Holy Father’s Lenten message says almsgiving helps Christians conquer greed

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Almsgiving helps Christians conquer the constant temptation to become slaves to wealth and material goods, Pope Benedict XVI said in his 2008 message for Lent.

The practice of almsgiving “represents a specific way to assist those in need and, at the same time, an exercise in self-denial to free us from attachment to worldly goods,” the pope said in the message, released at the Vatican on Jan. 29.

The theme of the message is “Christ Made Himself Poor for You.” Lent begins Ash Wednesday, which this year is on Feb. 6. Easter is on March 23.

Jesus recognized that material riches possess an enormous “force of attraction,” but he was resolute in confirming “how categorical our decision must be not to make of them an idol,” the pope said.

“Almsgiving helps us overcome this constant temptation, teaching us to respond to our neighbor’s needs and to share with others whatever we possess through divine goodness,” he said.

The Lenten season is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, which aid in “inward cleansing” that allows the Christian to welcome Easter with renewed spirit, he said.

The pope said he wanted this year’s message to reflect on almsgiving so that it would not be an empty, loveless gesture of philanthropy or an egotistical attempt for attention or applause.

“There is little use in giving one’s personal goods to others if it leads to a heart puffed up in vainglory,” he said.

Christian almsgiving must be hidden and, as everything, “must be done for God’s glory and not our own,” he added.

He said countries where the population is mostly Christian have an even more urgent call to share “since their responsibility toward the many who suffer poverty and abandonment is even greater.”

Standing up for life

Youths come out in large numbers for annual March for Life

By Bryce Bennett

WASHINGTON—The day was cold and rainy, but the mood of the thousands of marchers at the 35th annual March for Life on Jan. 22 in the nation’s capital could not have been more optimistic and spiritual about the rights of the unborn.

According to a recent study conducted by the Guttmacher Institute, a Planned Parenthood affiliate based in New York, pro-life supporters have reason to feel optimistic. The number of abortions declined to 1.2 million in 2005, a figure that is 25 percent below the 1.6 million abortions in 1990 and is the lowest level reported since 1.179 million in 1976, according to a study released on Jan. 17.

The Guttmacher Institute report also shows the abortion rate, the number of abortions per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, was down to 19.4 for 1,000 women—the lowest it has been since 1974.

Benedictine Sister Cathy Anne Lepore, a religion teacher at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, who took part in the national March for Life for the ninth time, credits prayer traditionally to the pro-life movement has seen gains in recent years.

“I think prayer is the foundation stone for this movement,” Sister Cathy Anne said. “It is a peace and prayer movement.”

Andy Proctor, a seminarian at the Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary at Marian College in Indianapolis, agreed.

“Prayer is so important. In the Gospels, Jesus uses prayer as his daily bread. It’s an integral part of God,” said Proctor, who is a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

Another key element helping the pro-life movement gain momentum in recent years is the tireless work done by a new generation of young people who are excited about working for life in all of its forms, Sister Cathy Anne said.

“Every year, I continue to see the [March for Life] crowd getting younger. See MAUCH, page 2.

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes to begin on Feb. 3

By Sean Gallagher

Catholics across the archdiocese are invited to take part in a nine-day period of prayer traditionally called a novena for Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein and all of the sick. It will start on Feb. 3 and conclude on Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, one of the Church’s primary patron saints of the sick.

Since 1993, Feb. 11 has also been observed by the Church as the World Day of the Sick. This special archdiocesan novena has, in part, been initiated because of the recent discovery that Archbishop Buechlein is suffering from Hodgkin’s lymphoma, a cancer affecting the lymphatic system.

However, Msgr. Joseph F. Schaedel, vicar general, said that the archbishop’s illness can be a reminder of the need to pray for all the sick.

“I can’t think of a person who hasn’t been affected by cancer among their family or friends,” Msgr. Schaedel said. “There are just so many people we hear about who have cancer or some other very serious illness. And we really do need to pray for them.”

Msgr. Schaedel said the novena prayer could be prayed by individuals, groups of Catholics, or before or after parish Masses or in schools.

The archdiocesan novena will conclude on Feb. 11 with a special Mass in observance of the World Day of the Sick starting at noon at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1400 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis.

Msgr. Schaedel is scheduled to be the primary celebrant. All priests are invited to concelebrate at the Mass and are asked to bring their jubilee vestments for the liturgy.
and younger,” she said. “The demographics of the march have gotten younger.”

Sister Cathy Anne thinks it is part of a generation shift back to a more moderate thought process. “These are the kids of the baby boomers. The baby boomers had the ‘free love’ movement,” she said. “This generation has seen the effects of that and the pendulum has swung back.”

Father Jonathan Meyer, archdiocesan director of youth ministry, thinks many young people look at abortion on an individual level. “I think that young people take abortion personally,” said Father Meyer, who also serves as associate pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “That could be because young people can relate the most to these unborn babies.”

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis sent more than 500 representatives to Washington for the march. This included high school students, priests, seminarians, women religious, teachers, youth ministers, parental chaperones and Marian College students.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly teens from around the country, participated in the march, which started at the National Mall, continued along Constitution Avenue and concluded at the Supreme Court building on Capitol Hill.

“Trolls were enormous,” said Servants of the Gospel of Life Sister Diane Carollo, director of the archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, who worked with Father Meyer on arrangements for the March for Life pilgrimage.

“The number of youths increases every year,” Sister Diane said. “The numbers were astounding. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was overflowing for the Mass for Life on Jan. 21. What this shows is that the youth of this country are pro-life and so the eventual overturn of Roe v. Wade is a given. These are our future voters, and we can see where they stand in terms of supporting life. They choose life.”

Many in the pro-life movement have credited the Church for its improved teaching methods and pro-life message on this new generation of young people.

“The Church has taken a strong stance on the issue,” Father Meyer said. “They have shared the message of life with others. This includes discussions of adoption and other life-based options.”

Michelle Culver, 17, a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville, credits her parish for educating her about the facts of abortion.

“The things I have learned through my Church and through my youth minister, Marianne Hawkins, have been a huge influence on me,” Michelle said.

The challenge for march participants and other pro-life advocates remains to continue this momentum and expand it into their everyday lives.

One of the ways they can help with this effort is by attending the Archdiocesan Pro-Life Youth Council’s spaghetti dinner and movie from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Feb. 22 in Priori Hall at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., in Indianapolis. The cost is $10 per person.

The dinner program’s focus will be on the late Pope John Paul II and his ministry.

During the program’s intermission, Pro-Life Youth Council members will show a documentary showcasing this year’s pilgrimage to the annual March for Life in Washington.

Archdiocesan participation in the pro-life pilgrimage went extremely well again this year, Sister Diane said, because of the dedicated volunteer service of the priests, bus captains, teachers and youth ministers.

“There is cohesion and a sense of continuity about the pilgrimage,” she said. “The spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage is constantly reinforced, and the behavior of the teenagers is outstanding. The witness that the [adult] chaperones give them is so authentic. It really is a pilgrimage experience.”

