U.S. bishops revise documents dealing with sexual abuse

CHICAGO (CNS)—As they have been at every U.S. Catholic bishops’ meeting since June 2002, clergy sexual abuse of minors and the protection of children from such abuse remained a part of the June 16-18 meeting in Chicago of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Most of the major issues dealt with were approval of revisions of the 2002 “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” and the related “Essential Norms” implementing the charter legislatively.

The bishops adopted those documents by respective votes of 229-3 and 228-4. As a legislative text, the norms still need Vatican approval. But Vatican rejection seems quite unlikely since the final version approved by the bishops had only four minor variations from the draft jointly developed by U.S. and Vatican officials: a correction of a typographical error, the addition of a missing canon law reference and two minor editorial changes intended to clarify the meaning of the text.

The revised charter and norms are to take effect for five years.

While several other abuse-related items were on the bishops’ agenda, they also took time to approve other documents and projects, vote on financial matters, discuss the growing phenomenon of lay ecclesial ministry and celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Catholic Church Extension Society.

As the bishops met inside Chicago’s Fairmont Hotel or gathered on June 15 for a pre-meeting Mass at Holy Name Cathedral, on the streets outside various demonstrators picketed and held press conferences. Among them were leaders of clergy sex abuse victim groups, abortion opponents, gay rights advocates who oppose Church teaching on homosexuality, women’s ordination advocates, and members of Voice of the Faithful and other groups who have been calling for greater openness and accountability by Church officials.

Documents the bishops approved during the meeting included a new Program of Priestly Formation, a statement in support of Catholic schools, a statement on missions and a statement committing themselves to mutual support and correction in implementing the child protection charter. All were adopted by overwhelming margins.

The new Program of Priestly Formation will replace the 1992 edition of that program if the Vatican approves it. It sets norms for seminary admissions and seminary formation.

Reflecting the increased awareness of the horror of child sexual abuse, the new program for the first time explicitly orders the rejection of any seminarian applicant and expulsion of any seminarian who has molested a child or shows inclinations to do so.

It also devotes extra attention to ensuring that seminarians are well-rounded human beings as an integral part of achieving their mature commitment to chaste celibacy before ordination. For the first time, it explicitly addresses questions of sexual orientation, saying that when the Vatican publishes its expected norms on the admission of homosexually oriented men to the seminary or priesthood.

Youth learn that leadership flows from being obedient to Christ

By Brandon A. Evans

One of the focal points of the Catholic Leadership Conference, held from June 13-17 at Marian College in Indianapolis, was to teach youth how to be followers of Christ.

About 30 high school youth turned out for the annual conference, which seeks to help them learn how to be leaders not only among their peers but also in parish life in general.

In explaining leadership in Church life, Father Robert Robeson, director of the archdiocesan Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, said that the leadership of those in the parish flows from the leadership of a pastor or parish life coordinator, whose leadership flows from the archbishop. The authority of the archbishop, as successor to the Apostles, flows from Christ—and the authority of the chief of the Apostles, the pope, successor to Peter, also flows from Christ.

It is in obedience to Christ through the
SAINT

Sister Mary Ann said, “For this diocese, we feel that it’s very important that they know about Mother Theodore.”

The desire on the part of the sisters to spread the message of the life of Mother Theodore took a big step forward in the past two weeks, and it was a step that came unexpectedly, said Sister Ann Margaret—unexpected because the timeline for this cause has been unknown.

With so many causes currently before the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, many can wait in line for an undetermined amount of time, said Msgr. Frederick Easton, vicar judicial for the archdiocese.

After all the oaths were taken and forms were signed regarding this particular miracle, the documents had to be wrapped in brown paper, tied with a red ribbon, sealed in wax and topped with a special Latin document.

At the time, Msgr. Easton drove the package to Washington, D.C., to the office of the papal nuncio, so that it could be delivered to the Vatican in an official diplomatic pouch.

From there, he said, there was a painstaking process of verifying the documents in Rome before the merits of the miracle were even examined.

Now, he said, with the commission finding no scientific explanation for the cure of the man in question, the theological commission will examine the case this fall.

Msgr. Easton said it likely will be sooner than five years when the cardinals will examine the cause.

Ambrosi said that he is pleased with the timeline.

“The Church is our coach, in a sense,” Father Robeson said. “If we get on that bus, as Catholics, we have to conform our lives to what the Church and the Church teaches us, and we have to become the people that God made us to be, we have to submit.

“The Church is our coach, in a sense, and the Church teaches us, and we have to conform our lives to what the Church teaches.”

And what the Church teaches, he said, is Jesus Christ, who is the chief teacher.

“If we get on that bus, as Catholics,” he said, “if we get on that bus to heaven, we live according to what our teacher says.”

Good leaders, he said, also listen to those under their authority, as pastors should do.

Catholics bring their own gifts to the table through the various commissions and councils of a parish, he said.

“People are important in running a parish,” he said. “A good pastor listens to the commissions. A good pastor listens to the hierarchy. A good pastor listens to the people of the parish.”

To help the youth learn about real parish situations, he divided them into four groups, each of which was given a specific scenario. Each person in the group was given a specific role to play.

For example, one group was given a situation in which an imaginary parish school desired to expand its program for teaching the Catholic faith.

The youth had to play the parts of a youth minister, a vice principal, a priest chaplain, a teacher and varying grades of students. They then had to work together to come up with a plan of action to recommend to the principal.

Together, they discussed the possibility of an apologetics course, teachings on chastity, a class on world religions, a yearly class retreat and other ideas.

The weekend conference was also host to many other activities, such as youth-planned liturgies, shared meals, “break-out” sessions on Catholic topics and recreational time.

Tina Schnarr, a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, is on the leadership team at her parish and helps plan youth events.

She heard about the conference and “figured it would be a great chance to expand my faith and come closer to God.”

Tina said that she particularly liked the in-depth discussions led by Father Robeson and others who planned the conference. Not only were they engaging sessions, she said, but felt like she was being talked with, not being talked at or lectured to.

“Very good, very good,” said Eric Connor, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.

For more information on Blessed Mother Theodore Guérin, including a brief biography and news coverage from the time of her beatification, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.

A young woman joins other participants of the Catholic Leadership Conference in prayer on June 16 at Marian College in Indianapolis. The annual program for high school youth took place during the week of June 13-17.

After attending the conference last year, she became more involved in youth ministry and joined the teen council at her parish.

“The event also had spiritual benefits. Before, I didn’t really like Mass all that much,” she said. “But I really like it now—I love it.”

One thing that Sarah said she particularly liked about the conference is that those youth who come are not forced to do so, but rather are there on their own accord.

She said that last year she met “a ton of people” and made some friends that she’s still in contact with.

