Expanded ISTEP testing shows success of archdiocesan schools throughout all grades

By Brandon A. Evans

This year, the archdiocese is receiving a lot more information about how Catholic schools are measuring up to state standards and the news is good. Normally, ISTEP (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus) scores, based on Indiana’s academic standards in language arts and mathematics, are reported for grades 3, 6, 8 and 10. But this year, for the first time, scores are also being reported for grades 4, 5, 7 and 9.

The Federal No Child Left Behind law requires states to test students in grades 3 through 8. Indiana approved annual testing for grades 3 through 10 in 1999, but it has taken six years to fully implement it. Schools used to test only in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10.

“We doubled the number of students that were tested,” said Ronald Costello, associate executive director of Catholic education and school improvement and director of Project EXCEED. Between 57 percent and 65 percent of all students in Indiana taking ISTEP received a “pass” designation for both the math and language arts portions of the test.

For the archdiocese, that passing percentage is between 80 percent and 88 percent from grade to grade—a higher percentage than even other private schools in the state. And for individual portions of the test, some of the passing percentages are above 90 percent.

The scores are so good that they alter that averages for both the state and for private schools.

“We bring up those averages for the non-public schools about six percentage points at each grade level, and the state at one percent,” Costello said. Also, statewide there is a downward trend in passing scores from lower to higher grades, but the opposite is true for the schools of the archdiocese.

“We’ve always said that the longer the students are with us, the better they do,” said Annette “Mickey” Lentz, executive director of Catholic education and faith formation for the archdiocese. “We’re very, very pleased with our results as an archdiocese.”

“I think we just really help our teachers focus on the standards, and our whole curriculum is based on the standards,” Lentz said.

She added that teachers in the archdiocesan schools are good at communicating with one another so everyone knows what the needs of the students are and what the students have already learned at each grade level.

Indiana House will vote on constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

A proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in Indiana took a major step forward this week.

The House Judiciary Committee voted 9-3 Monday to send Senate Joint Resolution 7 to the full House. The marriage amendment is a measure which would amend the Indiana Constitution to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. If approved, the change in the state constitution would make it illegal for same-sex partners to marry or for more than two persons to wed.

Indiana law currently maintains that a marriage is a union between one man and one woman, and the Indiana Court of Appeals upheld that definition in a unanimous decision on Jan. 20.

However, Indiana Catholic Conference executive director Glenn Tebbe said that while the Indiana Court of Appeals upheld the legislative intent of marriage in its recent decision, future challenges to Indiana’s marriage law might result in it being overturned. A change to the state constitution would keep the definition of marriage intact.

If the proposed marriage amendment passes the full House, the resolution must be approved again by both branches of a separately elected General Assembly then it must go to the voters for a public referendum. The earliest the referendum could be held would be 2008.

Tebbe testified in support of the marriage amendment at a Senate hearing on Feb. 8. During his testimony, Tebbe reiterated the Catholic Church’s official position on the issue by quoting from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ marriage statement of 2003.

“The Catholic Church believes and teaches that marriage is a faithful, lifelong union of one man and one woman,” the bishop’s letter stated. The document also noted that the definition of marriage is part of the divine plan for the procreation and rearing of children and is a foundation for family life and society’s order.

The Indiana Constitution currently defines marriage as a “union between one man and one woman.” If approved, the change in the state constitution would make it illegal for same-sex partners to marry or for more than two persons to wed.

If the resolution is defeated, the amendment proponents can introduce another resolution at the beginning of the 2007 legislative session. But Tebbe said that doesn’t mean the issue is dead.

“We will continue to have a dialogue with the general public on this issue,” he said. “We are ready to work with our lawmakers and to work with the public to explain the reasoning behind this amendment.”

“People in many cultures act out those events as a public sign of their faith in Jesus. This is especially true among Catholics in Latin American countries. Many of the Hispanic Catholics who have come to live in the archdiocese will express their faith in the power of the cross through the celebration of several living Way of the Cross processions along the streets in central and southern Indiana. On March 25, Good Friday, there will be three Way of the Cross processions in Indianapolis. St. Philip Neri Parish will host its processions twice at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. St. Mary Parish will host its procession at 3:30 p.m. and St. Philip's at 7:30 p.m.”

Hispanics give old Lenten customs a new home across archdiocese

By Sean Gallagher

The suffering and death of Jesus Christ was a historical event that happened in and around Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. But its power is felt in our own day to such a degree that people in many cultures act out those events as a public sign of their faith in Jesus. This is especially true among Catholics in Latin American countries. Many of the Hispanic Catholics who have come to live in the archdiocese will express their faith in the power of the cross through the celebration of several living Way of the Cross processions along the streets in central and southern Indiana. On March 25, Good Friday, there will be three Way of the Cross processions in Indianapolis. St. Philip Neri Parish will host its processions twice at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. St. Mary Parish will host its procession at 3:30 p.m. and St. Philip's at 7:30 p.m.
To cheers from the faithful, pope returns to Vatican

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope John Paul II returned to the Vatican on March 13 after spending 18 days in Rome’s Gemelli Hospital, where he underwent a tracheotomy and therapy to help him breathe and speak with a tube still in his throat.

Sitting in the front seat of a minivan, the pope arrived at St. Peter’s Square at about 6:30 p.m. local time, waving to the estimated 2,000 people and television cameras that had gathered to welcome him home.

Italian schoolchildren dressed in yellow jackets and about 30 Missionaries of Charity dressed in their blue and white were among those who shouted, waved and prayed as the pope’s car passed slowly and entered St. Peter’s Square.

The pope’s arrival at the Vatican came about six hours after he spoke live publicly for the first time since being hospitalized on Feb. 24 and undergoing surgery to insert a tube into his trachea to ease breathing difficulties.

Joaquim Navarro-Valls, the pope’s spokesman, said the pope would “continue his convalescence” at the Vatican, leaving the impression that the pope would have a drastically reduced public schedule for several weeks.

Before the Vatican announced the pope was leaving the hospital, John Paul II, speaking from his 10th-floor room at the Gemelli, thanked the crowds who came to visit him and wished them “well in their hospitals and those watching television a ‘good Sunday and a good week.’

Speaking into a microphone from behind the room’s closed window, the pope said, “Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your visit.”

The pope was of gravelly and difficult to understand, but he did not appear to be struggling to speak.

In addition to his general thanks, he offered special greetings to pilgrims from his Polish hometown, Wadowice.

The pope stayed at the hospital window for five minutes, waving and blessing the crowd gathered in the small square below his window.

On the pope’s 8th day in Rome’s Gemelli hospital, the Vatican television station broadcast pictures at noon of him sitting in a hospital hallway waving as crowds in St. Peter’s Square waved to him.

The Vatican television cameras were on the air again at 6:15 p.m., broadcasting footage taken from the backpack of the pope’s minivan as he left the hospital and drove through Rome to the Vatican.

Danuta Wyglya, a Polish woman working in Rome, said she and her friends always go into St. Peter’s Square on Sunday evenings after attending Mass nearby.

“It is sad when he is not here,” she said.

“It is so amazing that we will see him return tonight.”

A Missionary of Charity from Africa was pleased the pope was well enough to come home, but was a bit disappointed that she did not actually see him. “There were too many tall people in front of me.”

Three Italian girls were squealing with joy after the pope passed by. One of the girls, holding her mobile phone with its built-in digital camera high above her head, managed to get a clear photograph of the pope.

Earlier, at the traditional midday Angelus address, Archbishop Leonardo Sandri, a top official in the Vatican Secretariat of State, made the sign of the cross to bless the crowd in the square, while Vatican television showed the pope offering his blessing at the same time.

In the pope’s Angelus message, read by Archbishop Sandri, the pope offered special thanks to the journalists who have covered his convalescence, “thanks to which the faithful in every part of the world can feel closer to me and can accompany me with affection and prayers.”

“The role of the mass media is very important in our age of global communi- cation,” the pope’s message said. “Great also is the responsibility of those who work in this field and are called to furnish information, not only prudential, but respectful of the dignity of the human person and attentive to the common good.”

“During this time of Lent, which calls us to nourish ourselves more abundantly with the Word of God, I would like to recall that it is possible to feed one’s spirit also through radio, television and the Internet,” the pope’s message said.

“I thank those who dedicate themselves to these new forms of evangelization,” he said. †

Pope reminds Catholics of need to go to confession

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Catholics must remember that they may not receive Communion if they have committed a serious sin and have not gone to confession, Pope John Paul II said.

In the year the Church has dedicated to the Eucharist, it is important to remind people of the importance of going to confession, the pope said in a message sent from Rome’s Gemelli Hospital.

The pope’s message, released at the Vatican on March 12, was addressed to priests taking a course at the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican court dealing with matters related to confession and questions of conscience.

“One who has a sincere awareness of not having committed a mortal sin can receive the body of Christ,” the pope said in his message.

The prayers of the Mass underline the need for “purification and conversion,” he said, citing the initial penitential rite, the sign of the cross and the prayers immediately before the reception of the Eucharist.

The pope said the Gospel readings of Lent “help us to better understand the value of this unique priestly ministry. They show the Savor while converting the Samaritan woman, becoming a source of joy for her, he heals the man born blind, becoming a source of light for him; he raises Lazarus from the dead and shows how life and resurrection defeat death, the consequence of sin,” the pope wrote.