Although there continues to be a struggle to protect life as a result of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion on demand in the United States 35 years ago, Father Meyer sees an end to this injustice on the horizon. He also sees a movement that will continue to grow in numbers and support because of its message of respecting and protecting life for everyone.

“The movement will continue to grow and will win,” Father Meyer said, “because life always conquers death.”

(Mary Ann Wyand contributed to this story.)

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As the beginning of Lent nears on Feb. 6, The Criterion is asking readers to share how they make this season more meaningful.

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**Lenten disciplines include fasting, almsgiving, prayer.**

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Ash Wednesday is Feb. 6.

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those who are bound by this may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

The special Paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday. By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the Church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday, which is March 20.1

The archdiocesan pro-life pilgrimage.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis sent more than 500 representatives to Washington for the march. This included high school students, priests, seminarians, women religious, teachers, youth ministers, parental chaperones and Marian College students.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly teens from around the country, participated in the march, which started at the National Mall, continued along Constitution Avenue and concluded at the Supreme Court building on Capitol Hill.

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Ministry’s goal is saving babies’ lives and women’s souls

By Mary Ann Wyand

It was 8 degrees with a wind chill warning of minus 9 degrees at 10 a.m. on Jan. 19.

St. Joan of Arc parishioner Patty Yeaton of Indianapolis huddled inside her hooded woolen coat as she walked back and forth in front of the Clinic for Women, an abortion facility on West 16th Street in Indianapolis, early that Saturday morning.

As a volunteer pro-life sidewalk counselor for Truth and Compassion Ministry in Indianapolis, Yeaton had arrived at the west side abortion clinic at 7 a.m. and — in spite of the frigid weather — planned to stay until 1:30 p.m. in the hope of saving babies’ lives and women’s souls.

Yeaton was happy when volunteers for the archdiocesan Helpers of God’s Precious Infants arrived at the abortion center to pray five decades of the rosary along the sidewalk in front of the building.

She joined in their prayers with gratitude — all the while watching for women to arrive at the facility — and said later that it gave her spiritual strength for her pro-life ministry on a very cold day.

“It helps immensely,” Yeaton said of the Helpers’ prayers. “It’s like a spiritual lift. The minute [the Helpers] show up, everything changes. There’s just a sense of warmth and a sense of strength and a sense of the presence of God.”

Asking whether she was holding up after three hours of standing outside in the sub-zero wind, Yeaton said, “I’m just grateful that God keeps us obedient to the call that he has placed upon our lives. It’s nothing any of us do. It’s him making sure that we know where we’re supposed to be and making sure we’re out here.”

Truth and Compassion Ministry volunteer sidewalk counselor Catherine Thomas, who is a member of Freedom Temple Church of God in Indianapolis, also arrived at the clinic at 7 a.m. and planned to stay until another sidewalk counselor arrived later that morning.

“The freezing [weather] doesn’t bother me,” Thomas said. “It’s the lives that are important to me. Homeless people are in worse conditions than this so I just count it as a privilege to serve the Lord.”

Thomas said she is happy to do God’s work, and believes that God and the Holy Spirit will minister to the people inside the abortion clinic.

“We’re just instruments of the Lord,” she said, “and we believe that he’s doing the work.”

Servants of the Gospel of Life Sister Diane Carollo, the director of the archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, coordinates the Helpers of God’s Precious Infants ministry.

The Helpers’ pro-life prayers begin at 8:30 a.m. with Mass and continue with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, said this year’s papal message for Lent underlined the importance of the non-profit prayers being and spirit of the person doing the giving.

“The value of our donation is not measured according to the numbers of people inside the abortion clinic. … The value “does not hinge on the size of the wallet it comes out of, but on the thoughts and intentions that prompted the giving,” said the cardinal, whose office promotes Catholic charitable giving and distributes aid in the pope’s name.

Cardinal Cordes asked that donors also be aware of how much of their contribution goes to the intended project, and up what goes to cover overhead and administrative costs.

However, Catholic charities have also pay witness to God’s loving mercy.

St. Anthony parishioner Debbie Miller of Indianapolis, who founded the Healing Hidden Hurts post-abortion reconciliation ministry, said she appreciated Father Johnson’s homily at the Helpers’ Mass.

(“His” homily was balanced with concern for those wounded by abortion as well as protecting the unborn and having respect for all life,” Miller said. “Since one in four women have abortions in their past, any time you speak about abortion it’s an opportunity to plant seeds of hope and healing for those who may be suffering in silence.”)
The question to ask yourself before Ash Wednesday

Father Craig was the pastor of my parish a few years ago, and I still remember him well for the focused little sermons he gave. His homilies were among the shortest and best I’ve ever heard. He didn’t waste time in repetition or pious verbiage. He used simple, declarative sentences that got right to the point. And the point was always a good and true one—something that I would often take home and chew on during the week. How many homilies can you honestly say that about?

There’s one homily Father Craig gave that I still remember and think about now and then. As Lent approaches, it nags at me with the fundamental question: What am I looking for?

Father Craig’s sermons would always begin with a personal vignette, usually humorous, sometimes more sobering.

Once, he told us that his grandfather was hanging on during a terminal illness, waiting for Father Craig, on loan to us from a Midwestern diocese, to come home.

But the homily I remember best began with Father Craig telling us about the day that he and his cousin were outside playing basketball. They were teenagers then, and in the course of their game one of the cousin’s contact lenses was knocked out of his eye.

Remember the old days of “hard” contact lenses? If you’re old enough to remember, you know they were not disposable.

You bought a pair in the hopes that it would serve you for a year or two—just like a pair of glasses—because a replacement would set you back quite a few bucks. Some people even took out contact lens insurance.

I remember searching the bathroom floor for my own lens. Once, I even retrieved one from the bathroom drain with a straw covered in nylon and a vacuum hose. Soccer games were even halted while both teams searched for one kid’s lens.

So when the cousin’s contact fell out, Craig’s basketball stopped bouncing and both boys were on the ground, carefully maneuvering their hands and knees as they searched for the tiny lens.

At last, they got up and went into the house, where they got something to drink and told Craig’s uncle what happened.

“My uncle immediately went outside and started to look for that lens,” said the priest, “but my uncle was looking for a hundred dollars.”

I’m not sure if the Gospel reading that day was the lost sheep or the lost drachma, but Father Craig made his point: We’ll truly search and we’ll not stop searching for what we really want to find, for what truly holds value for us.

I see that story as a metaphor for the Lenten journey that lies ahead. I can approach it casually, with the self-help kind of resolution that might net me a five-pound weight loss. I can show up at a few extra Masses or the weekly Stations of the Cross.

But am I doing these things because I’m on a quest for the central value of my life? What are we searching for? For meaning and purpose, for meaning and purpose.

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinions among the People of God” (Communio et Progressus, 116).

