Seminarians grow in faith on centuries-old pilgrimage

By Sean Gallagher

Last spring, seminarian Dustin Boehm made a pilgrimage. But this was no ordinary spiritual journey that his fellow seminarians or any other Catholic might take. Boehm walked 850 miles in the footsteps of countless pilgrims who have taken similar routes for the past 1,000 years to the Shrine of Santiago de Compostela—on the western tip of Spain. The journey to Santiago de Compostela has journeyed for more than 1,000 years. From his starting point in southern France, Boehm experienced many physical and spiritual crosses along the way. He was hobbled by an ankle that swelled up to twice its normal size. However, he walked 850 miles to the shrine to which pilgrims have journeyed for more than a thousand years.

Boehm began his pilgrimage on March 21 and completed it on May 31, Pentecost Sunday. He did this during a year when he took off from his studies at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in Saint Meinrad, where he is currently in the third of his four years of priestly formation. "I really wanted to do something that was physical, that would really kind of help form my actions into prayer," said Boehm, a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. "I just wanted the time on the pilgrimage. I wanted to be able to come to be called in Spanish the "Camino" or, as it would be rendered in English, "the Way." The opportunity to walk the Camino made a pilgrimage in the English language more likely.

"I want to underline the importance that the pilgrimage. I wanted to be able to come to be called in Spanish the "Camino" or, as it would be rendered in English, "the Way."

He walked with many pilgrims who were dismissive of the very notion of believing in God and in becoming a priest. And he walked over the rugged Pyrenees Mountains in fierce late winter weather. Such challenges of pilgrimages, along with the many blessings that come with them, have made them an important part of the Christian faith since the earliest days of the Church. The ups and downs of a pilgrimage correspond powerfully to the journey of faith to heaven that all believers make over the course of their lives. This meaning is so profound that the journey to Santiago de Compostela has come to be called in Spanish the "Camino" or, as it would be rendered in English, "the Way." Boehm began his pilgrimage on March 21 and completed it on May 31, Pentecost Sunday. He did this during a year when he took off from his studies at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in Saint Meinrad, where he is currently in the third of his four years of priestly formation. "I really wanted to do something that was physical, that would really kind of help form my actions into prayer," said Boehm, a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. "I just wanted the time on the pilgrimage. I wanted to be able to come to be called in Spanish the "Camino" or, as it would be rendered in English, "the Way."

If you would like to use the "Way" note in Spanish, you can find more information online at www.saintmeinrad.org or by calling (812) 356-2411.

Households face budget crunch to put food on the table

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Whenever Robert Carlisle leaves his modest apartment on Cleveland’s near west side, he turns off the heat so he can save a little money on his gas bill for a pair of shoes or a bus pass. He does the same at night when he climbs into bed under an extra blanket.

Turning down the heat is an easy step to take, Carlisle said after breakfast on Dec. 30 at the West Side Catholic Center, a few blocks from his home. It is especially important, he said, when he is “budgeting down to every penny.”

What little money Carlisle earns from odd jobs is used for necessities, mainly rent and utilities, leaving little for food. So he visits the West Side Catholic Center for meals and even to shower. The money he saves on heating water and on a light breakfast or lunch can mean the difference between having a roof over his head or living in the streets. "I come here because it does help offset my income," said Carlisle, 42. People like Carlisle—those with limited or reduced incomes—turned to places such as the West Side Catholic Center in increasing numbers in 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They are experiencing what the department calls food insecurity.

Barbara Taylor, center supervisor, told Catholic News Service just before the new year that people are seeking assistance not just for a meal, but for clothing as well. She has seen more working people trying to stretch their dollars for rent or mortgage payments. One man who shows up almost every day for lunch is a part-time Regional Transit Authority bus driver, who, for now, is living in his van, she said.

"He said with his divorce and child support and his part-time work, it's the only way he can make ends meet," Taylor said. "His only request for me was to have a place to iron his clothes. I have a feeling so he can keep his job and work toward full-time employment."

In a recent report, the USDA said 16.7 million households—14.6 percent of all households—were food-insecure in 2008 as the recession escalated. That means at some point during the year those households lacked the resources to provide enough food for their members. To cope, they turned to emergency kitchens and food pantries. About one-third of the households were considered to have very low food security, meaning some people ate less or changed their eating patterns.

The overall number of households facing food shortages jumped 11 percent in 2008 to the highest level recorded since such statistics were first compiled in 1995. In 2007, 13 million households were short
NEW YEAR

Continued from page 1

In educating people to respect creation, the pope said, they must be helped to recognize that the human beings God created in His own image and likeness require special respect and protection. “If we must take care of the creatures around us, how much more must we care for people—our brothers and sisters,” he said. “On the first day of the year, I want to appeal to the consciences of those who are part of any kind of armed group. To each and every one, I say: Stop, reflect, and abandon the path of violence.”

In his homily during the morning Mass as St. Peter’s Basilica on Jan. 1, Pope Benedict said people will respect the environment only to the extent that they respect themselves and others because true respect for creation means seeing all creation as a reflection of God, the Creator.

Teaching people to respect others must begin early in childhood, he said. “From the time they are small, it is important to educate children to respect others even when they are different from us,” he said.

Children who are part of multiracial classes have an advantage, he said, because the faces of the children “are a prophecy of the humanity we are called to form: a family of families and peoples.” “The smaller these children are, the more they elicit from us tenderness and joy for an innocence and brotherhood that is evident—despite their differences they cry and laugh in the same way, they have the same needs, they communicate spontaneously and play together,” he said.

However, the pope said, the smilies of too many children are extinguished by suffering and their hearts are poisoned by violence.

In them, one can only see “faces lined by hunger and disease, faces disfigured by pain and desperation. The faces of these innocent little ones are a silent appeal to our responsi-

bility,” the pope said. Recognizing their helplessness, “all the false justifications for war and violence fall away. We simply must convert to projects of peace, lay down weapons of every kind and, all of us together, make a commitment to building a world more worthy of humanity.”

Three young people from Korschenbroich, Germany, dressed as the Magi, carry the offertory gifts during Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Jan. 1.

Vatican to decide fate of woman who knocked down pope at Christmas Mass

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican will decide how to proceed with the young woman responsible for knocking down Pope Benedict XVI during Christmas Eve Mass only after it reviews medical and Vatican security reports, said Vatican spokesman Rev. Federico Lombardi.

Critical to the prosecutor’s decision will be the doctors’ evaluation concerning the woman’s mental state and whether or not she was “of sound mind,” Father Ciro Benedettini, vice director of the Vatican press office, told Catholic News Service on Dec. 28. The prosecutor will also take into consideration eyewitness accounts, he said.

When the Vatican prosecutor has all the information, including a medical evaluation, he can recommend acquiring of any criminal, handing her over to Italian or Swiss authorities, or handing down a sentence.

While the pope was unharmed by the attack, French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, 87, suffered a broken hip and spent Christmas in Rome’s Gemelli hospital. He underwent surgery and received a total hip replacement on Dec. 27. The operation was successful and the cardinal’s condition was good, the Vatican said in a written statement that day.

Vatican sources confirmed that Maiolo was the same person who attempted to rush the pope at midnight Mass in 2006, but had been tackled by guards before she could reach the pontiff.

When asked what kind of precautions the Vatican was going to take in order to prevent Maiolo from having an opportunity to attack, Father Benedettini told CNS that for security reasons the Vatican would not reveal what strategies it intended to take.

Rev. Dennis M. Duvelius, pastor of St. Paul Parish in Tell City and St. Mark Parish in Perry County, was named as pastor pro-tem of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour on Dec. 27. The Vatican did not specify when the visit occurred, the Italian daily Il Messaggero said.

Pope Benedict XVI gives Communion to Miguel Diaz, the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, during Mass on the feast of the Holy Family. Meanwhile, the pope’s personal secretary, Msgr. Georg Ganswein, visited Maiolo at the psychiatric hospital in Subiaco on New Year’s Eve.

The paper said the monsignor brought her a rosary, saying “to show her the Holy Father’s interest in her situation,” Father Lombardi said in a written statement on Jan. 3. While the Vatican did not specify when the visit occurred, the Italian daily Il Giornale said Msgr. Ganswein met with Maiolo on Dec. 31.