It was definitely the best week of my year,” she said.
Archdiocesan committee releases parish staffing recommendations

Study proposes that St. Bernadette Church in Indianapolis become a chapel by 2012

By Greg Otolski

An archdiocesan strategic planning committee has recommended that St. Bernadette Church in the Indianapolis East Deanery become a chapel as part of an effort by the archdiocese to respond to a declining number of priests over the next seven years.

Several other parishes could see a reduction in the number of priests assigned to them during the same period.

The strategic planning committee discussed the recommendations on June 22-23 with priests, parish life coordinators and parish lay leaders in the Indianapolis East, Bloomington, Indianapolis South, Tell City, Batesville and Connersville deaneries who took part in a two-year study of future staffing of parishes.

The committee discussed staffing recommendations with leaders in the Terre Haute, Indianapolis North, Indianapolis West, New Albany and Seymour deaneries on June 15-16.

Those recommendations included changing the status of three parish churches in the Terre Haute Deanery—Holy Rosary in Seelyville, St. Joseph in Universal and St. Leonard of Port Maurice in West Terre Haute—to chapels. (Details of recommendations from the June 15-16 meetings were reported in the June 17 Criterion and can be found online at www.criteriononline.com.)

The main challenge the archdiocese faces in the immediate future is determining how a declining number of priests in active ministry can best minister to a growing Catholic population in central and southern Indiana.

About 700 pastors, parish life coordinators and parish lay leaders took part in 53 meetings — three meetings in each of the 11 deaneries — from October 2002 to October 2004 to discuss the best way for the archdiocese’s 150 parishes to share a declining number of priests in the immediate future.

There are currently 124 diocesan and religious order priests staffing parishes, but that number is projected to decline to 97 priests by 2012. During this same period, the number of Catholics in the archdiocese is projected to increase nearly 14 percent to 267,000 people from 234,574.

With fewer priests in the future, several parishes likely will have to form clusters to share a priest and other resources.

Changing the status of a parish church to a chapel means that no regular weekend or weekday Masses would be celebrated at the church. The church would still be maintained and used for special sacramental celebrations, such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.

In determining how many priests would be needed to serve each deanery, the staffing committee looked at the projected number of Catholics per deanery and established what percentage they would be of the total archdiocesan population in 2012. Each deanery was then allotted an equivalent percentage of the projected number of priests available in 2012. The goal was to have one priest for every 1,000 Catholics.

MARRIAGE SUPPLEMENT

Marriage Announcements

Be a part of our Marriage Supplement July 22, 2005, issue of The Criterion

If you are planning your wedding between July 1, 2005, and February 1, 2006, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement on the form below.

Pictures

You may send us a picture of the bride-to-be or a picture of the couple. Please do not cut photographs. The picture must be wallet-size and will be used as space permits. We cannot guarantee the reproduction quality of the photos. Please put name(s) on the back of the photo. Photos will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by Thursday, June 30, 2005, 10 a.m. (No announcements or photos will be accepted after this date.). All announcements with our photos must be received by the same date.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House

Summer Renewal Series for Parents and Teens
July 11, 18, 25 and August 1, 2005 7:00 p.m.—9:30 p.m.
Four consecutive Monday nights — Attend one or all!

July 11 Margaret Hendricks A Promise to Keep: Communication and Choices
July 18 Fr. Jonathan Meyer Being Counter-Cultural: Fighting Sinful Trends
July 25 Mike Fassold and Rick Wagner Preparing Your Child For High School
August 1 Fr. Daniel J. Mahan Responding to God’s Invitation

The final evening will include a book-signing session for Fr. Mahan’s new book “More Than Gold or Silver: Homilies of a Stewardship Priest”.

Cost is just $25.00 per family per night!

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House
5553 E. 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46226
(317) 545-7681
fatima@archindy.org
Faith and Society

Douglas W. Kmiec

Of trials and acquittals

We live in an age of damning public trial and the often unjustly acquitted or of infamous defendants: O. J. Simpson, sports impresario Michael Jordan, pop music star, and now Arthur Andersen, certified public accountant. Arthur Andersen? Seriously? Accounting, according to any office dictionary, involves the “organizing, maintaining and auditing of” a business firm’s books, and it builds upon the adjective “accountable”—that is, “being subject to the obligation to report.”

Three years ago, the Arthur Andersen accounting firm was criminally convicted of shredding thousands of pages of documents as the Securities and Exchange Commission mission was investigating the collapse of Enron, the now defunct Texas energy company. Three weeks ago, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously reversed Andersen’s convictions.

As a matter of ethics—indeed, of public accountability—the court was unanimously wrong.

In late summer 2001, Enron was failing badly. The principle reason for this was Andersen’s decision to Enron reflect accumulated profits from related corporate entities while hiding losses. Eventually, the market caught on. Enron’s stock plummeted, taking with it thousands of jobs and years of retirement savings.

As one of America’s “big five” accounting firms, Andersen was paid handsomely—some $58 million a year—to regularize Enron’s figures. Typically, the bidder was that the auditor or so Andersen accountants put to the task also generated plenty of documents, many of which would have been very helpful today in lawsuits as shareholders and families seek to recover even a small fraction of their Enron investment.

The papers aren’t available. Within a month or so of the time the SEC launched an informal investigation, Andersen supervisors reminded their accountants to follow the firm’s “document retention policy,” which everyone there knew was simply a sham, cynical instruction to destroy.

As a matter of fairness, the Supreme Court had an obligation to report.

But the Court will survive. The face of Jesus will continue to be revealed to those who hunger to see him. The Good Shepherd will continue to carry out its mission and ministries.

The more important fact in all this—regardless of the reality of the circumstances that have confronted the Church, the growth in the Catholic population. The Church should distance itself from ‘conservative versus liberal’ politics

In response to Sandra Dudley’s letter, I say thank God for those liberal and moderates. The courts have protected our rights to practice our religious beliefs in the light of attempts to subjugate Catholicism in the United States. Remember that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and the conservative movement here in the United States would take away all individual rights at a drop of the hat.

Walter Alderson, Greenwood

Letters to the Editor

The courts protect our religious rights

The Church should distance itself from ‘conservative versus liberal’ politics

I want to offer a different opinion than the one presented by Sandra Dudley in her letter in the June 17 Criterion concerning appointments to the federal courts. Jesus’ message is not one of conservative versus liberal; his message is one of love, compassion, healing and truth in all things.

The battle over conservative versus liberal ways of thinking only separates us and prevents the people—who make up the Church's most valuable asset—to be humiliated and their dignity offended. How much worse could happen today in lawsuits as shareholders and families seek to recover even a small fraction of their Enron investment.

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Después de muchos obstáculos, Simon Bruté es ordenado como sacerdote.
Events Calendar


June 24  22nd Annual Home for the Aged. 2345 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. Little Sisters of the Poor, National Life Foundation. Mass, rosary, confession, candlelight procession, rosary, 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-924-1700.


