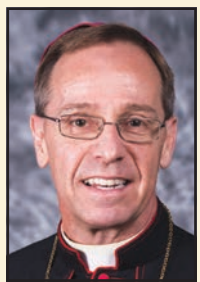


A crucifix hangs before a mural depicting the Resurrection in the sanctuary at St. Timothy Church in Mesa, Ariz. (OSV News photo/J.D. Long-Garcia, Catholic Sun)

## An Easter Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

### Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We celebrate the pinnacle of our liturgical year, namely, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!



Our world needs the authentic experience of joy, hope, healing and reconciliation that Jesus' victory over sin and death can provide.

Many have experienced a sense of darkness and woundedness caused by the

various forms of violence, injustice and scapegoating. The power emanating from the empty tomb dispels the darkness of sickness, death and despair.

Many are carrying deep wounds of abuse, addiction, betrayal, bullying, disappointment, disillusion and loss. The Risen Jesus, still bearing the wounds of his passion, allows his wounds to be touched in order to bring healing and reconciliation to all who bear the marks—emotionally, physically, psychologically and/or spiritually—of suffering. Thus, He is our hope and salvation!

Like those first disciples who went to the empty tomb and those who encounter

the Risen Jesus, we are called to be witnesses to His continued presence and kingdom among us.

This is the identity and task of every baptized member of the Church in living out the call to holiness and mission as missionary disciples. Many are hungering and thirsting for what the Risen Lord Jesus Christ alone can satisfy. He remains forever available to us through Word, Sacrament and Service.

Anointed with the Holy Spirit, especially through Baptism and Confirmation, we share in the co-responsibility of proclaiming the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ. It is by the grace of the Holy Spirit

dwelling within and among us that we have the capacity to heal wounds and console hearts.

Let us dare to make a difference, going forth with gospel joy as instruments of peace and unity to proclaim that Jesus Christ is alive. He is Risen! Neither sin nor death gets the last word. God's victory shall not be denied. Let us lift one another in prayer.

Easter Peace and Blessings!

*+ Charles C. Thompson*

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

## Mensaje de Pascua del Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson

### Queridas hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

Estamos celebrando la cumbre de nuestro año litúrgico: la resurrección de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. ¡Ha resucitado! ¡Aleluya! ¡Aleluya!

Nuestro mundo necesita la auténtica experiencia de alegría, esperanza, sanación y reconciliación que proporciona la victoria de Jesús sobre el pecado y la muerte.

Muchos han experimentado una sensación de oscuridad y heridas causadas por las diversas formas de violencia, injusticia y estigmatización, pero el poder que emana de la tumba vacía disipa la oscuridad de la enfermedad, la muerte y la desesperación.

Muchos arrastran heridas profundas de abuso, adicción, traición, acoso, decepción, desilusión y pérdida. Jesús resucitado,

que todavía lleva las heridas de su pasión, permite que se toquen sus llagas para llevar sanación y reconciliación a todos los que llevan las marcas—emocionales, físicas, psicológicas y espirituales—del sufrimiento. ¡Por eso Él es nuestra esperanza y salvación!

Como aquellos primeros discípulos ante la tumba vacía y los que se encuentran con Jesús resucitado, estamos llamados a ser testigos de su presencia continua y de su reino entre nosotros.

Esta es la identidad y la tarea de cada miembro bautizado de la Iglesia al vivir el llamado a la santidad y a la misión como discípulos misioneros. Muchos tienen hambre y sed de lo que solo el Señor Jesucristo resucitado puede saciar. Él siempre está allí para nosotros a través de la Palabra, los sacramentos y el servicio.

Ungidos con el Espíritu Santo, especialmente a través del Bautismo

y la Confirmación, compartimos la corresponsabilidad de proclamar la Buena Nueva de la salvación en Jesucristo. Es por la gracia del Espíritu Santo que habita en nosotros y entre nosotros que tenemos la capacidad de sanar heridas y consolar corazones.

Atrevámonos a marcar la diferencia, avanzando con la alegría del Evangelio como instrumentos de paz y unidad para proclamar que Jesucristo está vivo. ¡Ha resucitado! Ni el pecado ni la muerte tienen la última palabra. Nadie puede negar la victoria de Dios. Sostengámonos unos a otros en la oración.

Paz y Bendiciones Pascuales,

*+ Charles C. Thompson*

Arzobispo Charles C. Thompson



Pope Leo XIV holds a palm branch as he celebrates the Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 29. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, pool via Reuters)

## On first Palm Sunday as pontiff, Pope Leo says Jesus cries out from the cross against war

VATICAN CITY (OSV News)—In the first Palm Sunday homily of his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed that Jesus, the King of Peace, embraces all suffering in human history and cries out from the cross against war.

“Brothers and sisters, this is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war,” the pope said in St. Peter’s Square on March 29.

“He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: ‘Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood’ [Is 1:15].”

Pope Leo repeated the phrase “King of Peace” seven times in his homily, weaving it through different moments of the Passion of Christ, pointing to Jesus as a victim of unjust violence who never took up arms in his own defense.

“Christ, King of Peace, cries out again from his cross: God is love! Have mercy! Lay down your weapons! Remember that you are brothers and sisters,” Pope Leo said.

He emphasized that Jesus, in allowing himself to be nailed to the cross embraced “every cross borne in every time and place throughout human history.

“As we set our gaze upon him who was crucified for us, we can see a crucified humanity. In his wounds, we see the hurts of so many women and men today,” the pope said.

“In his last cry to the Father, we hear the weeping of those who are crushed, who have no hope, who are sick and who are alone. Above all, we hear the painful groans of all those who are oppressed by violence and are victims of war.”

Pope Leo’s first Holy Week began under sunny skies with a solemn Palm Sunday procession through St. Peter’s Square, where cardinals, bishops and lay people carried large palm branches. The congregation held olive branches, as is customary in Italy.

The Passion narrative from the Gospel of Matthew was solemnly chanted during

the Mass; at the moment of Jesus’ death, the square fell silent as tens of thousands of people, including the pope, knelt in prayer.

In his appeal at the close of the Mass, he went on further to press for peace, especially in the Middle East. He called on prayers for Christians in the Middle East, whose “ordeal challenges all our consciences,” as the conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran entered its fifth week.

“Just as the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord’s Passion, we cannot forget those who today are truly sharing in his suffering,” he said. “Let us raise our prayer to the Prince of Peace that he may sustain the peoples wounded by war and open concrete paths to reconciliation and peace.”

At the end of the liturgy, Pope Leo also led the congregation in the *Angelus* prayer in Latin and made an impassioned appeal for Christians in the Holy Land, where the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has had to cancel or postpone key Holy Week liturgies, including Palm Sunday due to wartime restrictions. (See related story on page 3.)

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, and Franciscan Father Francesco Ielpo, the custos of the Holy Land, were prevented from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulcher by Israeli police on Palm Sunday, the Latin patriarchate said on March 29.

“At the beginning of Holy Week, our prayers are more than ever with the Christians of the Middle East, who are suffering the consequences of a brutal conflict and, in many cases, are unable to observe fully the liturgies of these holy days,” Pope Leo said at the *Angelus*.

“Just as the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord’s Passion, we cannot forget those who today are truly sharing in his suffering,” he said, adding “their ordeal challenges all our consciences.” †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 3–April 12, 2026

**April 3 – Noon**  
Way of the Cross with Knights of Columbus at American Legion Mall, Indianapolis

**April 3 – 3 p.m.**  
Good Friday Service at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

**April 4 – 8:45 p.m.**  
Easter Vigil at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**April 7 – 10 a.m.**  
School Mass for Seton Catholic Schools at St. Mary Church, a campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Richmond

**April 8 – 2 p.m.**  
Virtual Evangelization Summit Planning Team meeting

**April 8 – 7 p.m.**  
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Jude Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**April 9 – 8:15 a.m.**  
Virtual Judicatories meeting

**April 9 – 10 a.m.**  
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

**April 10 – 3 p.m.**  
Virtual Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition meeting

**April 11 – 11 a.m.**  
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Mary Parish, Greensburg; St. Joseph Parish, Shelbyville; St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Shelby County; Holy Family Parish, Oldenburg; St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County; and Immaculate Conception Parish, Millhousen, at St. Mary Church

**April 12 – 2 p.m.**  
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Bedford; Our Lady of the Springs Parish, French Lick; St. Agnes Parish, Nashville; Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Parish, Paoli; St. Jude the Apostle Parish, Spencer; and St. Charles Borromeo Parish, St. John the Apostle Parish and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. John the Apostle Church

**April 12 – 5:30 p.m.**  
Mass and dinner at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

## Gaza Christians mark Palm Sunday with hope amid ongoing hardships

(OSV News)—In an unexpected sign of hope in the Holy Land, Gaza City Christians of Holy Family Parish were able to celebrate Mass with the blessing of palms and a procession for Palm Sunday on March 29.

The event garnered an unexpectedly large turnout, despite rain and nearby gunfire.

“We had a very beautiful celebration,” said Father Gabriel Romanelli, pastor, in a video update posted on YouTube, noting that earlier concerns about safety and mobility nearly disrupted the day.

He said fears were mounting “not only ... because we are close to the famous yellow line, but also because it is very difficult to find vehicles to move around,” mentioning the Israeli yellow line, which serves as a boundary in the Gaza Strip created as an effect of the October 2025 ceasefire.

The line splits the territory into two parts: one controlled by Palestinians and the other by Israel. It has forced most Palestinians to move to the western side, and the line has been gradually pushed farther into Gaza by Israel.

Five months after the ceasefire was announced in Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains dire in the enclave, and

airstrikes still cause civilian deaths, with shelling and gunfire experienced daily.

Despite this, attendance exceeded expectations for the Palm Sunday procession. “Against all forecasts, many people came, and Christians here in general in the Middle East love this celebration very much,” Father Romanelli said.

The Palm Sunday celebration extended beyond worship, with aid distributed to those in need.

“We shared a coffee with sweets, and aid was distributed to the families of the refugees ... some flashlights and a bag of food,” he said.

The priest described the gesture as modest but meaningful amid shortages, and he framed the observance within the broader suffering in Gaza and the region, calling for peace as Holy Week begins.

“Let us offer our sufferings, each in our own way, for the glory of God, for the salvation of souls, for the forgiveness of our sins and so that the Lord may grant the world and this part of the world—which is the Holy Land—peace, his peace, and a just and lasting peace for everyone,” asking “that we may come to see a new period that gives true hope of life to people to live in a humane way.” †

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# Israel to allow Church leaders to celebrate Holy Week at holy sites, Latin patriarchate reflects on Palm Sunday amid war

(OSV News)—The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said an agreement has been reached with Israeli authorities to allow Holy Week and Easter celebrations to take place at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher after they were initially barred from celebrating a Palm Sunday liturgy there.

In a statement published on March 30, the Latin patriarchate said that “naturally, and in light of the current state of war, the existing restrictions on public gatherings remain in force for the time being. Accordingly, the Churches will ensure that the liturgies and prayers are broadcast live to the faithful in the Holy Land and throughout the world.”

The agreement was reached a day after Israeli police barred Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Franciscan Father Francesco Ielpo, the custos of the Holy Land, from entering the church on March 29, drawing global condemnation.

In a statement published shortly after the incident, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said barring Catholic leaders from celebrating the start of Holy Week set “a grave precedent, and disregards the sensibilities of billions of people around the world who, during this week, look to Jerusalem.”

Following the backlash, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said he called Cardinal Pizzaballa to “express my great sorrow over this morning’s unfortunate incident in the Old City of Jerusalem.”

“I clarified that the incident stemmed from security concerns due to the continuous threat of missile attacks from the Iranian terror regime against the civilian population in Israel, following previous incidents in which Iranian missiles fell in the area of the Old City of Jerusalem in recent days,” he explained.

Herzog also reaffirmed Israel’s “unwavering commitment to freedom of religion for all faiths and to upholding the status quo at the holy sites of Jerusalem.”

In its March 30 statement, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem expressed its gratitude to Herzog “for his prompt attention and valued intervention.”

Responding to the incident in a series of posts on X, Israel’s prime minister’s office initially noted that Iran “has repeatedly targeted the holy sites of all three monotheistic religions in Jerusalem with ballistic missiles” and that missile fragments from one strike

crashed near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

The police, the office said, prevented Cardinal Pizzaballa and Father Francesco from entering the church “out of special concern for his safety” and said that “there was no malicious intent.”

“However, given the holiness of the week leading up to Easter for the world’s Christians, Israel’s security arms are putting together a plan to enable Church leaders to worship at the holy site in the coming days.”

Several hours later, in a sign of an effort to resolve the difficulties, Israeli’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a post on X said he instructed authorities that Cardinal Pizzaballa “be granted full and immediate access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.”

“Even though I understand this concern, as soon as I learned about the incident with Cardinal Pizzaballa, I instructed the authorities to enable the Patriarch to hold services as he wishes,” he wrote.

Cardinal Pizzaballa also sought to ease tensions in the aftermath of the incident. In an interview with TV2000, the television network owned by the Italian bishops’ conference, the Latin patriarch said the incident was the result of a “misunderstanding.”

“There were no clashes; everything was done very politely. I don’t want to force things; we want to use this situation to better clarify in the coming days what to do, respecting everyone’s safety, but also respecting the right to prayer,” he said.

He also noted that while the Palm Sunday incident was important, it must also be considered within “the broader context.”

“There are people who are much worse off than we are and cannot celebrate for very different reasons,” he said. “Once again, we are celebrating a subdued Easter.”

Cardinal Pizzaballa reflected on the difficulties that Christians in the Holy Land are facing in the midst of war during a homily he delivered on Palm Sunday on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem.

