Cardinal praises expanded health care, but fears remain on abortion

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops praised new health reform legislation for expanding health care to more Americans, but said the bishops and the Catholic community will be watching closely to ensure that the new law does not expand federal funding of abortion.

“We are apprehensive as we look to the future, even as we applaud much of the increased care that will be available,” Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago told Catholic News Service on March 23, shortly after President Barack Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

“So we will watch basically and try to continue to enter into conversations as a moral voice—never as a political voice. We’ve been very careful to insist upon the moral principles that everybody should be cared for and no one should be deliberately killed,” he added.

Cardinal George acknowledged in the interview that “the unity of the Church has been wounded” in various political actions and conversations surrounding the health reform debate. The USCCB opposed the Senate bill that passed the House on March 21 while some Catholic groups and members of Congress supported it.

“The bishops know that they don’t speak for every one of the 61 million Catholics in the country, but what we do is we speak for every one of the 61 million Catholics in the country,” he said.

“We are certainly concerned about division in the Church because bishops have to be the people who are concerned about its unity, about keeping people together around Christ,” he said.

The cardinal said it remained to be seen whether the executive order promised by Obama would be adequate to keep the law from expanding federal funding of abortion.

See related editorial, page 4.

Youth director embraces shelter’s goal of changing heartbreak to hope for homeless children and parents

By John Shaughnessy

In his dreams, the boy never imagined celebrating his 10th birthday in a shelter for homeless families. He also never dreamed how special that birthday would turn out to be.

As he woke that morning at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis, the boy just knew how much his life had changed in the past few weeks. He and his single mother had to leave their home, their neighborhood and the friends they had known. He sensed the helplessness that his mom felt. He saw the fear in her eyes, a fear that he felt, too.

He also feared that his birthday would pass unnoticed amid all the uncertainties in their lives.

The boy didn’t know an employee at the shelter—Emily Able—had seen the paperwork that showed the date of his birthday. He didn’t know that she took the time to get him a birthday cake and select presents for him from an extra supply of gifts that people had donated during the Christmas season.

“We always recognize a child’s birthday,” says Able, the director of community and youth services at Holy Family Shelter. “When he saw the gifts and the cake, he was surprised. He said, ‘I never had a cake before.’ There were tears in his eyes.”

There are tears in her eyes as she finishes that story.

Making the connection

The stories from Holy Family Shelter tend to be emotional.

Sometimes those stories are touched by joy, including the celebration in December when the archdiocese’s new 30,000-square-foot shelter opened on the near west side in Indianapolis, providing a much larger haven of hope for homeless families, married couples, expectant mothers and single parents with children.

Too often, the stories from the shelter are touched with heartbreak, especially considering the impact of suddenly being homeless on children.

“Our kids, even the ones who want to act tough, are affected hugely by what happens to their parents,” Able says.

“They lose a home, their friend next door and the neighborhood they’re used to seeing. They’re also going through the trauma of their family being stressed. Some parents cry. Some yell. Some stay in their rooms. There’s stress, confusion and even fear for our kids. They have fear for themselves, their parents, their little siblings. They’re carrying the brunt of a lot of things they shouldn’t be carrying.”

The 28-year-old Able works to lift the burden from their minds and their lives. One of the primary ways she does it is by providing stability in their schooling.

“There’s federal legislation called the McKinney Vento Act that says that every homeless child has the right to attend their school of origin,” notes Able, a 2000 graduate of Roncalli High.

“Are we blessed to have so many dedicated and hardworking clergy, religious and parish life coordinators

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

A recent medical checkup revealed that I have a small tumor that will need to be surgically removed. The tumor is not related to the Hodgkin’s lymphoma that I had in 2008. My doctors believe the tumor is benign, and want to remove it as a precautionary measure.

I am waiting for the results of further tests, but I expect to have surgery in mid- or late April.

I’ve been told I may need four to five weeks of recovery time following the surgery. I regret the interruption this may cause in my normal operations. I do not expect the day-to-day operations of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to be greatly affected.

We are blessed to have so many dedicated and hardworking clergy, religious and parish life coordinators as well as an excellent administrative staff. Our many ministries will continue as usual.

This is all the information I have at the moment. I would appreciate your prayers, and please know that I will continue to pray for all of you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B. Archbishop of Indianapolis
March 22, 2010
Pope apologizes to Irish abuse victims, orders Vatican investigation

Pope Benedict XVI personally apologized to victims of priestly sexual abuse and announced new steps to heal the wounds of the scandal, including a Vatican investigation and a year of papal penitential reflection.

“You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated,” he told victims in his letter released March 20 at the Vatican.

The pope told priest abusers that they would answer to God for their sins. He said bishops had made serious mistakes in responding to allegations of sexual abuse, and he encouraged them to implement new Church norms against abuse and cooperate with civil authorities in such cases.

“Only decisive action carried out with complete honesty and transparency will restore the respect and good will of the Irish people toward the Church,” he said.

The 4,600-word letter was distributed at Masses across Ireland on March 20, and priests there prepared homilies on the text. The letter came in response to the disclosure last fall that Irish Church leaders had often protected abusive priests over the last 35 years.