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Domenico Gian, director of Vatican security services, told the Italian daily Il Messaggero on Dec. 27 that the number of people “that are stopped because they get too close to the Holy Father are many, even if we do not publicize it.” Gian was the guard that tackled Maiolo in 2008 and 2009.

Father Lombardi told reporters on Dec. 27, “The pope cannot be shielded 100 percent unless a wall were created between the pope and the faithful, which is unthinkible.”

“Security measures could be intensified, but this will be decided by the appropriate parties. However, it’s necessary to dispel the illusion that there is zero risk,” he said.

Because the pope wants to be close to the people, Vatican guards cannot always keep “similar episodes from happening” in the future, Father Lombardi added.

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Sacred vessels badly damaged after break-in at Jennings County church

By Mary Ann Wyand

The 700-pound safe containing antique gold sacred vessels used during liturgies for many years were badly damaged, possibly because the sacred vessels used during liturgies for many years were badly damaged, possibly beyond repair.

Father Jonathan Meyer expressed gratitude that the thefts were not more damaging because the sacred vessels used during liturgies for many years were badly damaged, possibly beyond repair.

"Years ago, parishioners never locked the church and all the vessels were in an open cabinet," he said. "People didn't think anything of it. When Father Ryan McCarty was the pastor of St. Anne and St. Joseph parishes in Jennings County and St. Mary Parish in North Vernon, several thievery apparently used a crowbar to force open a steel side door secured with a deadbolt lock sometime after dark on Dec. 27 or in the early morning hours of Dec. 28. During a phone interview on Jan. 4, he said the wood floor was scarred when the thieves dragged the heavy safe from the sanctuary, across the doorway, down the main aisle and out the front doors.

"A lot of the vessels had the names of donors [inscribed on them], and [the thieves] took some sort of tool and scratched the names off so the chalices wouldn't be traceable. Everything is disassembled. Everything in pieces. All the chalices have been broken apart. They took metal cutters to the monstrances and cut open the base of the principal chalice.

"When I was at the sheriff's office and saw them, it was hard to keep from crying," he said. "These are the vessels that my parishioners have received the precious Blood and the precious Body of Our Lord in for more than a hundred years, and there was a total disregard for the sacred and holy."

"These are the people who need Christ more than we could ever imagine," he said. "We need to pray for the many people in our world who have no understanding of the sacred or of religion. "We borrowed some sacred vessels from St. Mary Church because everything we had was in the safe," he said. "The plan is to do whatever we can to replace the objects to the best of our ability before we would look into purchasing new vessels.

"A lot of the vessels had the names of donors [inscribed on them], and [the thieves] took some metal cutters to the monstrances and cut open the base of the principal chalice."

St. Jude celebrates opening of youth center

By Mary Ann Wyand

Looking to the future, St. Jude parishioners in Indianapolis celebrated the opening of the new youth center during a Dec. 12 dedication ceremony. The blessing of the brick, multipurpose facility was a historic occasion during the parish's 50th anniversary year.

The blessing of the brick, multipurpose facility was a historic occasion during the parish's 50th anniversary year. St. Jude's anniversary theme is "Looking Back with Pride and Forward with Hope." The event also gave Father Stephen Banet, the pastor, an opportunity to visit with parishioners after his recent return from a four-month sabbatical.

While teenagers, children, parents and other parishioners toured the renovated former bus garage and enjoyed holiday cookies in the new full-service kitchen, Father Banet reflected on how the youth center will benefit the Indianapolis South Deenary parish for years- and generations--to come by helping to keep young people active in the Church.

"To have their own space, their own identity, I think will really encourage them to live their faith," he said. "They can come here and know this is a safe place to be, and that they have their own place in the parish community."

The new youth center is located on the west side of Roncalli High School's football field, and includes a concessions stand where parishioners can sell refreshments during games as a fundraiser for youth programs and activities.

The 1,800-square-foot facility also has handicapped-accessible restrooms, a large social room and a smaller meeting room that will accommodate parish youth ministry gatherings, religious education programs, Scout troop meetings and some school events.

A landscaped prayer garden on the east side of the youth center features a statue of Mary, Mother of God, Father Meyer encouraged St. Anne parishioners to pray for the many people in our world who have no understanding of the sacred or of religion.

"Sacramental and sentimental value of the vessels made them priceless for us, but we didn't have them documented," Blackburn said. "I would encourage parishioners to take pictures and document everything that is valuable."

If you are planning your wedding between Jan. 20 and July 1, 2010, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement on the form below. Pictures

You may send a picture of the couple. Please do not cut the photograph. The picture must be 8x10, 8x12 or 11x14. Please do not cut the photograph. The picture must be a minimum 200 dpi resolution and at least 3 inches or 600 pixels wide. Color photos are preferred. Please submit your photo as an attachment to the e-mail.

Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by noon on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2010. (No announcements or photos will be accepted after this date.)
Faith and culture are both inside us. Both tell us what to think and do. In his book, The Difference God Makes: A Catholic Vision of Faith, Cardinal Francis E. George writes, “Culture is a normative system, and so is faith. If the faith and culture are in harmony, as they always do to some extent, it is because faith is a gift from God and culture is a human construction. There will be tension in us because the faith and culture are both inside us.”

Faith and culture both tell us what to do, what to value and what to believe. In our modern culture, the highest value is personal freedom—the right to do whatever we choose without the interference of others.

For faith, the primary value is obedience to the will of God. A cardinal George, “In a secularized culture, belief in an almighty God, an all-powerful God, seems a threat to human freedom.”

Seen with the eyes of faith, God creates us out of nothing and bestows on us the gift of life. Properly understood, there is no way that God can be an impediment to human freedom.

“By a secularized culture,” George writes, “God is implicitly, in some sense, a rival, a competitor to human freedom. That means separating ourselves from what we are taught day-in and day-out by the goods of creation, in private prayer, has to be surrendered to the will of God. Sacred Scripture, preaching at the beginning of Advent, what is required of us. Should we be informed, relevant, well-expressed and agreeable to as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be serious, meaningful, well-expressed and thoughtful. Readers are welcome to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space considerations, political sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage a range of viewpoints, letters should be constrained to a certain word limit and may be rejected if they are not informative, engaging or well-expressed. Readers should be respectful of the views and opinions of others, particularly those that differ from their own. If a reader chooses to express a viewpoint that differs from the views of others, they should do so in a way that is respectful and considerate of others. A letter that is abusive, defamatory, or otherwise inappropriate will not be published. 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 well-written, well-thought and, if possible, concise. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Critic, PO. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1717. Letters with access to e-mail may send letters to letterstoe@criterion.org.

Past decade has brought many blessings to archdiocese.

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Due to technical problems, some Events Calendar notices are not included in this partial listing. TheCriterionrepresents the inconvenience this may cause our readers.

January 9
St. Roch Parish, Family Center, 3603 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Single Seniors, meetings, 1 p.m., ages 55 and over. Information: 317-784-4207.

January 15
Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 E. Emerson Ave., Indianapolis. Couples to Couple League, Natural Family Planning (NFP) class, 7 p.m. Information: 317-462-2244.

January 16
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3254 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Helpers of God’s Precious Infants, pro-life Mass, 11 a.m., Father John M. Caslin, celebrant, 8:30 a.m., followed by rosary outside abortion clinic and Benediction at church. Information: Archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, 317-236-1659 or 800-382-8981, ext. 1569.

January 17
Richmond Catholic Community, 701 N. “A” St., Richmond. Charismatic prayer group, 7 p.m. Information: dicksoncorp@papalite.ws.

KM VS. Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross Revielle, located on 925 South. 8 mile east of 422 South and 12 miles south of Vincennes. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the new Marian Way, 1 p.m. Father Elmer Burwinkel, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3551.

January 19
St. Pius X School, 720 N. Bard Drive, Indianapolis. Open house, 6:30-8 p.m. Information: 317-666-3311.

January 20


January 21
Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, 9005 N. Haverdale Road, Indianapolis. Monthly Mass, 11 a.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemetery.org.