He noted that “the war that has interrupted our festive journey, making even the simple joy of following our king difficult,” leading to the cancellation of the traditional Palm Sunday pilgrimage in Jerusalem and the day’s liturgy in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

“Today, Jesus weeps once more over Jerusalem,” Cardinal



Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, holds a prayer service to mark Palm Sunday, following the cancellation of the traditional Palm Sunday procession from the Mount of Olives, amid restrictions on gathering in large groups and the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran, in Jerusalem, on March 29. (OSV News photo/Ammar Awad, pool via Reuters)

Pizzaballa said. “He weeps over this city, which remains a sign of both hope and sorrow, of grace and suffering. He weeps over this Holy Land still unable to recognize the gift of peace. He weeps for all the victims of a war that seems without end: for divided families, for shattered hopes.”

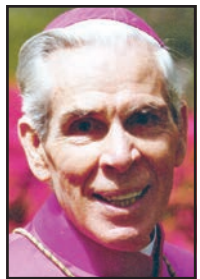
The patriarch said that, even “as war seems to suffocate every word of peace,” Christ offers a peace that “is not a fragile agreement between enemies, but a peace born of the cross—a peace that comes from a God who gives himself completely and has no need of force or weapons. This is the paradox we are called to embrace today.”

Such an approach of faith and hope amidst the tragedies and challenges of war, Cardinal Pizzaballa said, can lead Christians to affirm that “war will not erase the resurrection. Grief will not extinguish hope.”

In concluding his homily, the patriarch noted that “in this land that continues to wait for peace, we are called to be witnesses to a love that never gives up. May our journey of faith, even today, be a journey of hope. And may our lives, even amid the harshness of the present moment, bring the love of Christ and his light wherever darkness seems to prevail. Amen.” †

## Sept. 24 beatification of Archbishop Sheen to be ‘a moment of immense grace’

VATICAN CITY (OSV News)—Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen will be beatified on Sept. 24 in St. Louis, the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Causes of Saints announced on March 25.



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect for the Dicastery for Evangelization will be the principal celebrant of the liturgy.

On Feb. 9, the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., announced that the Vatican had given

the green light for the beatification of Archbishop Sheen to move forward, six years after the Holy See had postponed the beatification, initially scheduled for December 2019, only weeks before the event was to take place.

In a statement on March 25, Bishop Louis Tylka of Peoria said the beatification will take place at 2 p.m. CT at The Dome at America’s Center in St. Louis.

“With anticipation of a great number of people wanting to participate, we chose this location because of availability, being indoors and the close proximity to the Diocese of Peoria,” Bishop Tylka said.

Bishop Tylka added that a “number of events in Peoria” will be held “to celebrate this wonderful occasion.”

“This is a moment of immense grace for the Church—especially for us in the Diocese of Peoria, where Archbishop Sheen was born, ordained and first served as a priest,” he added. “His life and ministry continue to inspire countless people to know and love Jesus Christ more deeply.”

“The beatification Mass will be a profound moment of prayer and celebration for the faithful near and far,” Bishop Tylka said. “I invite all who have been touched by Archbishop Sheen’s life and legacy to join us in spirit or in person for this historic event.”

Msgr. Roger Landry, national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies USA, which Archbishop Sheen led the organization from 1950-66, received the news of the beatification date with “indescribable joy.”

The priest noted in a March 25 statement to OSV News that his predecessor to be beatified “is an inspiration not only to all of us who continue his work of prayer and support for the Church’s missionary work across the globe, but for all those whose faith has been strengthened by his preaching, broadcasting, writing and holy Catholic life.”

“Cardinal Tagle, like Sheen,” he added, is “an incredibly gifted preacher, but he will no doubt be able to emphasize the contributions that soon-to-be Blessed Fulton Sheen made and,

in many ways, continues to make to the Church’s mission work.”

In February, when it was announced Archbishop Sheen’s beatification would go forward, Bishop Tylka called the prelate “one of the greatest voices of evangelization in the Church and the world in the 20th century.”

“I have long admired his lifelong commitment to serve the Church as a priest, rooted in his deep devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist,” Bishop Tylka said. “As he journeyed through the different stages of his life, his ability to share the Gospel and truly relate to people drew countless souls into an encounter with Jesus—one that transformed not only his life, but more importantly, the lives of those he touched.”

Archbishop Sheen is remembered as one of the most influential and innovative

evangelists in American history. Once dubbed “God’s microphone,” Archbishop Sheen announced the Gospel in a nonconfrontational, yet no less life-giving manner to untold millions through radio, print and television.

“That the announcement of the date of beatification for the archbishop was made on the Solemnity of the Annunciation is likewise very fitting,” Msgr. Landry said in his statement. “Archbishop Sheen spent his life continuing the work of the Archangel Gabriel, calling us to rejoice because the Lord is with us, and imitating the response of Mary in placing himself as a servant of the Lord, allowing his whole life to develop according to the Lord’s word.”

The priest added, “I can’t wait to be in St. Louis on September 24 celebrating with Catholics from across the states and the world.” †



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## Editorial



A file photo shows members of St. Therese Parish in Appleton, Wis., venerating a crucifix during a Good Friday liturgy. (OSV News photo/Sam Lucero, *The Compass*)

# Good Friday is the day when we stand in awe of the humility of God

*Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world: come, let us adore.* (cf. Liturgy of the Lord's Passion)

Good Friday is a day of mourning, and it is a day of silence. It is a day on which the Light of the World seems to have been snuffed out by the darkness of sin and death.

On Good Friday, the brilliant light of heaven might seem forever hidden behind dark clouds of gloom. But the silence of Good Friday prepares us for the exuberant songs of the Easter Vigil—the “*Exultet*” and the great Alleluia that proclaim Christ's victory over sin and death.

Good Friday solemnly honors the triumph of humility over self-centered pride. It reminds us that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to cling to. Instead, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant and becoming human (cf. Phil 2:6-9). And in the ultimate act of humility, in order to sacrifice his life for us, Jesus freely accepted one of the cruelest forms of capital punishment ever invented: death by crucifixion.

Good Friday commends the wisdom of God which is quite unlike human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:20-24):

*Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

For, as St. Paul says, “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor 1:25).

Good Friday is the day when we stand in awe before the humility of God. It is the day when the Church reminds us that the freedom, the love and the happiness that every human being seeks

are only made possible through the miracle of self-giving love.

What we recall today is God's free decision to suffer and die for our sins. It is a painful memory that should cause each of us to feel remorse for our part in this day of sadness—for our contributions to the burden of sin that Jesus carried on his shoulders as he made his way to his crucifixion.

But the paradox of Good Friday is that the *Via Dolorosa* is not a dead end. Instead, it is a road that opens the way to salvation. And so, without ever forgetting the bitter tears that were shed on this day by Mary and those few who loved him enough to stand by him at the foot of the cross, we rejoice and thank God for the great gift of this day of remembrance and of peace.

God's humility, his sacrifice on the cross, has something profoundly important to teach us. The way to happiness is the Way of the Cross. That means that we will never find true happiness by seeking wealth, power, success or fame. We will never discover the freedom and love we desire if we dedicate ourselves to our own comfort and satisfaction. God's humility teaches us that true love is found in sacrifice and true happiness comes not when we cling to life's blessings and comforts, but when we share them generously with others.

Good Friday gives us the opportunity to praise God for his humility and for the great gift of his self-giving love, even as we mourn his cruel and utterly undeserving condemnation and death on a cross. Good Friday extols the humility of God that paradoxically (by our earthly standards) has exalted the name of Jesus Christ above all other names—so that at this name every knee should bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

Praise God for his self-giving love! May the name of Jesus Christ be praised, now and forever! May we always remember his sacrifice on the Cross, which has won our salvation and shown us the way to happiness and peace! A blessed Good Friday to all!

—Daniel Conway

**Be Our Guest/**Br. Octavio Duran, O.F.M.

## A saint's final footsteps

As I held Archbishop Óscar Romero's empty shoes in my trembling hands, I felt gravity heavier than their weight.



It was the evening of March 24, 1980. That fateful day had begun ordinarily at San José de la Montaña, where I was a seminarian, in San Salvador. Our daily routine proceeded normally—until the end of the 5:30 p.m. Mass, when devastating news shattered our world. Archbishop Romero had been assassinated while celebrating Mass at the Divine Providence Hospital chapel.

El Salvador's political situation was deteriorating dramatically. Violence engulfed the country as government forces committed widespread human rights abuses against civilians suspected of supporting leftist movements. Tensions had reached such extremes that Archbishop Romero felt compelled to address the armed forces directly in his Sunday homily, begging soldiers to stop the brutal repression sweeping the nation.

In a powerful sermon on March 23, 1980, Archbishop Romero spoke with unwavering moral clarity: “Brothers, you are members of our own people. You kill your fellow peasants. . . . When faced with a man's order to kill, God's law must prevail: ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ No soldier is obligated to obey an order contrary to God's law. It is time to reclaim your conscience.

“In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day,” he continued, “I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!”

This prophetic statement sealed his death sentence. Yet even as his words resonated through the basilica and across radio broadcasts nationwide, no one could have foreseen that his life would be taken the very next day.

At the seminary on the evening of March 24, Father Gregorio Rosa Chávez, our rector, approached me with grave urgency. He requested that I accompany him to the medical facility where emergency personnel had transported the archbishop's body.

As darkness fell, the taxi ride—a blur of motion and dread—took us through the crowded streets of a city already erupting with grief, outrage and uncertainty. Upon arrival, we found Archbishop Romero's corpse surrounded by frantic doctors and weeping religious sisters. His body still retained warmth, and a single, precise bullet hole in his chest marked exactly where hatred had pierced his compassionate heart.

Mechanically I took photographs, using my camera as an emotional shield between myself and the unbearable reality unfolding before me. Archbishop Romero himself had given me the camera to document the archdiocese's work.

Trauma erased many details from my memory, the mind's way of protecting us from what we cannot immediately process. Yet one image is etched in my mind: When his body was wheeled away for autopsy, his shoes remained behind on the floor, suddenly empty and abandoned.

I knew well those simple, worn-down shoes. I had seen them faithfully carry him through El Salvador's dusty streets and roads, to remote villages and to the humble homes of its most impoverished citizens. They had also taken him to the pulpit, where he boldly spoke truth to power.

These emptied vessels had transported

a man who walked alongside the suffering, who refused the comfort of silence when his people desperately needed a voice for justice. Without thinking, I carefully placed them in my camera bag.

As we returned to the seminary in stunned silence, El Salvador trembled on the edge of an unimaginable brutality. Our shepherd had fallen, and 12 years of civil war would claim over 75,000 lives. Half a million of us had to flee our country.

Throughout my four-and-a-half decades in the United States, these shoes have accompanied me, tucked away safely yet always present. Silent companions witnessing my own journey, they saw me become a Franciscan friar and anchored me through life's triumphs and hardships. I've occasionally shown them to trusted friends and colleagues, watching as understanding dawns on their faces while I explain what these ordinary-looking objects are. They carried a man of small physical stature and towering spiritual presence; they are the shoes of a prophet, a saint who spoke when others fell silent.

I attended St. Óscar Romero's 2018 canonization with his friend and disciple Cardinal Rosa Chávez—El Salvador's first cardinal. But in time, I came to realize that the shoes, which had become relics at his beatification in 2015, were like immigrants who yearned for their birthplace. The worn leather that once cushioned Archbishop Romero's feet belonged in the country whose soil is embedded in their soles.

So, 46 years later, I returned the shoes to their homeland.

On Jan. 14, while on pilgrimage with the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in El Salvador, I had the privilege of presenting his shoes to Sister Tránsito de la Cruz, superior of the community at Divine Providence Hospital. There, the Missionary Carmelites of St. Teresa lovingly tend a memorial museum in the little apartment where St. Óscar lived, and the delivery took place in the chapel where he was martyred.

The priests and brothers on the Maryknoll pilgrimage seemed to hold their breath as Sister Tránsito received the shoes. Her weathered hands trembled slightly—perhaps remembering the times when St. Óscar himself walked these grounds, bringing comfort and courage to the sisters during uncertain times.

“These belong here,” she whispered, tears glistening in her eyes. “They have completed their journey.”

As they passed from my hands to hers, I felt both emptied and fulfilled.

In giving the shoes away, I gained newfound clarity. They represent a path that few possess the courage to walk—one of sacrifice and unconditional love, placing one foot before the other, even when each step brings you closer to crucifixion.

The shoes now rest where they belong, in the museum alongside Archbishop Romero's other modest possessions, including the vestments he wore at the time of his martyrdom and photos of his pastoral visits. All who make the pilgrimage to honor his memory can contemplate their significance.

But St. Óscar's legacy is not confined to museums or memorials. It lives in continuing acts of remembrance, in the courage of those who still speak truth to power, and in the hope that justice will someday walk freely in the land our martyr loved.

(Franciscan Brother Octavio Duran lives in Butler, N.J., and is a freelance photographer and writer. He is a frequent contributor to Maryknoll magazine, where this piece was originally published.) †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Good Friday is a day of sadness and rejoicing

*Let us admire, congratulate, rejoice, love, praise, adore; because through the death of our Redeemer we are called from darkness to light, from death to life, from exile to home, from grief to everlasting joy. (St. Augustine).*

Good Friday is the saddest day in the Church's year. We are sad because we remember the intense suffering and humiliation of Jesus, and because we recall the bitter pain and death that he suffered for our sake.

As we learn in the first reading for the Good Friday liturgy (Is 52:13-53:12):

*Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people, a grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers, though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood. (Is 53:7-9)*

Good Friday is unquestionably a day of mourning and a painful reminder of just how cruel we human beings can

be—not only to each other, but even to God's only Son.

But paradoxically, Good Friday is also a day when we are invited to rejoice and give thanks. How can this be? We rejoice because by his wounds we were healed, and by his death we were given life everlasting.

Good Friday shows us that the Lord was willing to give up everything in order to gain for us the fullness of life. He freely chose to submit to the scandalous injustice of crucifixion in order to free us from the addictive power of selfishness and sin.