Similar allegations have since come to light in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

Pope Benedict, who met with Irish bishops to discuss the problem in February, began his letter by saying he shared in the sense of betrayal Irish Catholics felt when they learned of these “sinful and criminal acts” and the “often inadequate response” by Church authorities in Ireland.

He said he was convinced that the Church, having adopted strict new measures against sexual abuse, was now on the right path. But he also said the healing process for Irish Catholics would take time and require a deeper spiritual renewal, he said.

“No one imagines that this painful situation will be resolved swiftly,” he wrote.

The pope pointed out that he had met with sex abuse victims before, and said he was ready to do so again. Many in Ireland have called for a public apology from the pope for the damage caused to those who suffered abuse at the hands of priests.

To the victims of abuse and their families, the pope offered “true and profound sorrow.”

He noted that many victims found that, when they had the courage to denounce the abuse, “no one would listen.”

Abused Catholic institutional residents must have felt there was no escape from their sufferings, he said.

“It is understandable that you find it hard to forgive or to be reconciled with the Church. In her name, I openly express the shame and remorse that we all feel. At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope,” he said.

Addressing priests and religious who have abused children, the pope declared: “You betrayed the trust that was placed in you by innocent young people and their parents, and you must answer for it before almighty God and before properly constituted tribunals.”

Priest abusers, he said, have “violated the sanctity of the sacrament of Holy Orders in which Christ makes himself present in us and in our actions.” He said those who have abused should openly acknowledge their guilt, try to atone personally for what they have done and “do not despise of God’s mercy.”

The pope urged bishops to fully implement the Church’s new policies against abuse and to “continue to cooperate with the civil authorities in their area of competence.”

“It cannot be denied that some of you and your predecessors failed, at times grievously, to apply the long-established norms of canon law to the crime of child abuse. Serious mistakes were made in responding to all allegations,” he said.

The pope said he had ordered an apostolic visitation, or internal Church investigation, of certain dioceses in Ireland, as well as seminaries and religious congregation. He said details would be announced later.

The pope also announced two other “concrete initiatives” to help Irish bishops repair the damage in the Church:

• A yearlong period, from Easter 2010 to Easter 2011, of penitential and devotional practices with the intention of strengthening holiness and strength in the Church in Ireland.

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Archdiocese continues efforts to help students succeed in ISTEPs, academics

By John Shaughnessy

As many Catholic school students prepare for another round of ISTEP testing in April and May, two directions have become clear concerning Indiana’s standardized test for assessing student performance in math and language arts.

First, hoping to reach its goal of having 90 percent of Indiana children pass the tests by 2012, the Indiana Department of Public Instruction has adopted an approach similar to the one that has achieved success in Catholic schools in recent years.

Secondly, the archdiocese—which already has a student passing rate of 89 percent, has said it will continue its efforts to increase the success of its students, maintain their high level of performance and even extend it beyond.

A Washington tour guide will join the pilgrims for an afternoon of sightseeing on the National Mall, she said, and the group will visit the monument to the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery just across the Potomac River in Virginia.

The archdiocesan pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is one of the most popular pilgrimages in the nation. The archdiocesan pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is one of the most popular pilgrimages in the nation. The pilgrimage is an annual event, with thousands of pilgrims attending each year. It is a pilgrimage of the heart and soul, a chance to connect with one’s faith and to experience the beauty of the shrine.

The pilgrimage itinerary and registration form are posted online at www.archindy.org/pilgrimage/shrine2010.html.

Poet to receive University of Notre Dame’s 2010 Laetare Medal

NOTRE DAME, Ind. (CNS)—Dana Gioia, poet, educator and arts administrator, will receive the University of Notre Dame’s 2010 Laetare Medal on May 16, commencement ceremony.

In his vocation as poet and avocation as arts administrator, Dana Gioia has given vivid witness to the mutual flourishing of faith and culture,” said Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, president of Notre Dame. “By awarding him our university’s highest honor, we hope both to celebrate and participate in that witness. Gioia—the first poet to receive the honor—has published three full collections of poetry, including Interrogations of Noon, which won the 2006 National Endowment for the Arts Award. He has also published eight smaller collections of poems, two opera libretti, and numerous translations of Latin, Italian and German poetry.

He writes essays and reviews for The American Scholar, The New York Times Book Review, The Washington Post Book World, The New Yorker and The Atlantic Monthly. He also has served two terms as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, where he worked to strengthen support for public funding of arts and arts education, champion jazz as a uniquely American art form, promote Shakespeare readings and performances nationwide, and distribute NEA grants more widely.

In a lecture in 2003, Gioia argued that art and Catholicism mutually flourish because “the Catholic, literally from birth, when he or she is baptized, is raised in a culture that understands symbols and signs. And it also trains you in understanding the relationship between the visible and the invisible.” Consequently, allegiance finds its greatest realization in Catholic artists like J. M. G. Le Clezio, Gioia—the first poet to receive this award—has often cited the French writer as an example of what an American Catholic for outstanding service to the Catholic Church and society.