Retreats and Programs

January 10


January 11
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Men’s Night at the ‘Burg,” Franciscan Father Carl Haaver, presenter, 7-8:30 p.m., free-will donation. Information: 812-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

January 12
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Supus and Saints,” Franciscan Sister Miriam Karawan, instructor, 7-8:30 p.m., $15 per person or $25 for you and a friend. Information: 812-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

January 13
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Thomas Merton Seminar, “Bridges to Contemplative Living–Discovering the Hidden Ground of Love,” five-part series, Benedictine Sister Julie Sewell, presenter, Mass: 5:15 p.m., simple soup and bread supper, 6 p.m., session, 6:30-9 p.m., $65.95 for series. Information: 317-788-7581 or benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 15-17
Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 100 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. "Reflection on the Book of Exodus," Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell, presenter. Information: 800-581-6905 or MZoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

January 16
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Women’s Tasks,” Franciscan Sister Olga Wittkelnik, presenter, 9-11:30 a.m., $15 per person. Information: 812-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

January 17
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Woman Prayer–Everyday Holiness,” Benedictine Sister A. chinnette Purcell, presenter, 8:45 a.m. -1 p.m., $25 per person includes lunch. Information: 317-788-7581 or benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

February 9

February 12-14

February 17
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Thomas Merton Seminar, “Bridges to Contemplative Living–Traveling Your Road to ‘Joy’,” four-part series, Benedictine Sister Julie Sewell, presenter, Mass: 5:15 p.m., simple soup and bread supper, 6 p.m., session, 6:30-9 p.m., $65.95 for series. Information: 317-788-7581 or benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

February 19-21

February 26-28

March 1
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Our Lady of Fatima and Benedict Inn, Lenten program, “Drinking from the Well–enewing Our Desire for Eternal Life with the Women of John’s Gospel,” Benedictine Sister K. Abeline Yeaton and Rev. Callie Smith, presenters, Mass: 5:30 p.m., dinner, presentation, $30 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or spoelke@archindy.org.

Five-part series on women's issues begins in February in Beech Grove

Women’s issues will be explored during a five-part series beginning in February at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove. The Tuesday night programs start at 6:30 p.m. and conclude at 9 p.m. The fee is $25 per session and includes dinner. The program topics and presenters are as follows:


• “Women of Wisdom–Instrument of Inspiration,” presented by Patricia Koch, the owner of Holiday World in southern Indiana, on March 9.

Paul W. and Marilyn Sue (Nolan) Morton, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with a renewal of their marriage vows during Mass at 5 p.m. on Jan 9. The couple was married on Jan. 9, 1960, at St. Peter Church in Muncie, Indiana. They are the parents of four children: Theresa Ford, Thomas and Timothy Morton and the late Joseph Morton. They have five granddaughters and one great-grandchild.

Serra Club announces vocations essay contest

“Come and See” is the theme for the 2010 John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest sponsored by the Serra Club of Indianapolis. Packets with contest rules and procedures were mailed recently to pastors, principals, parish administrators of religious education and Catholic school religious teachers in the archdiocese. Information about the contest and contest materials are under the “News and Announcements” heading at www.archindy.org.

The annual vocations essay contest has been named and sponsored in honor of Heart of Mary parishioner John Kelley, a longtime member of the Serra Club of Indianapolis, who died on Aug. 12, 2009. Kelley coordinated the essay contest for Catholic organization dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. (For more information or to register for any of these programs, call the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center at 317-788-7581 or log on to www.benedictinn.org.

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• “Style and Color—Updating Your Wardrobe,” presented by Jeanne Weaver, the owner of The Secret Ingredient, on Jan. 20.

• “Women’s Drug Issues—What You Need to Know,” presented by pharmacist Denise Grissom, on Feb. 3.

• “Nutrition 101—Perspectives for Women,” presented by nutritionist Jill Foy, on June 8.

For more information or to register for any of these programs, call the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center at 317-788-7581 or log on to www.benedictinn.org.

Christmas prayer

Pope Benedict XVI prays at the Nativity scene in St. Peter’s Square after leading a vesper service in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 31.
A being invited to spend the day with Jesus, the Gospel of John tells us that Andrew immediately ran to his brother, Simon, and announced: “We have found the Messiah” (Jn 1:41). Andrew then brought his brother to Jesus, who looked upon him and named him Peter (Jn 1:37-42).

Similarly, Philip, who had just encountered Jesus in Galilee, found Nathaniel and told him: “We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth” (Jn 1:45). When Nathaniel expressed doubt, Philip simply responded, “Come and see” (Jn 1:46). He did, and when he saw he answered: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel” (Jn 1:49).

Both of these encounters mark the beginnings of discipleship. In following Jesus, Peter and Nathaniel will witness his life and ministry, and come to find life through their faith in him. In time, they will be sent, discovering their own call to sacrificial love and service.

What is interesting about these initial encounters, however, is that while they are deeply personal and unique, they are initiated by the action of another disciple. It is Andrew who first brings Peter to Jesus, and it is Philip who invites Nathaniel to “come and see.” Through these disciples—through their witness, joy and invitation—Peter and Nathaniel first encounter the person of Christ and are changed.

Our own encounter with Christ is much the same. So much of our experience of faith has been brought to us through the gift of others. Our lives have been filled with people of faith, men and women of the Church, who first spoke to us of Christ, who nurtured our gifts and whose faithful witness awakened within us a deeper longing for God. In their invitation, the Church fulfills her mission to draw others to Christ.

Of course, among those who have brought us this gift are our priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters. Through their lives and ministry, in many and varied ways, they remind us of the presence of God and call us to seek his face. In those most significant moments and in the simple routines of our daily lives, their unique presence among us turns us to look toward the person of Christ, who calls us, saves us and heals us.

In pointing to Christ, priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters invite us to deeper vocational discernment as well. In their own response to God’s call, they witness to the importance of listening. In joyfully and gratefully living a life of sacrificial love, service and ministry, they invite us to “come and see” how we might be called. Their lives can attract us, and can help us to consider our own vocation to love and service.

They, after all, were themselves once invited. They too heard the voice of others that encouraged them to “come and see.” Behind the great variety among priests, deacons and religious is the common witness to the person of Christ and the commitment to serve others by pointing to him. This supplement contains some of their stories. Each is unique and, together, they represent a range of experiences, responses and ministries. They are stories of vocation and of faith, and of generosity and joy. They are stories that afford us an opportunity to remember with gratitude the priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters who have been a part of our own lives of faith.

Perhaps in these stories we might also see the beginnings of our own discipleship. Perhaps they might encourage us to consider how God might be calling us to love and service, and how we might encourage others to “come and see.”
Priest years to learn from parishioners and God’s creation

By Sean Gallagher

EDINBURGH and FRANKLIN—Although he is 49 and has been out of school for 20 years, Father Thomas Schliessmann is still a student at heart. He always has something to learn from the members of the two parishes where he serves as pastor—Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin.

“It’s wonderful to spend time with people who are living out their faith and trying to grow in their relationship with God,” he said.

Ordained in 1989, Father Schliessmann also learns about the glory of God while camping in Indiana and at national parks west like Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite.

“It’s something glorious,” he said.

“...and I think it’s one of the most rewarding things to be a priest. This has led him to share that love of the priesthood with parishes.

“I’m happy, and I’d like people to share my happiness,” Father Schliessmann said. “I want to share our Catholic faith. And I want people who are excited about Jesus to consider that he might also be calling them to serve in the particular sacramental identity of a priest.”

A vocation nurtured in his youth

Father Schliessmann learned at an early age to love the Church and the priesthood.

“Born in South Dakota, my family moved to Indiana, and I became members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish when I was 11. It was so diverse, up family where being Catholic was simply part of family life,” he said.

Involved in Scouting as a youth also reinforced his faith.

“It just fed into that whole [perspective] that I was brought up with. I learned involvement in Scouting as a youth also reinforced my faith in this way.

“It just fed into that whole [perspective] that I was brought up with. I learned about the world, and how God is simply a part of life, faith is a part of life,” Father Schliessmann said.

“I was a server. I tried to pray. It seemed like just being an astronaut or being a ranger. It stuck with me.”