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

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Contact lenses (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

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

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1717. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
Lent is a fresh opportunity to deepen our conversion to Jesus

La Cuaresma es una nueva oportunidad para profundizar nuestra conversión a Jesús

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sh Wednesday is less than a week away. Lent arranges extraordinarily early on our 2008 calendar. Over the years, I have learned to consider Lent a season of great importance to the Church, and certainly to get our spiritual act together once again. I look on it as a fresh opportunity to get our proverbial “head and heart” straight about what counts in the stuff of everyday life. I fear that we don’t want to think this sound like one more self-centered opportunity to get caught up in ourselves because there is too much of that around already. Instead, getting our heads and hearts straight about what counts in life does the opposite: it helps us see more clearly something we already know but can easily forget—namely, that we are not the center of the world. God is.

This view of life is freeing because it is true. While it is so obvious, it is not a view that stays with us naturally. I think that is true of most folks.

This annual gift for new freedom in the stuff of everyday life is expressed in the call of Lent: “Repent and return to the Gospel.”

The Gospel is the Good News about the way that leads us to God. Jesus showed us as the way by his teaching and his own way of life.

Before he began his spiritual ministry with the call, “Repent and believe in the good news.” A combination of speaking the word and service (almsgiving) has become the traditional program for our observance of Lent.

Fasting is a tremendous practice that has almost been lost in our culture except to trim wastelimes and purify the body’s system. One spiritual writer calls fasting “a focus of the heart” and says maybe it is time to reconsider the value of fasting as an act of worship.

Fasting is a way of saying “God, you are the center of my life.” It is a way of saying God is our nourishment. Rightly understood, we can say fasting is a form of prayer.

In addition to abstinence from meat on Fridays, I suggest that we fast at least one day per week as a form of prayer and a reminder that God is the center of all life and we need to turn to him in our need. Further, I suggest that each of those fast days be offered up for some person in need of our love and support in prayer.

In his most recent encyclical letter on hope, Pope Benedict XVI, in a suffused flow of words, says “it is timely to renew the devout practice of offering up prayers and sacrifices for others.”

Some people are quick to point out that fasting is negative and old-fashioned. The better thing is to do some positive good work or service for another. The wisdom of the Church calls us to do both. Fasting and almsgiving, fasting and good works are age-old companion Lenten practices. It is our more recent society that wants to see fasting as something without value. In fact, fasting is a positive practice.

Almsgiving can take many forms. Giving to others out of our own need—and not merely from what we have left over—is the true intent of this practice.

I find that performing extra good works of love, especially for those who we may not particularly like, is the true test of good works. Day in and day out, there are numerous unexpected opportunities to do the loving thing for others.

One of the most important good works we might do during this season of special grace is to review and evaluate our practice of prayer.

Are we faithful in attendance and do we participate at Sunday Mass? Might we not attend Mass more frequently during this Lenten season? Do we pray at home? Do we support each other, especially our young folks, in faith and prayer? When was the last time we made the Way of the Cross? Is it an inspiring Lenten devotion? Are you familiar with the Twelve-Step Recovery Program of Alcoholics Anonymous? The fourth step calls for a completely honest and courageous moral inventory of one’s life. The fifth step, in effect, calls for a confession following on the heels of that inventory.

Lent is a season during which we can accept the special grace and help we need to evaluate honestly and courageously our way of life from a moral perspective.

Confession is freeing. In this season of special grace, let’s deepen our conversion to Jesus, and truly prepare for an Easter renewal of our baptismal promises and vocation.

It may be the chance of a lifetime! May you have an intention for Archbiishop Buechlein’s prayer list. You may mail it to him at:

Archbishop Buechlein’s Prayer List
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1400 N. Meridian St.
P.O. Box 1410
Indianapolis, IN 46202-1410

The Criterion Friday, February 1, 2008

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.

Seeking the Face of the Lord

Buscando la cara del Señor

Lent is a fresh opportunity to deepen our conversion to Jesus

LA CUARESMA ES UNA NUEVA OPORTUNIDAD PARA PROFUNDIR NUESTRA CONVERSIÓN A JESÚS

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Novices profess vows at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Benedictine Novices Kyle Cothern and Craig Wagner professed temporary vows as monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey during a liturgy on Jan. 20 at the monastery’s church in St. Meinrad.

Kyle Cothern, 24, was born in Kokomo, Ind., where he attended Kokomo High School. He was a member of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in the Lafayette Diocese. He earned a bachelor’s degree in music theory and composition at Ball State University and was a member of St. Joan of Arc parishioner Denis Ryan Kelly Jr. of Indianapolis, a professional photographer who has traveled to holy places all over the world, has a new photo exhibit titled “Holy Lands—Journeys of Faith.” Kelly is raising funds to take the exhibit to the Holy Land.

The exhibit features images and stories from holy sites in Israel, Japan, Italy and the Americas. Kelly is raising funds to take the exhibit to the Holy Land.

Pro-life members of the Louisville and southern Indiana communities will participate in “a 40 Days for Life” prayer and fasting campaign during Lent. The campaign will begin with an opening rally at 7:15 p.m. on Feb. 5 at Our Mother of Sorrows Church, 6706 Eastern Parkway, in Louisville. This rally will begin 40 days of prayer and fasting, with special attention to prayer outside the abortion facility at 138 W. Market St. in Louisville as well as various types of community outreach,” said Jenny Hutchinson, a spokesperson for the Louisville Pro-Life Network. “The purpose of a ‘40 Days for Life’ campaign is to start by drawing the members of the communities together to share the vision of ‘40 Days for Life’ and to pray for God’s blessings on this effort,” Hutchinson said. “It is time to focus attention on the harm abortion has done…” We look forward to seeing what kind of transformation God will bring about in [Louisville] and southern Indiana. The ‘40 Days for Life’ campaign is an intensive pro-life effort that focuses on 40 days of prayer, fasting, peaceful vigils at abortion facilities and prayer in public, educational outreach programs. This effort by faith communities in Louisville and southern Indiana is one of more than 50 simultaneous campaigns in 31 states from Feb. 6 through March 16. For more information, send an e-mail to Hutchinson at jhutch1216@gmail.com.

Correction

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Pharmacists’ conscience clause bill defeated in Senate

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

A bill that would have allowed pharmacists to follow their conscience and refuse to dispense drugs that result in abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide or mercy killing was defeated in a deadlock vote (24-24) in the Indiana Senate on Jan. 24.

One by one, nearly a dozen senators approached the microphone to voice concerns or explain why they supported or opposed the bill in a floor debate that lasted for more than an hour.

The bill failed for lack of a constitutional majority. To pass, Senate Bill 3, known as the conscience clause bill, needed at least 26 “yes” votes. 

Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference, said that even though the bill’s primary focus was to give pharmacists the same professional courtesy as other medical professionals in exercising their professional judgment and conscience, the debate on the Senate floor focused on a fear expressed by some senators that pharmacists would be given too much discretionary power. Some senators also feared that some pharmacists might refuse to fill oral contraceptives due to their potential abortifacient nature or they would arbitrarily refuse to fill other drugs they deemed harmful to or possibly misused by a patient.

Sen. Drozda, (R-Westfield), author of Senate Bill 3, said he authored the bill because several pharmacists had come to him who have been reprimanded or fired because, in following their conscience, they would not dispense drugs which could cause an abortion.