“His penetrating gaze, his word and his judgment of love enlighten the conscience of those he meets, provoking their conversion and profound renewal,” Pope John Paul said.

The pope said that in an age when people seem to forget about God and ignore the reality of sin, priests and religious educators must work even harder to help people understand that Christ is calling them to conversion, “which presupposes a conscious confession of their sins and the request for forgiveness and salvation.”

The pope also told the priests that people will not approach them unless they model their lives and behavior on Christ, “the teacher and pastor, healer of souls and bodies, spiritual guide, and just and merciful judge.” †
Governor talks with death penalty opponents before execution

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As several states weigh whether to keep the death penalty on the books, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will launch the Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty, calling for prayer, education and advocacy against capital punishment.

The campaign, whose kickoff is expected to coincide with Holy Week, comes just after the Supreme Court said it is unconstitutional to execute people for crimes they committed while under age 18 and as legislators in at least three states consider ending the death penalty.

According to a new poll conducted for the USCCB, fewer than half of Catholics now say they support capital punishment. The 48 percent of Catholics who said they support the death penalty reflects a dramatic decrease from past polls, which showed that Catholics were just about as likely as non-Catholics to support it.

Several recent polls have shown that about 66 percent of the general public supports capital punishment when asked a yes-or-no question about it. That percentage drops below 50 percent when those surveyed are asked whether they would support the death penalty or mandatory sentences of life in prison without parole.

The new poll done for the USCCB by Zogby International found 47 percent of Catholics oppose the death penalty, compared to 48 percent who said they support it. The poll also found that Catholics who attend Mass regularly were more likely to oppose the death penalty than irregular churchgoers and that they cite Church teaching as an influence on their opinion. Details of the poll were to be released as part of the campaign kickoff.

A brochure developed for the USCCB campaign says the project was launched because Pope John Paul II and the U.S. bishops “have clearly asked us to act to end the use of the death penalty.”

It notes that Catholic teaching as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in statements by the pope and U.S. bishops “make it clear that the use of the death penalty cannot be justified when the state has other ways to protect society.”

It also says the application of the death penalty in the United States “is deeply flawed,” and points to the execution of more than 118 people on Death Row since 1973. Nearly one-third of those were found in just the last five years to be innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

“The death penalty diminishes all of us,” says the USCCB brochure. “Its use ought to be abandoned not only for what it does to those who are executed, but what it does to us as a society. We cannot teach respect for life by taking life.”

The launch of the campaign comes as courts and legislatures are changing the way the death penalty is applied.

After federal courts overturned capital punishment in Kansas and New York last year because of problems with those states’ laws, the legislatures have struggled with whether to fix the flaws or simply let the provisions go. Catholic bishops in both states have been among those lobbying to end the death penalty.

New Mexico’s Catholic leader also has been lobbying in support of a House effort to abolish the state’s death penalty.

The House voted 38-31 on Feb. 28 to end capital punishment and replace it with sentences of life imprisonment without parole. A closer vote is expected in the Senate, however, and Gov. Bill Richardson, a Catholic and a Democrat, supports keeping the law.

Death penalty opponents in states including Connecticut and New Jersey also are waging campaigns to have those states drop the punishment.

On March 1, the Supreme Court took off the table the possibility of executing for crimes committed by juveniles. In a 5-4 ruling, the court found it cruel and unusual punishment to execute for crimes committed by 16- or 17-year-olds. That decision meant 72 men on Death Row would no longer face execution.

In an order dated the same week but not made public immediately, the Bush administration asked Texas to hold new hearings for 51 Mexican citizens on the state’s Death Row who say they were denied legal help from the Mexican consulate. A pending Supreme Court case asks whether that practice is a violation of international law.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments on March 28 in a case over whether the United States violated international law by failing to grant Jose Medellin the chance to get help from the Mexican government when he was charged with murder. It was unclear what effect, if any, the administration’s order might have on Medellin’s case in the Supreme Court.

By Mary Ann Wyand

It was the right thing to do.

That’s why St. Susanna parishioner Karen Burkhart of Plainfield, the Indiana death penalty abolition coordinator for Amnesty International, and other opponents of capital punishment held a vigil at the governor’s residence on March 9 during the final hours leading up to the execution of Indiana Death Row inmate Donald Ray Wallace Jr. of Evansville.

About a half hour before the execution, Gov. Mitch Daniels talked with Burkhart and other pro-life supporters outside the residence about his decision to allow the execution to proceed as scheduled.

Burkhart said on March 10 that she appreciated the governor’s willingness to talk with opponents of the death penalty.

Wallace was executed by chemical injection at about 1 a.m. on March 10 at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Ind., after they interrupted a burglary at a friend’s home, 5-year-old Lisa and 4-year-old James. County coroners and newspaper accounts said they had used drugs at the time of the murders.

Wallace decided not to ask the governor to commute his sentence.

Daniels said in a statement that the decision was “an evening of the Wallace execution.”

“There were several people of conscience who were outside for most of the evening,” Daniels said in a press release. “I went outside and said hello to them. I told them I respected their point of view and their coming out in the cold to voice it. I was, I think, a cordial visit.”

Daniels also said the execution weighed heavily on his mind.

“But it’s not a position you imagine yourself in,” he said in the statement.

Burkhart said it was about 28 degrees after midnight on March 10 and she was surprised when the governor walked out to the sidewalk to talk with them.

“The governor said a few words to us and told us about his decision to allow the execution to proceed,” she said. “None of the other governors had ever come out and said anything to us.

“I think that it means he’s really going to think about the death penalty,” Burkhart said, “and it gives us even more reason to continue to try to meet with him and talk to him about our problems with the death penalty. I think that the fact that he is prayerfully reflecting on it means that he’s open to considering the problems with the death penalty. I think that’s a positive thing, a good sign.”

Burkhart teaches science classes at St. Matthew School in Indianapolis and said she discusses the Church’s pro-life teachings about the death penalty with her students.

“I’ve participated in execution vigils here (outside the governor’s residence) for the past nine years,” she said, “because it’s not OK to take a life to show that killing people is wrong. I try to explain to the students how important it is to do the right thing always... It’s important for us to continue to live our faith, to do the right thing, all the time. It’s what Jesus would do.”

The Mass is produced from the Crypt Church at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

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The Lenten witness of Pope John Paul II

Watching Pope John Paul II suffer so publicly, with the whole world watching and speculating openly about his condition and his impending death, we are naturally tempted to ask, "Why?" Why does such a good man have to suffer so much? Why does he continue to stay in office, where he is forced to do so much in public? Why expose himself to this humiliation? Why not step aside and let a younger man assume the responsibilities and burdens of the Petrine ministry?

The 26 years of this pope’s ministry have been filled with “teachable moments.” From his first visit to his homeland (then-Communist Poland) to the forgiveness of his would-be assassin in prison to his historic pilgrimage to the gates of suffering and death to the resurrection of Christ. Many were accompanied by a companion.

As I came to each person, I leaned down to tell him why a healing was wanted. Some had chronic conditions. Some had cancer or heart disease. Many mentioned things like depression. A few young people who were there came forward and said, “I want to be anointed for my uncle” or some other person.

I anointed the people with holy oil on the head and the hands. Then I laid my hands on each one’s head. The deacons followed, laying hands on each head and praying over people for a while as I moved on to the next person.

After an hour, I was exhausted. Sweat was pouring down my brow. Someone brought me a towel and a glass of water. I had to sit down. One woman came up to me afterward and said, “Who will anoint the anointer?”

It was a wonderful experience. Over the following weeks, people would stop me and say, “My back is better,” “My depression is lifted.” Their healing had nothing to do with me, of course. It was the power of grace.

In one case, a young man came forward to be anointed for his uncle, who was suffering from heart disease. Just days later, the uncle agreed to be anointed in the hospital. The man had been away from the church for many years. He had received absolution and Communion as well as anointing. Since then, he has come back to the sacraments. Sometimes the healing God gives is not what we intend, but is what God knows we need.

When I was a young priest, I was skeptical about what good the anointing of the sick really did. It seemed so fruitless. But sometimes it was administered just moments before death.

But now, I see things differently. I have seen various kinds of healing: spiritual, physical and emotional. I have seen families healed by the experience.

Now, of course, I love every American soldier in Iraq, and every “insurgent” fighting for Iraq, and every suicide bomber martyring himself for the cause. But I vehemently oppose what they are doing to each other, and to mankind. They are doing the work of the devil, in the name of God. God is not in this at all. He is embarrassed. After all, God created each human person as well as the devil. Let us pray.

