an assisted living facility in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, Sister Jan served as a teacher at the former St. Andrew School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic Jr./Sr. High School) from 1965-67 and the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg from 1996-2002.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

Franciscan Sister Noreen McLaughlin was a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 31 years

Franciscan Sister Noreen McLaughlin died on Dec. 1 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 97.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 9 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Noreen was born on Oct. 18, 1928, in New Albany where she grew up as a member of St. Mary Parish. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1946, and professed final vows in on Aug. 12, 1954. Sister Noreen studied at Marian University in Indianapolis and Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Sister Noreen ministered for 31 years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea in both

education and youth ministry. While in the island nation in Oceania, she also helped develop the ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, a community of women religious native to the country. Sister Noreen also served in education and parish ministry in Indiana and Kentucky.

In the archdiocese, Sister Noreen served in Indianapolis at the former St. Francis de Sales School from 1948-52 and at the former Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary School from 1952-55. She retired to the motherhouse in 2006.

Surviving is her brother, Robert McLaughlin. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

Mary Schliessmann, 94, was the mother of Father Thomas Schliessmann

Mary A. (Pietrus) Schliessmann, the mother of Father Thomas Schliessmann, pastor of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, died on Dec. 31, 2025. She was 94.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 9 at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. Burial followed at Our Lady of Peace Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Schliessmann was born on June 24, 1931, in Pierre, S.D., to Charles and Lucy (Summer) Pietrus. After graduating from Pierre High School in Pierre, she studied at St. John's School of Nursing in Huron, S.D., and completed anesthesia training in Omaha, Neb., becoming a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). She worked as a nurse and CRNA in South Dakota, North Dakota and Indiana.

On Oct. 12, 1957, she married Jack Schliessmann at SS. Peter and Paul Church in Pierre. They lived in several states before settling in Indianapolis in 1971 where they became members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish.

The couple became the parents of five children, all of whom survive: Lucia Mach, James, Martin, Richard and Father Thomas Schliessmann. Jack Schliessmann died on Sept. 7, 2011, after sharing 53 years of marriage with Mary.

After retiring, Schliessmann volunteered at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis and participated in prayer and Bible study groups at St. Luke.

In addition to her children, Schliessmann is also survived by four grandchildren. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
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For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

- 1 Ethics Point Confidential, Online Reporting**
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- 2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis**
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Investing with Faith/Jolinda Moore

When it comes to the Catholic Community Foundation, your gifts truly matter

For nearly 40 years, the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has strengthened archdiocesan ministries, parishes, schools and agencies that are a lifeline of hope and Christ-centered examples across central and southern Indiana. Today, the CCF stewards nearly



600 endowments with a combined value of \$270 million.

Each endowment was created with a purpose: to provide stable, annual distributions that directly support the work of the Catholic Church.

An endowment is a permanent fund established to provide support forever. Because the principal remains intact, an endowment becomes a lasting source of stability, ensuring that ministries

have dependable support not only today but for future generations. In this way, donors can leave a legacy that continues to strengthen the Church long after the initial gift is made. For those with a visionary outlook to establish an endowment, I can only imagine their absolute joy in knowing that distributions in fiscal year 2025 totaled more than \$10.7 million!

Through the years, the CCF's staff and volunteers have worked intentionally to raise awareness across the archdiocese about the importance of longterm investment in the Church's future. Many Catholics are surprised to learn that endowments are not only for major donors. Any gift—large or small—can be added to an existing parish, school or ministry endowment.

This message has resonated powerfully—knowing that a gift of any size makes an impact. As communities see the real impact of these funds—

scholarships awarded, more people served, parishes stabilized—more Catholics are choosing to invest today so that ministry may flourish for generations.

Also resonating is a signature strength of the CCF—ensuring that all investments comply with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' socially responsible investment guidelines. This means Catholics can give with confidence, knowing that their resources are invested ethically and in alignment with Church teaching.