Good Friday makes Easter Sunday possible. The Way of the Cross is the way that leads us through the darkness and despair of death to the brilliant light and everlasting joy of the resurrection. There is no shortcut or bypass on the journey to heaven—no easier, softer way. There is only the Cross of Christ, and each of us must take up this cross and follow Jesus if we want to be one with him in the joy of heaven.

This is the consistent teaching of Jesus: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:39). Jesus tells us by his words and his example.

Whoever sacrifices selfish desires, ego-driven pursuits and the quest for admiration, wealth or power will find true and lasting happiness. Conversely, anyone who clings selfishly to these worldly goods will ultimately lose everything.

The liturgy for Good Friday understandably calls our attention to the suffering of Jesus, but it also acknowledges our reasons for joy.

During the Adoration of the Cross, for example, we pray:

*We adore your Cross, O Lord, we praise and glorify your holy Resurrection, for behold, because of the wood of a tree joy has come to the whole world.*

Joy comes into the whole world because of the self-sacrificing love of God's only Son. His suffering makes true happiness possible. That's why we venerate what at the time of Jesus was a hideous instrument of torture and death.

The events of Good Friday have transformed the injustice of this day into an experience of unqualified hope and joy. Our response is not a paralyzing grief or sadness, but a heartfelt act of worship that praises and glorifies the sacrifice that made Christ's

resurrection possible. And so, we can sing:

*Sing, my tongue, in exultation  
Of our banner and device!  
Make a solemn proclamation  
Of a triumph and its price:  
How the Savior of creation  
Conquered by his sacrifice!*

We can rejoice, even in our sadness, because of the wondrous love of God. As St. Augustine taught, our Redeemer has opened the gates of heaven for us. The Crucified One has defied death and emerged victorious. He has led us out of darkness into his wonderful light. He has freed us from the prison of sin, and he has transformed our grief into everlasting joy.

Good Friday is a vivid reminder that the sins that were the original cause of Jesus' passion and death continue today. The evils of injustice, war, abuse, indiscriminate killings, human trafficking, scapegoating migrants and refugees, and other unspeakable crimes against human life and dignity, continue to inflict pain and misery on the person of Jesus.

And, so, today's sadness is real, but so is today's joy: "For behold, because of the wood of a tree joy has come to the whole world." †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## El Viernes Santo es un día de tristeza y alegría

*Admiremos, felicitémonos, alegrémonos, amemos, alabemos, adoremos; porque por la muerte de nuestro Redentor somos llamados de las tinieblas a la luz, de la muerte a la vida, del destierro al hogar, del dolor a la alegría eterna. (San Agustín)*

El Viernes Santo es el día más triste del año litúrgico. Estamos tristes porque recordamos el intenso sufrimiento y la humillación de Jesús, y evocamos el amargo dolor y la muerte que sufrió por nuestra causa.

Como descubrimos en la primera lectura de la liturgia del Viernes Santo (Is 52:13-53:12):

*Fue oprimido y humillado, pero él no abrió la boca. Como cordero llevado al degüello, como oveja que va a ser esquilada, permaneció mudo, sin abrir la boca. Detenido, sin defensor y sin juicio, ¿quién se ocupó de su generación? Fue arrancado de la tierra de los vivos, herido por las rebeldías de su pueblo; pusieron su tumba entre malvados, su sepultura entre malhechores. Por más que no cometió atropellos ni hubo nunca mentiras en su boca. (Is 53:7-9)*

El Viernes Santo es, sin duda, un día de luto y un doloroso recordatorio de lo crueles que podemos llegar a ser los seres humanos, no solo entre nosotros,

sino incluso con el Hijo único de Dios.

Pero, paradójicamente, el Viernes Santo es también un día en el que se nos invita a alegrarnos y a dar gracias. ¿Cómo es esto posible? Nos alegramos porque por sus heridas fuimos sanados, y por su muerte recibimos la vida eterna.

El Viernes Santo nos muestra que el Señor estuvo dispuesto a renunciar a todo para brindarnos la plenitud de la vida. Eligió libremente someterse a la escandalosa injusticia de la crucifixión para liberarnos del poder adictivo del egoísmo y del pecado.

El Viernes Santo hace posible el Domingo de Resurrección. El Vía Crucis es el camino que nos conduce por la oscuridad y la desesperación de la muerte hacia la luz brillante y la alegría eterna de la resurrección. No hay atajos ni desvíos en el viaje al cielo, no hay un camino más fácil ni más llevadero. Solo existe la Cruz de Cristo, y cada uno de nosotros debe tomar esta cruz y seguirlo si quiere ser uno con Él en la alegría del cielo.

Esta es la enseñanza constante de Jesús: "El que encuentre su vida, la perderá; y el que pierda su vida por mí, la encontrará" (Mt 10:39). Jesús nos lo dice con sus palabras y su ejemplo. Quien sacrifique los deseos egoístas, los afanes impulsados por el ego y la búsqueda de admiración, riqueza o

poder encontrará la felicidad verdadera y duradera. Por el contrario, quien se aferra egoístamente a estos tesoros mundanos acabará perdiéndolo todo.

Es comprensible que la liturgia del Viernes Santo llame nuestra atención sobre el sufrimiento de Jesús, pero también reconoce nuestros motivos de alegría.

Durante la Adoración de la Cruz, por ejemplo, rezamos:

*Adoramos tu Cruz, Señor, alabamos y glorificamos tu santa Resurrección, pues he aquí que por la madera de un árbol ha llegado la alegría al mundo entero.*

La alegría llega a todo el mundo gracias al amor abnegado del Hijo único de Dios. Su sufrimiento hace posible la verdadera felicidad. Por eso veneramos lo que en tiempos de Jesús era un espantoso instrumento de tortura y muerte.

Los acontecimientos del Viernes Santo han transformado la injusticia de este día en una experiencia de esperanza y alegría sin límites. Nuestra respuesta no es un dolor o una tristeza paralizantes, sino un acto de adoración sincero que alaba y glorifica el sacrificio que hizo posible la resurrección de Cristo. Y así, podemos cantar:

*Canta, oh lengua,  
el glorioso triunfo*

*del cuerpo soberano,  
y de la sangre del precioso  
fruto del vientre soberano,  
que, para rescate del humano,  
¡vertió su Rey generoso!*

Incluso en medio de nuestra tristeza, tenemos motivo de alegría por el maravilloso amor de Dios. Como enseñaba san Agustín, nuestro Redentor nos ha abierto las puertas del cielo. El Crucificado ha desafiado a la muerte y ha salido victorioso, nos ha sacado de las tinieblas para llevarnos a su luz maravillosa, nos ha liberado de la prisión del pecado, y ha transformado nuestro dolor en alegría eterna.

El Viernes Santo es un vívido recordatorio de que los pecados que fueron la causa original de la pasión y muerte de Jesús continúan hoy. Los males de la injusticia, la guerra, los abusos, los asesinatos indiscriminados, el tráfico de seres humanos, el uso de migrantes y refugiados como chivos expiatorios, y otros crímenes incalificables contra la vida y la dignidad humanas, siguen infligiendo dolor y miseria a la persona de Jesús.

Y, así, la tristeza de hoy es real, pero también lo es la alegría que sentimos: "Pues he aquí que por la madera de un árbol ha llegado la alegría al mundo entero." †

# Events Calendar

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

## Every Wednesday:

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](mailto:jjdav887@gmail.com).

## April 11

Avon United Methodist Church, 6850 E US Highway 36, Avon. **Stephen Ministries 50th Anniversary Celebration and Learning Event**, 8-4 p.m., \$15 includes light breakfast and snacks, additional box lunch is \$12. Information, registration: [stephenministries.org/celebrateIND](http://stephenministries.org/celebrateIND).

St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Parish Life Center, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Euchre Tournament**, doors open at 5:30 p.m., games start 6:30 p.m., must be 21 or older, cash prizes, 50/50, food and beverages available for purchase, \$10, register by April 4. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/stmichaieleuchre26](http://tinyurl.com/stmichaieleuchre26), [events@saintmichaelyindy.org](mailto:events@saintmichaelyindy.org).

## April 14

Church of the Immaculate

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

## April 16

The Galt House, 140 N 4th St, Louisville, Ky. **St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities of New Albany "Giving Hope-Changing Lives" Annual Gala Fundraiser**, 5:30 p.m. doors open, dinner 7 p.m., client testimonials, live auction. Information, RSVP: 812-949-7305, [info@stcharities.org](mailto:info@stcharities.org).

## April 17

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, presenter TBD, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. April 14. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## April 18

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Called**

**to Community Women's Breakfast**, 7:30-11 a.m., sponsored by Confraternity of Christian Mothers, Mass at 7:30 a.m. followed by hot catered breakfast and full espresso bar, speaker and craft activity, \$15, register by April 4. Information, registration: 317-752-5172.

Sisters of Providence grounds, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Earth Day Festival**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., nature shows, craft activities, face-painting, hayrides, nature trail hikes, alpaca yoga spinning, weaving and felting demonstrations, alpaca visits, food vendors, live entertainment, free admission but donations accepted. Information: 812-535-2946, [Events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://Events.SistersofProvidence.org), [Irobinette@spsmw.org](mailto:Irobinette@spsmw.org).

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane, New Albany. **Spring Prayer Breakfast**, 9-11 a.m., Deacon John Jacobi presenting "Purgatory: Purified in God's Love," free, register by April 13. Information, registration: 812-945-1647, [jfey@olphna.org](mailto:jfey@olphna.org).

## April 19

Crane Bay Event Center, 551 W. Merrill St., Indianapolis.

**Light in the City Gala**, 4-9 p.m., dinner and silent auction event benefitting Lumen Christi Catholic School, includes cocktail hour, dessert dash, raffle, speaker, award presentation, \$125. Information: 317-632-3174, [cdillon@lumenchristischool.org](mailto:cdillon@lumenchristischool.org).

## April 20

**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](http://tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp). Information: [iowhosomaddox@archindy.org](mailto:iowhosomaddox@archindy.org), 317-261-3381.

## April 23

St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish Hall, 1870 W. Oak St., Zionsville, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette). **Boone County Right to Life Banquet**, 6:30 p.m., dinner, speaker will address issues and ethics of IVF and embryo adoption, \$40, free tickets for student groups available, register online or mail check by April 10. Information, registration: [boonecountyrighttolife.org/postmaster@boonecountyrighttolife.org](http://boonecountyrighttolife.org/postmaster@boonecountyrighttolife.org). Mail checks to: PO Box 264, Lebanon, IN 46052.

St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave., Indianapolis. **Race in the Catholic Church**, Notre Dame professor Darren Davis presenting, appetizers, wine, babysitting, free. Information: 317-253-1461, [churchinfo@staindy.org](mailto:churchinfo@staindy.org).

## 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.wvme.org](http://www.wvme.org). Information: Ken and Ann Butt, 317-863-5680.

## April 25

Holy Spirit Parish, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. **Evangelization 101 Workshop: Elevate your Spiritual Discipleship Journey**, 9 a.m.-3p.m., writer, speaker, evangelist Meg Hunter-Kilmer presenting, \$30 fee either paid by attendee or assessed to parish, includes lunch and materials, registration deadline April 20. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/Evang101-2026](http://tinyurl.com/Evang101-2026), 317-236-1466, [abardo@archindy.org](mailto:abardo@archindy.org).

## May 1-2

White Violet Center, Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-

of-the-Woods, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Spring Plant Sale**, Fri. 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., organically grown vegetables, flowers and herbs. Information: [Events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://Events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2946, [Irobinette@spsmw.org](mailto:Irobinette@spsmw.org).

## May 6

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—ages 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday 1 p.m. lunch events. Information: 317-796-8605.

## May 7

St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Activity Center, 210 Fifth St., Aurora. **Mary's FIAT (Faith in Action Together)**, 4:30 p.m. wine and fellowship, dinner and speaker to follow, Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Sister Deidre Byrne presenting, for women ages 13 and older, free, register by April 15. Information, registration: [tinyurl.com/FIAT5726](http://tinyurl.com/FIAT5726), 812-537-3992. †

## Retreats and Programs

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

## 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](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## April 20-24

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Priest Retreat: Faith Stories from the Gospel of Matthew**, Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting, \$625. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## May 1-3

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Women Carrying the Light of Christ: Past and Present**, women's retreat, Dr. Kimberly Baker

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

## May 12

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, 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](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## May 13

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Our Lady of Fatima Feast Day Evening of Reflection**, 5-8 p.m., spiritual director at the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Seminary and Fatima expert Jesuit Father James Kubick presenting, freewill donations

accepted. Registration: 317-545-7681, [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## May 15-17

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

## May 22-24

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Healing Loneliness**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## May 27

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr.,

St. Meinrad. **Heart on Fire**, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, \$75 single, \$150 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## 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](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Spirituality of Liturgical Architecture**, Benedictine Father Lorenzo Penalosa presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats). †

## Catholic speed dating event will take place at St. Joan of Arc Parish on April 18

"Holy Flirtation," a speed dating event for Catholic singles, will take place at St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., in Indianapolis, from 1:30-5:10 p.m. on April 18.

The event includes a catered dinner with wine, 12 six-minute speed dates and time for mingling.

Upon registering, participants will receive a link to a compatibility survey. The survey results determine the 12 people each person will "date" during the event. Toward the end of the event, participants will receive a survey to note which people they would like to get to know better. Mutual matches will be shared by e-mail the following day.

Immediately after the event, all are invited to worship at the 5:30 p.m. vigil Mass at St. Joan of Arc Church.

April 18 marks the third "Holy Flirtation" event, created and operated by St. Joan of Arc parishioner Josh Matthews. The previous events involved 200 participants, with an even balance of men and women.

There is no age limit to register. While the majority of attendees were 22-32 years old, participants have ranged from 20-55 in age.

The cost is \$35 plus \$1.92 online processing fee.