The medal, established in 1883, is awarded to an American Catholic for outstanding service to the Catholic Church and society.
The end of health care reform does not justify immoral means

Sadness and disappointment are the prevailing emotions of many Americans this week. We sincerely hope for authentic health care reform that would provide universal coverage, and protect the life, dignity, conscience and health of all. What we got instead was a misguided health care reform bill and reconciliation package that fail to protect the most vulnerable members of our society and cost us too much—both morally and economically.

Prior to this week’s passage of historic health care legislation, S. Rep. Kent Conrad had urged members of Congress to fix the serious problems in the Senate bill passed last Christmas Eve. In their March 20 letter to the House of Representatives, the bishops said: “The Senate bill provides a health care to millions, purchases health care for tens of thousands, and addresses the failings of our health care system in our parishes, emergency rooms and shelters. This is why we as bishops continue to support the Senate bill, which truly protects the life, dignity, conscience and health of all is a moral imperative of our Catholic identity.”

Congress did not accept the bishops’ advice, which was not offered on partisan, political grounds, but on the basis of fundamental moral principles and the Church’s 2,000-year-old commitment to caring for the suffering ministry of Jesus.

The new legislation, which was signed by President Barack Obama on March 23, sets aside the hue of the language of the Hyde Amendment, which forbids federal funding of most abortions. In place of this statutory prohibition against taxpayer-funded abortions, some Democratic senators proposed the House of Representatives who voted for the reform bill accepted President Obama’s executive order that reinforces the Hyde Amendment. The text of the draft executive order released by the White House said its goal was to “establish an adequate enforcement mechanism to ensure that federal funds are not used for abortion services [except in cases of rape or incest, or when the life of the woman would be endangered], consistent with a long-standing federal statutory restriction that is commonly known as the ‘Hyde Amendment.’”

This is not a morally acceptable solution. An executive order is not the law of the land. It can be changed with the stroke of a president’s pen—without the consent of Congress or the American people. Individuals who in good conscience oppose federal funding for abortion have been betrayed by this compromise—to say nothing of the unborn children who will die if this compromise is not fixed.

The bishops of El Salvador recently expressed by Sister Carol Keehan, a member of the House of Representatives in their letter to Congress. People should never be denied coverage because they can’t afford it, because of where they live or where they work or because of the persecuted “campesinos” (i.e., land workers). But that all so changed as Archbishop Romero faced personally involved with the poor and the sad facts of their lives in El Salvador.

The bishops of El Salvador recently announced that they are preparing to write a pastoral letter on the life and work of Archbishop Romero, the late Archbishop of San Salvador, who was canonized by Pope Francis. The bishops plan to use the letter to intercede for them in the presence of God.

Let us give Lent back to God

What happened to our Lenten observance? It is six weeks long, and should be observed for six weeks. We forget Ash Wednesday much like a holy day and then nothing until Holy Week.

Lent used to be a time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We did chores for the sick and elderly of our relatives and neighbors. They brought ashes to the door, made signs of the cross, and danced. The whole family attended Lenten devotions, especially the Way of the Cross. Families gathered together each evening to pray the rosary and the other devotion that is meaningful, but that is often forgotten.

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

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to publish 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 based on necessary space limitations, pastorial sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage openness to a variety of views, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are preferred.

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.

Making a Difference/Tony Magliano

The 30th anniversary of the death of a martyr, Archbishop Oscar Romero

Do you think of yourself as a prophet? It’s not a question us usually entertain, is it?

After all, prophets supposed to be proclamation God’s word—verbally and through example.—is often uncomfortable and at times dangerous.

So, unfortunately, we rarely ponder the prophetic call given us at baptism, the confirmation to be courageous witnesses for Christ. Even some bishops can at times drift into a certain spiritual hardness-of-hearing when it comes to their prophetic role.

It appears that, for a while, even Archbishop Oscar Romero had turned down the volume of the Holy Spirit’s call to boldly speak “truth to power.”

In his book Archbishop Romero: Martyr of Salvador, Augustine Father Placido Erdozain, a co-worker with Archbishop Romero, writes that at first the archbishop was churchy, a lover of rules.

Initially, Father Erdozain and other priests living and working with the poor were not admirers of Archbishop Romero. They saw him as being out of touch with the persecuted “campesinos” (i.e., land workers). But that all so changed as Archbishop Romero faced personally involved with the poor and the sad facts of their lives in El Salvador.

According to Father Erdozain, half of El Salvador’s population lived on less than $10 a month. Less than 1 percent of Salvadorans owned more than 50 acres of arable land, while the poorer 91 percent owned only 23 percent of the land. Father Erdozain had heard the murder of Father Rutilio Grande, who had challenged the injustice of the ruling families and the brutality of the Salvadoran military toward the poor campesinos, Archbishop Romero radically changed.

From then on, he broke all ties with the government and positioned himself with the people, surrounded by wolves, as Father Erdozain puts it.

He quotes Archbishop Romero, “I am a shepherd who, with his people, has begun to learn a beautiful and digical truth: Christian faith requires that we submerge ourselves in this world. The world that the Church must serve is the world of the poor.”