Hamilton County 4-H Exhibiton Center, main hall, 2003 Pleasant Grove (Diocese of Lafayette). “Pray the Faith” Catholic Home 2005.” Home Educators, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mass, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Information: 317-924-1815.

June 26  Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stev- ens St., Indianapolis. Faith Formation. Benediction of the Saints with the Apostles and Saints from 7-8 p.m., Sunday mission for children 4 years and older, sessions for adults, 11:15-11:30 a.m. Information: 317-636-4748.

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Cathol ic Widow/ Widower Fellowship, 11 a.m. Mass, 11 a.m. Flap Jack Restaurant, 4904 S. Madison Ave., Indianapolis, brunch. St. Christopher Parish, 5301 W. 16th St., Indianapolis. Eucharist party, 1-4 p.m., $3 per person. Information: 317-619-8788.


MKVS and DM Center, Rex, 112ed 925 South 241, South Bend (south of Versailles). Mass, 3:30 p.m., Schoenstatt holy hour, 2:30 p.m., with Father Emilio Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail emilioray@cs.com or log on to Schoenstatt Website at www.schoenstattinfrubankin.org.

June 27-30  St. Jude Parish, 1827 S., 5 p.m.-close, Sun. 4 p.m.-close, Mass followed by rosary, 8 p.m. Information: 317-689-3551.


July 4  The Scecina Memorial High School, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis. Girls’ basketball festival, Fri.-Sat., grades 5-5, 11-11 a.m., grades 6-8, 3 p.m. first child, $20 each additional child, family of three or more. Information: 317-356-6377.

Scecina Memorial High School, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis. Baseball camp, 8-3, 1-3 p.m. Information: 317-924-8874.

“Events Calendar submissions should include the date, location, name of the event, sponsor, cost, time and contact information. All events must provide a phone number for more information. All informa- tion must be received by 5 p.m. on Thursday one week in advance of our Friday publication.

You may hand-deliver the notice to the archdiocesan Office of Pro- life Activities, 8:30 a.m. drive to Clinic for Women (abortion clinic), 3607 W. 16th St., Indianapolis, for rosary, return to church for Benediction.

Fourth Tuesdays Mary in the Rosary, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Catholic Widowed Support Group, 5 p.m. Information: 317-783-1445.

Fourth Wednesdays St. Thomas More Church, 1200 N. Indiana St., Mooresville. Mass and anointing of the sick. 6 p.m. Information: 317-831-4114.

VIPS... Stephen and Dorothy (Raver) Schieler, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on July 4. They will have a family celebration at their home in Greenwood. The couple was married on June 25, 1955, at St. John the Baptist Church and living in Indianapolis. They have five children.

Pat and Catherine (Fitzgerald) Shama- nan, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Beech Grove, will cele- brate their 50th wedding anniversary on July 8. They will have a family celebration at their home in Beech Grove. The couple was married on June 25, 1955 at the former St. James the Great Church in Indianapolis. They have six grandchildren.

Sally Edington, Maureen Okerson, Kathy Towery, Robert Schohoff and John Shana- n. They also had two sons, Joseph and Michael, who died as infants. They have 15 grandchildren.
Only the 193 bishops who head dioceses can vote on assessments. While 86 bishops present and voting approved the proposed increase, the 80 who voted against it defeated it, since passage required at least two-thirds approval—possibly only with 64 or fewer negative votes.

With a new translation due soon for the English version of the latest official Roman Missal in Latin, the Committee on Liturgy asked the bishops to approve a series of current U.S. adaptations in the Mass, in use for more than 30 years, in order to obtain the necessary prior Vatican approval, before the new English translation of the main Latin text is submitted for approval.

Despite the Vatican requirement that such adaptations get prior clearance, the bishops voted to defer action on the adaptations until they can study the new English translation, which is expected to be ready within the next few months.

In special elections the bishops:
- Elected Bishop Dennis M. Schnurr of Duluth, Minn., as conference treasurer until November, filling the vacancy left early this year when Archbishop James P. Keleher of Kansas City, Kan., retired. Bishop Schnurr was already treasurer-elect, due to start a three-year term as treasurer at the end of the bishops’ November meeting.
- Following up on a request to a group of U.S. bishops last year by the late Pope John Paul II, the bishops devoted about half an hour on June 16 to hearing presentations by three bishops on various aspects of that issue.

The bishops approved revised charters for the Protection of Children and Young People, and Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of St. Paul-Minneapolis told reporters at the final press conference of the bishops’ spring meeting, that he is looking for budget increases to increase the number of people who can work to protect children.

In a meeting the bishops appointed: Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York City as chairman of the Committee on Doctrine until 2006. It will serve the remainder of the term opened up by the resignation of Archbishop William J. Levada of San Francisco, who was recently appointed prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by Pope Benedict XVI.

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The bishops approved the revised charter, norms and episcopal commitment statement for five years, intending to hold the second meeting in November 2006. Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, U.S. leader of the mixed commission of Vatican and U.S. Church officials that drafted revisions, said the biggest change was adopting the definition of sexual abuse of minors found in the Code of Canon Law as the definition to be used in the norms.

Revisions said not to weaken charter and norms for child protection

Since the norms deal with legal procedures in the Church when a priest or deacon is accused of breaking the Church law against clerical sexual activity with minors, it only makes sense to have its own legal definition of the crime in the norms, he said.

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reflected more precision in legal terminology, such as inserting “canonical” before “due process” at one point and, at another point, inserting a note that an accused cleric “enjoys the presumption of innocense” during the investigation of the allegation.

The section on the applicability of the norms to clerics in religious orders was rewritten, with appropriate canon law references added, to state more clearly the autonomy of religious orders over the internal life of their community, while affirming the bishop’s authority to prohibit a religious who has abused a minor from engaging in any public ministry in his diocese.

The charter has been rewritten extensively to reflect the fact that its provisions have now been in place since June 2002. The main work of dioceses now is continuing implementation—not establishing new policies, programs, offices and other structures to meet charter requirements initially, as many dioceses had to do when it was first adopted.

In the revised charter, the relationship of the bishops’ conference and its officers with the National Review Board and USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection will be spelled out more clearly. Conference officials emphasized that changes in that area did not weaken the authority of the board, which monitors implementation of the charter in every diocese.

The original charter contained 17 articles spelling out specific projects, policies, programs and structures that the bishops would set up naturally and in their dioceses. These included:

- Removing from ministry any priests and deacons who have sexually abused minors.
- Reaching out to victims and their families pastorally and in other ways.
- Notifying civil authorities when suspicion exists that someone has engaged in any public ministry in his diocese.

Throughout the revision the future tense verbs of the original charter are changed to the present tense because the charter is already operational.