For more information or to register, go to [tinyurl.com/HolyFlirtation3](http://tinyurl.com/HolyFlirtation3). †

## Former Chicago broadcaster Kevin Matthews to present 'The Broken Mary Project' retreat in Bloomington on May 16

A one-day retreat titled "The Broken Mary Project" will be held at Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, in Bloomington, from 9 a.m.-5:15 p.m. on May 16.

During this retreat, Kevin Matthews will share his story of how rescuing a broken statue of Mary from a trash dumpster helped him find hope and healing in God.

His message resonates profoundly today, particularly with those who have drifted away from the Catholic faith or feel abandoned and broken.

The cost for the retreat is \$65 and includes lunch.

For more information or to register, go to [tinyurl.com/BrokenMaryMay16](http://tinyurl.com/BrokenMaryMay16) or call 812-825-4642, ext. 1. †

## Catholic Women's Giving Circle to host Spring Launch Event in Indianapolis on April 21

The Catholic Women's Giving Circle Spring Launch Event will take place from 5:30-7 p.m. on April 21 at the Woodstock Club, 1301 W. 38th St., in Indianapolis.

The group's mission is to empower Catholic women to collectively support Catholic causes, as well as share in the camaraderie of time spent with women who share the same faith-based values. The event is an informational night to invite new members and welcome back current members to renew their commitment.

The evening will feature a keynote by

Dr. Marianne Price, executive director of the Cornea Research Foundation of America, about her personal journey of empowerment through philanthropy. A member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, she is also a Catholic Women's Giving Circle founding member.

Appetizers and beverages will be served. There is no cost to attend the event, but registration is required by April 9.

To register online go to [bit.ly/CWGC2026Launch](http://bit.ly/CWGC2026Launch) or contact Cheri Bush at 317-236-1411 or [cbush@archindy.org](mailto:cbush@archindy.org). †

# Divine Mercy Sunday services will be celebrated on April 12

Divine Mercy Sunday services are scheduled on April 12 at parish churches across central and southern Indiana. All services are open to the public.

St. Pope John Paul II instituted the observance of Divine Mercy Sunday—which is based on the visions of St. Faustina Kowalska, a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, who died in 1938—on the first Sunday after Easter.

To learn more about the indulgence and promises connected to Divine Mercy Sunday, go to [www.thedivinemercy.org](http://www.thedivinemercy.org).

A plenary indulgence is available to those who go to confession about 20 days before or after the feast day, and who on the feast day receive Communion, pray for the intentions of the pope and either take part in Divine Mercy Sunday devotions or, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in a tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus, such as “Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!”

Divine Mercy Sunday services reported to *The Criterion* are as follows:

## Batesville Deanery

—**All Saints Church**, St. Martin Campus, 8044 Yorkridge Road, Guilford.

3-4 p.m. prayer service, followed by ice cream social in parish hall. Information: 812-576-4302, [emilyalig.asp@gmail.com](mailto:emilyalig.asp@gmail.com).

—**St. Michael Church**, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. 3 p.m. sung Divine Mercy Chaplet, Deacon Steve Tsuleff speaker. Information: 765-647-5462, [brookvilleparishes@gmail.com](mailto:brookvilleparishes@gmail.com).

—**St. Nicholas Church**, 6461 E. St. Nicholas Dr., Sunman. 2:30 p.m., Divine Mercy Holy Hour. Information: 812-623-2964, [parishoffice@stnicholas-sunman.org](mailto:parishoffice@stnicholas-sunman.org).

## Bloomington Deanery

—**Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center Sacred Heart Chapel**, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington.

**April 11**—9 a.m.-1 p.m. Day of Reflection, two talks by Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Michael Gaureau, adoration and confession 11 a.m., Divine Mercy Chaplet 11:30 a.m., Mass at noon. presenting, **April 12**—1 p.m., adoration and confession, 1:45 p.m. Benediction, 2 p.m. Mass and blessing of images, 3 p.m. procession with relic of St. Faustina and sung Divine Mercy Chaplet (weather permitting). Information: 812-825-4642, ext. 1.

—**St. Martin of Tours Church**, 1709 E. Harrison St., Martinsville. 3:30 p.m., Divine Mercy Chaplet. Information: 765-342-6379, [sgiannini@ss-fc.org](mailto:sgiannini@ss-fc.org).

—**St. Vincent de Paul Church**, 1723 “T” St., Bedford. 2 p.m., confession, 3 p.m. Divine Mercy Service. Information; 812-275-6539, [parish@svsbedford.org](mailto:parish@svsbedford.org).

## Connersville

—**St. Gabriel Church**, 232 W. 9th St., Connersville. 3 p.m., exposition, confession, Benediction, Divine Mercy Chaplet sung by youth groups, reception following in school cafeteria. Information: 765-825-8578, [mfronckowiak@stgabrielconnersville.org](mailto:mfronckowiak@stgabrielconnersville.org).

## Indianapolis North

—**St. Luke the Evangelist Church**, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., Indianapolis. 2-3 p.m. confession, 3-4 p.m. Divine Mercy service with sung Divine Mercy Chaplet. Information: 317-259-4373, [ejeffries@stluke.org](mailto:ejeffries@stluke.org).

## Indianapolis South

—**Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church**, 7225 Southeastern Ave.,

Indianapolis. Adoration, 1-4 p.m., confession, 1-3 p.m., Divine Mercy prayer service, 3-4 p.m. Information: 317-357-1200.

—**Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church**, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. 3 p.m., adoration, confession, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Litany of Divine Mercy, Benediction. Information: 317-636-4478, [info@holyroaryindy.org](mailto:info@holyroaryindy.org).

—**St. Jude Church**, 5353 McFarland Road, Indianapolis. 3-4 p.m., adoration, Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Information: 317-786-4371, [goodnews@stjudeindy.org](mailto:goodnews@stjudeindy.org).

## Indianapolis West

—**St. Gabriel the Archangel Church**, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. Procession following 3 p.m. Spanish Mass. Information: 317-291-7014, [eesparza@stgabrielindy.org](mailto:eesparza@stgabrielindy.org).

—**St. Malachy Church**, 9833 E. CR 750 N., Brownsburg. Noon-6 p.m. adoration, 2-4 p.m. confession, 3 p.m. Divine Mercy Chaplet. Information: 317-852-3195, [jzeunick@stmalachy.org](mailto:jzeunick@stmalachy.org).

—**St. Susanna Church**, 1210 E. Main St., Plainfield. 3-4 p.m., talk on the Divine Mercy devotion and the life of St. Faustina, praying of the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Information: 317-839-3333.

—**St. Thomas More Church**, 1200 N. Indiana St., Mooresville. 3 p.m. prayer service. Information: 317-831-4142, [pweber@stm-church.org](mailto:pweber@stm-church.org).

## New Albany Deanery

—**St. John Paul II Church**, St. Joe Hill Chapel, 2605 W. St. Joe Road, Sellersburg. 2-5 p.m. New Albany Deanery Divine Mercy Celebration; 12:30-3 p.m. confession in English and Spanish, 3-4 p.m. adoration, Scripture readings, hymns, sung Divine



People pray in front of an image of the Divine Mercy at a Catholic Church in La Paz, Bolivia, on May 24, 2023. (OSV News photo/Claudia Morales, Reuters)

Mercy Chaplet, reflection by Mother Olga of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, reception following Holy Hour. Information: 812-246-2512, [divinemercy@stjohnpaulparish.org](mailto:divinemercy@stjohnpaulparish.org).

## Seymour Deanery

—**St. Bartholomew Church**, 1306 27th St., Columbus. 3-5 p.m., Divine Mercy Chaplet, followed by confession. Information: 812-379-9353, [dschafer@stbparish.net](http://dschafer@stbparish.net). †



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## ‘Proclaim the Gospel of life,’ Pope Leo XIV says in first papal visit to Monaco in modern era

MONACO (OSV News)—In the principality known for super yachts and sports cars, Pope Leo XIV urged Monaco’s wealthy citizens to remember the poor and protect every human life, calling on them to remember that the Last Judgment “places the poor at its center.”

“Within your community, many people hold positions of considerable influence in the economic and financial spheres,” Pope Leo said in a speech from the balcony of the Prince’s Palace of Monaco on March 28.

“The kingdom of God, to which Jesus dedicated his life ... comes among us and shakes up the unjust configurations of power—those structures of sin that create chasms between the poor and the rich, between the privileged and the discarded,” he said.

Pope Leo became the first pope in modern history to visit Monaco on March 28, traveling the streets of the famed Formula 1 Monaco Grand Prix Circuit by popemobile, instead of by race car, to meet the faithful of the tiny Catholic Mediterranean principality.

Flanked by Prince Albert II of Monaco and Princess Charlene on the palace balcony, Pope Leo addressed an elegantly dressed Monégasque crowd in his first speech of the quick 13-hour trip to Monaco, the world’s second smallest state after Vatican City. The visit is Pope Leo’s first international journey of 2026 and only the second of his pontificate.

In his speech at the palace, Pope Leo entrusted the Catholic principality with the task of “protecting every human life” and deepening its “commitment to the social doctrine of the Church.”

Roman Catholicism is the official state religion of Monaco, where roughly 82% of the population is Catholic.

“You are among the few countries in the world to have the Catholic faith as a state religion,” Pope Leo said in his speech at the Prince’s Palace.

“This faith places us before the sovereignty of Jesus, who calls Christians to become in the world a kingdom of brothers and sisters—a presence that does not cast down but raises up, that does not separate but connects, always ready to protect every human life with love, at any time and in any condition.”

School children in yellow hats eagerly waved the flags of Monaco and Vatican City as Pope Leo traveled by

popemobile through Monaco’s famed streets with panoramic views of the Mediterranean below. On the way, he stopped numerous times to bless babies.

At Monaco’s Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Monaco-Ville, the pope prayed Midday Prayer with the local Catholic community and members of the royal family, urging Monaco’s faithful to “proclaim the Gospel of life, hope and love.” The cathedral, consecrated in 1911 on the site of a parish church dating to 1252, contains the tombs of Monaco’s royal family, including Princess Grace Kelly, an Irish-American Catholic actress from Philadelphia, who married Prince Rainier III there in 1956 and died in 1982.

“Bring the light of the Gospel to everyone so that the life of every man and woman may be defended and promoted from conception until natural death. Offer new pathways capable of stemming the tide of secularism, which risks reducing humanity to individualism and basing social life on the production of wealth,” Pope Leo said.

Catherine Sassi was among the local Monégasque Catholics who prayed Midday Prayer with Pope Leo.

“It’s an amazing day,” Sassi said. “I was so pleased to be able to live it with my family, my husband, my two children. And so, it will be a day we will always remember.”

Pope Leo then made his way to the Church of St. Devota, one of Monaco’s most cherished religious sites. Dedicated to the patron saint of Monaco, an early Christian martyr from Corsica, the chapel lends its name to the first corner of the Formula 1 Monaco Grand Prix Circuit. At St. Devota, the pope met with young people and catechumens, including 70 adults preparing to be received into the Church.

Inside the chapel, he spent a few moments in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and paused to venerate the relics of St. Devota.

Under the bright Mediterranean sun, Pope Leo answered questions from young people and soon-to-be baptized catechumens about how to maintain hope in difficult times, witness to God’s love, and comfort those who feel abandoned by God.

In his speech Pope Leo pointed to the witness of both the ancient Roman martyr, St. Devota, and the modern

millennial saint, St. Carlo Acutis.

Highlighting St. Carlo’s eucharistic devotion, the pope told young people to make time for “prayer, moments of silence and reflection to quiet the frenzy of doing and saying, of messages, reels and chats, and to delve deeper into and savor the beauty of truly and genuinely being together.

“Monaco is a beautiful country, but its true beauty comes from you, when you are able to look into the eyes of those who suffer or who feel invisible amid the city lights,” he told his listeners.

As Pope Leo was speaking about peace during his meeting with Monégasque youths, yachts in the nearby harbor were blowing their horns in the port. The pope laughed, saying, off-the-cuff, “We also desire peace.”

Pope Leo then attended a private lunch at the residence of Archbishop Dominique-Marie David of Monaco. It was a moment of rest before the day’s culminating event, a 3:30 p.m. Mass at Louis II Stadium.

“Dear young people, do not be afraid to give everything—your time, your energy—to God and to your brothers and sisters, to pour yourselves out completely for the Lord and for others,” the pope told the young crowd at the church.

“Only in this way will you find an everlasting joy and an ever-deeper meaning in life,” he said. “The world needs your witness to overcome the errors of our time, face its challenges and, above all, to rediscover the sweet taste of loving God and neighbor.”

The day concluded with Mass at Louis II Stadium, the home ground of AS Monaco soccer club, with a congregation of approximately 15,000 faithful.

Arnold Atiomo Noudem, a 16-year-old high school student in Monaco, was among the thousands of people attending



Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass at Louis II Stadium on March 28 in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The day trip marks the pope’s second apostolic journey and the first papal visit to the Catholic principality of Monaco in the modern era. (OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media)

the Mass. He told OSV News that he believes religion is something that unites the very international population in Monaco, adding that he was “very excited that Pope Leo chose to come here.”

In his homily, Pope Leo appealed for peace in the face of war, saying, “Every life cut short wounds the body of Christ.”

“Let us not grow accustomed to the clamor of weapons and images of war,” he said. “Peace is not merely a balance of power; it is the work of purified hearts, of those who see others as brothers and sisters to be protected, not enemies to be defeated.”

In remarks after Communion at the papal Mass, Monaco’s Archbishop David addressed the pope for this affirmation of “how beautiful and luminous the Gospel of Christ is, how it can still give taste and meaning to our lives.”

The archbishop said Pope Leo has “encouraged us to face the challenges of our time without fear, aware that we carry a treasure capable of sustaining hope, ours and that of the world.”

“You have reminded our country that its identity does not consist solely in preserving an inheritance, but that it requires responsibility, selflessness and a sense of service,” he said.