That led him to attend the Latin School of Indianapolis, then Marquette Classical high school seminary, for three years until it closed in 1978.

After graduating from Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis in 1979, he studied aeronautical engineering for five years at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. During that time, he earned his master’s degree in atmospheric science.

“Still, the idea of the priesthood never left him. And so after graduating from Purdue in 1984, he became a seminarian again and enrolled at Saint Meinrad School of Theology, where he ‘felt at home’

The glory of God’s creation

Father Schliessmann learned early on from his parents to love the outdoors. As a priest, he has gained a new perspective on how to come closer to God.

“There’s something about the complexity of life and wanting to hang on to those things,” he said. “And so, it’s good to go and say, ‘What do I need just to be out for a day or two?’ and to come back and say, ‘You know, I don’t need that much.’

“There’s a spirituality of getting back to basics. What’s most important? And not just in terms of survival, but in how I use this gift of time?’

This simple approach to life and the ability to pare down one’s needs helps him create a good atmosphere for the participants in the Summer Field Study program at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis that he has been a part of for several years.

Each summer, Roncalli president Joseph Hollowell and other staff members guide a group of students for two weeks of hiking and camping at national parks in the western part of the country.

“His naturally positive attitude goes a long way to everyone having a positive experience,” Hollowell said, “regardless of whether you’re in the middle of a rain storm or if you’re lost in the woods overnight or if you’re on the 10th mile of a hike and you have blisters.”

Come and See! truly stimulates belief at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

By Dave Cox

ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS—Something happens to people who come through the main gate at Saint M ary-of-the-Woods, home of the Sisters of Providence and the shrine of St. Theodora Guérin.

There is something special about the physical appearance of the black iron gate or the granite marquies identifying the congregation and Saint M ary-of-the-Woods College.

But as soon as visitors move along The Avenue, they are welcomed by waving pin oak, black walnut, sugar maple, Eastern red cedar, pear, red buckeyes, white oak and red oak trees along the main drive, and close to 70 other species of trees around the grounds.

Come and see!

Each season has its own beauty. Pastel colors on budding stems and tree branches brighten springtime. Summer offers a palette of greens and plenty of shade, often accompanied by a soothing breeze. Autumn brings spectacular colors as the more than 70 species of trees burst into colors in anticipation of the coming winter months and holiday season. And during the winter, a brushing of snow across barren limbs accented by occasional red berries and frosted arms on the tall evergreens create natural snapshots and panoramic views that could hardly be captured on any artist’s canvas.

Come and see!

But it is more than the nearly 1,300 acres of natural beauty. Visitors who arrive at the front gate often feel a sense of peace and spiritual motivation. There is a force at work: God’s force, St. Theodora’s force, the Sisters of Providence force.

Come and see!

“A soon as I went through those gates, I was mesmerized. I was awe. I couldn’t have been met with more open arms or open hearts,” said Providence Sister Jan Craven as she remembered her first visit to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. “I was enamored with the grounds, the place, its beauty.”

Come and see what Sister Jan saw.

First impressions being what they are, postulant Hanna Corbin, who joined the Sisters of Providence in September, had a similar experience when she arrived here.

“It’s not only beautiful with its natural surroundings, it does have a spirit to it. It draws you inward, it draws you outward. The Spirit invites you to be who you are and to love,” she said. “It says to me the spirit of St. M. Other Theodore is still here. And all of the other sisters who have followed her have added to the natural beauty God has put here. The grounds are very inviting, very welcoming and very peaceful.”

Come and see what she has experienced.

Current sisters and future sisters aren’t the only ones who experience something special when they come to “The Woods.” The specialness is felt by various companions to the congregation: Providence Volunteer Ministers, Providence Associates, those who are part of Providence Volunteer Services, those in discernment, those on pilgrimages and tours, and those who just want some quiet time to themselves to feel the ambiance. Visitors from all 50 states and dozens of foreign nations have found that to be true.

Come and see what they have found!

Providence Sister Jenny Howard, vocation director, said the beauty of the grounds is genuine.

“I love to walk through the woods and feel the persuasive presence of St. M other Theodore. You really can get into a right relationship with God and find yourself!”
Caught up in God’

Franciscan sister feels at home as part of Oldenburg community

By John Shaughnessy

She believes she is home now, right where God wants her to be—sharing life with her Franciscan sisters, working with teenagers and living close to the animals that she loves.

As she travels the twisting, hilly roads in southeastern Indiana that lead to Oldenburg Academy, the Immaculate Conception, Franciscan Sister Clare Teixeira marvels at the remarkable life journey that has brought her to this part of the world.

For 14 years, she was married to the man she loved deeply—a “wonderful life” in Florida that ended in heartbreak, with her wanting to die.

She has also lived in New Mexico, doing mission work for a Catholic parish that ministered to the Navajo Indians.

And now, she is in Oldenburg, living the life she often dreamed of as a child—“caught up in God,” wanting to be a religious sister who makes a difference in the lives of students.

“My whole journey in life is listening to God with my ears, my eyes and my heart,” Sister Clare says. “I believe God speaks to us, speaks to our heart and allows us to know what’s life-giving and what gives us life.”

After three years in the Franciscan order, she professed her first vows in August. She is scheduled to profess her final vows as a Franciscan sister in 2012.

She was happy there, but then her younger sister, Gal, died in 2004. He had a lesion on his tongue that was diagnosed as cancer. The doctor said there were so many great-filled moments.

Rick had restless nights with the pain. I stayed up with him. I’d think of how Jesus said to his Apostles, “Can you not stay up an hour with me?” We both loved on Jesus. Rick never complained. He never got angry. We truly walked it together.

That’s what gave me the strength to go on.”

At 45, she began to travel, looking for a volunteer opportunity to work with animals.

“I have caught up with the grace and the gift of being in community,” she says. “We have a saying in the Oldenburg Franciscan community—‘Where one is, we all are.’”

—Franciscan Sister Clare Teixeira

Benedictine brother finds meaning and happiness at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

By John Shaughnessy

I looked back now, he can see when the turning point came for him—when his search for meaning and happiness started during one of the most difficult parts of his young life.

Right after college, I got a job out west in Seattle, Washington,” said Benedictine Brother Matthew Metzling, a 1997 graduate of Indiana University in Bloomington.

“When I was out there, my parents got divorced. It shook my world. The next five years, I was trying to figure out what to do with my life. I was also in a relationship that felt apart and I was in a career that I didn’t feel good about. I was working for a large company in sales and marketing. In college, I wanted to make a lot of money. Then I realized that money and success weren’t the true things for me.”

Brother Matthew paused before continuing. “I had a spiritual emptiness in my life. I started to go back to church in fits and starts. Then I went back every week, joined a parish and started to go daily Mass. I had the sense that this was the truth. And I felt I needed to get deeper and deeper in my knowledge of my faith. I ended up moving back to Evansville in 2004 to be closer to home. That’s when I got serious about discerning my life. I thought I might have a vocation. It was silly for me not to check it out.”

As he recently discussed his journey of faith, Brother Matthew mentioned that more than four years have passed since he made a retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad to view the life of a monk firsthand. He had come there in the fall of 2005 at the suggestion of the pastor of St. Benedict Parish in Evansville in the Evansville Diocese. He acknowledged that he had his doubts about becoming a monk.

“I had an idea in my mind what a monk was—and it was negative,” Brother Matthew recalled. He pictured a place of silence, not a very joyous place. But when he came to Saint Meinrad, I saw men who had a lot of joy for life. It totally overcame my whole idea and gave me a new perspective of what monastic life is. I could see myself being a monk.”

He entered the monastery in 2006. Now 34, he expects to make his final vows in August.

“Being around all the other young people in formation, I could see they were normal people like me,” he said. “Most of the monks here have a great sense of humor. Monastic life is very serious and prayer is one of the main things here, but we also have time to play. I’ve made some wonderful friendships here. When people...
Carmelite sister in Terre Haute creates intricate religious icons

By Mary Ann Wyand

Countless hours of love, prayer and meticulous work go into the “writing” of an icon. Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, recently completed a large religious icon of Our Lady of Peace holding the Child Jesus as a gift for the new Carmel in Dongsducheon, South Korea.