For example, “will be” has been changed to “are to be,” and references to creation of the review board and national office have been changed to reflect the fact that they have been established.

The revised preamble to the charter reflects what the bishops have done since 2002 to implement its policies and procedures.

On one of the most debated substantive issues, the revision remains firm: “For every single act of sexual abuse of a minor ... the offending priest or deacon is to be permanently removed from ministry and any granted, dismissed from the clerical state.”

When a reporter asked Archbishop Flynn about complaints from leaders of various dioceses, the archbishop said, “Look about you. See what has happened in the past three years and see what is going to happen in the next three.”

He said some victims’ groups have assisted the bishops in that work, but “there are others, that no matter what we did or said, it would not be satisfactory.”

The commitment of the bishops to protect children and root out sexual abuse “is evident in every vote and decision we make,” he said.

The “Statement of Episcopal Commitment” is a slight revision of one adopted in 2002. It notes that since bishops “are directly accountable to the Holy See,” the charter and special U.S. norms cannot be applied to bishops in the same way as it applies to priests and deacons.

“In cases of an allegation of sexual abuse of minors by bishops, we will apply the requirements of the charter also to ourselves, respecting always Church law as it applies to bishops,” it says. “In such cases we will inform the apostolic nuncio,” the papal representative to the United States.

The statement pledges the bishops to procedures and practices of moral responsibility to one another and mutual support and correction in helping one another interpret and implement the charter correctly.

Program of Priestly Formation raises bar on preparation for theology

CHICAGO (CNS)—After some debate over tougher seminary academic and formation standards, the U.S. bishops on June 17 adopted a revised Program of Priestly Formation by an overwhelming margin, 231-17.

If approved by the Vatican, it will replace the fourth edition of the program, which has served as norms for U.S. seminaries and seminary admission policies since 1992.

Most of the debate centered on language in the new document calling for a minimum of two years of pre-theology studies for new seminarians who got their college degree outside the seminary system.

The discussion also drew new attention to a long-expected Vatican document on the admission of homosexually oriented men to seminaries, raising speculation among journalists at the meeting about when that document may appear and what it will say. The discussion arose out of a statement in the new program that U.S. seminaries will follow.

Bishop John C. Nienstedt of New Ulm, Minn., chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Priestly Formation, led the subcommittee that drafted the fifth edition of the Program of Priestly Formation, introduced the revised program to the bishops on June 16 and guided the debate before the vote the following day.

Like earlier editions, the program will set national norms and principles that must be applied in all U.S. seminaries once it is approved by the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education, which oversees Catholic colleges, universities and seminaries around the world.

Bishop Nienstedt said at the Vatican’s request the bishops would seek to make the new document effective for a five-year period, anticipating that revisions will be in order following an approaching Vatican-supervised visitation of all U.S. seminaries to assess how well they form future priests in celibacy and related areas.

Like the fourth edition in 1992, the fifth edition of the program speaks of three dimensions of formation that seminarians must develop and integrate in their years of preparation for priesthood: intellectual, pastoral, spiritual and human. Those dimensions were spelled out by Pope John Paul II in Pastores Dabo Vobis (I Will Give You Shepherds), a 1992 document on priestly formation issued only months before the fourth edition was adopted.

One of the major insights in the papal document was its emphasis on “human formation”—the social, psychological, psycho-emotional and relational manners of the seminarian—as an integrating factor for the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation on which seminary programs traditionally focused.

Human formation gets stronger, more defined treatment in the new document than it got in 1992. The main section on formation for celibacy, for example, came under the heading of spiritual formation in 1992, but it is treated mainly under the human formation heading in the new edition.

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Smiles and clapping erupted from the 170 people who gathered at Holy Angels Parish Center in Indianapolis on June 5 to celebrate the African Catholic Church. A procession of 17 members of the African Catholic Ministry in the archdiocese began the 4 p.m. prayer service, “A Celebration of the African Family Tree.”

Natives of Cameroon, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo, Uganda and the United States carried a crucifix, a Bible, statues of Mary and Jesus, a photo of the Ugandan martyrs and the images of other African saints as the song “Ehinta Byooona Obheebwa Ruhanga” (“meaning everything is given to you by God and you ought to thank him”) was played.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix (IHMR) Sister Christine Nantaba led the prayers for “our people living in the four corners of the earth” with members of the assembly turning to the east, south, west and north. IHMR Sister Faustina Nansubuga of Uganda poured a libation and Florence Tchuisse of Cameroon held a bowl while Sally Stovall of Nigeria read prayers commemorating the gifts of previous generations and those who still struggle for justice. The assembly answered “Amen” meaning “so be it.” The “Praise God Alleluia” was sung in languages used in Nigeria, Uganda and Togo.

In his homily, Father Kenneth Taylor, director of the archdiocesan Office of Multicultural Ministry and pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish Center in Indianapolis, said that the lost sheep message of Matthew 18 is one that “repeats itself throughout Scripture and Christian history—that God is for all people and that not even one is to be lost.” He called this “an ongoing mission for us.”

“It strikes me that many people around the world and many people throughout history have thought of Africa as a lost continent,” said Father Taylor.

He told of the 2002 statement of the U.S. Bishops in solidarity with Africa, calling the U.S. Church to reach out to contribute and do whatever it can to make sure the love of God becomes a reality in that continent. In their commitment to peace, justice and development, the bishops called on the U.S. government to address present challenges and encourage future growth.

Father Taylor remembered that the late Pope John Paul II said, “Africa is not destined for death but for life.”

Since the time of the Apostles, Father Taylor said, the growing influence of the people of the Catholic Church in Africa has been felt throughout the world. Today, there are 210 million Catholics of African descent in the world. 130 million of them on the continent of Africa itself. In Latin America, there are 60 million Catholics of African descent. There are three million African-American Catholics in the U.S., 250 of them serving as priests. Six hundred native African priests serve here, he said.

Father Taylor explained that in the archdiocese includes refugee resettlement of people seeking to escape the violence and devastation of their native African countries, such as Sudan and Somalia.

Father Taylor said the archdiocese is trying to “make real Jesus’ message of no one being lost.” And he said that it is important that we have solidarity on an individual level. “Jesus came to bring salvation to all people.” Father Taylor said.

Intercessory prayers for the success of the 2006 African National Eucharistic Congress, for all families and for an end to war, disease, hunger and poverty in Africa and around the world were offered in languages spoken in Nigeria, Uganda and Togo.

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” was the closing song.

Eleven barefoot members of the archdiocesan African Catholic Ministry presented typical African dances, later inviting the audience to join them.

Father Clarence Waldon, pastor of Holy Angels Parish, led the prayers before the ethnic dinner, which included lamb, fish and chicken served with spinach, rice and yams.