“Encouraged by your presence and your words, we want to again say, ‘Yes, Jesus is the way,’” Archbishop David added. “And we want to walk together, covered by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we want to proclaim the way is open to all and for all. Jesus is the truth that enlightens, liberates and gives meaning to life.” †

## U.S. leaders named to Vatican dicastery that promotes humanitarian vision, work

(OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV has appointed four U.S.-based scholars and leaders as members of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development (IHD).

Named among 11 new dicastery members the Holy See announced on March 30 are: Holy Cross Father Daniel Groody, deputy principal and associate principal for university education of the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana; Meghan J. Clark, assistant chair of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of St. John’s University in New York; Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute in El Paso, Texas; and Léocadie Lushombo, professor of theological ethics at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in Berkeley, Calif.

At Notre Dame, Father Groody’s academic and pastoral work has involved migration, refugees and human displacement. He is the author of *A Theology of Migration: The Bodies of Refugees and the Body of Christ*, published in 2022 with an introduction written by Pope Francis. In 2025, he was appointed by Pope Francis to the general council of *Borgo Laudato Si’* in Castel Gandolfo, Italy.

In a statement issued by the university, Father Groody said he was “truly honored and humbled by Pope Leo’s appointment.”

“My vocation is to serve, together with my colleagues at Notre Dame and around the world,” he said. “The work of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is vital to informing the Church’s response to the world’s most vulnerable people and the most pressing global challenges of our time.”

Established by Pope Francis in 2016, the dicastery supports the Church’s efforts in the areas of human dignity and human rights, economic justice, care for creation, migration and displacement, as well as peace, conflict and humanitarian crises. It is led by Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny. Dicastery members contribute to the body’s ongoing discernment process on the Church’s humanitarian mission and priorities.

Corbett, whose work with the Hope Border Institute applies the perspective of Catholic social teaching in policy and practice to the U.S.-Mexico border region, said in a statement that he was “humbled by this appointment.”

“The pope is very attentive to God’s work in border communities and with people who are migrating to bring about a more just and compassionate world,” he said. “I’m honored to do what I can to bring this perspective to the critical work done by the dicastery, in service to the Holy Father and the global Church, to advance the social Gospel, so that all might have life, and have it abundantly.”

In a separate statement, Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso praised Corbett’s appointment, saying this “recognition affirms Mr. Corbett’s faithful leadership and his witness of faith to our border community, where the dignity of all that is encountered and defended each day.”

Clark, who previously worked with the dicastery’s section on migrants and refugees in 2022 for the project “Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries,” also described herself as “honored and humbled” by the

appointment and “grateful for the opportunity to serve the Dicastery and the Church in this new way.”

“As a moral theologian, I work on Catholic social teaching, seeking to examine the intersections of human dignity, solidarity and development,” she said in a statement. “I am humbled to be alongside such esteemed colleagues—all deeply committed to promoting and practicing the social teachings of the Church with particular attention to the dignity of the marginalized—especially migrants—of the common good, and integral ecology.”

Lushombo likewise described herself as “delighted, honored, and humbled” by the appointment. In a statement, she noted her previous collaboration with the dicastery as a member of a study group from 2024-25 analyzing documents from the Synod on Synodality that related to the poor and care for creation.

“The mission of the IHD Dicastery is to promote the human dignity of all individuals, without exception, with particular attention to the weakest, the least, and the excluded,” said Lushombo, a member of the Teresian Association, an international Catholic association of laypeople.

“The fulfillment of the human person is really the glory of God,” she continued. “That is why dignity matters, justice matters, and why faith without justice makes no sense. That is the focus of my work—each person being recognized for their inherent dignity endowed by God, as *imago Dei*. My work affirms that recognizing this dignity is imperative not only for the flourishing of the excluded, but for human flourishing.” †

# Via Crucis: Reflecting on the final Holy Week journey of Pope Francis

(OSV News)—The Church's celebration of Holy Week is a solemn time for Catholics around the world to contemplate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It also provides an opportunity to reflect on one's own mortality and on the price paid for humanity's sins, which opened the doors to heaven for each and every one.

Yet seeing with one's own eyes how a Christian makes that final, arduous journey can also be a source of consolation.

During Holy Week 2025, Pope Francis was called to share in the mystery of Christ's passion. No one knows whether he had some premonition that it would be his final week, but one thing was certain: He prepared himself for it.

After detailing his funeral arrangements in his autobiography, *Hope*, which was published in January 2025, he concluded with a simple yet poignant prayer.

"Though I know that He has already given me many blessings, I ask the Lord for just one more: Look after me, let it happen whenever You wish, but, as You know, I'm not very brave when it comes to physical pain. ... So, please, don't make me suffer too much," he wrote.

## 'Why them and not me'

Following his release from Rome's Gemelli Hospital in March 2025, Pope Francis was prescribed two months of rest by doctors to recover after five weeks of hospitalization. Outside of a few brief appearances, it was widely expected that the pope would be seen little during Holy Week.

But, in a totally unsurprising move—given his penchant for doing or saying the unexpected—the pope made a surprise visit on Holy Thursday (the afternoon of April 17) to Rome's *Regina Coeli* prison despite still recovering from severe double pneumonia.

Escorted in a wheelchair, the pope was greeted with cheers and thunderous applause by 70 inmates gathered in the prison's rotunda, moved that he had come to see them, even in his frail state. The last time he visited *Regina Coeli* was in 2018 to celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening and wash the feet of 12 inmates.

"Every year, I like to do what Jesus did on Holy Thursday, washing feet, in

a prison," the pope told them. "This year I cannot do it, but I can and want to be close to you. I pray for you and your families."

He then went around the rotunda, greeting the inmates individually before praying with them and blessing them. Photos released by the Vatican showed a group of prisoners pressed against an iron-and-glass door, hoping to catch a glimpse of the pope.

The pope is seen looking at them, blowing them a kiss.

Upon leaving, the pope, seated in the passenger seat of a small black car, stopped briefly to speak to a group of reporters gathered outside.

"Every time I enter these doors, I ask myself, 'Why them and not me?'" he said.

Speaking with Italian news channel TG2000 after the pope's visit, Father Vittorio Trani, the chaplain at *Regina Coeli*, said the visit was "a sign of immense tenderness because it expresses closeness, affection and everything positive you can imagine in a relationship."

The prisoners, he added, were moved that, in spite of his ill health, the pope still visited them and "confronted this very specific and harsh reality."

"He left us with a great lesson on how we must look at the events that happen in life, always having the ability to think that there is a tomorrow where we can have the best," he said. "And hope means exactly this bridge that exists between today, which can even be heavy, and a tomorrow that someone might help us make better."

## The last goodbye

Pope Francis was understandably not seen in public on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.



Pope Francis appears on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to deliver his Easter blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) at the Vatican on April 20, 2025. Pope Francis, formerly Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, died on April 21, 2025, at age 88. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

However, as thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square to celebrate Easter on April 20, their eyes gazed upward as the ailing pontiff appeared from the basilica's central balcony, mustering the strength to wave his hands and greet them, saying, "Happy Easter."

After delivering what would be his final "urbi et orbi" blessing ("to the city and the world"), and to the surprise of many, Pope Francis boarded his popemobile for the last time to greet the faithful.

Only after his death was it made public how that last popemobile ride came to be.

According to Vatican News, the day before Easter, Pope Francis and his personal nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti, went to St. Peter's Basilica to review the route he would take the following day to the central balcony.

The pope then told Strappetti of his hope to surprise the faithful by greeting them in his popemobile. However, he asked his nurse, "Do you think I can do it?"

After Strappetti reassured him, the pope was just as happy to be close to the people as they were to see him. And

although the popemobile ride weakened him, he expressed his gratitude to his nurse.

"Thank you for bringing me back to the Square," he told Strappetti.

He rested, and later enjoyed a quiet dinner, Vatican News reported. However, at 5:30 a.m. the following day, he suffered a stroke. After making a farewell gesture with his hand to Strappetti, Pope Francis slipped into a coma and died on April 21, 2025—Easter Monday.

In the end, the simple prayer he wrote months earlier was answered. The pope who admitted he was "not very brave when it comes to physical pain" was spared prolonged suffering, and those at his side recalled that his death came quickly and peacefully.

After one last Holy Week marked by closeness to prisoners, quiet endurance and a final blessing to the world, Pope Francis died as he had lived his ministry: trusting in God, being close to the people and at peace.

For many, that peaceful passing became its own testimony: that the hope he proclaimed throughout his pontificate was real. †

## Missouri bishops back amendment to limit abortion, gender transition for minors

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (OSV News)—The Catholic bishops of Missouri on March 26 issued a statement offering their support to a ballot measure that would both limit abortion and certain types of medical or surgical gender reassignment



A file photo shows a woman holding a crucifix as she and other pro-life supporters pray outside Missouri's sole remaining Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis. On March 26, the Catholic bishops of Missouri issued a statement regarding Amendment 3 slated for the 2026 ballot, urging voters to support it to "restore safeguards" for the unborn and for women's health, following the passage of a different, pro-abortion amendment in 2024. (OSV News photo/Lawrence Bryant, Reuters)

procedures for minors who identify as transgender.

In the joint statement from the Missouri Catholic Conference on Amendment 3, Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski of St. Louis, and Bishops James V. Johnston, Jr. of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Ralph B. O'Donnell of Jefferson City and Edward M. Rice of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, said they "are committed to protecting the sanctity and dignity of all human life, including the poor and needy, refugees and immigrants, prisoners on death row, and mothers and children."

"In Missouri, this dignity is being threatened by the pro-abortion amendment passed in 2024," the bishops said. "That amendment enshrined a sweeping right to abortion in the State Constitution and eliminated the legislature's ability to set common-sense safeguards for the abortion industry, including the requirement that only doctors perform abortions, the requirement that parents be notified and give consent before their minor child has an abortion, and the requirement that abortion clinics be licensed and inspected."

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death, and as such, opposes direct abortion while at the same time having concern for both mother and child and calling for strengthened support for those living with poverty or other risk factors for abortion. The Church notes that its teaching on protecting unborn life, while supported by Scripture and tradition, is also fully based in natural law, which can be understood and accepted wholly on reason alone and apart from faith.

Missouri had a ban on most abortions, which went into effect after the U.S. Supreme Court issued its 2022 *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*

decision, but the state's voters rejected it in 2024.

"This year, Missourians will have the opportunity to restore those safeguards by voting for Amendment 3," the bishops continued. "The proposed constitutional amendment will protect women's health and safety and restore protections for the unborn."

They added, "We ask the faithful and all people of good will to join us in prayer and fasting for the success of Amendment 3 and to support each human person from conception to natural death."

Missouri enacted restrictions on medical or surgical gender reassignment procedures for minors in 2023. However, the measure included a sunset provision, and is set to expire on Aug. 28, 2027. State lawmakers have advanced legislation to repeal that sunset provision.

Missouri voters in 2024 approved a constitutional amendment that overturned the state's ban on abortion. However, polling suggests the ban on medical or surgical gender reassignment procedures for minors is driving increased support for Amendment 3 more than abortion concerns.

A recent poll by St. Louis University and British pollster YouGov found 47% of likely voters said they support the amendment, 40% said they oppose it, and another 12% said they were not sure.

However, the same poll found 59% of respondents said it should be legal to have an abortion in the first 8 weeks, dropping to 47% at 12 weeks and 35% to 15 weeks.

According to a 2025 analysis of Missouri's abortion data by the Charlotte Lozier Institute, 60% of abortions took place before 9 weeks of gestation; 16% between 9-10 weeks of gestation; and 7% between 11-12 weeks; and 4% between 13 and 14 weeks. †

# National Eucharistic Pilgrimage seeks to be sacred journey for U.S. at 250 years

(OSV News)—The upcoming National Eucharistic Pilgrimage—which takes place as the U.S. celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2026—marks a moment for “a country still in conversion,” and “a country still on pilgrimage,” said Jason Shanks, president of the National Eucharistic Congress (NEC) organization.

Shanks joined pilgrimage organizers, along with several of its nine perpetual pilgrims, for an online March 25 press conference announcing further details of the event, which will take place from May 24 through July 5.

With a theme of “One Nation Under God,” the route will run from Florida to Maine and back to Philadelphia, spanning more than 2,200 miles in most of the nation’s 13 original colonies. Over the course of 43 days, pilgrims will travel through 18 dioceses and archdioceses, as well as two Eastern Catholic eparchies.

Nine perpetual pilgrims will accompany the Blessed Sacrament, with public events—including Masses, Holy Hours, eucharistic processions, sacred music concerts, talks and charitable outreach—taking place along the way.

Pilgrimage organizers are inviting the faithful to participate in a spiritual bouquet of 250,000 Holy Hours, with a signup form available on the pilgrimage website, [eucharisticpilgrimage.org/one-nation-under-god](http://eucharisticpilgrimage.org/one-nation-under-god).

The spiritual bouquet will be presented in the nation’s capital as a sign of “prayers for peace in our world, for unity and peace in our country, and for God’s hand to continue to guide all of those in the United States,” said Shanks.

The 2026 pilgrimage, which continues the 2024 and 2025 journeys undertaken as part of the National Eucharistic Revival, has been placed under the patronage of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the woman religious and Italian immigrant who

became the first U.S. citizen to be canonized after a lifetime of work ministering to immigrants.

Along with Mother Cabrini, other holy men and women who will be commemorated throughout the pilgrimage are St. Katharine Drexel, the Philadelphia banking heiress who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and served Black American and Native American communities; St. John Neumann, the Bavarian-born Redemptorist who as bishop of Philadelphia established the nation’s parochial school system, as well as the Forty Hours devotion; and the soon-to-be-beatified Georgia Martyrs, six Spanish Franciscans who were slain while serving as missionaries among the Indigenous Guale people in the late 16th century.

The stops along the Cabrini Route will highlight sites significant to Catholicism’s contributions to U.S. history, said Shanks.

“Before there was a Constitution, there was a consecration,” he said, pointing to Masses celebrated on the territory of what would later become the U.S.