Our Lady of Peace holding the Christ Child, of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, a Carmelite sister in Terre Haute creates intricate religious icons

Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher carefully works on a religious icon of Our Lady of Peace holding the Child Christ. Another icon of Mary and the infant Jesus that she created for the millennium has been published by Primary House at the Benedictine Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo.

The happiness comes from discovering the changes in his life.

“They’re more of obedience and carefulness because you’re under a certain sense of the word where you can just do things. The truth is that all of us are striving for that. But we’re regular people who are just trying to find God. There’s lots of joy and humor in this place,” Brother Matthew said.

Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, decorates a large religious icon for the new Carmel in Dongsducheon, South Korea.

The new Carmelite monastery is under construction on a former U.S. Army base just south of the demarcation line between North and South Korea. As part of this ancient tradition, icons are “written” in the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox styles.

“The Carmel community in Seoul, South Korea, is making a foundation to Dongsducheon on an old American military base,” Sister Mary Grace said. “When they asked us to leave, we started to plan being able to return to our homeland in the midst of our construction.”

The two Carmelisters are located on continents half a world apart, but the sisters have become friends.

A few years ago, the prioress of the Seoul community brought a nun to the Carmel in Terre Haute to learn English.

In 2006, Carmelite Sister Susanna Choi, a native of South Korea, was notified by U.S. immigration officials that there was a problem with her visa so she had to return to her homeland in the midst of her foundation.

“The Seoul community took her in for 13 months until she could get that [immigration] paperwork rectified and re-enter our country,” Sister Mary Grace said. “As an act of thanking, our community agreed to write this icon for their foundation in gratitude for their help in leading me to where I am now.”

Brother Matthew Mattingly, left, and Jacob Niemand, a seminarian from the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., attend class at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, log on to their computer stations.

“Come, Lord Jesus.”

That icon has been published by Primary House at the Benedictine Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo.

Brother Matthew exemplifies balance and a deep theological approach. “The Church is a mystery, but it’s a mystery that makes sense. It gives the credit to God.”

Countless hours of love, prayer and meticulous work go into the “writing” of an icon. Carmelite Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a member of the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, recently completed a large religious icon of Our Lady of Peace holding the Child Jesus as a gift for the new Carmel in Dongsducheon, South Korea.

The happiness comes from discovering the changes in his life.

“The biggest thing is I’m more patient—willingness to try new things and step outside his comfort zone a little—teaching, working with youth, giving retreats. In general, he’s on the quiet, introverted side, but he’s stretched himself. Not only has he the community benefited, but he has as well.”

Brother Matthew Mattingly, left, and Jacob Niemand, a seminarian from the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., attend class at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, log on to their computer stations.

Benedictine Brother Matthew Mattingly, left, and Jacob Niemand, a seminarian from the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., attend class at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

Brother Matthew Mattingly, left, and Deacon Charles Rohrbacher, a master iconographer in Alaska, attend class at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, log on to their computer stations.

“Brother Matthew exemplifies balance and a deep theological approach. “The Church is a mystery, but it’s a mystery that makes sense. It gives the credit to God.”

Brother Matthew said.

“At the time, when I was going through those difficult parts of my life, I thought it was the end of the world. Looking back, all of them had a small part in leading me to where I am now, where I should be and where God wants me to be.”

“Just amazes me how God works.”
BEECH GROVE — Prayer becomes a way of life for women who answer God’s call to join the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

“You find yourself thinking about God,” said Benedictine postulant Heather Foltz, who entered the monastic community on Sept. 7 after discerning a religious vocation as a member of the sisters’ affiliate program.

“The first thing that attracted me to the Benedictine way of life was the prayer, and how the sisters’ ministry flowed from there,” she said. “I remember the first time I came to pray at the monastery chapel. I felt at home. I loved the way that the Psalms were sung, the times of silence, the petitions and the community life.”

Since entering the monastic community four months ago, she has had many opportunities to grow in her faith with 70 Benedictine sisters.

“When you’re working and processing things, you learn to see God in the people that you encounter in day-to-day life,” she said. “You grow in your knowledge of yourself, your relationship with God and your relationship with others.”

Benedictine Sister Juliann Babcock, the prioress, oversees the needs of the monastic community as well as the sisters’ corporate ministries. They sponsor the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center and St. Paul Hermitation, their ministry to the elderly, adjacent to Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

“In light of our Benedictine vocation, our ministry flows out of our community life,” Sister Juliann said. “Benedictines are not founded for a particular ministry like many apostolic communities. We have sisters whose ministries are in the fields of education, health care and social work. Other sisters minister in parishes, serve as administrators and are librarians.”

Their motto, “Seek God,” is displayed over the monastery door and is the focus of their daily life.

“We have a charism of hospitality—seeing Christ in the guest,” Sister Juliann said. “We see our ministries as an extension of our hospitality from the monastery. … We try to base our life as a community on prayer, work and hospitality. Our day hinges on our prayer life. We pray together in the morning, at noon and in the evening.”

Before dinner, a common practice of the community is to have a sister read aloud from the Rule of St. Benedict to deepen the sisters’ message in the hearts of the sisters.

“Liturgy is very important to us,” the prioress said, “so we work very hard at the quality of our music and our prayer life.”

St. Benedict calls the sisters to live in community. “A sister, we are listening to one another and discerning together,” said Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner, the community’s vocation director. “We are committed to working at our life together.”

The sisters invite women between the ages of 18 to 45 to contact the monastery about a time to visit the community and learn more about the Benedictine life.

“In the Rule, St. Benedict talks about ‘good zeal’ and says that we should anticipate the needs of one another,” Sister Juliann said. “There is a wonderful spirit of generosity in our sisters. As a community, we have a desire to welcome new members and to be of service to the people of God. We’re all about seeking God together. That’s what God is calling each of us to do.”

(For more information about the Sisters of St. Benedict, call Benedictine Sister Jennifer Mechtild Horner at the monastery at 317-787-3287, ext. 3032, or contact her by e-mail at jennifermechtild@benedictine.com.)
Deacon seeks to glorify God through work and family life

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—Almost 20 years ago, David Henn pondered whether God might be calling him to be a priest or a husband and father with a career as a lawyer.

But he was contemplating this question of faith in an unusual setting: the gallery of the House of Representatives prior to the start of a State of the Union address.

At the time, Henn was a student at Indiana University in Bloomington and serving as an intern in Washington, D.C., for then-Representative Andy Jacobs Jr.

As he sat there in the veritable temple of American political power, a priestotta and sat next to him. It was Jesuit Father William Byron, then president of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

“I actually opened up to him and told him exactly what I was going through,” Henn said. “He just sat with me. That was probably the most important that I decided that the priesthood was probably not going to be the way for me.

“The most important that I probably decided to go to law school. And that was certainly the most important that I decided to marry my wife.

Being enlightened about how he could glorify God through work in the secular world eventually led Henn more than a decade later to participate in the first permanent deacon formation program in the history of the archdiocese.

He was ordained a deacon on June 28, 2008, and Minister of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

Faith and the law

Today, Deacon Henn lives out that lesson he learned 20 years ago in his law practice in Greenwood. The formation he received in the deacon formation program helped him.

“There is no complete separation between the deacon and the lawyer in any instance,” Henn said. “I’m very clear with my client that when they want to use me as their lawyer, they get all of me.

This has led him to bypass divorce work because it was just not consistent with his vocation and vision of the deaconate, and he did not want “on Saturday to be celebrating someone’s wedding and on Monday in court working to dissolve a marriage.”

He also helps Catholic clients who come to him for estate planning to learn about end-of-life issues. When living wills are dictated, he will offer them a copy of the U.S. Bishop’s teaching on the topic.

“That affects people,” Deacon Henn said.

Finding something that was missing

In 1994, Deacon Henn married his wife, Mary Ellen, whom he had met shortly before that State of the Union address.

Although happily married with two children, Deacon Henn said he “always knew that something was missing.”

He discovered that missing piece when the archdiocesan launched its first permanent deacon program in 2003. Mary Ellen became confident that her husband had a possible call to the diocesan when she easily accepted the program’s rigorous formation schedule. The deacon candidates had formation sessions one weekend to a month each year, had homework to complete and were involved in minstry and activities.