Bob Nowicki, Indianapolis
Nuestros rituales de la Semana Santa veneran el obsequio de Cristo mismo

Tengo una extraordinaria cruz de obispo que uso en la Soledadidad de la Pascua. Posee un adorno de esmalte el cual percepción de las piedras preciosas verdes y un diseño de filigrana dorada en los lenguados horizontal y vertical. En una palabra: es una cruz pectoral impresionante. La heredado el arzobispo Edward T. O’Meara, mi precesor. El había heredado la cruz de su amigo el arzobispo Fulton Sheen. Jesús letrás de sí mismo, no solamente una huella propia, ni una simple reliquia, ni una simple astilla de la cruz victoriosa en la que murió. Jesús se entregó a sí mismo, en cuerpo y sangre, alma y divinidad. De hecho, se dejó a sí mismo en el gran misterio de la Eucaristía: la representación de la Pasión, muerte y resurrección misma. Al entregarnos la Eucaristía, nos dio un obsequio mucho más impresionante que la reliquia de la cruz. Al embarcarnos en la Semana Santa, llamamos “santa” experimentar a través del ritual el misterio en el cual Cristo nos entregó el obsequio de nuestra redención; celebramos en asombro que el misterio de esa redención se revive cada vez que celebramos la Eucaristía. Los intenso rituales del Domingo de Ramos y el Triduo Sacrament, es decir, el lapso que va desde la noche del Jueves y Viernes Santo, y la gran Vigilia de la Pascua, que culmina con la Soledadidad de la Pascua, veneran el obsequio de Cristo mismo, así como la espléndida cruz pectoral enmara la astilla de la cruz de Cristo. En este Año de la Eucaristía, espero que vivamos el ritual del Jueves Santo con más fervor que nunca. En la noche antes de morir, Jesús instituyó la Eucaristía, la celebramos en honor de su Pasión, muerte y resurrección para que fuera representada en el obsequio de la Eucaristía, hasta el final de los tiempos, y vinculado su sacrificio con el mandamiento del amor y el testimonio de lavarles los pies a los doce apóstoles. Cuando celebramos la misa, el misterio que permanece oculto bajo la forma de pan y vino es mucho más precioso que una astilla de la cruz en la cual tuvo lugar la victoria inmortal. Sin embargo, la representación del Domingo de Ramos, a través del Jueves y Viernes Santo hasta la gran Vigilia de Pascua y la Soledadidad tienen un gran significado. La representación de la procesión con las palmas, al comienzo de la Semana Santa y el lavado de los pies en la Eucaristía del Jueves Santo nos ayudan mucho. Escuchar las lamentaciones que se le atribuyen a Cristo en su camino de sufrimiento y la veneración de la cruz en el Viernes Santo, son rituales de gran valor para nuestro crecimiento espiritual. La belleza de la Vigilia de Pascua que comienza con la llama divina, la celebración y el encendido del ciro pascual, seguido de la historia de nuestra salvación, son símbolos muy poderosos. La maravilla de recibir nuevos hermanos y hermanas a través del ritual del bautismio, confirmación y primera comunión, rejeune nuestra fe. Después de finalizados, los rituales representativos de la Semana Santa nos conducen hacia la más profunda de todas las realidades de la historia. Cristo se entregó a sí mismo en la Eucaristía, tanto como un sacrificio siempre presente de su amor, y como una comunión de confraternidad con todos aquellos a quienes llama a consular con él. En los misterios de la Semana Santa nos aguarda un obsequio precioso. Vengan, ¡vamos a adorarlo! ✝

Traducido por: Language Training Center, Indianapolis

Las intenciones vocacionales del Arzobispo Buechlein para marzo

Los jóvenes: que ellos acepten el árbito del Espíritu Santo, para que puedan discernir su papel en la Iglesia, especialmente la llamada de Dios a hacerse sacerdote y entrar en esta vida religiosa.
A blessing of the first foods of Easter, which is a Slo- 

vanic tradition, will be held at noon on Holy Saturday, 
March 26, at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 523 S. 
Merrill St., in Fortville. For more information, call the 
parish office at 317-845-5102.

A special bilingual and ecumenical service commemorat-

ing the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Oscar 
Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador, begins at 7 p.m.
on March 23 at St. Mary Parish, 317 New Jersey St., in 
Indianapolis. The archbishop was a voice for the poor in 
their fight for justice. For more information, call 317-637-
3983.

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, 535 E. Edgewood Ave., in 
Indianapolis, is having a high school youth Passion prayer 
service at 7 p.m. on March 20. For more information, call 
317-787-8246.

St. Nicholas Parish, 6461 E. St. Nicholas Dr., in Sunman, 
is having a parish mission featuring Father Simon Stefano-
wicz, a native of Poland, from March 29 to April 3. On 
March 29 through April 1, confessions will be heard begin-
ning at 6 p.m., and Mass will begin at 7 p.m. Father Stefano-
wicz will give each night’s presentation in the context of his 
homily. Mass will be celebrated at 8:20 a.m. on April 2, and 
will be followed by a healing service. A Divine Mercy 
Sunday celebration will be held at 2 p.m. on April 3. For 
more information, call the parish at 812-623-2964.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad will offer special 
Holy Week liturgies. There will be a blessing and proces-
ion with palms, followed by Vespers at 5 p.m. on March 19, 
and Mass at 9:30 a.m. on March 20. Palm Sunday Mass 
will be celebrated at 5 p.m. on March 19 and cele-
brated by Archbishop Daniel M. Bechlein at 10:30 a.m. 
on March 20. There will be solemn sung Vespers at 5 p.m. 
on March 19 and solemn sung Mass at 10:30 a.m. on 
March 20. Saint Meinrad will be interpreted in American Sign 
Language. The Mass of the Lord’s Supper will be celebrated by the archbishop at 7 p.m. on April 3. On Holy Saturday, and at 8:30 p.m. on Holy Sunday, the Vigils of Holy Saturday 
will be offered. There will be Vespers at 5 p.m. on March 25, 
Holy Saturday, and at 8:30 p.m. the beginning of the Easter 
Mr. Frank and Paul Kraft are noted speakers on living trusts and estate planning. They 
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Jerusalem on March 10.

Yad Vashem in the new Holocaust museum will replace the current Historical Museum established in the late 1960s as a part of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority. The exhibits were put together in the early 1970s and had become outdated by today’s standards of interactive and innovative museum norms, officials said. The museum was built to accommodate half a million visitors a year. Attendance reached more than 2.5 million in the year 2000 following Pope John Paul II’s visit, said Shalev.

After the outbreak of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, the number of visitors fell as tourism to Israel declined. Some 80 percent of the visitors to Yad Vashem are non-Jews from abroad, Shalev said.

Whereas the old museum had more of a textbook feel, focusing mainly on the events, noted Na’ama Galil, a museum curator who wrote all the texts for the museum exhibits.

“This is, in essence, a very personal story, and the museum personifies this new approach. You can see it in every corner. The individuals tell their story,” said Shalev. “We want to show what they created, what they were thinking, feeling when this was happening to them. How did they struggle to maintain their human values? How did they maintain family contact? Contact with friends? How was this process done and what was the reaction of their neighbors?”

He said it was not the intent of officials to send out one particular message, but to deal with the Holocaust as a whole. The curators sought to contact as many survivors as possible. In addition to giving testimonies about their lives during those years, many of the survivors donated personal artifacts—such as Bluma Walach’s eyeglasses, which her daughter, Tola Walach, carried with her in concentration camps, authentic concentration camp uniforms and bunk beds, street posts, cobblestones and wagons from ghettos, and a cattle car used to transport people to the concentration camps.

Among the letters on display is the final letter of Wanda Pacifici, in which she pleads for the safekeeping of her children. Pacifici and her two children fled from Genoa to Florence, Italy, while her husband, a rabbi, remained in Genoa. She and her children hid in two monasteries, but someone informed on Pacifici, and she was killed. Her two children survived the war.

The new museum includes a section about the systematic extermination of Gypsies, homosexuals, and mentally and physically handicapped people. One exhibit is reserved for the stories of righteous Gentiles, including Catholics such as businessman Oskar Schindler and two Belgian brothers and priests, Fathers Luis and Huber Ceis, who risked their lives to protect Jewish children.

A special effort was made to humanize the events, noted Na’ama Galil, a museum historian who wrote all the texts for the museum exhibits.

“...to young people...”

Jerusalem (CNS)—A New Israeli museum was designed to be personal and keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, officials said.

As the last of the elderly Holocaust survivors die, there will be almost no opportunities to learn about the Holocaust at a personal level, said Arnon Shalev, chief curator of the new Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem and chairman of the Yad Vashem directorate.

“Our main challenge was how to build a pattern of meaningful remembrance for the third and fourth generation [after the Holocaust] without the support of the very personal encounters between those eyewitnesses who are able to deliver their experiences ... to youngsters around the world,” said Shalev.

The Vatican archivist and former foreign minister, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, was to be among the hundreds of international leaders and dignitaries scheduled to attend the inauguration of the museum on March 15-16.

Ten years in the making, the new museum will replace the current Historical Museum established in the late 1960s as a part of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority. The exhibits were put together in the early 1970s and had become outdated by today’s standards of interactive and innovative museum norms, officials said. The museum was built to accommodate half a million visitors a year. Attendance reached more than 2.5 million in the year 2000 following Pope John Paul II’s visit, said Shalev.

After the outbreak of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, the number of visitors fell as tourism to Israel declined. Some 80 percent of the visitors to Yad Vashem are non-Jews from abroad, Shalev said.

Whereas the old museum had more of a textbook feel, focusing mainly on the events, noted Na’ama Galil, a museum curator who wrote all the texts for the museum exhibits.