Historians have cited a number of such liturgies, including Masses reported to have taken place in 1541 in the future states of Kansas and Texas, and the Sept. 8, 1565, liturgy celebrated by Father Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales at the site of present-day St. Augustine, Fla.



With an estimated 7,000 participants, the Source and Summit Eucharistic Procession makes its way along Summit Avenue in St. Paul, Minn., on its way from St. Paul Seminary to the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul on May 27, 2024. The procession was part of the 2024 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. A third National Eucharistic Pilgrimage has been scheduled for May-July 2026, organizers have announced. (OSV News photo/Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*)

In 1664, the London-born Jesuit Father Andrew White celebrated Mass in the Maryland colony.

“We’re excited to unite our country in memory of its history and to sort of explore the Catholic contribution to this American experiment,” Shanks said.

Among the pilgrimage events honoring the nation’s development will be a Eucharistic procession through historical Williamsburg, Va.; a blessing from Arlington Memorial Bridge over the Potomac River in Washington, with a procession past national landmarks in the capital; eucharistic adoration in Pilgrim Memorial State Park in Plymouth, Mass.; and a crossing of the Delaware River into New Jersey—a nod to George Washington, who led 2,500 Continental Army troops across the body of water on Christmas night in 1776, surprising enemy Hessian troops, mercenaries of the

British Empire, and securing major U.S. victories in the Revolutionary War.

The pilgrimage concludes with Mass and a eucharistic procession over the July 4 holiday weekend in Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence was signed, and which served as the nation’s capital from 1790 to 1800, when the new city of Washington became the nation’s seat of government.

Pilgrim Zachary Dotson said at the press conference that “the real beauty” of the theme “One Nation Under God” lies in “the great humility that it takes to truly believe that and follow that.”

“There’s nothing more healing than God’s divine mercy and love, which is open and available to all people,” he said.

(More information on the 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage can be found at [www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org](http://www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org).) †

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# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Christ's resurrection impelled its first witnesses to proclaim the Gospel

By Sr. Anna Marie McGuan, R.S.M.

(OSV News)—Easter Sunday is the Church's greatest feast day—a day in which we celebrate Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* boldly calling it the “feast of feasts” and the “solemnity of solemnities,” goes on to say that, “beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance” (#1168-69).

Christians believe that Jesus “crushed death,” and the “mystery of the Resurrection ... permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him” (#1169).

Jesus Christ truly died on Good Friday. There was no mistaken prognosis that Jesus did not really expire on the cross; there was no accidentally identifying Jesus as someone else. There was no theft of Jesus' body from the tomb; no swallowing up of the body in an earthquake.

From the beginning, Christians proclaimed not only the resurrection of Jesus, but also his very real death. His human soul separated from his human body. All of the Gospels testify to this. Without that death, his appearances to the women and to his Apostles on Easter morning would have been humdrum. Instead, these first witnesses were terrified, overjoyed and astonished.

There are factors that confirm the Church in her faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

First is the empty tomb. The Apostles saw the empty tomb and heard the testimony of the women who went there on the first Easter morning: “... the empty tomb was ... an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection” (#640).

Second, the Apostles saw Jesus with their own eyes. They disbelieved at first—and who wouldn't?—but were convinced by the fact that they could touch him, speak to him and eat with him.

Jesus' body was clearly different than it was before, and almost always the women, the Apostles and the disciples do not recognize him at first. Each time, however, Jesus reveals himself to them, and they are able to make the connection that this one standing before them was the same one who died by crucifixion on Good Friday.

In the encounter with the Apostle Thomas, Jesus actually points to his wounds as the way for Thomas to make the connection that the man standing before him, talking and breathing, is the same man who was crucified.

Jesus had to lead Thomas and the others to that understanding, because his glorified and risen body was no longer subject to the limitations of space and time. He could appear as he wished, when he wished. He could be in their presence and not reveal himself, and then allow them to recognize him in an instant.

All of this has to do with his glorified, risen humanity and its new properties. “At Jesus' Resurrection, his body



Orthodox Christian worshippers hold candles on April 15, 2023, around what is believed to be the tomb of Christ during the ancient Eastern rite ceremony of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem's Old City. The first witnesses of Christ's resurrection were impelled by the empty tomb and encounters with the risen Lord to share the Gospel with others. (OSV News photo/Oren Ben Hakoon, Reuters)

is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is “the man of heaven” (#646).

The Resurrection also brought St. Paul, who hated Christians, to believe in Christ and to be baptized in Damascus, after having encountered him on the road to the city. He saw Christ with his own eyes. He heard his voice. He spoke to him.

Later, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul compared his authority to preach the Gospel as being on par with that of the first Apostles, and so he based his valid apostleship on his encounter with the risen Jesus. He himself saw the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, and from that encounter, Paul's life was transformed, and he became God's Apostle.

It was the fact of the resurrection that compelled the Apostles to preach that Jesus was and always will be the true Messiah and the Savior of the world. It is still the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus that compels Christians to share his life and message and to dedicate their lives to him.

Without the resurrection, Paul says, Christianity is useless: “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has

not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:16-17). He continues: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:20-22).

Because of the evidence of the empty tomb and the encounters of the risen Jesus with the women, the Apostles and other disciples, and St. Paul, the Church has always believed and preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is the moment that definitively changed human history forever.

Jesus' rising from the dead was the catalyst for all evangelization. The fact of Jesus' resurrection impelled the Apostles to go and tell people what had happened.

That is still what the Church proclaims today, and she always will.

(Sister Anna Marie McGuan, a member of the Institute of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, is director of Christian formation in the Diocese of Knoxville, Tenn.) †

## Languages use different words to refer to the feast of Christ's resurrection

By Msgr. Charles E. Pope

(OSV News)—Whatever we call it, Easter is plainly the solemn feast celebrating the resurrection of Christ. It is fine to say Happy Easter.

The origin of the word “Easter” is complex. In the Greek language of the Gospels, the word “*pascha*” was used for the Hebrew word “*pesach*,” meaning Passover. Latin, too, took up this word, “*pascha*.” Christ is our Passover Lamb.

Most of the European languages derived from Latin use the words derived from *pascha* such as Italian, *pasqua*; Spanish, *pascua*; and French, *paques* to refer to what the English-speaking world calls Easter.

English drew from a different source to describe this great feast. According to St. Bede (who died in 735), the word Easter comes from the word “*Eoster*,” the name of the Germanic goddess of the rising light of day—that is, spring and of dawn. The Old German plural

for dawn, or east, is “*ostern*,” and it also influenced the English word for Easter. That is because the people who lived in what is now England after the fall of the western Roman Empire migrated to there from what is now northern Germany.

As the English language developed, Easter came to denote that Sunday morning in spring when Christ, our true Light, rose.

Whatever pagan roots the word had (and our words have many different origins), the word Easter in present times clearly refers to the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

People are free to say, “Happy Resurrection Day,” as some do, but they ought to avoid a harsh stance that holds that others who do not say this mean something less proper. Catholics do not.

If they are too insistent or inflexible about their preference they can come off as annoying and their practice could become a countersign, showing a lack of charity in the very act of exchanging Easter greetings.

The fact is, the Church, when she is strong, is often able to take non-Christian practices (as long as they are not intrinsically evil) and often “baptize” them by giving them Christian meaning. That clearly is the case with the name we English speakers most commonly use for Easter.

(Msgr. Charles E. Pope is a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington.) †



Father John Crozier elevates the Eucharist during Easter Mass on April 4, 2021, at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Islip Terrace, N.Y. The Church continues today to proclaim the same good news of Christ's resurrection shared by the first witnesses of Christ's rising from the dead. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

## ‘Joy as a daily discipline’: Author’s new book leans into ‘Living Easter’

Easter gets the short end of the stick.

That’s what author Laura Kelly Fanucci concluded. Any Catholic can tell you what the 40 days of Lent entail, rattling off the terms: praying, fasting and almsgiving.



But ask about the 50 days of Easter, and many get stuck on an egg hunt and “Alleluia.”

Then what?

“Why aren’t we living Easter more deliberately?” Fanucci found herself asking.

The 45-year-old Minnesota mother explores this question in her new book, *Living Easter*, published by Ave Maria Press. “I set it up as a creative, theological challenge: How would you think about sustaining the practice of a whole season of Easter?”

The book illuminates the Church’s most consequential liturgical season, gathering every Scripture story of the Resurrection into daily entries with Fanucci’s reflections and action items. They’re all tucked into a beautiful, hand-sized hardcover.

“Living Easter celebrates joy itself as our resurrection practice,” Fanucci writes in the introduction. “Taking up joy as a daily discipline teaches us about feasting as a companion practice to fasting: an intentional sacred act that draws us closer to God.”

That doesn’t mean being cheerful for 50 consecutive days, Fanucci is quick to clarify. “It’s OK if you’re not feeling very Easter-y, if things aren’t looking like bunnies and chocolate,” she told me. “Easter is for all of us—especially those who are suffering or lost or grieving. That’s exactly the kind of people that the first Easter came for.”

Fanucci has plenty of firsthand experience.

Three years ago, she received a horrifying diagnosis: triple negative breast cancer, an aggressive form of the potentially deadly condition. A decade

ago, she lost twin girls hours after their birth.

“Even in their dying, I could feel something of the life they were being born into or were going to hold onto,” said Fanucci, who is now cancer free and a mom of five boys. “I came to a really deep understanding of the reality of the Resurrection. God does impossible things. He makes a way where there seems to be none. In small ways and big ways, resurrection is at the heart of my faith.”

Every page of the book is colored by her medical journey.

“Dying and rising are woven into creation. Surviving cancer helped me see that is part of what it means to be human,” said Fanucci, who lives in St. Michael, Minn., and is a member of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Maple Grove, Minn. “God’s work of resurrection is always going on in the world.”

That conviction anchors Fanucci when war dominates the headlines and immigration raids sever her community.

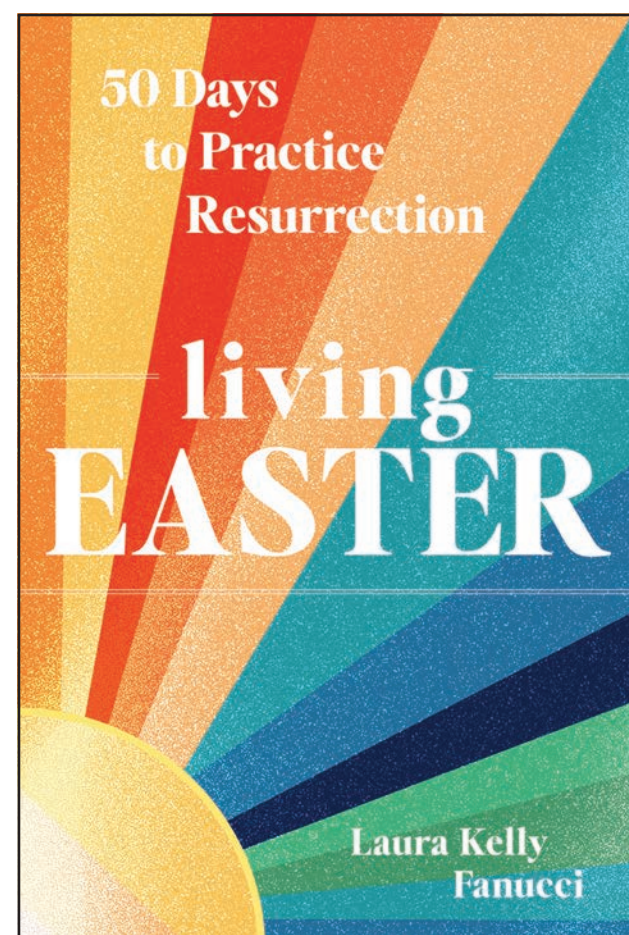
Creating this book meant spending time with the saints who witnessed Jesus’ resurrection—Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Peter, Mary. They provided a companionship that Fanucci never could’ve anticipated.

She pairs her profound insights with simple action items for each day of Easter: pick flowers, bake bread, sing, take a walk, bless with holy water, call a friend, share a story about God.

Faith-based writing has always animated Fanucci, who has written more than a dozen books and houses her work at [laurakellyfanucci.com](http://laurakellyfanucci.com). Lately she’s felt compelled to cast a wider net of readership.

“Increasingly, I have such a yearning to write for those who don’t feel certain of their faith, who maybe don’t feel included in the Church,” she said. “The most meaningful feedback I get is when folks say: ‘I stopped going to Mass decades ago, but I really like what you’re saying and it’s made me think maybe I believe this, too.’”

She’s clear on her goal. “It’s a dream I have to help people strengthen their imagination to see how God is



at work around us, so we don’t file away resurrection as an idea or a historical event. This isn’t the end. There is hope.”

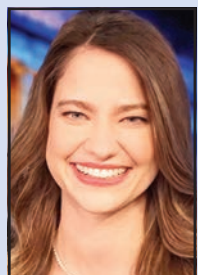
(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.) †

Life and Hope/Katie Yoder

## The beauty and blessings of family and Ballerina Farm mom’s nine kids

During a recent visit to St. Paul, Minn., I found myself in a long, glass-paneled room bursting with flowers of all colors, shapes and sizes.

Some appeared otherworldly, like the South African veltheimia with its tubular blossoms. Others introduced a more classic elegance, such as the white camellias from East Asia. All were beautiful.



As I walked through the flower show at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory with a dear friend, I marveled at each one and its unique contribution to the larger garden.

I thought of this while watching a social media post that criticized influencer Hannah Neeleman. In the post, which went viral, a writer named Rebecca Reid responds to the news that Neeleman is expecting her ninth child. Neeleman, a Juilliard-trained ballerina and beauty pageant winner who shares her home and family life with millions online, runs Ballerina Farm with her husband, Daniel, in the mountains of northern Utah.