In a letter to President Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Romero wrote, “Political power is in the hands of unscrupulous military officers who know only how to repress the people... I ask you, if you truly believe in the right of a people to be forbid that military aid be given to the Salvadoran government...”

Carter ignored Romero’s plea.

In a national radio broadcast, Romero said, “Without the support of the people, no government can be effective... I want to make a special appeal to soldiers, national guardsmen and policemen: Brothers, each of you is one of us. We are the same people. The campesinos you kill are your own brothers and sisters...”

In the name of God, in the name of our torment people who have suffered so much and whose laments cry out to heaven, I beseech you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God, stop the repression!”

Afterward, on March 24, 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass. The bishops of El Salvador went through his heart just as he was finishing the consecration: “This is the cup of my blood, shed for you.”

The bishops of El Salvador recently announced that they are preparing to write a pastoral letter on the life and work of Archbishop Romero’s canonization. The Pope of the people of El Salvador, who have come to love as a father, is already present in their churches and icons of “St. Romero” in their homes, there is no need for canonization. They already know that he intercedes for them in the presence of God!

(Tony Magliano writes for Catholic News Service.)
Crucifixes embrace a Christian realism about life, death and resurrection

D
uring Holy Week, we contemplate the tortured face of Jesus as he hangs on the Cross, outside the city walls. It is the scene of humiliation and degradation—a double humiliation of death as a criminal and banishment outside the walls of the sacred city. The late Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin once described a photograph from a book he had been given on the Holocaust.

“Two men face one another. One is a Nazi soldier. The other a Jewish civilian. The soldier’s mouth looks as if it is just about to break into a grin. He seems to be enjoying what he is doing. By contrast, the Jewish civilian’s face is contorted, twisted, as if he is about to weep. There is great pain, grief, agony, embarrassment in his countenance. In his right hand, the soldier holds a pair of scissors—not a weapon. He is cutting off the beard and earlocks of the Jewish believer. The caption under the photo reads, ‘Shearing off or plucking out the beard and earlocks of Orthodox Jews in w in front of jeering crowds was a favorite pastime in occupied Poland.’”

The late cardinal asked, “Why does that picture remain in my mind? On the surface, it is far more horrifying than the pictures of massacred bodies lying strewn in a huge mass grave. … Why does it stand out to me?” He said, “Because it is ugly. But it is also beautiful. Because it is not so horrendous as to be totally alien to our own experience. Because it is within the realm of our own possibilities of cruelty” (Bernardin, The Journey to Peace: Reflections on Overcoming Suffering, and Finding New Life, pp. 97-98).

Cardinal Bernardin made the point that, as we look at this scene, we realize that we are, at our worst moments, capable of this kind of heartless ridicule. A person can transform the simple act that barsbers perform every day into an act of humilating desecration. There is a smirk on one face, and deep pain, humiliation and loss on the other.

This week, as we contemplate the tortured face of Jesus on the Cross, we do well to probe our capacity to harm others. No, we would not crucify Christ. We would not kill another person. But we could mock another person. We could humiliate another person. Children can bully each other on the playground. Adults can tell jokes that mock another person’s faith or race or status in society. This week, we are well to probe our minds for our sins and the sins of the w orld, which continue the humiliation of Jesus. It is difficult to stand at the foot of the Cross. We don’t like to look at ugliness. We don’t feel comfortable in the presence of another person’s suffering. It is particularly difficult to stand at the foot of the Cross because we have been party to inflicting such suffering on Jesus, who hangs on the Cross.

In another reflection, the late Cardinal Bernardin remarked that standing at the foot of the Cross is a difficult place to be for every generation, especially our own.

As we stand there, “we are immediately struck by Jesus’ extreme suffering on our behalf. In an age like our own, marked in part by the quest for instant relief from suffering, it takes special courage and determination to stand on Calvary. But standing at the foot of the Cross teaches us something very profound. What ultimately counts is that we say yes to what God requires of us, no matter how costly it may be” (ibid, p. 117).

Perhaps that is why our Church clings to the tradition of displaying the cross in our churches with the image of the body of Jesus on it. We need and we want to be reminded that a real human person stretched out on his arms on the Cross and suffered deeply because he loves us. Our crucifixes embrace a Christian realism about life and death and resurrection, and they strike a chord in our human experience. The love of Christ calls for our love in response. On Good Friday afternoon, as we know well enough at the foot of the Cross, may we dig deep into our hearts and renew our own love for Christ, especially as we encounter him in our neighbors.

ARCHBISHOP/DIóCESIS DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.
Events Calendar

March 26
Marie Guild, rummage sale. 8 a.m.—2:30 p.m. Information: 317-539-5087 or beegael@att.net.

March 27
St. Matthew the Apostle Parish, gymnasmium, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Lenten fish fry, 5-30 p.m. Information: 317-495-3019.

March 28
Holy Trinity Parish, Blockhold Church, 902 N. Holcomb Ave., Indianapolis. Fish fry, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross, 5-6 p.m. Information: 317-257-4297.