“This is, in essence, a very personal story, and the museum personifies this new approach. You can see it in every corner. The individuals tell their story,” said Shalev. “We want to show what they created, what they were thinking, feeling when this was happening to them. How did they struggle to maintain their human values? How did they maintain family contact? Contact with friends? How was this process done and what was the reaction of their neighbors?”

He said it was not the intent of officials to send out one particular message, but to deal with the Holocaust as a whole. The curators sought to contact as many survivors as possible. In addition to giving testimonies about their lives during those years, many of the survivors donated personal artifacts—such as Bluma Walach’s eyeglasses, which her daughter, Tola Walach, carried with her in concentration camps, authentic concentration camp uniforms and bunk beds, street posts, cobblestones and wagons from ghettos, and a cattle car used to transport people to the concentration camps.

Among the letters on display is the final letter of Wanda Pacifici, in which she pleads for the safekeeping of her children. Pacifici and her two children fled from Genoa to Florence, Italy, while her husband, a rabbi, remained in Genoa. She and her children hid in two monasteries, but someone informed on Pacifici, and she was killed. Her two children survived the war.

The new museum includes a section about the systematic extermination of Gypsies, homosexuals, and mentally and physically handicapped people. One exhibit is reserved for the stories of righteous Gentiles, including Catholics such as businessman Oskar Schindler and two Belgian brothers and priests, Fathers Luis and Huber Ceis, who risked their lives to protect Jewish children.

A special effort was made to humanize the events, noted Na’ama Galil, a museum historian who wrote all the texts for the museum exhibits.

“...to young people...”
Cardinal cites progress, challenges in Catholic-Jewish relations

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Facing hunger, rape and death, refugees and displaced people in Sudan’s Darfur region and throughout Africa must be given greater assistance to work toward an agreement over federal energy legislation and end a growing wave of protests. The protests forced President Carlos Mesa to present his resignation to Congress, which rejected it on March 9. A March 11 meeting between Mesa and trade unions ended without agreement. “It is still possible to reach a social and political agreement to accomplish realistic and lasting solutions to the conflicts,” said Bishop Jesus Juarez Parraga, general secretary of the Bolivian bishops’ conference, at a press conference on March 9. The government embargo and the nation’s Assembly for Human Rights supported the Church’s call.

Cardinal challenges science to preserve human dignity

CHICAGO (CNS)—Science in itself cannot justify a belief in human dignity, but scientists can justify such a belief precisely because of their own humanity, Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George said. The cardinal offered his remarks in the introduction to “Science, Faith and Law,” March 4.

Bolivian bishops urge social, political leaders to agree on energy

PUNO, Bolivia (CNS)—The Bolivian bishops’ conference has urged the nation’s social and political leaders to work toward an agreement over federal energy legislation and end a growing wave of protests. The protests forced President Carlos Mesa to present his resignation to Congress, which rejected it on March 9. A March 11 meeting between Mesa and trade unions ended without agreement. “It is still possible to reach a social and political agreement to accomplish realistic and lasting solutions to the conflicts,” said Bishop Jesus Juarez Parraga, general secretary of the Bolivian bishops’ conference, at a press conference on March 9. The government embargo and the nation’s Assembly for Human Rights supported the Church’s call.

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EXCLUSIVE, and lifelong union between one man and one woman, joined as husband and wife in an intimate part-
nership of life and love. Marriage exists so that the spouses might grow in mutual love and, by the gen-
erosity of their love, bring children into the world and serve life fully. The teachers told Indiana lawmakers that while marriage as defined as a union between one man and one woman is a “part of the common moral heritage” it is not just a moral issue, but an issue of societal structure that affects the common good of all—believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians alike. “Marriage is a basic human and social institution which did not originate from Church or state, but from God,” Tabb said. “Neither Church nor state can alter the basic meaning and structure of marriage.” Tabb tells senators that the institution of marriage not only “supports the well-being of children, families and communities,” but “society itself.” He said “marriage is unique because of its traditional and foundational role in societal structure.” The Indiana Catholic Conference’s position paper sup-
porting the marriage amendment, which was submitted to the legislature, also acknowledges the concern of fear of treatment of homosexuals with regard to claims of bene-
fits, stating, “To the extent that homosexuals or other indi-
viduals face obstacles to claims of benefits, legislative bodies may choose to address these matters. … Such questions must not be addressed, however, in a way that endangers the centrality and distinctiveness of marriage to the welfare of society.” The Catholic Church approaches the marriage amend-
ment from a perspective which recognizes and respects all human beings, homosexual or heterosexual, because every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. The Catholic Church does not condemn a person who is of homosexual orientation, but believes that sexual acts, homosexual and heterosexual, which are outside the con-
text of a sacramental marital union are sinful. To read the Indiana Catholic Conference’s position paper on the marriage amendment in its entirety, go to the ICC web page at www.indianacc.org, click on Public Policy Issues/Priorities and scroll down and click on ACR Definition of Marriage.

(‘Brigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

Fire breaks out at St. Raphael Cathedral in Diocese of Madison

MADISON, Wis. (CNS)—Smoke billowed out of the roof, spire and bell tower at the 150-year-old St. Raphael Cathedral in downtown Madison early on March 14 after a fire broke out there, only a few months after the new spire was raised. The fire, reported at 9:32 a.m., destroyed much of the roof, which collapsed into the church. The cathed-
ral proper appeared to be severely damaged. The new spire did not have significant damage, but will be taken down as a safety precaution.

There were no reported injuries. The cause of the fire is yet to be determined.

Fire Chief Debra Amesqua said the fire department was concerned about the steelpeel collapsing since it is made of steel, which does not fare well in intense heat. As the fire continued, a crack developed on the side of the tower below the spire.

Around 8:30 a.m., Amesqua said the fire was under control, but firefighters were going into the tower to try to put out spot fires. Structural engineers from J.H. Findorff and Sons in Madison determined after an evaluation of the steelpeel that it would have to be taken down to ensure that it would not collapse, she said.

The steelpeel would need to be cooled before it would be stable enough for Findorff cranes to take it down, according to Amesqua.

The new spire was raised atop the downtown church’s steelpeel in late November 2004 as part of a $1 million project, the first step in what was anticipated to be a multimillion-dollar refurbishment of the cathedral. The spire, including the cross, stretches to 104 feet. The project also included replacement of four art-glass windows, refurbishment of two existing bells and the addition of one new bell, restoration of the clock, and repair of some supporting stonework.

Smoke could be seen for miles around the cathedral and many people gathered to watch. Local streets around the cathedral were blocked off to traffic as the fire department worked to control the fire.

That plan—a four-week program—is what his stu-
dents participated in at the start of the school year to help them learn how to take the test and do well on it. The good test results all around the archdiocese are more than a pat on the back, though. They point out, Lentz said, what areas need more work.

The results give the archdiocese a clear vision of “where we are and where we need to go,” she said. “The more information we have from the data, the more we’ll be able to help students.”

“There’s always more work to be done, that’s for sure,” Lentz said.†

MARRIAGE

Class passed both portions of the ISTEP test, which is far

above the average for the Indianapolis center-city

schools, said that all 13 students in his

classroom are motivated, and they want to learn every day. They can’t

wait to learn new things.” Part of the success of his students—and of Catholic

students across the board—is the smaller class size that a private school allows.

Another part of his students’ success is a program called “Learning 24/7” that Alley was able to take advantage of thanks to funding through the archdiocesan Project EXCEED program.

“It’s a program out of Texas,” he said. “They actually send representatives to each of the center-city schools” to help teachers set up an ISTEP preparation plan.

“Called by Name” Catholic Teacher Recruitment Day

Sponsored by

The Office of Catholic Education

and

The Archdiocesan Principals Association

Cathedral Center

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Indianapolis

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Registration form obtained online

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will start its Way of the Cross at 4:30 p.m.
St. Mary Parish in New Albany will begin its Way of the Cross at 7:30 p.m. on Good Friday.
At 10:30 a.m. on Holy Saturday, a living Way of the Cross sponsored by St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis will begin in Max Bahr Park across the street from the church.
Father Michael O'Mara, pastor of St. Mary Parish and administrator of St. Philip Neri Parish, both in Indianapolis, and Conventional Franciscan Father Thomas Smith of Mount Saint Francis, who assists in Hispanic ministry in the New AlbanyDeanery, spoke about the meaning of the Living Way of the Cross for Catholics in and from Latin America.
Father O'Mara said, “because we don’t limit participation to only those who are at Mass on Sunday with us every week. It attracts people who may not be active, but because of this important expression of their piety, their religiosity, they want to be involved in this Via Crucis.”
But the evangelization that can happen through celebrating Jesus’ Passion and death can also touch passers-by on the city streets where it happens.
“I think that it causes people to stop and reflect,” Father O’Mara said. “We start this at 4:30, so we get downtown at about 5:15, right when people are getting off work and going home. And people stop.
People who are walking stop. People who are driving by are watching. It has to have an impact on them. It has to remind them of what the day is. And so, it’s a very, very interesting dynamic to watch that happen.” Father O’Mara said.
This tradition among the Hispanics is starting to gain roots in the archdiocese. The celebration at St. Mary Parish in New Albany will mark the seventh year that it has happened, while St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis is hosting its living Way of the Cross for the fourth time.
It also has started to attract a large number of people to witness them and pray along as they are celebrated. Father Thomas said that approximately 300 people came to last year’s Way of the Cross in New Albany. More than 400 people walked the downtown streets of Indianapolis last year for the one hosted by St. Mary Parish, according to Father O’Mara.
Father Thomas encouraged those who do not understand Spanish to come and follow along in bilingual booklets that will be provided. Father O’Mara noted that, while St. Mary and St. Philip Neri parishes’ Way of the Cross processions will be celebrated in Spanish and booklets will not be provided, it can still be powerful for those who may not be able to understand what is spoken.
“I don’t think that anybody will be inhibited from understanding because we already know the words,” he said. “It’s just trying to put ourselves into how that looked with Jesus and how it might have been.”
In reflecting on the overall meaning of the event, Father Thomas spoke about the great potential that it can have for all involved.
“I think it gives us a more realistic and more personal awareness of the life of Christ and his gift to us on Good Friday,” he said. “It’s meant to deepen our faith and to help us, in a sense, act out and live out our own faith as well as the faith of Jesus. For me, it’s a really beautiful moment.”