“You cannot give nine children adequate time, attention and connection,” Reid addressed Neeleman in a March 1 post. “You are, unquestionably, with nine children, spending less time with your children than a working parent with two kids.”

Online, hundreds of people came to Neeleman’s defense, including national pro-life leaders.

“Only in a culture that treats children as inconveniences would nine kids be seen as a tragedy instead of a blessing!” said Kristan Hawkins, a Catholic and president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action. “Love doesn’t run out; it multiplies.”

Lila Rose, founder and president of the pro-life organization Live Action, responded by calling her seven siblings her best friends and saying her family spent time together often. Older children learn to help with younger children, and younger children learn to play with other younger children, she added.

“It’s not always dependent on mom to play with, entertain and provide personally 100% of all care for every kid,” said Rose, who was raised as an Evangelical Christian but was received into the Catholic Church as a young adult. “Kids learn that life is full

of love but life isn’t only about them, and that life is about loving and being loved by other people.”

She concluded with a quote frequently attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta: “How can you say there are too many children? It’s like saying there are too many flowers.”

These leaders expressed what many in the pro-life movement know: That every child, from the moment of conception, has inherent dignity and worth. That every baby is unrepeatable and irreplaceable. That all children are a blessing—a gift—from God.

Another thing Reid misses is that every couple is called to discern their marriage and family—and what one may be called to, another may not be.

More doesn’t necessarily mean better: Families who struggle with infertility or secondary infertility shouldn’t feel less-than or inadequate because they have welcomed fewer children or none at all. Indeed, these families may discover a calling to help children in need, such as through foster care, adoption or service in their community.

Every family is different. Every family is unique. But one thing should remain consistent: Instead of telling pregnant women “You cannot,” we should empower them by saying, “You can. You are loved. Your child is loved. You are not alone. How can we help?”

Instead of judging families because they look different, we should walk with them. We should embrace a world of variety, not a cookie-cutter life.

It is through variety and diversity that God’s creativity and imagination become obvious. At the flower show, the blue blossoms made the pink ones pop. The smaller plants accentuated the larger bushes.

Perfection does not mean the little violet tries to become a splendid rose, as St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a beloved 19th-century French Carmelite nun, suggested at the start of her spiritual autobiography *The Story of a Soul*. Perfection means being who we were meant to be—embracing who God wills us to be—and helping others do the same.

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

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

## How are you doing with the practice of forgiving those who have hurt you?

It’s a tough question, isn’t it?

And to make the issue more problematic, there seems to be an 11th commandment “embedded” in the Our Father. And it is not one that most of us find easy to embrace when confronted in a concrete situation in real time.



I am referring to the sentence, “Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Take a brief moment to ruminate on that one! It is quite easy to recite, but so much harder to manifest in reality.

Because of this small phrase, I think that a person can say that all are commanded to forgive others.

“Thou shalt forgive.” Now, that is a difficult one to

practice in the messy world of everyday life.

Our culture often teaches an opposite way of approaching those who hurt us. It seems more natural to seek revenge or retaliation of some kind when a person is wronged. We see graphic examples of this behavior in news headlines daily.

But this is not what Jesus taught. In the Gospel of Luke 16:1-8, we can read the parable of the shrewd steward.

He is about to lose his job and realizes he had better forgive some debts of others if he hopes to be treated similarly. This is not an example of American “business as usual”!

I remember a murder case in Evansville in the 1980’s where parents of a murder victim attended the trial of her assassin. These parents expressed their forgiveness of this man and fought to prevent him

from receiving the death penalty.

St. Pope John Paul II took a similar action when he nearly died in 1981 from wounds from gunshots fired at close range in St. Peter’s Square while he was blessing a crowd from the popemobile.

The Holy Father actually later went to the place that his attacker was incarcerated to offer him forgiveness. Now that is the definition for a witness of forgiveness!

So, this brings the topic back to our own lives once again. Are there people who need your forgiveness—a little more mercy from you—a little more grace from you? How will you move forward?

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

**Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord/**

Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 5, 2026

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

Today, the Church celebrates the greatest day of its year, Easter, the feast of the Lord's Resurrection.



These readings are proclaimed at Masses during the day on Easter itself.

On the night of Holy Saturday, the Church will have celebrated the Easter Vigil, surely one of its most dramatic and expressive liturgical moments.

The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. It gives us a glimpse into life in the early Church in Jerusalem and into the lives of the 11 surviving Apostles after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.

It is apparent that the words of Jesus, the risen Lord, were fresh in the minds of the Apostles and the other members of the Church. Strong also was the wish to follow the Lord's instructions and example.

The Apostles were committed to making the mercy of God in Jesus known in this first proclamation of the Gospel that continues in the life of the Church today.

St. Peter is the spokesman for all the Apostles. Indeed, throughout Acts, Peter appears as leader of the Apostles and of the Church.

For its second reading, the Church gives us a passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians. According to the Apostle, Christians also have been raised to new life. Their new life is in the resurrected, living Christ. As Christ is in heaven, so the thoughts of Christians must be on heaven.

A passage from the resurrection narrative of St. John's Gospel is the last reading. Mary Magdalene was at Christ's tomb, but she found it empty. Upset, fearing that the Lord's body had been stolen, she rushed to inform Peter. Reaching Peter, she anxiously said that the Lord's body had been taken away.

Peter then hurried to the tomb with "the disciple whom Jesus loved," traditionally thought to have been the Apostle John but never actually identified as such in the Gospel (Jn

20:2). The disciple arrived first, but he waited for Peter, another indication of Peter's status.

Peter entered the tomb, saw that it was empty, but evidently did not realize that Jesus had risen, although the Gospel does not say this. It does say that the other disciple understood what had occurred.

**Reflection**

In 1943, Americans were tormented by World War II, wearily and anxiously coping with its effects upon their lives. Catholics in America found a moment of relief when a motion picture, *The Song of Bernadette*, was released.

Fictional, but based on history, it recalled the appearances by the Blessed Mother to St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 in Lourdes, France.

Not everyone accepted as fact the story of the apparitions. At the beginning of the movie, a statement appeared on the screen, saying, "For those who do not believe, no explanation [of the apparitions] is possible. For those who believe, no explanation is needed."

These few words capsulized the meaning and value of faith, a gift to an individual heart from Almighty God. Easter commemorates the Lord's resurrection from death. Accepting as fact, the Resurrection is the greatest act of faith. Rising from the dead confirms Christ's identity as God and the wonder of the Lord's mission as Savior of the world. Praise be Jesus Christ!

Fortunate is anyone who believes. Pope Leo XIV recently noted the benefits of faith in a believer's life. Faith lifts the veils that cover reality and pinpoint the essentials.

In a poor person, believers see not just an unlucky person, but a treasure, a beloved child of God. In human decisions, believers see not just coincidences, but opportunities to assert the mercy and justice revealed by Jesus. In hardships, believers see not misfortune, but the purpose and reality of life, of future glory and even the inspiration to provide earthly relief.

Of course, on Easter, the Church joyfully proclaims, "He lives!" †

## Daily Readings

**Monday, April 6**

Monday within the Octave of Easter  
Acts 2:14, 22-33  
Psalm 16:1-2a, 5, 7-11  
Matthew 28:8-15

**Tuesday, April 7**

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

**Wednesday, April 8**

Wednesday within the Octave of Easter  
Acts 3:1-10  
Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9  
Luke 24:13-35

**Thursday, April 9**

Thursday within the Octave of Easter  
Acts 3:11-26

Psalm 8:2ab, 5-9  
Luke 24:35-48

**Friday, April 10**

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

**Saturday, April 11**

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

**Sunday, April 12**

Second Sunday of Easter  
Divine Mercy Sunday  
Acts 2:42-47  
Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

**Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper**

## Venial sins can be forgiven outside of the sacrament of penance

**Q**I heard a priest on the radio talking about holy water fonts in churches. He said that, as a sacramental, holy



water "absolves us from venial sin." He actually used the word "absolves." That doesn't sound right to me. What does the Church teach about this? (Rhode Island)

**A**I can see where this would sound odd to you the way it was phrased, but the priest on the radio was at least broadly correct in noting that there are ways venial sins can be forgiven even outside of the sacrament of penance.

First, let's recall some basics. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines a mortal sin as that which "destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law" (#1855).

As the name implies, a mortal sin leaves us, in a sense, spiritually "dead." For an act to be a mortal sin, three conditions must be met. One, the act must be seriously wrong. Two, the person committing it must know it is seriously wrong. And, three, the person must commit the sinful act of his or her own free will.

If any one of these components is missing, the sin is considered "venial" (see #1862 of the catechism). Venial sin is still a problem in our spiritual lives because it "weakens charity," even if it does not "deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace [and] friendship with God" (#1863).

Baptism frees us from any and all sin, including the original sin with which we are all born, as well as any actual sins we may have committed prior to baptism. After baptism, the sacrament of penance is the "gold standard" for seeking forgiveness of both mortal and venial sins.

However, we as Catholics believe that our all-powerful God is free to extend his grace beyond what he has already promised through his sacraments.

For instance, true sorrow for sin that is motivated entirely by love for God is called "perfect contrition," and according to the catechism, "such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible" (#1452).

Beyond this, there are a few other ways that merely venial sins might be forgiven outside the confessional.

One is receiving holy Communion. As paragraph 1394 of the catechism tells us: "As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away venial sins."

It should be kept in mind, though, that this only applies to a worthy reception of Communion in which the person receiving it is free from mortal sin. Receiving holy Communion in a state of mortal sin only compounds that sin.

Other things that are generally understood in Catholic theology to remit venial sins include the penitential rite at the beginning of Mass, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and a bishop's blessing.

With respect to holy water in particular, St. Thomas Aquinas specifically identifies the "sprinkling of holy water" as a means for the remission of venial sin in question 87, article 3 of the third part of his *Summa Theologica*.

Whether or not these extra-confessional sources of forgiveness can be appropriately described as "absolving" venial sins is an interesting question. It does seem that in our modern sacramental theology, the Church generally shies away from using the word "absolution" in contexts other than the sacrament of penance.

For instance, as we can see in some of the above-mentioned quotes, the Church in its teaching documents tends to describe venial sins as being "remitted," "forgiven," or "wiped out" by things like perfect contrition or the use of holy water.

Still, while the precise meaning of the word "absolution" would likely make an interesting thesis for a theologian or canon lawyer, I think we accept the basic point the radio priest was trying to make.

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

## My Journey to God

### Good Friday

By Clare Diez

They left Him there to hang till dead,  
Sacred Hands pierced with sharpest pain.  
Hands that multiplied fish and bread,  
that healed the blind, the deaf, the lame.

He came into this world to fight  
against the snares of sin and vice.  
He told the good thief at His right,  
"This day you'll be with Me in Paradise."

Near Him stood Mary and the one  
whom the Lord loved like a brother.  
He told Mary, "Woman, behold thy son,"  
and so the whole world gained a mother.

He died for mankind as the Paschal Lamb,  
He Who said, "Let the children come to Me,"

The Savior sent from the great I AM  
had come—and look how we'd treated Thee!

He was laid in the arms of the Stabat Mater.  
She held Him close, softly weeping,  
He Who said of Jarius' daughter,  
"She is not dead, but only sleeping."

His friends carried Him with many a tear  
to lay Him away in a grave of stone.  
His followers hid from the Jews in fear,  
Never had they felt so alone.

But on Sunday morn when the birds did sing,  
He proved He'd conquered death's dark prison.  
Our Savior, Redeemer, Christ the King,  
had come forth from the grave and risen!

(Clare Diez is a member of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove.)

# 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.

**BANAYOTE, Jr., Benny G.**, 89, Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis, March 3. Father of Joe and Rob Banayote. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of six.

**BLEDSON, Karen S.**, 77, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, March 17. Mother of Jackie Woo, Gregory and Michael Mertz. Sister of Julie Miller, James Bledson and Gary Sater, Jr. Grandmother of eight.

**BOSTIC, David H.**, 86, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, March 18. Husband of Delores Bostic. Father of Elaine Bostic, Karen Royalty and Gwen Russell. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 13.

**DUFOUR, Daniel J.**, 88, Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis, Feb. 15. Brother of Donna Culotta, Victoria Jenkins, Bernadette Lathrop, Dianne Metzler, Sussane Sullivan, Maria, Christopher and Richard Dufour. Uncle, great-uncle and great-great-uncle of several.

**EAGAN, Rose**, 99, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Feb. 14. Mother of Cathy Kremer and Michael Eagan. Sister of Joseph Minatel. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of two.

**ERNST, Kathleen**, 82, St. Mary, New Albany, Feb. 26. Sister of Father William Ernst.

**HELD, Mary Rosalie**, 87, Christ the King, Indianapolis, March 10. Mother of

Kimberlie Ebey. Sister of Mary Christine Schrader and Mark Schmidt.

**HIRSCH, Henry M.**, 80, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, March 13. Husband of Kathryn Hirsch. Father of Megan Duncan and Clay Hirsch. Brother of Patricia Hirsch. Grandfather of six.

**KEMERLY, Karen**, 65, St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville, Nov. 5, 2025. Sister of Sharon and Robert Kemerly.

**KIEFFER, Esther E.**, 98, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Feb. 27. Mother of Carol Byard, Joan Carter and Kathy

Kieffer. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of five.

**LOWDEN, Joyce W.**, 79, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Feb. 25. Wife of John Lowden. Mother of Elizabeth Auffrey, Andrew and Robert Lowden. Sister of Peggy Gunter. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of three.

**MORGAN, Carolyn S.**, 93, St. Mary, New Albany, March 9. Mother of Beverly Anderson. Sister of Providence Sister Joanne Cullins. Grandmother of two.

**OGDEN, Eileen M.**, 90, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Jan. 4. Mother of Cindy Bryan and Greg Ogden. Sister of Rick and Sonny Jenks. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of several.