“I always felt the sense that it was right,” she said. “I never felt like, ‘Are you crazy? We don’t have time for that. That won’t work.’ It was always, ‘We can make that work.’

“The years of formation were a blessing to the couple.

“They gave us a lot of opportunities to really talk and share on a deeper level,” Mary Ellen said. “It helped bring our faith into the forefront.

Growing up with the deaconate

The Henns’ children, Sydney and Collin, have grown up with the deaconate as a part of their lives. They were 5 and 3 when their father began his involvement with the deacon program.

It is not unusual for Collin, a fourth-grade student at Our Lady of the Greenwood School, to be an altar server at a Mass where his father is also assisting.

“It’s fun [when I’ll be up there with my dad at the altar],” Collin said.

The children often attend and go from the parish with their dad. “We were probably in and out of the parish probably a half dozen times on [a recent] Saturday,” Deacon Henn said.

The children find that their dad is often busier than their friends’ fathers.

“At my friends’ house, their dad’s always busy,” Collin said. “When I go to visit, they’re there most of the day. My dad isn’t always home, but he’s home a lot.

Sydney, a sixth-grade student at Our Lady of the Greenwood School, was worried the first time that her father preached at a School Mass.

“That was weird,” Sydney said. “I was afraid of what he was going to say.

But Deacon Henn is adamant about not telling stories of his vocation during his homilies.

“I leave my wife and kids out of the homilies,” he said. “I’ll preach about Rhydee. But I leave my wife out of it.”

A role model in the parish

Still, Deacon Henn admitted that Mary Ellen, whom he called the “spiritual center of our family life,” profoundly influences his preaching.

“I pale in comparison to her level of faith,” Deacon Henn said.

And by preaching a homily, he aff in a way that people a snapshot into our spiritual lives,” Deacon Henn and Mary Ellen know that, through his preaching and their presence in the parish, others see their role models, a reality that adds to the richness of their vocation.

“Even the people who are friends of mine see the also a deacon’s wife,” Mary Ellen said. “I don’t want to say that I act better because of that, but it helps to retell the [to be a good example],” Deacon Henn hopes that his example will lead his fellow parishioners to delve deeply into their faith.
Seminarian’s journey is an affirmation of the gift of life

By Sean Gallagher

OSGOOD—In his relatively short 28 years, seminarian Jerry Byrd has had an adventurous journey of faith. Raised in the Southern Baptist tradition in southeastern Indiana, he recalls telling his fellow grade-school students who were Catholic that they would go to hell because they worshipped Mary. “I repeated what I heard,” he said.

In his high school years, Byrd developed his musical talents and put them to the service of his Baptist congregation. But before the end of his junior year, he became convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and was received into the full communion of the Church.

During his college years, he majored in music and was involved in music and youth ministry at two parishes in the Cincinnati archdiocese. After graduating from Mount St. Joseph College in Cincinnati in 2003, Byrd served as a youth minister for a year at St. John the Baptist Parish in Dover and at St. Louis Parish in Batesville for two years.

For the past three years, he has been an archdiocesan seminarian at Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad while continuing to serve in parishes during the summer and on breaks from his studies.

Now Byrd is looking forward to the day when, God willing, he will be ordained a priest.

The gift of life

While pregnant with Jerry, Rose’s doctors told her that he had Down syndrome and tried to persuade her to have an abortion.

“I’m dead set against abortion for any reason,” Rose said. “They tried to be [forceful]. They had me watch a film and showed me all of this stuff about Down syndrome babies. But it didn’t change my mind, and I told them it wouldn’t.”

As the pregnancy progressed, the doctors told Rose that her child was losing weight and experiencing other physical problems. After a difficult labor, Jerry was finally delivered by Caesarean section.

“I saw them deliver him,” Rose said. “And here’s this big, fat, healthy, red, screaming, loud-mouthed baby. And in my mind, I’m hearing all the things the doctors said, that he was sick, that he was going to be a little tiny, sick baby.

“A nd from that point on, it just reinforced everything that I knew that the Lord had a purpose for him. I just always knew that he would serve the Lord in some way. But I just felt that it would be in the Baptist Church.”

“She chose to say ‘yes’ to life,” Jerry said. “She chose to say ‘yes’ to whatever God had in store for her and for me. And it was in that moment that her ‘yes’ enabled me to say ‘yes’ to God’s call.”

An encounter with Jesus

It would take a while for Byrd to finally discern what he believes is God’s vocation for him. Throughout his childhood and early teenage years, he held the Catholic faith in contempt.

But one night in 1997 as a high school junior, he went to a Mass with a friend who was seeking to become Catholic.

“I had no idea when I was walking into that church that night that my life was going to change,” Byrd said.

Up until then, he thought the Mass was just an empty ritual. But that night, something happened.

“When [the priest] elevated the host, I knew that that was Jesus,” Byrd said. “I didn’t know how. I didn’t know why. I couldn’t figure that out. I knew just something inside me that said, ‘Jerry, this is Christ.

“From that moment, I had a strong desire to receive the Eucharist. I wanted to receive Jesus. I wanted to have that encounter with him.”

Despite the misgivings of his mother, Byrd entered into the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) at St. John the Baptist Parish in Harrison, Ohio, in the Cincinnati archdiocese. He was received into the full communion of the Church in 1998.

Hints and affirmations of a vocation

While still in RCIA, Byrd heard his pastor preach a homily in which he challenged the young men in the congregation to consider the priesthood.

“IT was like I couldn’t shake the thought,” Byrd said of the powerful homily. “I couldn’t get rid of it.”

It took eight more years and a few periods where he felt that God was calling him to marriage before Byrd was ready to discern a possible call to the priesthood in a seminary.

Since he has been at Saint Meinrad School of Theology, Byrd has continued to develop his musical talents.
SCHLIESSMANN
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Always learning
Father Schliessmann said his parishioners “always, always” draw him closer to Christ.
This happens for him in a special way when he meets them in a privileged and confidential place: the confessional.
“I’m seeing people at their best there,” Father Schliessmann said.
“They’re courageous, humble, vulnerable, being honest and being open.”
He’s a very thoughtful and careful and attentive confessore, said Barbara Pierse, a member of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh.
Pierse also sees her pastor’s attentiveness when she works with him in the parish’s Hispanic ministry outreach.
“He does not presume that he knows everything,” she said. “And so he wants to hear what other people have to say about issues that are going on.”
“He listens to what you have to say, even if he disagrees with you,” said Jean Martin, a pastoral associate of Holy Trinity Parish in Franklin. “He’s open to new things. He’s a very thoughtful person.”
This positive impression that Father Schliessmann has made on the people he serves might be rubbing off on the next generation of priests.
Seminarian Michael Kubancsek, a freshman at Bishop Simon Brdlik College Seminary and at Marian University, both in Indianapolis, has gotten to know Father Schliessmann because the priest works closely with his father, Gary, who is the co-chair of the Catholic Scouting Committee in the archdiocese. Father Schliessmann is the committee’s chaplain.
“Father Tom is an excellent priestly example,” Kubancsek said. “He’s a good pastoral role model. He’s one good example of a priest who has a very human side.”
Kubancsek also simply appreciates how Father Schliessmann likes to spend time with him and his fellow seminarians.
“It’s good to know that priests are genuinely concerned about the seminarians and about their formation,” Kubancsek said. “And it comes from the fact that he cares so much about the priesthood itself.”
(For more information on priests and vocations to the priesthood in the archdiocese, log on to www.HearGodsCall.com.)

JOURNEY
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composing liturgical music that has been sung at St. John the Baptist Church in Osgood. He often stays at the parish rectory when on weekends.
Rebecca Delker, a homeschooled eighth grader, is a member of the parish and sings in the choir that Byrd directs from time to time.
“He’s a lot of fun to be around,” she said. “He brings out the best in our voices somehow. Something about him just makes us want to try our best. And so we always end up sounding good.”
“He’ll be a great priest,” said Jesse Weidner, a member of the parish choir and a freshman at Marian University in Indianapolis. “He loves the Mass. He loves Jesus. He loves God.”
Father Shaun Whitlington, the pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish, values Byrd’s musical talents and his love of Catholic culture.
But he also sees other attributes in Byrd that will serve him well in priestly ministry.
“Any religious vocation recognizes that one is called to serve God and to be in relationship with other people and to speak the truth in charity,” Father Whitlington said.
“I see it from [his] openness and honesty in working with youth to the compassion and concern given to those who have lost loved ones. It’s all across the board.”