March 29
St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 N. Central Ave., Indianapolis. Rosary, 6 p.m.; Mass, 6:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross, Benediction, 7 p.m. Information: 317-283-5508 or marivelli@aol.com.

March 30
St. Michael Parish, 11400 Farmers Lane, N.E., Bradford. Lenten fish fry, 4-30 p.m. Information: 317-364-6173.

March 31
St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., Columbus. Lenten reflection, Stations of the Cross, service, concert, 6 p.m. Information: 827-379-9535, ext. 237, or bsmith@fb.com.

March 26-28

March 27
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Indianapolis. Stations of the Cross, 2 p.m. Information: 317-364-3604.

March 28

March 29
St. Lucy’s Archdiocesan Pro-Life Ministry, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Lenten organ concert, Jay Mer mund, organist, 11:30 a.m. Information: 317-635-2021.

April 2
Calvary Cemetery, 455 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. Stations of the Cross, Msgr. Joseph F. Schadel, vicar general, and Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, noon, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898.

April 3
St. Mary Church, 212 Washington St., North Vernon. Youth ministry dramatization of “The Living Way of the Cross,” 1 p.m. Information: 317-364-3604.

April 4
St. Rita Church, 8709 Preston Highway, Louisville, Ky. Via Crucis, bilingual outdoor Way of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 502-494-3264.

April 5
Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Twister Circle, Oldenburg. Alumni Association, Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m. Information: 317-933-0737.

Retreats and Programs

March 27

March 30-April 1
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Parenthood–Living the Sacraments at Home,” Jeanne Hunt, presenter, 9-11:30 a.m., $15 per person. Information: 827-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

March 31-April 2
Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 100 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. Holy Week Retreat–Christ Has Died, Christ Is Risen, Benedictine Father Vincent Tobin, presenter. Information: 812-689-3551 or mszeller@smcin.org.

April 1-4

April 9-11
Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 100 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Royal Sacrifice–Queen Esther’s Redemptive Role,” Benedictine Father Noel Mueller, presenter. Information: 800-581-6905 or mzeller@smcin.org.

April 12
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Men’s Night at the ‘Burg,” Father Carl Hawser, presenter, 7-8:30 p.m., free-will offering. Information: 827-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

April 13
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, Oldenburg. “Food, Faith and Family: Salads and Scripture,” Franciscan Sister Miriam Kaeser, presenter, 7-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-933-6437 or center@oldenburgosf.com.

April 16-18

April 18
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Date Night–The Five Love Languages,” Father Jim Farrell, presenter, 6-9:30 p.m., $35 per couple includes light dinner. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasotti@archindy.org.

April 22
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Morning for Moms,” 8 a.m.-1 p.m., $50 per person includes breakfast and lunch. Child care is provided, but space is limited. Contact Cheryl McSweeney for child care at 317-545-7681, ex. 15, or ms zoning@smcin.org. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasotti@archindy.org.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Where the Darkness Meets the Light—A Metaphor of Spiritual Growth,” evening of reflection, Anne Ryder, presenter, registration and child care, 9-15:45 a.m., program, 9-4:55 a.m., $35 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasotti@archindy.org.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Come Away and Rest Awhile,” 8 a.m.–4:25 p.m., $25 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasotti@archindy.org.

April 29
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Cone Away and Rest Awhile,” 8 a.m.–4:25 p.m., $25 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasotti@archindy.org.

April 30-May 2

Birthline donation
Margaret Foust and Paul Donahue present a $254 donation in support of Birthline, an archdiocesan pro-life ministry, to Birthline volunteer Sue Beaver at the St. Joseph Knights of Columbus #520 Hall in Indianapolis on Feb. 12. Two truckloads of baby clothes, diapers and other baby supplies were also donated. Foust leads the council’s Ladies Auxiliary, and Donahue is the grand knight of the council. The funds were collected at the auxiliary’s annual Baby Shower pro-life fundraising event.

St. Patrick’s Day parade
Father Glenn O’Connor was honored as the 2010 Irish Citizen of the Year during the St. Patrick’s Day parade in Indianapolis on March 17. Father O’Connor is the pastor of St. Ann Parish and St. Joseph Parish, both in Indianapolis. He is also the Catholic chaplain at Indianapolis international Airport. Father Noah Casey, the pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, was honored with the 2010 Hibernian President’s Award on March 14.

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Margaret Foust was honored with the 2010 Hibernian President’s Award on March 14.
Young adults discerning vocation must listen for God's voice, priest says

By Mary Ann Wyand

Begin each day with prayer, Father Patrick Beidelman advised a group of young adults who are discerning their vocation in life.

Then the vice rector of the Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and archdiocesan director of liturgy thanked the 14 young adults for giving so much of their time to Jesus in meaningful and life-giving ways during a Lenten day of reflection on vocations to the priesthood and religious life on Feb. 26 at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis.

“Deciding to be here … is a gift to the Lord,” he said. “I think it pleases the Lord that we’re here. Thank you for coming and having this time to commit to it. Remember to worship our Lord, but also to receive his mercy and grace, which is so fitting and appropriate during this Lenten season.”