Fifteen members of the ministry presented a style show, explaining how and where African natives wear the garments shown. The men and women models represented the Indianapolis parishes of Holy Angels, Holy Spirit, St. Andrew, St. Gabriel, St. Michael and SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

Sister Christine, chair of the African Catholic Ministry, said that one of the reasons for the ministry is to help African Catholic Church of Indianapolis.

“We settled here under a variety of circumstances, but all share the common faith,” said Sister Christine.

(Margaret Nelson is a member of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.)
The future parish staffing committee’s report is regarded by the archdiocese as a resource guide for making staffing decisions in the future. It suggests what the Archdiocese of Indianapolis might do between now and 2012. In no way do the report and its recommendations constitute a “master plan” that can’t be changed.

Following are the parish staffing recommendations:

**Bloomington Deanery**
- Current (2004): nine priests are serving the deanery
- By 2012: five priests serving the deanery
  - From two priests to one priest serving St. John the Apostle Parish, Bloomington
  - From two priests to one priest serving St. Louis Parish, Bloomington

**Indianapolis South Deanery**
- Current (2004): 17 priests are serving the deanery
- By 2012: 10 priests serving the deanery
  - From three priests to one priest serving Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Millhousen
  - From two priests to one priest serving St. Joseph Parish, Crawford County

**Tell City Deanery**
- Current (2004): five priests are serving the deanery
- By 2012: two priests serving the deanery
  - From three priests to two priests serving St. Joseph Parish, Crawford County

**Indianapolis East Deanery**
- Current (2004): 14 priests are serving the deanery
- By 2012: five priests serving the deanery
  - From three priests to two priests serving St. Louis Parish, Bloomington (being implemented)

**Indianapolis East Deanery**
- Current (2004): 14 priests are serving the deanery
- By 2012: five priests serving the deanery

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**Spanish bishops join thousands in protest against legalization of gay marriage**

MADRID, Spain (CNS)—Senior Spanish bishops joined along with hundreds of thousands of protesters in central Madrid, calling on the government to withdraw a bill that allows homosexual couples to marry and adopt children.

Under the slogan “The Family Matters,” printed on a massive banner held aloft by helium-filled balloons, the demonstrators filled the streets of central Madrid, flanked by his three auxiliary bishops, later suggested the government take note of the show of discontent.

The gay marriage and adoption bill comes before Spain’s upper house at the end of June.

The bill “would be better off withdrawn,” Cardinal Roque told reporters after the march.

The government of Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero has said it will not formally respond to the protesters, although it has criticized the participation of senior members of the opposition Popular Party.

The march was organized by the Spanish Forum for the Family, a nondenominational umbrella group that is made up of sizeable Spanish Catholic organizations. The forum spent months coordinating the travel of tens of thousands of people from across the country.

Homemade posters were scattered among thousands of balloons bearing the rally’s slogan: “Zapatero, I am a child not an experiment.”

The Spanish bishops’ conference had formally thrown its weight behind the demonstration some days before. This marked the latest move in the war of words between the Church and the government over a wide range of social policy proposals, which also include the relaxation of Spain’s abortion laws.

Together with Cardinal Roque, 9 bishops from across Spain joined the protesters, including the bishops’ conference vice president, Archbishop Antonio Canizares Llovera of Toledo. He heralded the high turnout of the march as a “huge success,” the Spanish Forum for the Family hailed the tens of thousands of families who participated.

The strategic planning committee report continues the work begun in 1989 when a Future Parish Staffing Committee of the Priests’ Personnel Board was appointed by the late Indianapolis Archbishop Edward F. Ike Mears.
Creation and humanity exist to give praise and glory to God

By Fr. John W. Crossin, O.S.F.S.

Appointments fill my calendar. Meetings with specialists fill my days. I rely on these specialists. I “put my faith” in their expertise.

I have little understanding of how the nervous system or cell phone works. When I have a problem, I look to my telephone or e-mail directory for the right name and address.

In affluent societies or groups, it is possible to live each day as if God does not exist. We rely on specialists to solve our problems. The government provides for social well-being. Technology provides rapid communication. The telephone rarely mentions God.

Sunday mornings can be occupied with a gigantic newspaper or branch. Conversations dwell on politics or personalities or the TV show “Survivor.”

Social events can focus on the quality of the wine or preparation and presentation of food.

This is not new. For centuries, people have put their trust in “other gods.” This is not to say that, when surveyed, people would say they don’t believe in God. Rather, it is that we can function on a day-to-day basis as if God does not exist.

We can, perhaps unconsciously, embrace a functional secularism in daily living, living 99 percent of the time as if God does not exist.

Filling our days this way does not get us farther away from the deeper issues of human living. War and good and evil, life and death stay at some distance from the gods of expertise, security and comfort. Yet, as we live our lives, deeper questions inevitably arise in our minds.

God’s inner call, the impulse of the Holy Spirit, can be obscured for some time, but God can be persistent—calling us to see the “bigger picture” and thus to grow spiritually.

One avenue of God’s grace can be through healing. Jesus healed people of their physical and spiritual ailments.

Today, we need inner healing beyond the scope of medicine. Most people care for them hurts from their past life that become the scars of living.

These can be an occasion for deeper reflection or turning to the Lord.

Usually, divine grace appears to work its way into our lives gradually.

St. Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, and St. Augustine experienced the voice telling him to “take and read” in the garden.

But these well-known cases are the exceptions, not the rule. God more often speaks in the “gentle breeze” of interior grace. Often, or so it seems to me, God is slow. Inner healing occurs over time. One aspect of our lives and then another is called into question and transformed.

Often, an experience of human limitation or death is the catalyst for reconsideration of our life’s direction. These can bring our vague disquietss into focus.

Some experiences are beyond the ministrations of specialists. They require the deeper direction of the Holy Spirit.

The guidance of the Spirit is not the “God of the Gaps” spoken of these days in the dialogue of science and religion. It is not God filling in where we have no scientific data.

But to accept the Spirit’s guidance is ultimately to adopt a total view of reality: God is sustaining all things. All of our expanding universe is in God.

Likewise God creates—most likely through evolution—and sustains all living things. The Spirit of God, Jesus Christ, offers a message of salvation from sin. He offers a most profound healing of our deepest alienation. He sends his Spirit to guide us and bring us peace.

In this context, other people are seen as gifts from God. We value the expertise of doctors and information technology professionals. Their intelligence and knowledge are gifts to use and value.

Each person has gifts. Our community is strongest when, in using these gifts, we contribute to the common good, give thanks to God for the gifts of others and seek to discern our own gifts, develop them and share them with the community.

We also thank God for social well-being and material prosperity. We try to live simply and extend prosperity to others on our planet who are not so fortunate.

Jesus Christ is our ultimate framework. Within this framework, we understand and value all people and all things. Each expertise, each good, each gift can be seen in proper perspective and with proper value. We see all in light of eternity, in light of our commitment to follow Christ.