“I find it very troubling that people who are following their conscience are being punished, reprimanded or even fired because of their moral convictions,” Sen. Drozda said.

“I was disappointed that some of my colleagues, who normally support life bills, voted against Senate Bill 3.”

Sen. Marvin Riegsecker (R-Goshen), a pharmacist since 1967, voted for the bill.

He said he supported Senate Bill 3 for two reasons.

“First, it allows the pharmacist to follow his or her conscience in dispensing drugs and, secondly, it protects the pharmacist from being fired for following his or her conscience. “My philosophy is we need to be respectful of life,” Sen. Riegsecker said.

“Pharmacists are one of the most respected and trusted groups of medical professionals.”

Sen. Riegsecker added that he thought some of the comments voiced on the Senate floor during the debate and the concerns raised by those opposing the bill were “overstated” and were “somewhat disrespectful of the pharmacists’ professional judgment.”

Earlier in the day, Sens. Vi Simpson (D-Ellisville), Sue Errington (D-Muncie), Earline Rogers (D-Gary), Connie Sipes (D-New Albany) and Karen Tallian (D-Portage) held a news conference to bring attention to the conscience clause bill, and their concern over an attempt to restrict access to health care.

“First, they limited access to information on reproductive health, and now they want to limit access to reproductive health care.”

Sen. Tallian said, “This could have been a dangerous step back from 40 years of progress.”

Following the floor debate and tie vote, Sen. Simpson said, “I hope that this debate brings about a renewed awareness of how tentative women’s reproductive rights can be.”

Tebbe, who serves as the official representative of the Catholic Church on public policy matters, testified in support of Senate Bill 3 at a Jan. 9 hearing before the Senate Health and Providers Services Committee.

Tebbe told lawmakers, “The Church believes that pharmacists should be treated in the same manner as other health care professionals, be able to follow their conscience and have the right to reject participating in a moral evil.”

The Senate panel approved Senate Bill 3 in a 6-5 vote.

Sen. Drozda said that representatives from St. Vincent Hospital, St. Francis Hospital and the Hospital Association had expressed concerns from a hospice perspective that Senate Bill 3 might prevent some patients from receiving pain medication.

Sen. Drozda amended the bill to require pharmacists to contact the prescribing physician to clarify the clinical condition of the patient before refusing to fill a prescription or dispense a medical device.

This provision would protect hospice patients and patients needing high doses of pain medication. The amendment also provided that the pharmacy where the pharmacist is employed have a policy in place to dispense or sell the drug.

Referring to a publication of Americans United for Life called “Defending Life 2007: Proven Strategies for a Pro-life America,” Sen. Drozda said that five states have enacted a pharmacist conscience clause law, including Arkansas, California, Kansas, Maine and South Dakota.

Thirty-four states have general provisions allowing medical professionals and medical institutions to refuse treatment or procedures which would violate ethical standards of the individual or institution.

This is the fourth time that the Indiana General Assembly has considered a conscience clause bill for pharmacists, but Sen. Drozda said that it is the first year the bill has passed out of committee and been voted on by the full Senate. Under Senate rules, as author of the bill, Sen. Drozda can call the bill down for another vote with no debate.

He said he just needs to get two more “yes” votes for the bill to pass.

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

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By Mary Ann Wyand

What important questions do you need to ask yourself during Lent? Come Next Spring: Scripture Reflections of Promise and Hope, published in 2007, can help you answer many of those challenging questions.

James Welter

The first book, Welter said. “They cover a variety of life topics—grief, loss, forgiveness, love, resurrection—and include discussion questions written by my wife, Helen, to make the book usable for small faith-sharing groups.”

Both books are Catholic resources that also appeal to Protestant readers. “I see Scripture as one area on which we can all agree,” he said. “especially if we look at Scripture as how it speaks to us in our daily life.”

The title of each book was inspired by Welter’s childhood experiences on his family’s farm in northern Indiana. “Like the people in Scripture, farmers are people of hope, he said. “By that, I don’t mean hope as wishful thinking but hope as an expectation of good. There was always that expectation that next year would be better [on the farm].

As a child, he remembers hearing the farmers say, “Come next spring.” —except if their crops did not grow into a bountiful harvest that fall.

“Come next spring, we’ll turn the soil again,” he writes. “Come next spring, new rains will fall. Come next spring, the flowers will bloom and new growth will flourish. We will live again. We will laugh again. We will love again.”

That image expresses the promise and hope of Christian life, he said. “Lent isn’t about endings—it’s about beginnings.”

Hope is a grace and blessing from God, he said. “Many times, we have to look back on our life and spend some time reflecting on our experiences before we can see God’s movement in our lives.”

Welter hopes readers will turn to Scripture to gain insight about their lives and grow closer to God in the process.

Father Clem Davis, pastor of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus and a member of a small Church community for 15 years, wrote the introduction for Welter’s second book, Nearer.

“Jim’s memories will help to stir recollections from your own life and will help you find your way onto the lush landscape of your relationship with God,” Father Davis emphasizes. “So that you, too, may see the promise and hope that [God] offers.”

“I invite you to embark on this journey of self-discovery,” he writes, “and to hear God’s Word in a new way by reflecting on it in light of Jim’s life experience—and your own. You will find that you are indeed ‘surrounded by a cloud of witnesses’ [Heb 12:1] and are by no means alone in your faith, nor in your struggles.”

(James Welter’s books are available at Catholic bookstores as well as the gift shops at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis and the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove. “Living in Hope,” a Lenten reflection guide for use with the book, is available free at the author’s Web site at www.ascensiononline.com.)

Book can help answer many of Lent’s challenging questions.

Archdiocesan parishes schedule annual Lenten penance services

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of penance services that have been reported to The Criterion. The schedule is also posted on The Criterion Online at www.CriterionOnline.com.

Batesville Deaconry

Feb. 21, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
Feb. 26, 7 p.m. at St. Martin, Yorkville
March 3, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
March 4, 7 p.m. at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Brown
tongue March 12, 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Rock, Franklin County
March 12, 7:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
March 12, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg
March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Morris
March 14, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg

Bloomington Deaconry

Feb. 26, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington
March 4, 7 p.m. at St. Valentine de Paul, Bedford
March 6, 7 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington
March 11, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville

Connersville Deaconry

Feb. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth, Cambridge City
Feb. 26, 7 p.m. at St. Andrew, Richmond
March 5, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
March 7, 7 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle
March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Bridget, Liberty
March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville

Indianapolis East Deaconry

Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m. for St. Michael, Greenfield, and Holy Spirit at Holy Spirit
Feb. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Simon the Apostle
Feb. 27, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas, Fortville
Feb. 28, 1:30 p.m. at St. Philip Neri
March 13, 7 p.m. for St. Bernadette, Our Lady of Lourdes

and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) March 13, 7 p.m. for St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyds Knobs
March 1, 9:30 a.m. for St. Anthony and Holy Trinity at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove. “Living in Hope,” a Lenten reflection guide for use with the book, is available free at the author’s Web site at www.ascensiononline.com.)