WOODS
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God, with each other, and with creation here. This place has a sense of sacredness about it. There is a true sense of being at home,” she said.
“Come and see what Sister Jenny describes!” Sister Jenny said.
There may be a perception of everything being in the past. Certainly, a strong heritage and legacy create a forceful foundation for those who seek an opportunity to follow God’s call, “but there is a strong energy here. We are deeply rooted, we are grounded here.”
Sister Jenny said.
“We are grateful for and blessed by the many people who are so generous to support our mission. Our faith calls us to action, and it all ties in with our mission as an apostolic community.”
The Sisters of Providence will host their annual “Come and See!” weekend for women who are in discernment about religious life on March 26-28 at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. More information can be found on the congregation’s Web site at www.SistersofProvidence.org.

Submitted photo

Sister Jenny describes! Autumn’s beauty frames the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, where St. Theodora Guérin’s remains are entombed at a shrine.

JANINE WOODS
Jesus built on Jewish moral tradition by upholding commandments

By Fr. Gerald O'Collins, S.J.

What is it about the Bible that confirms some people in their unbelief, prompts others to pick and choose what they want to hear, and brings some others closer to Christ?

I first seriously faced the question many years ago when I read a book by Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology.

Freud quoted what he called "the grandiloquent commandment" that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

"Why should I do so?" he asked.

"How can it be possible? If I am to love someone, he must deserve it in some way. But so many men don't!"

Freud wrote that if the commandment stated "love your neighbor as your neighbor loves you," he would not take exception to it. But as the commandment stood, he found it false, unreasonable, and impossible to fulfill.

In a discussion with Jesus, a lawyer was ready to accept as a true norm for action the commandment of loving one's neighbor. But Jesus gave a precise statement about the people who made up the category of "my neighbor."

He seemed to answer to Jesus that Jesus is to list certain classes of people and omit others or perhaps to mention certain kinds of events when love should be exercised and to exclude other kinds of events when there would be no call to practice love.

Instead, Jesus told a story about a traveler who had been robbed and left badly wounded by bandits, and about the way in which three individuals reacted to the traveler's terrible plight and critical needs.

The Bible is God's personal letters to us

By Carole Norris Greene

The New American Bible, the translation that is the choice of the U.S. bishops and the achievement of some 50 biblical scholars over the course of many centuries, is a collection of 73 books written over the course of many centuries.

Can the Bible be believed? The Church says yes, and in its entirety. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context of the books.

In 1943, Pope Pius XII wrote in his encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu" ("Inspired by the Divine Spirit") that we "ought to explain the original [biblical] text, which was written by the inspired author himself and has more authority and greater weight than any... translation whatever ancient or modern." The New American Bible was produced in response to the pope's mandate.

The encyclical further reiterates that Scripture aims to awaken in readers feelings of gratitude "to the God of all Provvidence, who from the throne of his majesty has entrusted books as so many personal letters to his own children."

As Catholics, we should follow all of the teachings of Jesus, even the really hard sayings and difficult lessons, such as loving our enemies. Jesus challenges his followers to do just that. In accepting this challenge, Christians experience a special joy and happiness because they find Jesus himself in all those who desperately cry out for their help.

In a discussion with Jesus, a lawyer heard a question that Jesus neither picked nor chose nor place limits on what they are willing to hear from Jesus. They put into practice even his hard sayings because they give him their total allegiance. He is the truth — the total truth — which they want to live.

Jesus built on the Jewish moral tradition by upholding the Ten Commandments (Ex 19:10-15) and following the prophets in stigmatizing social injustice, especially the failure to act justly and lovingly toward those like Lazarus who suffer and are in terrible distress (Lk 16:10-31).

But Jesus went beyond this principle and introduced something startlingly new by teaching love for one's enemies.

Here we reach the really "hard sayings" of Jesus: "love your enemies," "offer no resistance to one who is evil," "when someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well" and "do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow." (Mt 5:36-44)

These and other hard sayings are heroic ideals that go beyond any common-sense morality that might be established on reasonable grounds, and that might have appealed to Freud.

"Things in Revelations and even in Genesis are sometimes so hard to accept literally, but with faith you can accept it. The Bible is the Bible, and I believe it is the inspired word of God," (M. Lea Cué, Aiken, Texas)

"My biggest problem is that the Bible gets translated — and we're not 100 percent sure that it's translated correctly — so we cannot or may not be true or be interpreted correctly by people in authority. I believe the essence of the Bible, which shows the almighty creative power of God, and the overwhelming love of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit," (Judy Dominic, Harrison, Ohio)

"I'm not a literalist. I understand that the Bible is a collection of many stories which may not have happened, but they are true to life and have applications... That makes it relevant to all ages... so nothing is hard to believe."

A further dramatic example comes from what Jesus told someone who had invited him to a meal: "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors. ... Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (Lk 16:12-13).

Yet there are millions of Catholics and other Christians who neither pick and choose nor place limits on what they are willing to hear from Jesus. They put into practice even his hard sayings because they give him their total allegiance. He is the truth — the total truth — which they want to live.

Jesus built on the Jewish moral tradition by upholding the Ten Commandments (Ex 19:10-15) and following the prophets in stigmatizing social injustice, especially the failure to act justly and lovingly toward those like Lazarus who suffer and are in terrible distress (Lk 16:10-31).

But Jesus went on to claim something that no prophet ever did. He identified himself with the sick, the hungry, prisoners and all others in great need. That is why Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Dorothy Day and millions of other believers have opened their arms to the destitute, cared for those who are physically disabled and spent their lives serving the less fortunate.

Jesus challenges his followers to do just that. In accepting this challenge, they experience a special joy and happiness because they find Jesus himself in all those who desperately cry out for their help.

They come to experience the ultimate truth about the human race: The face of every man and every woman is the face of Christ himself.

Believing that God faithfully led and taught his people in view of the coming Messiah, and seeing in the life of Jesus and in his words how we ourselves are to live, some people will wholeheartedly embrace all that the Bible offers, even the hard challenges.

To do anything less is to invite nagging doubt — and that doubt can become a kind of self-appointed hell.

Jesus Father Gerald O'Collins has taught theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. His 46 published books include Jesus Our Redeemer, published by Oxford University Press, and Pope John Paul II: A Reader, published by Paulist Press."

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

Family and faith are reinforced through experiences

I. Charisma in Veritate

II. The Bottom Line/Antoinette Bosco

John Melendez’s ‘miracle’ on death row

As we rang in the New Year, I connected with a dear old friend of mine. Together, we were living under the circumstances I would have chosen. Instead of a private party hats and holding toasting glasses, we were inside a church on a cold January morning. Her mom had been sick for years, but today her health had taken a turn for the worse.

A few weeks later, the doctors told us that mom probably had a month or so to live. My friend and I kept each other near by, but even more so because the events of the past just sort of happen upon it one day, completely unaware.

But the resolution that we all came to the same end. We return to our Maker, just like the beginning. The events of the past few days made me do a gut check and re-examine some things. I need to ditch anti-aging creams and get with the program. Although the message doesn’t resonate much here on Earth, it’s never too late to what we can “see.”

So how do we move forward, keeping our eyes on home while plugging into life’s daily commitments? “It’s NOT about the many shiny objects which distract us!” my friend proclaimed.

I thought about God’s answer to that question.

My brother, Stan, became a regular columnist for The Criterion.

Antoinette Bosco writes for Catholic News Service.

PERSPECTIVES

It’s All Good/Patti Lamb

My New Year’s resolution? To connect with God each day

Later, I got to thinking about the statement I made at the funeral: “At least she knew and could prepare.” That sounded like death sneaks up on the rest of us and takes us by surprise—as if only a minute ago I was up and the rest of us just sort of happen upon it one day, completely unaware.