All creation and all humanity exist to give praise and glory to God.

(Oblate Father John Crossin is executive director of the Washington Theological Consortium in Washington, D.C.)

Christians respect God’s gift of life

By Fr. Dale Launderville, O.S.B.

Our lives are limited, not only in length but also in terms of power. Jesus addressed this struggle between the forces of life and death. He made clear to his disciples that how they responded to the struggle between life and death would shape their self-understanding in a fundamental way.

While Jesus combated forces of disintegration by curing physical and emotional illnesses, he also resolutely accepted his destiny of crucifixion.

The belief that life is a gift sustained even in the midst of death has set the followers of Jesus apart through the centuries. Jesus followers fear the Lord, who invest only in this life fear the death-dealing forces that shorten earthly life. Often, the dangerous forces that we fear are wielded by people.

St. Paul feared the Lord so he explained how all the troubles that afflicted him were not reasons for despair, but rather signs that he was sharing in Christ’s suffering and death.

“We have this treasure in clay jars,” St. Paul said, “so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us” (2 Cor 4:7).

St. Paul teaches that the power bringing us life will be a power we cannot control. This teaching was challenging for early Christians, and seems even more difficult for Christians who live in today’s technologically advanced society.

The extraordinary power that St. Paul speaks of is still active in our time, but access to it is covered over by the remarkable displays of lesser powers under human control, such as in advances in medicine and information technology.

At the time of Jesus and Paul, the Roman imperial system was an invasive power in the Jewish people’s lives. Early Christians would have revered the mysterious forces of nature.

Christians are called to take seriously the maxim, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord” (Pr 11:10). If we have our priorities in order, our afflictions will be meaningful as a participation in Christ’s sufferings.

(Benedictine Father Dale Launderville is a Scripture scholar at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minn.)

Discussion Point

Helping others leads to progress

This Week’s Question

How do you define “human progress”? What is a contemporary sign of it?

“If people become more and more aware of other people, nationalities and races, and are concerned about helping, that’s real progress.” (Father Thomas Donnelly, M.M., Kamuela, Hawaii)

“If you measure progress is if we, as a community, are becoming more Christ-like in the exercise of our free will.” (Carolyn Hager, Washington, D.C.)

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: Why do you think freedom of religion is an important right today?

To respond for possible publication, send an e-mail to cgreen@catholicnews.com or write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.
Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

What happened to the good old summertime?

When we think of summertime, we often imagine all the fun we had as children. We think of books and movies, stuff like wearing a bathing suit, swimming, fishing with a bamboo pole in the Mississippi River and playing with a Tom Sawyer. All the lazy, hazy days of summer are before us and we think, whatever happened to that kind of summer?

Well, to tell the truth, I don’t think it ever existed, at least not since Tom Sawyer was alive. Probably, not even then.

The way I remember summer back in prehistoric times, I think it was always hot and sunny. There were grasshoppers forever jumping out of the long grass and nasty insects making the only sounds except for an occasional airplane going overhead.

Since I lived on a farm, the smell outside was not always related to flowers and shrubs. However, when Dad mowed the field there was a heavenly odor of mown grass and even better, alfalfa or clover.

Overhead, the skies were always that bright blue in Minnesota blue, with occasional clouds white cotton candy fluff.

Summer meant wearing shorts, riding my bike into town to go swimming in Lake Minnetonka and sleeping in a tent in the back yard with my girlfriend. I also spent a week every July with my grand- parents, and they had a serious farm, which included a bull, a very big deal indeed.

Ah yes, vacations. The way this went was, Dad made an itinerary for a certain area. There had to be enough mileage, available campgrounds and, most important, whatever historic sites were on the way coming and going. No matter how obscure.

Funds were limited, so we’d figure out what we could do on the limited amount of money allotted for all day. If we had to pay an unexpected emergency fee, one parents could do it for peanut butter sandwiches the next. There was a certain amount of grumbling among the troops, including me, but nothing has made me marvel as much as to wonderful into memories. Our family sits around now marveling at the fun we had. As we look back, the places we saw, we may have put summers in this pleasant light. For instance, I’d remember the ubiquitous poison- ous spiders that made me miserable for at least one month every summer.

Our kids would probably only remember the long car rides, with squabbling little brothers plastered hotly next to them, and drooling guides telling them all kinds of things they didn’t care to know about Fort Ticonderoga or Sutter’s Mill.

Even Mark Twain, in writing “Tom Sawyer,” perhaps before he left his Missouri childhood through a rosy lens. His summers seemed always relaxed and free, the great river ran majestically and the fishing was good.

Summers are just one more wonderful gift from our God. The memories stituated memories we take from them.

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenwich, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

Jesus in the Gospels: He fed the multitudes

In my two decades of writing for The Criterion, I have never blantly recommended a television program, this is the first time I do now. I suggest that readers tune their TV sets to PAX-TV program no matter what political orientation they may have. It is airing 7 p.m. (EDT), 8 p.m. (CDT).

I learned about this PAX-TV program through an e-mail from Grizzly Adams Productions (GAP), Inc., which for ten years has made family-friendly films. GAP’s message offered a preview of a program called “The White House.”

When I found out the actual DVD’s full title to be “George W. Bush: Faith in the White House,” my fear was this might be political propaganda; but it is not about politics. It is about faith, not only in the White House currently but with an historical overview about the faith of past presidents.

Also, I learned this. Every American president has mentioned God in his inaugural speech. (Of course, I then wondered why the name of God in prayer is tolerated in such a public setting but frowned upon when used in legislative sessions in the public schools. But that’s another story.)

The DVD taught me more than I ever knew about President Bush and his background. It also gives previously unknown insight into the spiritual life of America’s leader. And, I think I learned as well as that of his family and associates. Special, too, are the interviews with people of varied ages, including religious leaders, about Bush’s faith-in-action. One is a poignant but happy segment about a faith-filled seriously ill boy getting his wish to meet the president.

The correspondent Jonson Webb sums up the program well: “Nobody spends more time on his knees than George W. Bush. The Bush administration_hums to the sound of prayer. Prayer meetings take place day and night. It is not uncommon to see White House functionaries burning down cranberries and copying Bibles.

However, this revealing behind-the-scenes documentary is not all roses. It also frankly reveals the president’s not so exemplary past life, including the reason he made a personal decision to change at age 40.

I encourage readers to see this June 28 PAX-TV program. Many of Bush’s views are held. As I said before, this is not about politics. It is about faith. Bush is a Christian, and a great deal of information can be done through Grizzly Adams Productions, Inc., www.grizzlytv.com; 800-811-0548.

Faith in the White House reminded me of writer Frederick William Faber’s well- known words for the hymn, “Faith of our Fathers.” The original third stanza reflected Faber’s Catholic roots: “Faith of our fathers, Mary’s prayers/Thou shalt win our country back to thee.” That reminds us to also place our nation’s future into the loving care of Christ’s Blessed Mother.