**OGLE, Anne**, 68, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, March 10. Wife of Kevin Ogle. Mother of Jeremy and Jonathan Ogle. Sister of Lynn James, Carol Potter and John Seyfried. Grandmother of three.

**SIMON, Dale C.**, 77, Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, Jan. 10. Father of Elizabeth Newman and Gina Orlando. Stepfather of Angie Haskell. Brother of Rita Bedel and Linda Wissel. Grandfather of five.

**WENKER, Nancy E.**, 86, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Feb. 12. Mother of Chris and Gregory Wenker. Sister

of Audrey Mason, Phyllis Smith and Gary Bowen. Grandmother of six.

**WESBECKER, Carl**, 89, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, March 16. Father of Dale and Dean Wesbecker. Brother of Paulette Miles and Carolyn Stewart.

**WESTERKAMP, Robert**, 90, Prince of Peace, Madison, March 22. Husband of Marlene Westerkamp. Father of Linda Freese, Susan Locaputo, Christine May,

Greg, Jim, John, Steve and Tom Westercamp. Brother of Mary McGoron and Bill Westerkamp. Grandfather of 30. Great-grandfather of 18.

**WILSON, Elaine A.**, 84, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, March 21. Mother of Carol, Christopher, James and Mark Wilson. Sister of Robert Sprinkle. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

**WILSON, Joann (Faenzi)**, 91, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, March 21.

Mother of Anthony, Daniel, Ronald and Scott Wilson. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of 10.

**WITHEM, Loretta**, 94, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, March 21. Mother of Janet Learner, Diane Roe and Stephen Withem. Sister of John Walker. Grandmother of two.

**ZIGAN, Steve J.**, 88, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Jan. 31. Husband of Ani Zigan. Father of Dave, Jim and Mike Zigan. Grandfather of 15. †

## Palm Sunday in El Salvador



An elderly woman holds palm fronds during the Palm Sunday procession on March 29 outside El Calvario Chapel in Nahuizalco, El Salvador. (OSV News photo/ Jose Cabezas, Reuters)

### Providence Sister Marikay Duffy was a missionary in Peru, served in Hispanic ministry

Providence Sister Mary Catherine Duffy, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on March 20 at Lourdes Hall on the campus of her religious community's motherhouse. She was 90. Her initial religious name was Sister Marie Michele. She was commonly known for a long time as Sister Marikay.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 27 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Marikay, was born on May 11, 1935, in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of St. Philip Neri Parish. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Jan. 6, 1953, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1960.

Sister Marikay earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in special education at Indiana State University in Terre Haute. She was later awarded an honorary doctorate of humanities at the University of

Indianapolis in Indianapolis.

During her 73 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Marikay ministered as an educator in Catholic schools for nine years in California, Illinois and Indiana. She then served as a missionary educator in Peru from 1964-75.

Upon her return, Sister Marikay ministered as a religion teacher at St. Matthew the Apostle School in Indianapolis from 1986-87. She also served in Hispanic ministry in the archdiocese and in 1987 helped to found the former Hispanic Education Center, a part of the former Marian Center on the campus of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis, serving there until 2004.

She also provided immigration assistance first, at the Marian Center and later in the archdiocesan Office of Refugee and Immigrant Services, before retiring to the motherhouse in 2024.

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

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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:

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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:

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[www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com](http://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](mailto:victimassistance@archindy.org)

# Encounters with ‘angels,’ memories of loved ones bless Camino journeys

(Editor’s note: A record 499,239 pilgrims from all over the world walked the Camino pilgrimage in northern Spain in 2024. The Criterion has invited people from the archdiocese who have made all or part of that pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain to share how that experience has influenced their life and their faith.)

10th in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

In our journeys in life, the moments that stay in our memories are often the ones when a stranger helps us through a tough time.

Eleven years have passed, but Bob and Cindi Klee still cherish the memory of what happened when they became lost during their first 500-mile trek along the Camino.

“During our first Camino, we decided to pray the rosary while we were hiking,” Bob recalls. “We were caught up in praying and missed a yellow arrow marker and hiked 3 kilometers [about 2 miles] out of our way. We wandered onto a farm, and a nice farmer stopped us and told us how to rejoin the Camino.”

Cindi chimes in with other memories of the people she has come to call “Camino Angels”—people who have touched their lives from the five journeys that she and Bob have made along The Way together.

“The Camino travels through many rural areas as well as large cities where the inhabitants are proud of what the Camino represents to people all over the world who come to walk in the footsteps of St. James the Apostle,” Cindi says.

“One time, a man in a van drove by on a hot day and offered each pilgrim he passed bottled water. Once, when we experienced colds and injuries, a kind innkeeper gave us a private room. Pilgrims have also stopped to help when they saw I was injured.”

Then there are the moments that have touched their soul, when the physical journey also became a deeply spiritual one.

## ‘It was so moving’

“After our first experience, which included some injuries on my part, it brought me so much more joy than I expected and brought me so much closer to my faith that I wanted to return again and again,” Cindi says.

“It was so moving to me to think that, at one time, in the early 1100’s, as many as 500,000 people walked this

route in blind faith without any of the modern amenities we have now to follow in the footsteps of St. James.”

That connection with past generations of the faithful especially hit home to the couple as they stopped in many of the small village churches along the Camino path.

“I always marvel at the beautiful tribute to God these small churches contain in sparsely populated areas with little resources,” Cindi says. “Most churches on the Camino have a special pilgrim Mass that includes group or individual pilgrim blessings. Some included singing nuns, some included Gregorian chants.

“In one small chapel, nuns greet pilgrims with a blessing and give each pilgrim a small medallion of the Virgin Mary. In another small village, the Franciscan [friar] gave each pilgrim a small stone with an arrow waymark painted on it to carry on the rest of their journey. In Leon, Bob was selected to read a prayer to the English-speaking congregation while the priest read the same prayer in Spanish.

“All of this served to exemplify to me how unified we all are in our Catholic faith.”

During their journeys, the couple from Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis also made a special gesture to recognize the people who gave them the roots of their Catholic faith.

## ‘Looking out for each other’

“We were both raised Catholic, and both sets of our parents were devout Catholics,” Bob says. “My siblings and I attended Christ the King School and Bishop Chatard High School. Cindi and I were married at Christ the King. Our three children also attended Christ the King and Chatard. We loved that they practiced the Catholic faith and received the same sacraments as we did.”

As the couple walked their first two Camino journeys, they noticed how pilgrims had left crosses, prayer cards and photos of their loved ones on fences, rocks and crucifixes.

Those scenes led the couple to dedicate their 2019 Camino to Cindi’s late father and their 2021 journey to Bob’s late mother.

“We laminated prayer cards for them,” Bob says. “We made five of these, keyhole-punched the cards and then attached long rubber bands to them. Then during several parts of the Camino, we attached the cards to historic points and monuments, saying prayers for their souls. We were really moved by combining our love of the Camino with prayers and dedication to our parents.”

Cindi adds, “We found this a lovely way to say a silent



Cindi and Bob Klee of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis post a photo of Bob’s mom on a fence during their 2021 journey on the Camino, a pilgrimage they dedicated to the memory of his late mother. (Submitted photo)

prayer in recognition of our parents’ lives.”

Their experiences have also deepened their connection with each other.

“We always relied on our Catholic faith to unify our family throughout six career relocations,” says Bob, retired from Eli Lilly and Company. “During our first Camino in 2015, we spent 37 days hiking together, covering 500 miles. This was the longest time we had ever spent continuously together.

“We enjoyed the common experience, hiking together in sunshine and rain, walking long flat trails or climbing mountains, enjoying the small towns together, praying together and looking out for each other.”

Cindi believes the Camino is meant to be a shared experience.

“Without each other’s love and support on each Camino we have traveled, it would have been difficult to get through some of the bad days of weather, long hikes, injuries and setbacks. All of these shared memories have had a lasting impact on our daily lives.” †

## Why is St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of the environment? Here’s why

(OSV News)—St. Francis of Assisi was declared a saint nearly 800 years ago, just two years after his death. Not until much more recently—about 50 years ago—was the beloved 13th-century Italian friar called the patron of ecology.

“John Paul II makes that proclamation in 1979,” explained Joshua C. Benson, associate professor of historical and systematic theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington. “Part of what’s happening there is that there’s greater ecological awareness on the part of people—and in looking for a patron for that, Francis became an obvious choice.”

Benson and other experts spoke with OSV News about how the founder of the Franciscan order became the patron saint of ecology, amid the Jubilee Year of St. Francis marking the 800th anniversary of his death. Like St. John Paul II’s proclamation, these experts recognized St. Francis’ special approach to creation. In particular, they pointed to his poem

“The Canticle of the Creatures,” where he used language such as “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon” to refer to creation.

“When you look at St. Francis’ life, he shows a very deep and real care for creation,” said Father Jonathan St. Andre, a Third Order Regular Franciscan priest and vice president for Franciscan life at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. “We see that in his writings, particularly in a beautiful writing called ‘The Canticle of the Creatures’ ... he talks about how all of creation praises God.”

Capuchin Franciscan Father Robert Barbato, rector of the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi in San Francisco, said St. Francis wrote the canticle at the end of his life. It draws from the saint’s recognition that “we all come from the same Creator and need to care for one another.”

While St. Francis’ approach to creation was not unusual in the spirituality of his time, he gave it “popular and accessible words” in his canticle, said Franciscan

Father Joseph Chinnici, president emeritus and professor of history at the Franciscan School of Theology at the University of San Diego.

“His spirituality emphasized the communion between God and creatures in Jesus Christ,” he said. “Created through the Word of God, all things bore the stamp of the Word. His vision emphasized not so much being the ‘steward of creation’ as a companion or kin with other creatures, gifts from a most generous God.”

Father Jonathan added that St. Francis “loves creation at a deeper level, because

creation is Christic—it reflects Christ.”

St. John Paul II’s 1979 declaration belongs to a larger focus, Father Joseph said.

“This focus on the need to be responsible for the environment has been a major theme of Church teaching, culminating in the encyclical letter of Pope Francis, “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,”” he said of the 2015 papal document that takes its name from St. Francis’ canticle.

With this letter, the late pope “shows how this spiritual experience of Francis

See ST. FRANCIS, page 16

## Employment

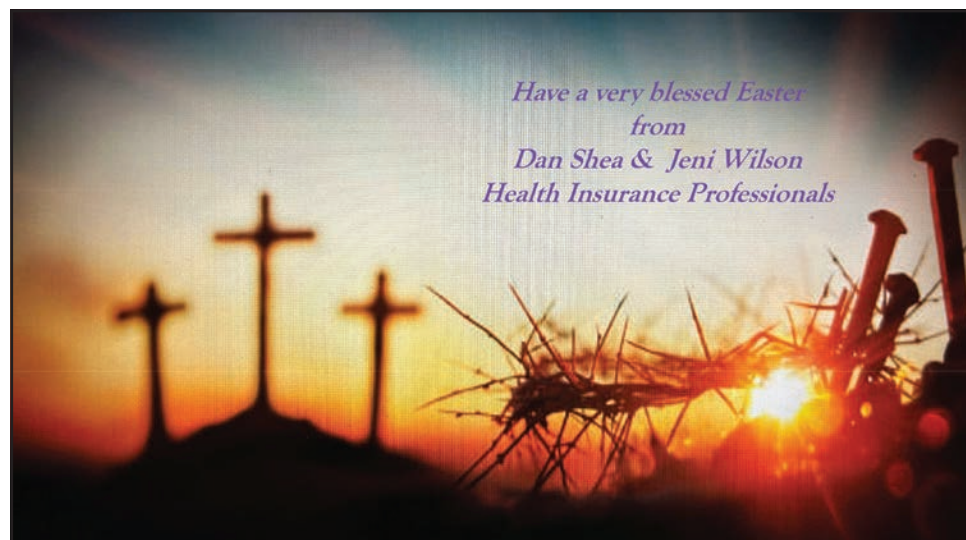
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## A National Championship Celebration!

The women's basketball team of Marian University in Indianapolis earned a national championship on March 24, with a 73-61 victory over the team from Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa, where the game was played.

After beating the two-time defending national champions, the Knights showed their joy in securing their third NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) National Championship. The program also won championships in 2016 and 2017.

In winning the championship, this year's team completed its season with a 35-2 record, the best in the program's history. (Photo provided courtesy of Marian University)



## ST. FRANCIS

continued from page 15

was one with his concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace," Father Joseph said. "Today, this timely 'integral ecology' of Francis represents a path for the believer partially to heal a suffering world."

Benson called St. Francis the obvious choice as patron of ecology because of his tendency to call everything "brother" or "sister," his interactions with creatures,

and his "sacramental vision of reality" embedded in his canticle.

"The liturgy shows us that the created gifts we bring of bread and wine can be transformed by the power of the word and the Holy Spirit into Christ himself," Benson said. "For Francis then, all of creation kind of becomes sacramental in a way, in as much as the temporal and the physical becomes a gateway or a window to those things that are eternal and spiritual to God himself."

Benson said this is connected with St. Francis' love for creation, and the saint

was especially concerned with creatures with a biblical connection to Christ.

St. Francis saw the worm in light of the Scripture passage, "I am a worm and no man" (Ps 22:6), referring to Christ and his suffering. He saw Christ as the Lamb of God, a title proclaimed by St. John the Baptist (Jn 1:29).

So, when St. Francis saw a worm on his path, he picked it up. When he saw a lamb about to be butchered, he rescued it.

Franciscan Father Jerome Wolbert at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington noted the stories of

St. Francis preaching to the birds and negotiating a truce with a "Brother Wolf," while, at the same time, disliking when mice ran over him. Like Benson, he said St. Francis rescued lambs because of their connection to Christ.

"There is also the telling of how when one year Christmas fell on a Friday, and the brothers were arguing over whether they had to keep the Friday fast," he said. "St. Francis went into the kitchen and picked up a piece of meat, smearing it on the wall as he said, 'It's Christmas! Even the walls should eat meat!'" †

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