The street in front of St. Mary Church in New Albany serves as the setting for part of a living Way of the Cross sponsored by the parish in 2004. St. Mary Parish is hosting the same devotion at 7 p.m. on March 25, Good Friday. Identities of those participating in last year’s living Way of the Cross were not available.
Liturgy of the Hours was inspired by Jewish tradition

By Jim M. Schellman

Embedded in the heart of the Jewish prayer tradition is prayer out of the inspired word of Scripture. Several millennia old, this prayer tradition gives a privileged place to the poetic form of Scripture—that is, the Psalms and certain biblical canticles.

Early Christian prayer grew from and adapted these prayer forms, making extensive use of the Psalms and canticles. Phrases from the Psalms are found on the lips of Jesus at various moments in the Gospels and are woven throughout the New Testament letters.

Formed and inspired by the Jewish tradition of praying at various times of the day, our earliest Christian ancestors fashioned a cycle of daily biblical prayer with the Psalms and biblical canticles as its centerpiece.

In early cathedral communities and parishes, this prayer gave pride of place to the beginning of the day and to the onset of evening. This was called Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

The Psalms and prayers that were selected reflected the dawn of day, acclaiming Christ as the light of the world, and they reflected the day’s end, acclaiming the grace hoped of unending light and eternal resurrection in the risen Lord.

This long and living tradition of prayer has come to us today in the official liturgical book of the Church called The Liturgy of the Hours.

Pope encourages lay people to pray Liturgy of the Hours

By David Gibson

Several times, in his writings, Pope John Paul II has encouraged lay people to take up the Liturgy of the Hours for their daily prayer time as a way to sanctify each day.

At the start of the new millennium, the pope said, “Perhaps it is more thinkable today in our own time, God’s journey with us. The whole of our lives is material for God’s purpose, God’s time, the in-breaking of God’s kingdom in our world. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer thereby become the hinges of each day, its opening and the way it draws to a close.

These hours of biblical prayer are seen in the Church as extending the unfailing love and paschal grace experienced in the celebration of the Eucharist into each day of the week.

In this cycle of daily prayer, we tap directly into the inspired source for eucharistic, sacrificial living throughout each day and hour of the week. And by living in God’s time in this way, we are drawn deeply into that spiritual longing that causes us to hunger anew for the coming Sunday’s eucharistic gathering.

Those who pray the Hours at the beginning of the day and day’s end offer a spiritual tradition by which each day is seen and experienced in the light of God’s time, the in-breaking of God’s kingdom in our world. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer thereby become the hinges of each day, its opening and the way it draws to a close.

Liturgy of the Hours, by which the Church sanctifies the different hours of the day and the passage of time through the liturgical year.

In 2003, Pope John Paul II said, “It is important to introduce the faithful to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours” to strengthen their prayer life.

Those working in mealtime prayer should “take into account the ability of individual believers and their different conditions,” the Holy Father said, but they should “not be content with the minimum.”

In his apostolic letter for the current Year of the Eucharist, the pope recalled how, as the new millennium began, he had “recommended the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, by which the Church sanctifies the different hours of the day and the passage of time through the liturgical year.”

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(Liturgical Text, Living Liturgy)
Jesus in the Gospels: Move to Caper naum

Cynthia Dewes
Cornucopia/

From the Editor Emeritus/

mysterious power that persuades the men while Matthew and Mark stress Jesus’ James and John as Jesus’ first disciples.

Luke 4:31-5-11 See Matthew 4:12-25, 8:14-17, Mark 1:14-39,

another order whose name I forget Christian Charity in grade school, by

...personal.

that, over the centuries, other explana-

in one day following a severe illness.

16 "Revelations of Divine Love." She early 15th-centuries who revealed culture. It’s like learning God’s will from self-centeredness, which may merciful Mother [Christ] we have refor-

God is the source of our natural reason; God is the basis of the teaching of Holy Church; and God is the Holy Spirit. Each is a distinct gift which we are meant to treasure and to heed. All of them are continually at work in us leading us Godwards.”

The last of Julian’s 16 revelations is a summary and confirmation of her vision that it was that love was our Lord’s meaning.” What a timely message we way to Easter.

Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is a regular columnist for Catholic News Service.)

Making a Difference/ Tony Magliano

The legacy of Archbishop Oscar Romero

March 24 is the 25th anniversary of the assassination of the holy archbishop from El Salvador. Since he was murdered while cele-

brating the Eucharist, it is fitting that this anniversary falls on Holy Thursday.

Following Jesus example, Archbishop Romero moved to tirelessly care for the poor and oppressed. In her book, Oscar Romero: Memories in Moses, Maria Lopez Vigil wrote: “His life was and remains as a bishop, Archbishop Romero was politically cau-

tional. Even when the Latin American bish-

oped pronounced at their gathering in Medellin, Colombia, that “institutionalized sin” was crushing the majority of Latin Americans.”

At his own request, Archbishop Romero should support a preferential option for the poor, wanted nothing of it; he wholeheartedly protested standing.

One priest who worked with Archbishop Romero, Father Inocencio Alas, recalled key moments leading to the archbishop’s conversion. According to Father Alas, the archbishop began realizing that the poor laborers waiting for government food handouts and plantations were sleeping on the sidewalks.

“What can be done?” Archbishop Romero asked. “Father Alas replied: “Look at that big house where the school used to be. Open it up!”

When Archbishop Romero continued his research, he had difficulty believing Father Alas’ claim that plantations existed.

Father Alas said, “Go to the plantation of this friend of yours. Go find out for yourself.”

Finally, with tremendous courage, Archbishop Romero asked Father Alas to say, “You were right, Father, but how is so much injustice permissible on this planet when Christ said ‘in the name of God, in the name of our Father, God Almighty, we have our being. In our grace.’”

As Archbishop Romero continued his ministry, he became standard practice. Surely, readers could. Then, after Vatican II, the practice became foolish. Open it up!”

Saintly debates in American history reveal that the U.S. government supplied the Central American military with millions of dollars in weapons and training. Without success, Archbishop Romero appealed to Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan to end the aid.

Finally, with tremendous courage, Archbishop Romero said, “The Church ... cannot remain silent in the presence of such abominations.”

He said, “The Church ... cannot remain silent in the presence of such abominations.”

In the name of God, in the name of our Father, God Almighty, we have our being. In our grace.”

The past two weeks, I have shared information about the Eucharist. The first column in March encouraged readers to spread the news about giving Free Communion hosts for those suffering from celiac disease. The second column shared a story and some websites to help better understand mystical visions. Mysticism doesn’t seem to be in fash-

The Criterion Friday, March 18, 2005

Perspectives

From John F. Fink

Salvation as revealed to Mother Julian

Oscar Romero, holy archbishop, through your example and prayers may we be...in the name of God, stop the repression!”

... In the name of God, in the name of our Father, God Almighty, we have our being. In our grace.”

As Archbishop Romero continued his ministry, he became so close that it was as if he had heart on that ‘pass-over’—from the pain we now experience into the bliss we trust.

The first is the use of man’s natural reason; the second, the everyday teaching of Holy Church; the third, the inner working of grace. The Holy Spirit is grace.

She wrote, “Thus in our Father, God Almighty, we have our being. In our grace.”

In the third stage we come to our knowledge of God, the first element of this kind of vision is called “God’s voice.”

It was revealed to Julian that “Our life is threefold. In the first stage we have in our being, the second in our growth and in the third our perfection.

The next day, Jesus did what he was told to do.

Jesus did the same with authority, and then he also ordered them not to tell anyone about what had happened.

Jesus had command over the men, but Matthew and Mark stress Jesus’ James and John as Jesus’ first disciples.

I was educated by the Sisters of Christian Charity in grade school, by another order whose name I forget because their sisters only prepared me for confirmation while I attended a pub-

Communing with the past during Holy Week

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much more critical information that the Romans acted most unmercifully and many compassed against Jesus. Jesus is the central figure in the reading, not the Romans or those who plotted against Jesus.