Whatever vocation that God is calling you to accept and pursue in life, Father Beidelman said, “the best way we can start our day is by beginning it in an offering to God in service of our Lord.”

The day of reflection featured the celebration of Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction at the St. Augustine Home Chapel as well as vocation talks by Father Beidelman, seminarian David Marcotte from St. Scholastica Parish in Greenfield, and three Little Sisters of the Poor—Sister Judith Meredith, the superior, and Sisters Gabriela Kneusch and Marie Cecilia Fausto.

“The goal of Lent leads us to a fuller experience of the mystery of God’s love for us,” Father Beidelman said. “As we approach the season of Easter, we need to keep that goal in mind. We are called to a fuller life—a life of deeper freedom, deeper peace and ultimately a deeper experience of God’s love.” So we are joyful because the Lord gives us ways to do this. He helps us to step into picking up his rhythm, his ways, his will in our lives. My hope and my prayer today is that if you are searching, if you are seeking to know the will of God more fully in your life, that this day might be a point of clarity for you.”

Discerning a vocation to the priesthood, religious life, marriage or single life requires listening for God’s voice in our daily lives, he said. “It’s good for us to be around holy people … and to sit in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. … Our vocational journeys are very personal. We are people who need to connect with God at the very deepest level of who we are so that we might hear his voice speaking to us.”

The holy Scriptures assure us that “God knows us better than we know ourselves,” Father Beidelman said, “which is why it’s good for us to talk to him because we can come to know and to be our truest and best selves in our dialogue and communication with him. God knows each of us by name, and can speak to us personally in our hearts about what his dreams for us are.”

When people give themselves over to God, Father Beidelman said, they can begin to discover deep peace, joy and happiness in life.

“I had to find my way,” he said, “and that ultimately came with uncovering who I was and what my gifts were—what God had given me to share with the world to build up his kingdom here on Earth.”

“When I started learning about who I was, what I liked to do and what made me happy, I realized that I liked being in front of people. I liked serving in positions of leadership. I liked prayer. I liked serving [and] being with people. I liked the feeling that I was a part of something much larger, just beyond what I could individually do. These were sign posts along the road that helped me begin to realize that maybe a vocation to the priesthood might fit for me.”

“That sense of belonging, and that desire to serve and make a difference in people’s lives,” he said, “began to really lead me to giving God a chance to speak in my heart, to say my name, and to call me to a life of service and love in ministry in the Church. … That’s a gift. That’s a grace. [But] it isn’t like that for everybody because our journey and our ways of uncovering God’s dreams for us are very personal.”

When we discern what God’s dreams are for us and we say yes to the Lord, Father Beidelman said, we receive so much goodness in return.

“It’s like God opened a fire hydrant of grace, mercy and blessing,” he said, “and we’re overwhelmed … with the Lord’s presence, his peace, his consolation, his guidance, his wisdom. … I think a lot of people would say that when they discern whatever their call is—to the single life, to the married life, to priesthood or to consecrated life—many people would say when they pick up on what that dream is that ultimately God opens the flood gates of his love and his presence.”

“If you are searching [for your vocation],” he said, “my prayer is that you can get to that place where the flood gates are opening on you. So put yourself around holy things. Be in holy situations with holy people. It will rub off on you. … Give God a chance … so that you can主旨 build up God’s Kingdom on Earth. … The Lord is calling you in a powerful way to be the best disciple of Christ that you can be. … I don’t think there is any way that we can do that other than having a little bit of silence in our days.” Father Beidelman said, “… so the Lord can come to us and speak to us in our hearts.”

Brazil bishops launch campaign to distribute 1 million Bibles to poor

SAO PAULO, Brazil (CNS)—The bishops of Brazil launched a campaign to distribute 1 million Bibles to the country’s poorest Catholic families.

The effort calls for individual families to receive a kit containing a Bible, a Children’s Bible, a catechism book, a rosary, a missal, a book I Believe and a booklet to guide the reader through the Bible.

Sonia Minder, campaign coordinator, explained that the distribution will focus first in the Amazon and the northeast regions of the country where the concentration of poor people is highest.

“Our target is to hand out the kits to those who are unable to afford to buy the [Bible],” she said. “We are also looking at rural areas and urban areas where people have strayed from our religion.”

Parishes and community groups will determine who receives the kits. Their requests will funnel through local diocesan offices, which will forward them to the bishops’ conference.

The Church is relying on private donations and partnerships with advertising agencies and transportation companies to promote and deliver the kits.

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continued from page 1

School in Indianapolis. “School districts have the obligation to provide the transportation to their school.”

Able makes those transportation connections with the school districts. She also serves as an advocate for parents in discussions with teachers and school administrators.

“Emily has a very good ability to listen to the families’ concerns and needs, and act in the best interests of their kids,” says Bill Bickel, the archdiocese’s director for crisis relief and shelter services for Catholic Charities Indianapolis.

“She has exceptional communication with the families about the importance of their children’s education.” It’s one part of the children’s lives that can be an anchor, Able says.