and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) March 13, 7 p.m. for St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyds Knobs
March 1, 9:30 a.m. for St. Anthony and Holy Trinity at St. Anthony
March 13, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Indianapolis West Deaconry

Feb. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
Feb. 19, 7 p.m. at Mary Queen of Peace, Danville
Feb. 25, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
Feb. 26, 6:30 p.m. at St. Monica
Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at St. Malachi, Brownsburg
March 1, 9:30 a.m. for St. Anthony and Holy Trinity at St. Anthony
March 3, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
March 5, 7 p.m. at St. Christopher
March 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. Susana, Plainfield
March 12, 7 p.m. for St. Joseph and St. Ann at St. Ann
March 13, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

New Albany Deaconry

Feb. 7, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
Feb. 24, 4 p.m. for Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, and St. Mary, New Albany, at St. Mary, New Albany

Feb. 27, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph, Corydon
Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
March 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul, Sellersburg
March 6, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph, St. Joseph Hill
March 8, 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyds Knobs
March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
March 10, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
March 10, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
March 12, 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyds Knobs

Seamour Deaconry

Feb. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Anne, Jennings County
Feb. 20, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, and St. Ambrose, Seymour, at St. Ambrose, Seymour
Feb. 24, 2 p.m. for Sts. Rose of Lima, Franklin, and Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh
Feb. 26, 7 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace, Madison
Feb. 26, 6 p.m. at Church of the American Martyrs, Scottsburg
Feb. 27, 6 p.m. at St. Patrick, Salem
Feb. 27, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
March 6, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus

Tell City Deaconry

March 9, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Paul, Tell City
March 11, 6:30 p.m. deanery service at St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad

Terre Haute Deaconry

Feb. 13, 7 p.m. at Auninication, Brazil
Feb. 12, 3:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton
Feb. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph, Rockville
Feb. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
Feb. 21, 1:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus, Terre Haute
Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at St. Patrick, Terre Haute
March 5, 7 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle

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You Must Question
Your Murder?
NOVENA
continued from page 3

Indianapolis, he had been planning a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes since this year is the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Mary to St. Bernadette Soubirous near the southwestern French town [see related story below].

Father Meyer made a pilgrimage to Lourdes when he was a seminarian studying in Rome and, with his fellow seminarians at the Pontifical North American College, prayed novenas to Our Lady of Lourdes.

He described Lourdes and devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes as a “beautiful treasure” that is an “undiscovered mystery” for many Catholics.

“If you look at the story of Lourdes, it’s the power of God working through simple, ordinary people,” Father Meyer said. “And that’s what I see this novena as an opportunity to be, for people to realize that God is someone that I’m always going to be helpful to the sick,” he said. “I would be helpful to them out of faithfulness.”

Many of the prayers offered at Lourdes and in devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes are to Mary, whom Father Meyer said is a natural person for us to turn to when praying for the sick.

He likened praying for Mary to those suffering various illnesses to people young and old who often turn to the care given to them by their own mothers when they were sick.

“God is there during times of sorrow and woe, but, ultimately, God is always there,” Father Meyer said. “God willing, out of any moment of prayer, there’s an opportunity for a deeper relationship, for a deeper communion. Then God is no longer just someone I go to in times of need, but God is someone that I’m always going to out of faithfulness.”

Ultimately, however, Msgr. Schaeled said he hopes the novena will be a time for those who participate in the novena to do so “out of a spirit of thanks to God for all of the wonderful progress that has been made in the treatment of cancer and other diseases.”

Father Meyer said that prayers for the sick can extend this gratitude to take in being thankful for the continued presence of God in the midst of sickness.

“God is there during times of sorrow and woe, but, ultimately, God is always there,” Father Meyer said. “God willing, out of any moment of prayer, there’s an opportunity for a deeper relationship, for a deeper communion. Then God is no longer just someone I go to in times of need, but God is someone that I’m always going to out of faithfulness.”

Ultimately, however, Msgr. Schaeled said he hopes the novena will be a time when archdiocesan Catholics will become reacquainted with the importance of the sick and of prayer.

“I hope that it will make them aware of the need to be mindful, to be prayerful, to be helpful to the sick,” he said. “I would hope that it would remind people of the power of prayer.

“More things are wrought through prayer than we can imagine.”

(To send a message of support and prayer to Archbishop Buechlein, log on to www.archindy.org/archbishop)†

2008 is the 150th anniversary of Lourdes apparitions

By Sean Gallagher

On Feb. 11, 1858, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous about a mile from the 14-year-old peasant girl’s hometown of Lourdes, France, which is in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains in the southwestern part of the country.

Mary appeared to Bernadette at the same place, a grotto at Massabielle, 18 times, the last apparition occurring on July 16 of that year.

A previously unknown spring of water appeared at Massabielle in the midst of the apparitions. Bernadette drank from the spring during some of the apparitions.

In the New Testament, we read that, following Christ’s Ascension into heaven, his disciples remained in the upper room in prayer for nine days while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:1-14).

“… God is able to use them through their opportunity to be, for people to realize that God is someone that I’m always going to be helpful to the sick,” he said. “I would be helpful to them out of faithfulness.”

Many more, however, have been blessed with spiritual strength to bear with patience their sufferings through either a pilgrimage to Lourdes or through prayers to Our Lady of Lourdes.

Since 1980 is the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Mary to St. Bernadette, there will be many special celebrations at Lourdes, including a visit to the pilgrimage site by Pope Benedict XVI.

The Novena

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Nine-day period of prayer has its roots in sacred Scripture

By Fr. Jonathan Meyer

A novena is traditionally a nine-day period of prayer that has its roots in sacred Scripture.

In the New Testament, we read that, following Christ’s Ascension into heaven, his disciples remained in the upper room in prayer for nine days while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:1-14).

This nine-day period of fervent prayer that the disciples practiced has been copied by thousands of Christians in the centuries since and is known as a “novena.” The word “novena” comes from the Latin word “novem,” which means “nine.”

A novena can be prayed in several ways. There can be a formal prayer that is said every day, a rosary or a spontaneous prayer for a single petition for nine consecutive days.

Sometimes you will hear of a person praying a shortened novena. This would consist of praying a certain prayer on the hour, for nine consecutive hours in one day.

Lastly, there was the traditional custom of Wednesday Night Novenas that some of our more experienced Catholics might remember. These novenas were nine weeks long.

All these numbers, days and prayers may sound a bit odd and superstitious, but they are not.

A novena is a means to encourage prayer and devotion. It is not magical and superstitious. A novena encourages an individual to pray, to be like the disciples who begged for the Holy Spirit to be poured upon them. Asking for blessings and favors from our Lord is never a bad thing.

(Father Jonathan Meyer is the archdiocesan director of youth ministry and associate pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.)†

2008 is the 150th anniversary of Lourdes apparitions

On Aug. 14, 2004, Pope John Paul II prays at the Massabielle grotto at Lourdes, France, where the Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. In 1992, the Holy Father established Feb. 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, as the World Day of the Sick.