Reflection
The reading of the Passion Narrative is the centerpiece of this weekend’s Liturgy of the Word, and inevitably it is presented even in more amateur settings with such drama that few who hear it anywhere are unmoved. Because of its length, and the additional moments of this liturgy, such as the blessing and procession of the palms, homilies to explain the Scriptures usually are brief, if preached at all. Nevertheless, these readings convey a powerful lesson. The crown of the readings is the Passion Narrative. This narrative’s message is that the Lord was completely abandoned. It is more than a distressing coincidence. It is an indictment of human nature. So contorted, so limited, so enwrapped by self-interests or unreasonable fears, humans rejected even the source of life. The delight and praise of those who welcomed Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem does not simply illustrate fickleness on their part. It reveals a very basic fact about us. We all are fickle. We are all short-sighted. We all are inclined to think of self. Yet, the reading from Philippians, certainly coming from the early Church, very possibly an ancient liturgical hymn, illustrates how wise, and joyful, humans can be once they are redeemed, healed and enlightened in Christ. In this redemption, healing and enlightenment is new life. It is whole life. It is eternal. It comes through and in Jesus. On this Palm Sunday, the Church invites us to come to Jesus, and to be born again.

Sunday, March 20, 2005
• Matthew 21:1-11
• Isaiah 50:4-7
• Philippians 2:6-11
• Matthew 26:14-27:66

This weekend, the Church observes Palm Sunday, the revered and traditional entry into the drama of the trial, crucifixion and death of Holy Week.
On this weekend, the liturgy includes two readings from the Gospels. The first Gospel reading occurs at the blessing of the palms and as the procession of the faithful bearing the palms assembles at the church. The reading reveals both the Lord’s divine power, seen through the knowledge that an ass and colt are in the village ahead, and the Lord’s mission as messiah. He is approaching Jerusalem, more than just a city in pious Jewish minds, but the holy place in which God’s temple stands, where David once reigned as king and where the prophets spoke in the name of God.

The crowd recognizes Jesus, proclaiming the Lord as “son of David.” They greet the Messiah as if they were welcoming the king, not the detached Roman emperor, whom they’re own legitimate king.

For its next reading, the Church gives us a passage from the third part of Isaiah. It is one of those eloquent and expressive sections of Isaiah called by biblical scholars the “Songs of the Suffering Servants.” Poetic and descriptive, these four songs lead an unmatchably faithful servant of God, who despite abuse and persecution remains steadfastly loyal.

Christians always have seen Jesus figured in these beautiful poems. In the next reading, from the Epistle to the Philippians, the emphasis again is on Jesus and again in the literary genre of poetry. Experts now believe, in fact, that this passage was an early Christian liturgical hymn. In any case, its deep understanding is new life. It is whole life. It is enlightened in Christ. In this redemption, healing and enlightenment is new life. It is whole life. It is eternal. It comes through and in Jesus. On this Palm Sunday, the Church invites us to come to Jesus, and to be born again.

Friday, March 25
Good Friday of the Lord’s Passion
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 31:2-12, 13-15, 17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42
Saturday, March 26
Holy Saturday
Holy Saturday Night: The Easter Vigil
Genesis 1:1-2

Question Corner/ Fr. John Dietzen
Priest can be laicized for several reasons

I was offended by the tone of your recent response to “What does laicization mean?” You said the laicization process is “designed to protect the rights of everyone—any victims, the offenders and other Catholics or members of civil society.” This is a loaded statement that makes the popular assumption that all laicized priests are wicked abusers. You didn’t mention that a priest can be laicized after walking away from the priesthood for a number of reasons which do not involve abuse.
As the daughter of a laicized priest who left the priesthood in the tumultuous 1960s, I can say you have thought twice before responding in such a cold way. After 30 years away, he returned to the Church, goes to Mass almost daily and prays for himself, family and friends, the Church and other priests. You should be added to his list. (Missouri)

Perhaps you didn’t notice that the questioner in that column specifically asked about a priest who is “laicized because of grievances against offense against Catholic law.” As you say, as it seems you did also, as referring especially to the current scandal of sexual abuse by priests. The response I gave was in that context. It is worth noting, however, that several possible circumstances may explain a priest’s being dismissed from the clerical state, or laicized. Some are punishments for wrongdoing, but others involve dismissal with the priest’s own consent or at his request.

Canon law provides that dismissal from the clerical state may occur through a declaration that the ordination was invalid (similar to the declaration of nulity of a marriage); it may be imposed as a penalty; or it may be granted for “most grave causes” to priests who request it (2969). As you say about your father, it is rash to judge Catholic priests who left the ministry, especially in this third way. Many laicized priests are living full, active and faithful Catholic lives. It is a mistake to assume otherwise.

(A free brochure answering questions that Catholics ask about the sacrament of penance is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 3315, Pooria, Ill. 61612. Questions may be sent to Father John Dietzen at the same address or e-mail in care of criterion@archindy.org."

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column.
Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.
Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org.
The Criterion welcomes announcements of archdiocesan Church activities and other open-to-the-public activities for the “Active List.” Please be brief—listing date, location, event, sponsor, cost and time. Include a phone number for verification. No announcements held over to next issues. Notices must be in our office by 3 p.m. Thursday one week in advance of (publication: The Criterion, The Archdiocese of Indianapolis, 1400 N. Meridian St., Suite 1711, Indianapolis, IN 46204; mail: 317-236-1593 (fax); mlkennel@archindy.org (e-mail).

March 18
Kingsley Columbus Hall, 2000 E. 1st St., Indianapolis, Catholic Business Exchange, Mass, 6:30 p.m., $10 per person, panel discussion, My Faith and My Business. Information: 317-949-9122.

St. Joan of Arc, 4217 N. Central Ave., Indianapolis, Rosary and Way of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-638-5476.

Sacred Heart Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis, Stations of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-638-5551.

St. Gabriel Parish, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis, Fish fry, 5-7:30 p.m., way of the Cross, 7:30 p.m., Mass, 8 p.m. Information: 317-236-1593.

March 19
Filadelfia, 6500 N. St. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis, Men’s Club, fish fry, 4:30-7:30 p.m., Communion service, 5-7:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-375-8352.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 1401 N. Boutard Ave., Indianapolis, Fish fry, 4:30-7:30 p.m., Communion service, 5-7:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-236-1593.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, 1408 Oakridge Road, Carmel, Ind., (Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana Family Planning class, 7-9 p.m. Information: 317-848-4486.

March 19
Fish fry, 4:30-7:30 p.m., St. Cecilia Memorial High School cafeteria, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis.

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Sharon Martin, 6561 E. 51st St., Indianapolis, Men’s Club, fish fry, 4:30-7:30 p.m., Communion service, 5-7:30 p.m. Information: 317-236-1593.

First Sundays
St. Paul Church, 218 Scheller Ave., Sellersville, Prayer group, 7:05-8 p.m. Information: 317-236-1593.

First Saturdays
St. Paul Church, 218 Scheller Ave., Sellersville, Prayer group, 7:05-8 p.m. Information: 317-236-1593.

Keiser Blvd. B., Dr. Indianapolis. Eucharist. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after 7:15 a.m. Mass; 5:30 p.m. Benediction and service. Rosary Church, 520 St. 

Indianapolis, Indiana, Adoration, 5:45 p.m.-5:45 a.m. Information: 317-378-4478.

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 5333 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-234-4902.

St. Anthony Church, 779 N. W. Washington Ave., Indianapolis, Holy Hour for the sick, 5:30 p.m., Holy Hour for religious vocations, 7 p.m.

St.Joseph Church, 1375 S. Metcalf Ave., Indianapolis, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 4-5 p.m. and Bracelet of the Blessed Sacrament, 3 p.m., Information: 317-233-1181.

St. Paul Church, 2605 S. 8th St., Sellersburg, Holy hour for religious vocations, Adoration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 6-7 p.m. Information: 317-234-4604.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1750 Scheller Lane, New Albany, Adoration concluding with confessions at 6 p.m. Information: 317-632-9342.

St. Joseph Church, 113 S. 5th St, Terre Haute. Eucharistic adoration at 3 p.m. noon, Holy hour for vocations and Benediction, 6:45 p.m. Information: 317-234-3664.

We invite you to attend the “Women: No Arm Bands” seminar, 7-9 p.m. Toll Free: 1-888-240-1585. Please mention this ad in The Criterion when placing your order. Thanked.
Rachel’s Companions helps women heal from the pain of abortion

By Mary Ann Wyand

An estimated one of every six Catholic women has had an abortion. But the painful reality of that national statistic is shattered in secrecy because most of the women don’t talk about their abortion experience due to feelings of grief, denial, shame or fear that have troubled them for years. Lent is a time to grow closer to God, Servants of the Gospel of Life Sister Diane Carrollo explained, and the Catholic Church offers several confidential ways for women suffering from the pain of abortion to seek spiritual and emotional healing.

As director of the archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, Sister Diane coordinates the Church’s Project Rachel programs. Rachel’s Companions is a three-month reconciliation process and Rachel’s Network is an ongoing support group for women suffering from the pain of abortion. Future plans may include offering Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats in the archdiocese.

A new Rachel’s Companions group begins meeting on March 19, and women are invited to call Sister Diane for information about this abortion reconciliation process. Rachel’s Companions is designed for Catholic women, she said, and is rooted in the Catholic tradition. Weekly sessions explore a variety of topics that facilitate healing, and a psychologist provides professional assistance.