“These families are going through so much turmoil, and the kids’ lives have been turned upside down. They need to go to school and give them a feeling of consistency. Maybe they’ve made a connection with a teacher or a lunch lady. To still get to see that face can make a difference. It’s powerful.”

So is the story she shares about a mother and her daughter.

The bonds between a parent and child

That story started in a parenting class that Able teaches at Holy Family Shelter.

One of the main goals of the class is to promote strong, healthy relationships between parents and their children. At one point, she asked the parents how they encourage positive behavior from their children. Their answers surprised her.

“They said they communicated with their kids, but when they did something wrong,” Able recalls.

“The idea of praising a child for good behavior was a foreign concept. It made me think that a lot of the young mothers hadn’t gotten that as a child. I asked them to try that—to search for the one thing that their child is doing right. We met a couple days later, and there was this one mom I’ll never forget. She broke down in tears about how her child got so excited that her mom finally saw something good in her.

“Mother saw her daughter felt some sense of pride, and she saw how her daughter strived to get more positive feedback from her. Sometimes it’s those little seeds we can teach.”

Able credits her compassion for homeless families to the “seeds” that her mother planted in her as a child.

Her mother, Kathy Able, always told Emily, her brother and her sister how much they were blessed as a family. Kathy Able’s way of thanking God for those blessings was to do service projects with her children, especially efforts that provided food and clothing for people in need.

“She said, ‘This is our faith,’” Emily says. “She raised us to give back.”

The warmth of God’s arms

Her mother focused on how those seeds have flowered in her daughter’s life.

“I couldn’t be more proud of her,” Kathy Able says. “I got a small taste of what she does on Christmas Eve. The shelter had a group come in for the families who were there. Someone in the group told the families that Jesus was homeless for a while, that he was born in a stable. All the kids got gifts. Then all the parents got blankets. They emphasized to the parents that the blankets had been specially handmade for them. And that when they are feeling bad to wrap themselves up in the blankets and feel God’s arms around them like a hug. Everyone was in tears.

“The warmth of such moments flames the efforts of Emily Able and the other staff members at Holy Family Shelter. It was especially helpful during this harsh winter when the 23 bedrooms in the facility have been constantly occupied.

“There are a lot of moments of sadness here, but there are also the smiles on the kids’ faces, too,” Able says. “We give children new uniforms and backpacks and school supplies, and you see how that helps give them a renewed sense of self-confidence as they get on the school bus. Then you see that mother who was yelling at her child the day before, and now she’s on the floor playing eye to eye with her child. And when someone gets a job, that’s exciting for all of us.”

She talks again about the boy who cried because he had a cake for his birthday. She also mentions again the mother who transformed her daughter and herself with words of praise.

“Those things will stay with those families forever,” she says. “I just hope for a better life for all of our families.”

**Volunteers needed to fill many roles at new Holy Family Shelter**

By John Shaughnessy

On one night, it can be the simple pleasure of w aching a movie and digging into a bag of popcorn.

On another night, it can be the fun of making a m eal with your family. These are examples of helping to create an arts-and-crafts project.

In all the situations, it’s mainly the opportunity to just be a child in that moment, free from the stress and hardship of being part of a family whose life has been turned upside down by homelessness.

“We get a lot of volunteers that host children’s activities here,” says Emily Able, the director of community and youth services at the archdiocese’s Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis. “For those two hours, it allows the kids to be kids. It relieves the stress they’re going through, and it gives the parents a break, too.”

The combination of special activities and willing volunteers is constantly needed and appreciated at Holy Family Shelter, especially since the new, expanded facility opened in mid-December on the near west side of Indianapolis.

“We need more groups to come in and host children’s activities,” Able says. “They can be as creative as they want— Minecraft games, building activities, to wrap themselves up in the blankets and feel God’s arms around them like a hug. Everyone was in tears.

“The warmth of such moments flames the efforts of Emily Able and other staff members at Holy Family Shelter. It was especially helpful during this harsh winter when the 23 bedrooms in the facility have been constantly occupied.

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Emily Able poses by a mural at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis. During the summer of 2009, children who participated in the shelter’s summer camp helped design and paint the mural with the assistance of artists from the Indianapolis Art Center. The mural reflects the children’s hopes and dreams for the future—moving into a new home, being connected with their extended family and being reunited with pets they had to give up when their families became homeless. 
Cardinal George also rejected claims by some that the USCCB had allied itself in the health reform debate with groups that were primarily interested in advancing the Republican agenda.

“I really don’t think that’s true,” he said. “I think the principles are twofold—everybody who choose federally subsidized plans that would expand the role of the federal government in funding and facilitating services.’ However, the fact that an executive order or statute appropriates billions of dollars in government in funding and facilitating services for abortion, and it would be kept,” said Cardinal George. “This is a profound statement in the legislation.”

“Stranger still, the statute forces all those who are interested in advancing the Republican agenda. It is common good. The principle is that for the common good, the public interest must be served.”

The statement noted that the bishops’ views on abortion are consistent with the teaching of the Church. Cardinal George emphasized that the bishops are not complicit in the abortions of others, and they are consistent in their opposition to such acts. He also noted that the bishops’ opposition to abortion is consistent with the teaching of the Church, which holds that the taking of human life is a grave moral evil. He emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of the unborn and the role of the Church in promoting a culture of life and protecting the weakest members of society.