(Shirley Vogler Meister, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

Perspectives

Celebrating our interdependence on July 4th

Coming up to the end of June, many of us might already be talking about Independence Day. I know that various families will be celebrating, perhaps neighbor’s families have decided to do so.

I’ve seen signs pointing to stores that seem to pop up overnight, with bottle rockets, selling all kinds of fireworks. And I’ve already heard talk about the low-level explosives shot off in nearby backyards.

It is the celebration of our independence that we celebrate on the Fourth of July is a good thing. That freedom from the king of England for which our ancestors fought bravely over 200 years ago points to a fundamental independence of each human person.

Created in the image and likeness of God, each person has an inalienable dignity which is the foundation of our nation’s founders call us to defend in our own day.

But being made in the image of God means that there is something in our humanity that is mysterious. We are not independent of the world. We have found dignity written into our uniqueness. We are also interdependent creatures whose fulfillment can only come by being in relationship with others.

Just as Jesus’ life here on earth was made complete when he poured himself out fully of love for us in his death on the cross, so each one of us who are baptized Christians will discover the ultimate meaning of our lives only when we give of ourselves in service to others.

Our families gather together to celebrate our independence, it is important for us to honor our interdependence as well.

Healthy family life is defined by interdependency. No one member of a family is defined independently of the other members. Each, from the youngest baby to the oldest parent, contributes to the flourishing of all. Independence is not about being defined when parents provide for all of the material needs of their children. But children play a critical role in the sanctification of their parents.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us “It is defined by the growth in holiness of their parents” (2227). It goes on to say that this happens in the gratitude of everyday life. The blessed presence of children into a home spurs parents to be more generous and to forgive constantly.

“Mutual affection suggests this,” the Catechism says, “The charity of Christ demands as such.”

But as vital as interdependence within a family is to the salvation of each of its members, we must not lose sight of the fact that our individuality extends beyond the bounds of the home to other families as well.

As we go from time to time, parental care can find it especially difficult to give to themselves to each other. At times work demands upon them, as well as the developmental stage in a child’s life might make life in the home more tedious. But being made in the image of God has to grace to overcome these troubles through the example and support given to them by other families who are living it out in the midst of their own problems in the past.

In any case, no matter how much help one family might receive from another, every family has something to contribute to the good of another, even those who on the surface appear to be doing well.

Independence Day is often a time when families gather together to enjoy each other’s company. Perhaps this July 4th they could give thanks for the interdependence that each has with the other.
**Sunday, June 26, 2005**

- **2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a**
- **Romans 6:3-4, 8-11**
- **Matthew 10:37-42**

Second Kings provides the first reading for this weekend’s liturgy. Originally, First and Second Kings were one volume. As readers have no access to the con- tinuation of the Scriptures, this one vol- ume was divided into two books. The title of these Books implies that they concentrate, maybe even exclusively, upon the three kings—Saul, David and Solomon—who successively governed the united king- dom of Israel. In fact, prophets are the central figures as much as kings in these books.

An example of this is the reading for this weekend. Elisha is the principal fig- ure. To understand Elisha’s appearance in this reading, it helps to have a good understanding of the culture and thinking of his time.

First, then as throughout Hebrew and Jewish history, the coming of children into the lives of parents was regarded as an extraordinarily blessed gift from God. Even if their very unappreciated knowledge of biology, the ancients knew how babies came to be and also realized that some people could not physically parent babies. If no children came, people did not suspect a medical problem, as people would today, but presumed that for some reason God was not blessing them.

This is the background of the worry of the couple in this reading. They wanted a son. None seemed to be forthcoming, and they were aging. They recognized Elisha and trusted God. Speaking with the assurance of God, Elisha promised that soon they would be the parents of a son. St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading for this Sunday. It is a marvelous testimony to the fun- damental Christian belief that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of all, and the one and indispensable mediator and reconciler between God and humanity. He is the Redeemer. An added consideration is that in and through baptism Christians actually bond with Jesus in a miraculous and powerful way.

For its last reading, the Church pre- sents us with a selection from St. Matthew’s Gospel.

As was the case last weekend, the Lord is blunt and direct. He again is men- tioned as speaking to the Apostles, those most special students commissioned by Jesus to continue the work of redemption. Jesus insists that to be truly faithful, any disciple must be prepared to leave mother or father, son or daughter, even husband or wife, if a relationship threat- ens Christian steadfastness.

Also as noted last weekend, the Gospels, including Matthew, were written generations after Jesus. Risks awaited those persons who turned to Christ. Christianity required hard decisions, very hard decisions indeed, but turning to the Lord is the only truly wise choice.

**Reflection**

The stories of conversion to Christianity or of devotion in living the Christian life have their mention of sharp divisions within households and families. It probably was a problem in the first century A.D. One old legend, true or not, has it that the Roman authorities were able to find and arrest Peter, the leader of Rome’s Christian community, because an insider in this community led the police to the Apostle.

Perhaps now such stark occasions of treachery and doom are rare, at least in this American society. However, it is not rare that Christians find conflict between the Gospel and the secular culture in which they live each day. Certainly, in so many instances, conventional wisdom belittles Christianity. In the Gospel, Jesus warned that con- flicts would occur for Christians. Whatever the conflicts, whatever the costs, true discipleship means, as St. Paul wrote in the second reading, that Christians literally are part of Jesus and Jesus is part of them.

He is the Son of God, and God can overcome every obstacle to protect and bless the righteous, as the couple who hosted Elisha were surprised to discover.†

**My Journey to God**

Flowers Blooming in the Desert

I am searing and arid fragile and parched says the desert.

undulating sun beats down on me

unending wind blows my sand

thorny shrubs and cactus

grow within my realm

scorpions and snakes

lay in wait

I am a world of silence and shadow colored by sun and moon

then an unexpected rain begins the rain

water to open my soul

rain

as blessings falling from heaven

feeding my fragility

through no effort of my own

flowers blossom and soft animals

Trudy Bledsoe is a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis and the Order of Secular Discalced Carmelites at the Monastery of the Resurrection in Indianapolis.