“It provides a journey that leads to spiritual liberation, healing and growth,” Sister Diane said. “And [it] has served as a spiritual oasis for women wounded by abortion. This support group allows women to bring their grief and pain into the healing presence of Christ. Companions extend their loving support and compassion to them as they seek healing, forgiveness and peace.”

After completing the Rachel’s Companions process, she said, women may join Rachel’s Network and continue to share spiritual formation and fellowship.

“The women are truly outstanding in their Catholic faith,” Sister Diane said. “They prove that nothing can ever definitively separate a woman from the love of Christ, not even the experience of abortion. They prove that a life of holiness following abortion is possible because the Lord invites them to deep spiritual intimacy, and provides them with abundant graces to achieve their sanctification.”

“I encourage every woman suffering from the aftermath of abortion to find the help she needs through a priest, counselor, understanding friend or Project Rachel program,” Sister Diane said. “The important thing is that she take the first step by reaching out for help. All calls are completely confidential.”

St. Thomas More parishioner Bernadette Roy of Mooresville recently shared her abortion experience during a program at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. She also helps Sister Diane and other volunteers facilitate Rachel’s Companions and Rachel’s Network.

Until she turned to the Church for help with abortion reconciliation, Roy said she felt that she couldn’t be forgiven of this “most unforgivable sin, and it echoed and echoed inside of my soul.”

Roy said she found solace in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1864), which explained that “the most unforgivable sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit by not asking for mercy and forgiveness.”

She said “knowing that I am forgiven, then I had to do the next step, which is to forgive myself.”

Roy can’t remember details about her abortion more than 15 years ago, but suffered from anxiety and nightmares so she turned to Rachel’s Companions for help and healing.

“The sacrament of reconciliation is so important,” she said. “It’s the first step in this whole process. God does forgive. Rachel’s Companions let me know that I was forgiven. It reinforced the whole experience of forgiveness and healing, and I could name my child. Her name is Katherine. She’s not just a pregnancy anymore. She’s Katie.”

Roy prays before the Blessed Sacrament every week and has a great devotion to the rosary and chaplet of Divine Mercy.

“Teressa” had an abortion at age 17, about 20 years ago, because her mother arranged it as a “solution” to the problem of being an unwed teenage mother. She asked that her name not be published, but was excited about sharing the peace and happiness she has found in her life since participating in Rachel’s Companions.

“I don’t think I ever used the word ‘baby,’” Teresa recalled. “I think I was too afraid to use the word ‘baby.’ I think I just said ‘the pregnancy’ or ‘the abortion.’ It makes me feel I can’t talk about it anymore. I’ve never spoken my mind about how I felt about it.”

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Archdiocese to hold VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children programs

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is holding VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children workshops in parishes. VIRTUS is an education and awareness program that the archdiocese has implemented for employees and volunteers who work with young people to teach them more about child sexual abuse and how to help prevent it. Employees and volunteers should register in advance for the programs online at www.virtus.org and let their parish staff know if they are attending. They also should check to make sure the time and date of their parish program has not changed.

Programs scheduled for April will be held at:
- Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis on April 27 at 12:30 p.m.
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis on April 21 at noon
- St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis on April 8 and April 11 at 7 p.m.
- St. Bernadette Parish in Indianapolis (program will be held at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis) on April 21 at noon
- St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis on April 24 at 3 p.m.
- St. Luke Parish in Indianapolis on April 27 at 7 p.m.
- St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis on April 10 at 5 p.m. and April 21 at 6 p.m.
- St. Louis Parish in Batesville on April 8 at 1 p.m.
- St. John the Apostle Parish in Bloomington on April 24 at 5 p.m.
- St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington on April 5 at 9 a.m.
- St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus on April 9 at 9 a.m. and April 28 at 6 p.m.
- St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fortville on April 16 at 12:30 p.m.
- St. Michael the Apostle Parish in Greenfield on April 6 and April 28 at 7 p.m.
- St. Augustine Parish in Leopold on April 5 at 6:30 p.m.

Vatican bioethicist says removing Schiavo’s tube is ‘direct euthanasia’

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Removing the feeding tube from Terri Schiavo, a brain-damaged Florida woman, or other patients in a similar condition amounts to “direct euthanasia,” a “cruel way of killing someone,” said the Vatican’s top bioethicist.

Bishop Elio Sgreccia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, said the academy usually does not comment on specific cases before courts, but “silence in this case could be interpreted as approval.”

The bishop told Vatican Radio on March 11 that withdrawing Schiavo’s gastric tube would not be a matter of allowing her to die, but would “inflict death.”

Judge George W. Greer of Florida’s Pinellas County Circuit Court ruled on Feb. 25 that Michael Schiavo, Terri Schiavo’s husband, could order doctors to remove the feeding tube on March 18.

Her parents, Bob and Mary Schindler, have opposed his son-in-law’s efforts. Bishop Sgreccia spoke to Vatican Radio the day after Greer ruled the state’s Department of Children and Families could not intervene in the process.

Schiavo, 41, has been impaired for the past 15 years. She can breathe on her own, but requires nutrition and hydration through a feeding tube.

Bishop Sgreccia told Vatican Radio, “Terri Schiavo must be considered a living human person, deprived of the capacity for self-defense.”

“The removal of the gastric tube used for nourishing her cannot be considered an ‘extraordinary’ measure or a therapeutic measure,” he said. “It is an essential part of the way in which Mrs. Terri Schiavo is nourished and hydrated.”

“As far as we are concerned, denying someone access to feeding and hydration are ‘signs of respect for the human person,’ whether young or old, healthy or sick, he said.

Bishop Sgreccia said he did not want to get into questions about Schiavo’s husband, parents or economic situation.

“Taking into account only medical and anthropological considerations,” he said, “we feel an obligation to affirm that such a decision violates the rights of Terri Schiavo and, therefore, constitutes an abuse of judicial authority.”

Bishop Sgreccia said he also was concerned about the precedent the court’s decision could set in the United States, creating a situation in which euthanasia is seen “as a right.”

“For these reasons, we consider illicit the decision to remove Mrs. Terri Schiavo’s gastric feeding tube,” he said.

Bishop Sgreccia told Vatican Radio that the Catholic Church does not support keeping people alive at all costs, going to extraordinary and even painful means to postpone death.

However, he said, keeping a patient clean, warm, fed and hydrated is not the same thing as “therapeutic obstinacy” or the refusal to accept death.

Feeding and hydration are “signs of respect for the human person,” whether young or old, healthy or sick, he said.

Franciscan Brother Conrad Richardson leads intercessory prayers during a rally for Terri Schindler Schiavo on March 12 across from the hospice where the 41-year-old woman resides in Pinellas Park, Fla. More than 200 people gathered to pray and speak out against the removal of Schiavo’s feeding tube, which was scheduled under court order for March 18. Schiavo suffered brain damage in 1990, and her husband has sought to remove the feeding tube. Her parents have fought against such action.
PEZZULLO, Judy Marie
MORGAN, Audrey
MORGAN, Bert
MORGAN, Muriel
MORGAN, Wilma
MORGAN, John
(1930, 75), Indianapolis, April 4. Son of Hyrum and Ethel (Stokes) Morgan. Brother of Bert, Isabella Zehr and William. Brother-in-law of Mary Schipper. Grandfather of five. †
MORGAN, Margaret
MORGAN, Barbara
MARTIN, Mary
MARTIN, Louis
(1925, 80), Indianapolis, April 4. Son of Hyrum and Ethel (Stokes) Morgan. Brother of Robert and Isabella Zehr. Brother-in-law of Mary Schipper. Grandfather of five. †
MARTIN, Robert
(1924, 81), Indianapolis, April 4. Son of Hyrum and Ethel (Stokes) Morgan. Brother of Isabella Zehr. Brother-in-law of Mary Schipper. Father of Bert, Wilma and John. Grandfather of 15. †
MARTIN, Isabella
Zehr
MARTIN, John
MARTIN, Josephine
MACNAB, Janet
(1956, 49), Indianapolis, April 4. Daughter of Alfred and Margaret (Bendall) MacNab. Sister of Susan. Mother of Lindsey and9. Grandmother of four. †
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Application must be submitted by April 15, 2005.
Conference in Batesville focuses on healing power of Jesus

By Sean Gallagher

BATESVILLE—Nearly 500 people from throughout the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and nearby areas of Ohio and Kentucky gathered on Feb. 19 at Batesville High School to learn about the healing power of Jesus Christ.

The conference, “Healing through the Power of Jesus Christ,” was arranged by the evangelistic team of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County.

The main speaker of the day was Johnette Benkovic, founder and president of the evangelization apostolate Living His Life Abundantly International and the founder of Women of Grace, a Catholic apostolate for Christian women.

S.A.C.R.E.D. (Sacifice, Advocate of Life, Christ-centered, Roman Catholic, Evangelization, Defender of the Faith), an independent apostolate located in Batesville, also helped sponsor the event.

Benkovic shared with the audience her experiences of God’s healing power in her life, suggested ways that they can do so and spoke many about “counterfeit healing techniques.”