Archdiocesan Catholics are invited to pray a novena from Feb. 3-11 for Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein and all who are sick.

(Sources are www.lourdes-france.com, the official Web site of Lourdes, and www.newadvent.org/cathen/09188.htm, the online entry for Our Lady of Lourdes in the 1917 edition of 'The Catholic Encyclopedia.')†
Catholic Charities USA urges dialogue on racism, poverty

DETROIT (CNS)—At an annual Mass celebrating the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Catholic Charities USA unveiled a plan to spark a national conversation about racism and poverty.

“Poverty and racial injustice betray our national ideals of liberty and justice for all,” said Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities, during a Jan. 21 press conference in the offices of the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit.

Catholic Charities USA, which is based in Alexandria, Va., and has 1,700 local agencies and institutions nationwide, released a paper titled “Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good.” It was handed out to those attending the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Mass.

Father Snyder said Catholic Charities would use the paper to start a national dialogue on the topics that most Americans don’t want to address.

“This document is intended to start, enrich and inform a conversation throughout our country, compelling each of us to serve, educate and advocate for programs and policies that will foster unity in all of our communities, eliminate racism and significantly reduce poverty in our lifetime,” he said.

The document is part of Catholic Charities’ Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America, which was started in January 2007 with the goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent by the year 2020.

The 22-page paper begins by recalling the dream of Rev. King, and also the encouragement given to Catholics by the late Pope John Paul II to end racial injustice and inequality.

The paper goes on to define racism as a threat to both Christianity and society, and to detail its relationship to poverty.

The document cites various historical examples of how the U.S. government and even the Catholic Church have contributed to racism and racially biased economic inequality. It gives a snapshot of the current reality of racism—decaying wealth disparity and reflecting on current public debates, such as those over immigration reform and Hurricane Katrina.

The paper also includes a 10-point “call to action,” focusing mostly on government reforms, such as passing improved fair-housing laws, employing affirmative-action policies, implementing comprehensive immigration reform and repairing the nation’s social safety net.

Father Snyder and Father Clarence Williams, Catholic Charities’ senior director of racial equality and diversity initiatives, spoke with both local and national media about the organization’s efforts.

Father Snyder said during the press conference that Catholic Charities is uniquely positioned to begin a national dialogue on racism and poverty, given its work with the poor.

“Catholic Charities knows firsthand how racism and poverty are interconnected,” he said at the press conference. “Every day, our charity sees the face of the poor throughout America, which was started in January 2007 with the goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent by the year 2020.

The paper was released in Detroit in recognition of the local Church’s commitment to racial dialogue, and because the Archdiocese of Detroit has a 26-year tradition of honoring the work of Rev. King with a liturgy.

During the Mass, Father Williams encouraged hundreds gathered at the cathedral to consider their own role in addressing the problems of society. He said that everyone, like Noah from the first Scripture reading and Rev. King, has an assignment from God to be part of a diverse and accepting community.

“We are that blessed community that says to our brothers and sisters, ‘We have to live together. We have to love together. We have to struggle together’—and there’s joy in doing that,” said Father Williams, former director of black Catholic ministries for the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Catholic Charities’ role, Father Williams explained during the press conference, will be to put racism and poverty at the forefront of national attention.

“Catholic Charities is saying, ‘We’re going to be the pre-eminent organization to break the silence and start the conversation,’” he added. 

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Conversion requires a deep commitment to Christ

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

We have chosen to follow Christ. But we are reluctant to commit ourselves more deeply. These days, we need courage for commitment.

Many people around us believe that detachment rather than commitment brings happiness. They believe it is better for us to keep our options open, retain our freedom and wait for the best opportunity.

We can distance ourselves from others by humor or irony. If you are a football fan, you may see this phenomenon in TV commercials during the game. Appealing to young adults, they are both ironic and touched with humor.

Occasionally, some friends have asked me what a commercial means, and I don’t know.

Advertisers appeal to autonomy to sell products. The free person drinks a certain brand of beer during the game and afterward drives a fast car home.

Another way we can distance ourselves is by adopting the detached air of the scientist or social scientist. All we want to look at is the data. We analyze. We theorize. In this way, we can keep an emotional distance from others—and from Christ.

Scientific objectivity, humor and irony are all good in themselves. Yet in excess they can shield us from commitment, intimacy and spiritual maturity.

We are part of an individualistic culture. This is more a culture of separation than attachment.

I have not noticed that this autonomy leads to the promised happiness. For some, it seems the reverse. Detachment leads to boredom, loneliness or even depression.

Commitment to a deep relationship with Christ is hard in our current environment, but commitment has always been hard, no matter what century it is. There have always been serious obstacles to personal growth. Commitment to Christ brings deep joy. Knowledge of Jesus and commitment to his service are deeply rewarding. The road to spiritual maturity is through commitment—not away from it.”

—Fr. John W. Crossin, O.S.F.S.

**Discussion Point**

**Lent is a time for focusing on faith**

How will this Lent be a time for you to put faith into action?

“One thing a friend and I want to do in our parish is to put information in the bulletin to give people more of an understanding and appreciation for the fact that we’re receiving God in Holy Communion.” (Mary Lou Timma, Sun Lakes, Ariz.)

“A sprayer of Stations the Cross each week during Lent, we have fellowship where we have soup and bread. It is hosted each time by a different parish group, such as the Knights of Columbus, our women’s or youth groups or the finance council. We also have Pre Cana classes in Lent and the young couples are invited to [the stations and fellowship], which lets them see the support in the Church community.” (Laurie Croghan, Bozeman, Mont.)

“Paradoxically, because my life is almost frenetically full of action, I try to slow it down during Lent and pay more attention to my small actions with my husband and kids, daily prayer and little acts of sacrifice.” (Mary Calzontani, Garden City, Kan.)

“Attending stations every Friday brings me back to peace and reminds me why I’m there. [Lent is a time to] strip away all the froufrou things in life and concentrate on ... faith.” (Cynthia Meek, Bakersfield, Calif.)

**Lend Us Your Voice**

An upcoming edition asks: Describe a special Easter custom observed in your family.

To respond for possible publication, send an e-mail to cgreene@catholicnews.com or write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.
Faith, Hope and Charity/ David Siler

‘Providing help, creating hope’

A few years ago, Catholic Charities USA, the national member service organization for Catholic Charities’ agencies throughout the United States, adopted the tagline “Providing Help, Creating Hope.”

Now, our own archdiocesan Catholic Charities organization has embraced this statement to clearly communicate what we do and what we seek to achieve.

Help is provided in many ways:

- Helping families find permanent housing.
- Helping seniors find companionship.
- Helping children find a safe haven after school.
- Helping pregnant mothers make the best choice for their children.
- Helping refugees find a home and a job.
- Helping the hungry find food.
- Helping the depressed find happiness.

Help can come in so many different ways, but the ultimate goal in providing help is to see change.