![Trudy Bledsoe](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

make me their home

I am overcome by the living loving touch of the Creator

Trudy Bledsoe

**Daily Readings**

**Monday, June 27**

- **Cyril of Alexandria, bishop and doctor**
- **Genesis 18:16-33**
- **Psalm 103:1-4, 8-11**
- **Matthew 8:18-22**

**Tuesday, June 28**

- **Irenaeus, bishop and martyr**
- **Genesis 19:13-29**
- **Psalm 26:2-3, 9-12**
- **Matthew 8:25-27**

**Wednesday, June 29**

- **Peter and Paul, Apostles**
- **Acts 3:1-10**
- **Psalm 19:2-5**
- **Matthew 16:13-19**

**Thursday, June 30**

- **The First Holy Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church**
- **Genesis 22:1b-19**
- **Psalm 115:1-6, 8-9**
- **Matthew 9:1-8**

**Friday, July 1**

- **Blessed Junipero Serra, priest**
- **Genesis 23:1-4, 19, 24:1-8, 9-27**
- **Psalm 106:1-5**
- **Matthew 9:13-19**

**Saturday, July 2**

- **Genesis 27:28-35, 15-20**
- **Psalm 135:1-6**
- **Matthew 9:14-17**

**Sunday, July 3**

- **Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- **Zechariah 9:9-10**
- **Psalm 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14**
- **Romans 8:24-25**
- **Matthew 11:25-30**

**Question Corner/Fr. John Dietzen**

Mass offerings acknowledge God’s graciousness, wisdom

Q

I am a priest, 76 years old, and would like your comments on what I see as a decline in giving offerings for Masses for the dead. The one funeral Mass, of course, has eternal and infinite value, but my per- sonal opinion is that souls can give merits of additional Masses to whomever he or she wishes. Is that bad theology?

The one funeral Mass is regarded as “applied” by God to when that person was alive. This understanding, clumsy as human words always are when dealing with things of God, is reflected often in the Church’s liturgies and prayers for the deceased.

Second, and more important, our prayers for loved ones who have died are also, in fact primarily, prayers of thanks, praising God for his unfailing goodness, particularly that person and to all oth- ers who were blessed by his or her life.

It is a wonderful and reverent way of acknowledging God’s graciousness and wisdom, shown in our care and service of one another.

For these reasons, and there are more, our continued prayers for and with those who have gone before us may offer an excellent psychological and spiritual common sense.

In my experience, people of faith eas- ily pick up on them if we help them understand what they are doing.†

**Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column**

The Criterion invites readers to sub- mit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for pos- sible publication in the “My Journey to God” column.

Seasonal reflections also are appre- ciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with sub- missions.

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 Friday, June 24, 2005**

Page 13
By Mary Ann Wyand

Indiana Death Row inmate Michael Allen Lambert, who was convicted of killing a Muncie police officer in December 1990, was granted a stay of execution on June 17 by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to allow time to review legal discrepancies in his trial and questions about his sentencing hearing. The 34-year-old Lambert was scheduled to be executed by chemical injection at 12:01 a.m. on June 22 at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Ind. His fate remained uncertain until early afternoon on June 21 due to the pending status of his attorneys’ legal appeal seeking to grant him at least a temporary stay of execution.

Lambert was convicted of shooting Muncie Police Officer Gregg Winters five times in the back of his head on Dec. 28, 1990, while he was handcuffed in the back of a police car.

Winters had arrested Lambert for public intoxication following a traffic accident and was transporting him to the jail at the time of the shooting. He died 11 days later.

His capital sentence was decided by a judge rather than a jury due to Indiana’s death penalty law, which may affect the legality of his sentencing procedure.

At the time of the federal circuit court’s ruling last Friday, Indiana Parole Board members were hearing testimony from the public about Lambert’s capital case and appeal in an assembly room at the Indiana Government Center in Indianapolis.

During a break in the parole board hearing, Molly Winters told The Courier that she has forgiven Lambert for killing her husband, but still believes that justice should be served and he should be executed for his crime.

“It’s a very overwhelming process,” Winters said of the death of her husband and the subsequent trial. She raised their now teenage sons, Kyle and Brock, as a single parent.

That anger and that pain is a part of your life,” Winters said. “When I went to meet with Michael Lambert [at the Indiana State Prison], I went in there still with every ounce of hatred inside of me that I had from one day.”

“In the process of talking to him though,” she said, “I just found answers to questions I needed to hear, and him telling me what he needed to say to me, there was just a calming effect that came over me. It is very much the grace of God being with me.”

Winters said she asked Lambert, “Where are you with God because you don’t need my forgiveness? When you die, you don’t stand in front of me for judgment, you stand in front of God, and where are you with God?”

“Where were you with God, and what did you do,” she asked, “because you don’t need my forgiveness? When you die, you don’t stand in front of me for judgment, you stand in front of God, and where are you with God?”

She said Lambert “told me he was good. He believed in God. He accepted God. He knew his punishment was going to be death, and he was ready to accept that.”

“We talked for a while longer,” Winters said, “...and there was this calming effect that came over me, and something inside just made me look him in the eye and tell him, forgive you for what you’ve done to me and my family. I’ll never forget, but I do forgive you. But I do still expect you to pay for your punishment, and that punishment being you will pay with your life.”

Winters said she wishes her sons could have celebrated Father’s Day and other holidays with their father during their childhood years.

Seventeen-year-old Kyle Winters will be a senior at Greenfield Central High School in Greenfield and plans to major in forensic accounting at Indiana University in Bloomington so he can help law enforcement personnel solve crimes.

“Lambert owned up to his crime,” Kyle said after the Indiana Parole Board hearing on June 17, “which I thought was good because many people don’t do that. He said he that he would give his life, and also that he was ready to die and that he knew that his time was coming.”

The Catholic Church teaches that life in prison without parole is an appropriate punishment in capital cases. In March, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops announced a new educational campaign to end the use of the death penalty.
While the 1992 edition focused more on the theology of celibacy, the new document places more emphasis on the concrete skills, attitudes, behaviors and supports needed to build an effective, mature commitment to a chaste, celibate life.

Besides giving fuller treatment to the different types of formation in seminaries, the fifth edition significantly expands its discussion of admission requirements.

One new element is the statement, “Any evidence of criminal sexual activity with a minor or an inclination toward such activity disqualifies the applicant from admission.”

The admission norm is reinforced with a formation norm that says, “Any credible evidence in the candidate of a sexual attraction to children necessitates an immediate dismissal.”

The 1992 program made no specific mention of homosexuality, but the new one says, “With regard to the admission of candidates with same-sex experiences and/or inclinations, the Church has already expressed its concern.”

The admission norm is reinforced with a formation norm that says, “Any evidence of criminal sexual activity with a minor or an inclination toward such activity disqualifies the applicant from admission.”

The new version’s section on admission is more explicit about the seminary’s obligations under canon law to determine an applicant’s freedom from legal barriers to ordination.

The criteria for admission to the ongoing formation of priests after ordination must be met before such an applicant can be readmitted as a candidate for priesthood.

One late addition to the final document was a far more explicit demand that substantive Latin studies be added to the curriculum of college seminaries and pre-theology programs, reflecting the reality that Latin is the primary language of most of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Church in the West.

The bishops voted 175-42 in favor of Bishop DiMarzio’s call to change “must” in that sentence to “should.”

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