Supporting the work of the Church through an endowment is more accessible than ever. Parishioners may:

—Give directly to their parish or ministry of interest and restrict the gift to the entity's endowment

—Visit www.acrossthearch.org/ccf/donate and choose where they would like their contribution to apply.

Contributions of stock, donor advised fund grants or QCDs can also be used to

grow an endowment. Please contact our office at 317-236-1482 or e-mail ccf@archindy.org to request additional details on these types of contributions.

Whether it's a onetime gift, an annual donation, or part of an estate plan, every contribution strengthens the longterm vitality of our local Church.

In supporting an endowment today, we strengthen the Catholic ministries that form our families, our communities, and our Church—today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

(Jolinda Moore is a member of SS. Francis and Clare Parish in Greenwood and serves as the executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation. 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.) †

PEACE

continued from page 2

that 'the Gospel must be proclaimed and lived in every setting, serving as a leaven of fraternity and peace among all individuals, cultures, religions and peoples,' Archbishop Coakley said. "It is with this in mind that I prayerfully



Archbishop Paul S. Coakley

urge calm, restraint, and respect for human life in Minneapolis, and all those places where peace is threatened. Public authorities especially have a responsibility to safeguard the well-being of people in service to the common good.

"As a nation, we must come together in dialogue, turning away from dehumanizing rhetoric and acts which threaten human life. In this spirit, in unity with Pope Leo, it is important to

proclaim, 'Peace is built on respect for people!'"

During his *Angelus* address on Jan. 25, Pope Leo said, "... let us pray for peace: in Ukraine, in the Middle East, and in every region where, unfortunately, there is fighting going on for interests that are not those of the people. Peace is built on respect for peoples!"



Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis also released a statement on Jan. 25 calling for prayer and a restoration of peace.

"Following Saturday's tragic shooting in Minneapolis, I ask all people of good will to

join me today in prayer for Alex Jeffrey Pretti, for his parents, and for his loved ones," said Archbishop Hebda. "The loss of another life amidst the tensions that have gripped Minnesota should prompt all

of us to ask what we can do to restore the Lord's peace.

"While we rightly thirst for God's justice and hunger for his peace, this will not be achieved until we are able to rid our hearts of the hatreds and prejudices that prevent us from seeing each other as brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God," he said. "That is as true for our undocumented neighbors as it is for our elected officials and for the men and women who have the unenviable responsibility of enforcing our laws. They all need our humble prayers."

Catholic and other faith leaders have previously called for prayers and peace during the enforcement effort. A multifaith prayer service on Jan. 23 at

Temple Israel in Minneapolis included Auxiliary Bishop Kevin T. Kenney.

Regarding the Jan. 24 shooting, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said during a news conference that officers responded to a report and found "an adult male with multiple gunshot wounds." Life-saving measures were implemented, and the man was transported to Hennepin County Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead, the police chief said.

Asked about the DHS response alleging an armed person approached agents, O'Hara said local law enforcement responding to the scene were not provided information about what happened prior to what can be seen on social media. †

Employment

Director of Development

Scecina Memorial High School

Scecina Memorial High School is seeking a Director of Development who will collaborate with school leadership to develop and implement strategies to cultivate, invite, and steward alumni and friends' financial support for school priorities. The director is responsible for managing the annual Scecina Fund, special events, and special development projects. We are seeking an experienced and visionary development professional who is committed to Catholic school education, is an effective collaborator and project manager, and has strong relationship-building skills.

To apply, please send a letter of interest and resume to:

Ms. Magy Garcia
Assistant to the President
Scecina Memorial High School
5000 Nowland Avenue
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mgarcia@scecina.org

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- High school diploma or equivalent is required.
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- Experience with processing payrolls using Paylocity software is a plus.
- High attention to detail and accuracy with data entry
- High level of discretion and confidentiality

For consideration, please send resume to tsteele@archindy.org

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To apply, please send your resume and cover letter to:

Ms. Magy Garcia
Assistant to the President
Scecina Memorial High School
5000 Nowland Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46201
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