When a family has a home, a senior has companionship, children are safe after school, and pregnant mothers make good decisions for their children, refugees find a job and a home, the hungry have food, and the depressed find happiness, the light of hope can enter their lives. The light of hope is the ultimate goal.

Lenten retreats, novenas, Bible studies and even an old-fashioned mission here and there. Every weekend in Lent is an opportunity for charitable giving in addition to a weekly parish donation.

We’re provided with special envelopes dedicated to various specific recipients, such as children, new parents, the elderly or the homebound. We can give up the little temptations that we allow ourselves to indulge in otherwise, such as cigarettes or beer. While we’re at it, we can try to eat together as a family more often than not.

The Church provides us with a Lenten season on the Church calendar for a reason. It’s not a time to mope over what’s wrong, but to work on creating what’s right. God is always there with us in prayer to give us a hand.

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

David Siler is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

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Bible passage triggers thoughts about pain

Faithful Lines/Shirley Vogler Meister

While casually flipping through a magazine in the waiting room of a physiotherapist’s office near my home, I came across this Bible verse: “Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless andinnocent, children of God without blemish, spotless and holy in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that when the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Phil 2:14-16).

Because I had been grumbling and questioning for many months as a result of formidable back pain.

When St. Paul wrote his Letter to the Philippians, he was not referring to pain. However, in what he was describing as: Why is this happening and what went wrong? I didn’t feel sorry for myself, but needed to understand the reasons that took me into confusion and the Jews overwhelmed the Medes.

The Jews stubbornly resist Holofernes at Bethulia. Holofernes lays siege to the town, cut off the water supply and begins to starve the people. After 34 days, the Jews are ready to surrender (Jdt 8:1-15:3).

Judith is the widow of a man named Manasseh, and she is described as “beautifully formed and lovely to behold.” But for three years and four months, she had worn sackcloth and widow’s clothing. She was known to be a God-fearing woman.

When she learned that the elders of Bethulia were ready to surrender, she called them to her house and gave them a message about how God was with the Jews as long as they didn’t offer him. She asked them not to let him out of the city and not to surrender for five days. She said the Lord would rescue Israel by her hand.

The elders agreed. Judith took off her widow’s clothing and anointed her body with rich ointment. She put on the festive attire she had worn when she was married. She arranged her hair attractively and put on her finest jewelry. As the story says, “She dressed herself to captivate the eyes of all the men who should see her” (Jdt 10:3-4).

The letter arrived with her maid and made her way to the enemy camp. When she was captured, she was asked to be taken to Holofernes, who was taken by her beauty. She praised the great King Nebuchadnezzar and said that she would help Holofernes defeat the Jews.

Holofernes gave her a room next to his and asked her to join him at table, but she insisted on eating first. She explained that her provision that her maid had brought in a food pouch. She quickly took his head and passed it to her maid, who put it in her food pouch. Then the two women went out as they were accustomed to do for prayer. Unhindered by Holofernes’s men, they made their way back to Bethulia.

With Holofernes dead, his army went into confusion and the Jews overwhelmed them.

The physiotherapist was an expert, using exercises techniques and massage in painless ways that each of you gives help, you can assist us in the Lenten imperatives of prayer, penance and almsgiving.

Most parishioners offer daily or frequent Masses, prayer or communion services in addition to weekend Masses.

Frequent Lenten reconciliation services are available in every parish in the diocese. The scheduled reconciliation usually offered weekly in each parish. Many parishes hold Lenten retreats, novenas, Bible studies and even an old-fashioned mission here and there.

The Book of Judith is another religious novel in the Old Testament. The events described were not part of the annals of history. It was written as a pious reflection on God’s presence among the Jews. The name “Judith” means “saver.”

Holofernes, the commander of the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar, has held an overwhelming force against the vassal states that refused to help in the Assyrian war against the Medes.

Bible passage triggers thoughts about pain

February has to be one of the most significant months of the year.

For one thing, it’s the only one that counts an extra day every four years—leap year.

That’s the case this year, where February 29th, will come just 29 days. Even its usual 28 days is unique in a cycle of three 30 and 31-day months.

February also is a month that contains more holidays than any other in our family, we don’t count July in this tally since it’s already check full of six holidays and a couple of wedding anniversaries, not to mention Independence Day."

One of these February holidays is President’s Day, which is actually a composite of what used to be two free days (get it?) celebrating the United States of America’s Washington’s and Lincoln’s birthdays.

Another is Valentine’s Day, that pleasant tradition to romantic love. Both events are big deals on elementary school calendars.

February is full of saints’ days, too, some familiar and some not.

I’ve heard of St. Agatha, St. Cyril, St. Methodios and St. Peter Damian, but I don’t know much about St. Jerome Emiliani, St. Josephine Bakhita or St. Polycarp. Still, it’s comforting to know they are there for us in heaven.

Sometimes February is host to other important days which are indeed holy days, namely Ash Wednesday and the following days of Lent. That’s true this year in preparation for a similarly early Easter.

It seems we’ve barely absorbed the spiritual rewards of our Savior’s birth at Christmas, and here we are already at the prelude to his death and resurrection. It heralds 40 Lenten days in which to experience God’s grace. (Shirley Vogler Meister, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)
The Book of Zephaniah provides this week’s first reading.

Monday, Feb. 4
2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30: 16:5-13
Psalm 3:2-7
Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday, Feb. 5
Agatha, virgin and martyr
2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a
30:19-3
Psalm 86:1-6
Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday, Feb. 6
Ash Wednesday
Joel 2:12-18
Psalm 3:1-6, 12-14, 17
2 Corinthians 5:20-6.2
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, Feb. 7
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Psalm 1:1-4, 6

Friday, Feb. 8
Jerome Emiliani, priest
Josephine Bakhita, virgin
Isaiah 58:1-9a
Psalm 51:3-6a, 18-19
Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday, Feb. 9
Isaiah 58:9b-14
Psalm 86:1-6
Luke 5:27-32

Sunday, Feb. 10
First Sunday of Lent
Genesis 1:1-11, 12-17
Psalm 1:3-6, 12-13, 17
Romans 5:12-19
or Romans 5:12, 17-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Daily Readings

Sunday, Feb. 3, 2008

- Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-7
- Matthew 5:1-12a

The Sunday Readings

The mighty, by contrast, will be laid low.
The overall lesson from Paul’s writing in this regard is that judging our lives, or the world, by earthly, human standards, is, in the last analysis a waste of time. Only in God, as revealed by Jesus, is there to be found a clear and true vision of what life is all about, and of what is important or unimportant in life.

St. Matthew’s Gospel provides the last reading.

It is the beautiful presentation of the Beatitudes. In general, the similarity between Jesus and Moses always intrigued Matthew, and this similarity is a theme of his Gospel.

For example, there is a coincidence between what God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses atop Mount Sinai—in the midst of the flight of the Hebrews from slavery and death—and the pronouncement by Jesus of the Beatitudes on a mountaintop at the edge of the Sea of Galilee as the people yearned to be freed from hopelessness and doom.

Each revelation—that to Moses and that of Jesus—is a series of statements for virtuous living addressed by God to the faithful. Living by the Beatitudes builds the kingdom of God.