After noting that any illness in life is ultimately an effect of sin in the world, she shared the good news that God wants to heal us and return us to wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

“There is no sin that is greater than God’s mercy,” Benkovic said. “We give him our misery of life. He takes it. And he hands back to us gifts of love, gifts of faith, gifts of hope. Our Father God is all about the business of restoring his people.”

Giving credit to God for all healing, Benkovic noted that “he often does this through human agency.”

“I want you to hear that only God can heal us,” she said. “Sometimes he uses doctors, sometimes he uses medicines, sometimes he uses mental health counselors, sometimes he uses psychiatrists and psychologists. And all of that is an action of God’s love for us, to bring us to holiness.”

While noting that God works to heal us through conventional medicine, Benkovic said that healing also comes to us from God through the Church.

“But of ultimate importance, [God] gives us the spiritual help that we need,” she said. “And he does it through holy mother Church, and through the sacraments, and through the priesthood who ministers those sacraments to us, and through the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and through our prayer.”

Benkovic emphasized the importance of these spiritual aids because she argued that the spiritual world can have a significant impact—for good or ill—upon the integrated health of body, mind and soul.

The Holy Spirit can bring healing while the devil and other evil spirits are real and can oppress us.

She has shared this message through books, on TV and radio, and before audiences throughout the world since she began her ministry nearly 20 years ago. But she noted that it was in the past year that she was challenged beyond her imagination “to begin to walk the walk of the talk that I would talk.”

In March 2004, her son, Simon, was killed in a traffic accident while he was visiting her and her husband in Florida while on leave from serving in the Army in Iraq.

Showing from her own experience that emotional anguish can be expressed through physical pain, Benkovic noted that after learning of her son’s death, she felt a pain in her womb that she compared to labor pains.

After noting that this pain still returns occasionally, she said that she once asked God in prayer how long she would continue to experience it.

“And deep down in the bottom of my heart, where St. Francis de Sales says we hear the voice of God, I heard the voice,” Benkovic said. “And he said, ‘Child, you labored to give your son physical life. Will you not labor now to give him spiritual life as well?”

Nearly a year later, she still naturally suffers the wounds of the loss of her son.

The wounds that she received because of it have not yet been entirely healed. But this fact led her to share an important message with her audience.

“Suffering has value,” Benkovic said. “Suffering has merit. What a paradox, that God would right the situation of original sin—that produced death—by death itself. What a tremendous paradox that the torment and the confusion caused in the life of man would become the matter he would use to effect the redemption of man. The cross of Christ is a paradox.

And not only did that cross redeem mankind and each one of us, but that cross [also] redeemed suffering.”

While she acknowledged that it does not contradict the truth of the redemptive suffering to seek to alleviate our pains and illnesses, Benkovic warned her audience to avoid “counterfeit healing techniques” such as healing touch.

Arguing that while such methods might be presented in Catholic terminology and as offering many goods, she said that they can actually be harmful and are based on a worldview that contradicts those that are acceptable within the Christian tradition.

“If we were to weigh what was being presented to us against the revealed truth of sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church, we would not fall into the trap,” Benkovic said.

But no matter what threats these other methods may pose, and no matter how great our own physical, emotional or spiritual trials might be, Benkovic stressed that as followers of Christ we have no reason to fear.

“Should we be afraid? No,” she said. “We have nothing to fear. Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world.”

Parishes schedule final Lenten penance services

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of the remaining Lenten penance services that have been reported to The Criterion.

Batesville Deanery
March 18, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greenburg

Indianapolis South Deanery
March 20, 2 p.m. for Good Shepherd, St. Patrick, Sacred Heart of Jesus and Holy Rosary at Holy Rosary March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Ann’s, Parishes of the Greenwood, Greenwood

New Albany Deanery
March 20, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany

March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery
March 19, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at St. Joseph, Jennings County
March 22, 7-7:30 p.m. at St. Anne, Jennings County

Tell City Deanery
March 20, 4 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City
March 23, 7 p.m. at St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad

Terre Haute Deanery
March 20, 6 p.m. at St. Patrick, Terre Haute

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St. Nicholas Catholic School is seeking a principal that is dedicated to the following: teaching the Catholic faith, faith formation programs, high expectations for students and teachers and shared decision making with school staff.

The successful applicant will have successful teaching experience, hold the appropriate building principal license and be a practicing Catholic.

St. Nicholas Catholic School is a K-8 school with 184 students, has an attendance rate of 97.7%, exhibits strong NCEA scores with 89.2% passing, and 17% that qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Interested applicants should submit a letter of application, current resume and college placement file to: Rev. Greg Bramlage, Pastor St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church 6401 E St. Nicholas Drive, Sunman, IN 47091

Deadline for applicants: March 25, 2005

Catholic Diocese of Columbus

The pastor of St. Andrew School, Columbus, Ohio is initiating a search for a principal of the parish elementary school. Interested applicants must be active, practicing Catholics and must possess—or be eligible for—appropriate Ohio administrative licensure.

The School Administrator’s license is available online at www.cdeducation.org. For further information contact the: Diocese of Columbus Personnel Office 197 East Gay Street Columbus, OH 43215 (614) 221-5829 ezzettler@ceducation.org Deadline for applications is April 1, 2005

Classified Directory, continued from page 18

Positions Available

Director of Religious Education
St. Susanna Parish is seeking a full-time director of religious education to implement and oversee parish faith formation programs at all levels beginning as soon as possible.

Applicant should be strong in the Catholic faith, knowledgeable and committed to the Indianapolis Archdiocesan Faith Formation Guidelines and Faith Formation Curriculum and the ability to work together with catechists, youth minister, RIGA team, school personnel and pastor. Experience in parish formation program preferred.

Direct inquiries/resumes to: Rev. Kevin Morris St. Susanna Parish 1210 East Main Street Plainfield, IN 46168

Advertise in The Criterion: Indiana’s Largest Weekly Newspaper Call 236-1572 to advertise!
Faithful view and pray before the "Relics of the Passion," including a fragment of the true cross, on display in the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver on March 5. Several thousand people flocked to the cathedral to venerate items associated with Christ’s last hours.

DENVER (CNS)—Several thousand people flocked to the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver on March 5-6 to venerate items associated with Christ’s last hours.

Some waited up to an hour to view the “Relics of the Passion” exhibit, which began its 2005 tour to six cities in February in Honolulu. The tour will end in Los Angeles during Holy Week.

Sponsored by the Apostolate for Holy Relics, the exhibit included a piece of the true cross discovered by St. Helena; full-size replicas of the nails used in Jesus’ crucifixion made with shavings from the actual nails; remains from the crown of thorns worn by Jesus; and a portion of the sindonis, the cloth believed to be the exterior wrapping in which the burial cloth of Jesus was kept when it was not being venerated.

Additional relics were an artist’s rendition of Veronica’s veil that had been touched to the veil itself; a piece of the column of flagellation used in Jesus’ scourging; a relic of the table of the Last Supper; and a bone fragment of St. Longinus, the centurion who pierced Christ’s side and proclaimed, “Indeed, this was the Son of God.”

The display drew Catholics, non-Catholics and people from both inside and outside the Denver Archdiocese. Their reaction to the relics was a mixture of curiosity, excitement, reverence and awe.

“Today is my birthday. I had to come,” said Greek Orthodox Father Ambrose Mayas, 58.

Clad in the tall black headdress and robes of his faith, the priest bowed and blessed himself several times before the relics, which were under the watchful eyes of caped Knights of Columbus.

Noting that the veneration of relics is an ancient tradition shared by the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, he said, “They are heavenly images that bring us closer to God.”

He told the Denver Catholic Register, newspaper of the archdiocese, that the display reminded him of last year’s blockbuster movie, The Passion of the Christ, a recut version of which was opening in Denver on March 11. The display, like the film, brought to life the Gospel events of redemption, he said.

Deeply touched by the close relationship between Jesus and his mother depicted in the film, the 58-year-old priest said he was also struck by the manner in which Christ accepted his cross.

“In love and compassion, he embraced the cross for all of us to set us free,” Father Mayas said, thrilled that the display included a fragment of the true cross.

Jim Lucero, 54, an Anglican who became a Catholic nine years ago, said the relics are tangible reminders of Christ’s Passion, death and resurrection.

“I love the Church because it has so much history and the relics are part of that history,” he said. “By faith, I do believe those relics are part of Our Lord’s history. It’s incredible we have that physical matter we can identify with Our Lord.”

The relics on display were all authenticated in Rome, according to Tom Serafin, president of the Apostolate for Holy Relics, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the guardianship and promotion of relics that operates with the approval of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

But he emphasized that their veneration is not a question of proof, but an act of faith—even if curiosity drives a person to see them.

“The intention is still pure,” he said. “The action of the people that venerate them validates the relics themselves, whether an act of thanksgiving, hope, repairation or an act of love for Christ’s crucifixion.”

Many of those praying before the sacred items took rosaries, religious medals or scapulars to be touched to the relic of the true cross.

Serafin said he was particularly moved by those who asked him to touch their wedding rings to the relic, calling his ability to do so for them “a privilege.”

In 2003, Bob Fisher of Brownsburg had his own show. The plot: transplant. The setting: St. Vincent. And thanks to our experience in treating a lot of hearts—and treating them individually—Bob now stars in a better role: life. To learn more about our heart care, call 338-CARE or visit stvincent.org.