But the real resolution that we all came to the same end. We return to our Maker, just like the beginning. The events of the past few days made me do a gut check and re-examine some things. I need to ditch anti-aging creams and get with the program. Although the message doesn’t resonate much here on Earth, it’s never too late to what we can “see.”

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Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

My Journey to God

**Sign of Hope**

In the dead of winter, I stand amongst the trees
And upon a holy bush, Whose branches spoke to me
As a sign of hope
That God's love will bring forth life.

Hope comes from faith,
Belief in things unseen,
Life amidst the dead of winter,
Belief in things unseen.

If there is no marriage in heaven, it wouldn't seem that she is preparing a place for me. And if she can see me, she must know that I am not happy without her. (Illinois)

On the other hand, the blessings and happy memories of a previous marriage that has ended by death may leave the surviving spouse with a lasting mental intimacy and companionship that he or she is drawn to renew, even though a new marriage relationship may never come to pass.

No one knows with certainty. It was, and is, God's will that we be with one another.

Life amidst the dead of winter,
Belief in things unseen.
Hope comes from faith,
Belief in things unseen.

He has been with me, comforting me in my grief.

I have been in herd of humans and wives.

The intimacy, trust and life-giving they share with each other that, in all their goodness, will never end.

Perhaps it all comes down to being humble enough to acknowledge that some real and existential meaning lie beyond our comprehension in this life. Your wife is with you in the communion of saints, and is supporting you.

It is true that there is no marriage in heaven, certainly not in the reproductive dimension that we experience here.

Part of heaven will be our conscious intimacy and communion with those who were dear to us here on Earth. Beyond that is the fact that our personalities, our ways of loving and being which we carry into eternity is largely determined by the people with whom we shared our earthly life.

You are a significantly different person than you had married someone other than the woman with whom we shared earthly life. On the other hand, the blessings and happy memories of a previous marriage that has ended by death may leave the surviving spouse with a lasting mental intimacy and companionship that he or she is drawn to renew, even though a new marriage relationship may never come to pass.

Catholic Courier
Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state connections to the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.


Gibbins, Brian R., 68, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 26. Father of Becky Berry, April Ruhl and Tina Ruhl. Brother of Patricia Coakley, Lisa Cox, Gregory and Mike and Terry Gibbins. Great-grandfather of 12.


Linn, John, 85, St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, Nov. 3. Wife of Victor Linn. Sister of Carol Barth, Barbara Edwards, Jacqueline Finanagin, Mary Sue Lenahan and Elizabeth M. O’Donnell. Great-grandmother of nine.

McAin, Jim, 77, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Dec. 2. Son of John and Marjorie McAin. Stepfather of Jennifer Bing, April Ruhl and Tina Ruhl. Brother of John McAin.


McKean, Nickie Trinidad, Clint Daniel and Dennis Kortman.

Mosey, Ann L., 66, St. Mary of the Knobs, Floydia, Nov. 6. Brother of Eleanor Rosenberg, Mary Patricia and John Poynter.


Havanik. Sister of Carol Barth, Barbara Edwards, Jacqueline Finanagin, Mary Sue Lenahan and Elizabeth M. O’Donnell. Great-grandmother of nine.


Robert Carlson, 42, visits the West Side Catholic Center in Cleveland on Dec. 26. Formerly homeless, Carlson now has his own apartment, but his income prevents him from being able to rent or afford utilities and food. The meals he gets at the center allow him to stay off the streets.

U.S. Postal Service to honor Mother Teresa with stamp in 2010

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Blessed Teresa of Calcutta will be among the subjects depicted on U.S. stamps debuting in 2010, the U.S. Postal Service announced on Dec. 30.

The 44-cent stamp, bearing a portrait of Mother Teresa painted by artist Thomas Blackshear II of Colorado Springs, Colo., will go on sale on what would have been her 100th birthday on Aug. 26.

"Her humility and compassion, as well as her respect for the innate worth and dignity of humanity, inspired people of all ages and backgrounds to work on behalf of the poorest of the poor," said the Postal Service news release on its 2010 commemorative stamp programs.

The release also noted that Mother Teresa received honorary U.S. citizenship in 1996 from the U.S. Congress and Bill Clinton. Only five other people have been honored as U.S. citizens—Winston Churchill, Raoul Wallenberg, William Penn and Hannah Callowhill Penn, and the Marquis de Lafayette—and all but Callowhill Penn have also appeared on U.S. postage stamps.

Mother Teresa also received the Congressional Gold Medal in 1997 for her "outstanding and enduring contributions through humanitarian and charitable endeavors," the release said.

Born on Aug. 26, 1910, in what is now the Republic of Macedonia, Mother Teresa went to India at the age of 18 and founded the Missionaries of Charity through the order she founded in Calcutta on Sept. 7, 1950, and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2003.

Other stamps to be issued during the next year will honor actress Katharine Hepburn; "distinguished sailors" William S. Sims, Arleigh A. Burke, John McCain and Doris Miller; cartoonist Bill Mauldin; 10 abstract expressionist artists; "cowboys of the silver screen" William S. Hart, Tom Mix, Gene Autry and Roy Rogers; entertainer Kate Smith; and filmmaker Oscar M. Ieuches.

U.S. postage stamps also will depict winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, the Chinese lunar new year, the M-ackinac Bridge in Michigan, the Negro Baseball League, and characters from the "Sunday funnies"—Archie, Beetle Bailey, Dennis the Menace, Garfield, and Calvin and Hobbes.

In 2010, the Postal Service will issue the first stamp designed especially for oversized or odd-sized-greeting cards. The 64-cent stamp will depict a monarch butterfly, and an illustration of a generic butterfly will appear on cards or envelopes requiring the additional postage.
enter into the spirit of the pilgrimage, the spirit of conversion. And I had the time to do that."

History's examples, today's crosses
While walking, Boehm gained an appreciation for the historic nature of his pilgrimage.

"It really hit me about one week into it that I was treading the same ground that so many Christians [had walked]," he said. "[They] really were our ancestors who had sought conversion to conform themselves in a greater way to the crucified Christ in the pilgrimage.

Dustin did this by carrying many difficult crosses during his long trek. Some were forced upon him, such as when he had to truck over the rugged Pyrenees Mountains in harsh late-winter weather.

"It was terrible," he said. "It was the first day that they had just opened up the route (over the mountains), it was night at the end of winter. So the snow was still up there. It was cold. And it kept switching between snow and rain. I couldn't see more than 50 feet in front of me."

Other crosses encountered were his own fault, such as his choice to forgo physical preparation prior to the pilgrimage and to not break in his hiking boots. This decision resulted in one of his ankles swelling to twice its normal size two weeks into the pilgrimage.

"It was really about one week into it that pilgrims have taken for centuries to arrive at the end of winter. So the snow was still up there. It was cold. And it kept switching between snow and rain. I couldn't see more than 50 feet in front of me."

As he took one step at a time, Boehm said, "He just looked at me and said, 'One day at a time. Just put one foot in front of the other and you'll be fine.' That's the grace of God, you'll get this done."

"I'd do this on my own, I'd do this on my own," Boehm said. "I'd do this on my own, I'd do this on my own."

"I just broke down and cried. It was a huge moment for me," he said. "I just broke down and cried. It was a huge moment for me."

Boehm eventually walked into Santiago de Compostela on Pentecost. He received a document certifying that he had completed a pilgrimage to the shrine in that city which, according to tradition, holds the relics of St. James. Boehm completed a 1,000-mile journey, made largely on foot, the previous day.

"It has given me leaps and bounds greater confidence that I can depend on my Lord to provide whatever I need;" Boehm said. "Despite all of the trials that I will no doubt go through in the future, I can look to him and be wholly confident that what I need will be given."

"It might not be what I want, but it will be what I need."

At the same time, his experience of the day-to-day blessings and crosses of his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela taught Boehm to not worry about the future but, instead, to live in the present.

"With this pilgrimage, instead of looking so much to the future, I was really able to live in the moment with the pain and suffering of each day, the joys and the peace of each day that came," Boehm said. "I tried to look for the grace in the moment, even in the pain."

"For more photos from Boehm's pilgrimage, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com."