Reflection
Midway in the week to come, the Church will observe Ash Wednesday and begin the season of Lent.

At the conclusion of Lent, we will celebrate the resurrection of the Lord and await our own ultimate victory over sin, despair and death.

Lent will prepare us for Easter, not by planning for a celebration but by calling us to penance and deeper prayer. Lent is a microcosm of life on Earth.

Just as in Lent we symbolically prepare for Easter by disciplining ourselves with prayer, self-denial and fasting, in life we must prepare ourselves for genuine peace and for eternal life by disciplining ourselves.

How? The most demanding discipline is to accept in our hearts and minds the fact that judgments based on earthly considerations are hopelessly and essentially flawed. We must accept as our standard the model of Jesus. Only in accepting Jesus, and living according to the example of Jesus, will we join Jesus in eternity.

Q

This question concerns your column several months ago about the Mormon practice of being baptized for the dead.

More than seven years ago, I came home to find that my husband had died. The house was soon full of firemen and medics. I told one of them that my husband had said recently that he would like to be baptized, and I asked a fireman to baptize him. He was eager to do so.

My husband was a friend of our pastor, which I believe led him closer to the Church. My husband was formerly anti-Catholic.

Several years before his death, he had heart bypass surgery, became depressed and didn’t feel like he was any good for me or our seven children.

My Question: Was his baptism valid?

I really hope so. He was a good man and a good father. (California)

A

First, you did the right thing when your husband died.

All sacraments, including baptism, are for the living. They cannot be received by the dead.

If death is in any way doubtful, however, baptism should be administered, which is what you decided to do.

Death is usually a gradual process, and many theories are exchanged about how long some life may be left in a person’s body even after the loss of all the vital signs.

That is not the whole story, however.

Your husband, like billions of other human beings who die without baptism, is in the hands of a loving God who, we Christians believe, loves all people with an infinite love and wishes everyone to save.

Many people have never heard of God as we believe him to be or of Jesus Christ. Others, like your husband, appear to have something in their lives, perhaps a negative experience of some sort, which may hinder their ability to recognize and respond to God’s love and invitation.

What happens to all of them? We don’t know, but we are certain that God’s saving grace is extended to everyone. Jesus told us that baptism is the sacramental “sign” by which people enter into his life, his community of faith.

Christians have pondered what exactly that could mean, considering the billions who have no chance for baptism or are never able to see baptism as a personal spiritual obligation.

Can we believe the matter is clear.

God has told us much about his plan for the salvation of the world, and he expects us to believe and follow what he says.

But he never hints that we know everything about his providential, saving care.

As Pope John Paul II said in his book Crossing the Threshold of Hope, God is unendingly at work in the sacraments “as well as in other ways that are known to him alone” (p. 134).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we find the same idea: “God has bound himself to the sacrament of baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments” (#1257).

Our words are reminded here again that when we try to tell God what he cannot do, we are quickly in water over our heads.

What he asks of us is trust that he knows what he is doing, and his plan is totally for our good.

Q

Your church recently changed the traditional Ash Wednesday appeal into an automatic assessment.

What gives a bishop the authority to impose such a tax? (Texas)

Each diocese has some form of taxation, usually on parishes, which enables a bishop to fulfill his obligation to oversee the Church in a financially responsible manner.

A significant section of canon law, beginning with canon #1274, provides detailed instructions on how the local bishop is to carry out this responsibility.

(A free brochure in English or Spanish, answering questions that Catholics ask about baptism practices and sponsors, is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 3315, Peoria, IL 61612.

Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail in care of jdietzen@yahoo.com.)
Rest in peace

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


Therese Klauck and John Payant. Rice, Eugene, Thomas and Box, Pamela Marion, Patricia St. Andrew the Apostle, Indianapolis, 89, Baldison and Anna Mitchell. Jan. 6. Daughter of Javier infant, St. Monica, Indianapolis, BALDISON, Gabriel Arianna,

Grandmother of three.

of Betsy and Rob Albright. St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Jan. 15.

page.

separate obituaries on this connections to it; those are brothers are included here, and religious sisters and . Order priests serving our archdiocese

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Please direct inquiries and resume by February 15, 2008 to: Patrick Jendraszak, Parish Manager St. Luke Catholic Church 7575 Holliday Dr., East Indianapolis, IN 46260
WASHINGTON (CNS)—When the tens of thousands of participants at the annual March for Life returned to their homes, some after longer bus rides than others, many of them put away their placards, marching gear and talking points for another year.

But not all of them.

A number of the participants who traveled great distances and braved cold temperatures to come to Washington to voice their opposition to legalized abortion were ready to go right back to volunteering, praying or working for the cause that brought them to the Jan. 22 march in the first place.

Those who lobby in Washington for pro-life efforts were no exception—they certainly got right back to work after attending the march that marks the anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

Two days after the march, Richard Doerflinger, associate director for the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, told Catholic News Service that his office had a full slate of issues it planned to closely monitor in the months ahead.

For starters, the secretariat was supporting an amendment to the Indian Health Care Improvement Act expected to go before the Senate any day. The bill would restore federal funding of abortion through the Indian Health Service except to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape of a minor or incest with a minor.

The federal agency is responsible for providing health services to American Indians and Alaska’s native peoples. The U.S. bishops also are following an amendment to the Public Health Service Act and working to ensure that provisions designed to ultimately reduce the number of abortions.

The legislation, which would prohibit states from placing limits on abortion, was initially introduced during the Clinton administration and reintroduced last April immediately after the Supreme Court ruled that the federal ban on partial-birth abortion is unconstitutional.

For tactical reasons,” he added, “they do not wish to have pitched battles over abortion policy right now. But that doesn’t mean the presidential candidates are shying away from it or that future policies won’t be determined by the election’s outcome.

If a Democratic candidate is elected president, Johnson said, all current anti-abortion legislation “would be on the chopping block” because the Freedom of Choice Act, supported by the major Democratic presidential candidates, would “sweep the board clean.”

The legislation, which would prohibit states from placing limits on abortion, was initially introduced during the Clinton administration and reintroduced last April immediately after the Supreme Court ruled that the federal ban on partial-birth abortion is constitutional.

Although Johnson hailed the Supreme Court’s ruling in a joint decision in Gonzales v. Planned Parenthood and Gonzales v. Carhart, he also noted that the 5-4 decision proves how tenuous the court is on abortion issues.

“We’re on the cusp here,” he said, adding that when the next president picks a new justice for the Supreme Court, the appointment will either “build a majority to re-establish protection for the unborn” or will establish a court that is “extremely hostile to pro-life legislation.”

There is a lot riding on the political events this year,” said Johnson, matter-of-factly.

But while he awaits election outcomes, he said he has plenty of reason to be optimistic, citing the recent report on the overall decline in performed abortions and polling data showing “a stronger pro-life sentiment in younger people.”

Participants in the 35th annual March for Life make their way up Constitution Avenue on the way to the Supreme Court building in Washington on Jan. 22. People from across the nation joined the demonstration against abortion.