“Cardinal George is consistent and admirable,” said the statement. “He is consistent in his opposition to abortion, and he is consistent in his support for the pro-life values of the Church.”

The statement concluded by expressing support for the bishops’ views on abortion and the pro-life values of the Church. It expressed support for the bishops’ efforts to promote a culture of life and protect the rights of the unborn, and it called on all members of the Church to support these values.

U.S. bishops urge vigilance to keep abortion funding out of health re f or m

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Several groups have mixed reactions to the passage of the health reform legislation in Congress and the pending presidential executive order on taxpayer-funded abortion.

The House approved the Senate-passed health reform bill by a 219-212 vote late on March 21, then voted 219-211 in favor of a package of legislative fixes which had to go to the Senate for approval.

In their public comments before the House votes, the heads of the USCCB’s pro-life, migration and domestic policy committees said the health care legislation still fell short in the areas of abortion funding, conscience protections and treatment of immigrants, and they urged House members to vote against it.

“After a year of divisive political combat, members of the House are told that they can advance health care reform only by adopting the Senate legislation as is, including these fundings of the late Rep. Darleen D. De Labarre, R-Iowa, who is president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, who has been consistent.”

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Immigration reform advocates march for change in Washington

WASHINGTON (CNS)—By bus from across the country and on foot from across town, an estimated 200,000 people flocked to the National Mall on March 21 to press Congress and the president—signs, banners, T-shirts, chants and prayers—to make good on promises to fix the immigration system.

U.S. citizens, legal immigrants and some who admitted they are in the country illegally covered a six-block stretch of the Mall to make their case for reforming a system that keeps families apart, limits students’ education prospects and causes millions of people to exist “in the shadows” because they lack legal status.

Before marching three miles past the Capitol to RFK Stadium, where their buses waited, the exuberant, hopeful crowd waved flags and signs as dozens of speakers took to the stage to tell their personal immigration stories. Other speakers pledged the support of their congregations, unions and human rights groups.

A videotaped message of support from Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony addresses immigrants and immigrant advocates during his homily at a special Mass on March 21 in Washington. Cardinals from around the nation attended the liturgy at St. Aloysius Church before joining tens of thousands of people at the “March for America” immigration reform rally on the National Mall.

Pope earmarks Holy Thursday collection for rebuilding Haiti’s major seminary

WASHINGTON (CNS)—President Barack Obama brought a hush to the crowd, turning to cheers as he pledged “to do everything in my power to forge a bipartisan consensus this year on this important issue. You know as well as I do that this won’t be easy, and it won’t happen overnight. But if we work together—across ethnic, state and party lines—we can build a future worthy of our history as a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.”

A few blocks from the Capitol at St. Aloysius Church shortly before the rally, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony spent 30 minutes greeting people arriving for a special Mass. In a homily that invoked the late labor leader Cesar Chavez, with whom the cardinal worked for many years for farmworkers’ rights, he noted that after the events at the Capitol that day it would be time for immigration reform to take the political stage.

In a phone interview with Catholic News Service the next morning, Cardinal Mahony said passage by the House of a bill to reform the system this year for farmworkers’ rights, he noted that after the events at the Capitol that day it would be time for immigration reform to take the political stage.

The president made a very firm commitment during the campaign and again recently that immigration reform is one of his top priorities,” the cardinal said. Now that a health care bill will help millions of uninsured people receive affordable medical care, he added, it’s time for the government to address the millions of people who are living in the shadows because they lack legal immigration status.

“This is unfinished business,” Cardinal Mahony said, adding that bringing those immigrants into the system for paying taxes and tapping into assorted public services will help the U.S. economic recovery. Among the crowd on the Mall estimated by organizers at 200,000 people, Jose described his motivation for making a 15-hour bus ride with Holy Cross and St. Cecilia’s parishes in Clearwater and St. Petersburg, Fla.

A U.S. citizen who was born in Mexico, Jose explained that his wife lacks legal immigration status. He lives in constant fear that she will be arrested and deported before the current years-long process it would take to get her legal residency status.

They have three young U.S. citizen children. While he works 13- to 14-hour days to support the family, his wife manages the household, gets the children to and from school, doctors and other activities, he said.

But next year, a change in Florida law will require her to show proof of legal immigration status to renew her driver’s license. Lacking that license, the family’s way of life will have to change in order to adapt.

Of bigger concern to Jose, who asked that his last name not be used, is that “I’m afraid, every moment, that she will get arrested and taken away from me and our children.”

He doesn’t believe that either he or his wife can safely return to their native Mexico, mostly because of the pervasive violent crime in his home state of Zacatecas and her state of Michoacan.

“My family there already is threatened because the criminals know they receive help from me,” Jose said. Were he to go back, he would be an immediate target, he believes.

“She has so much heart,” Jose said, describing his wife and how lost he and his children would be if she were deported. “She’s a wonderful mother.”

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Our Lady of Fatima Retreat
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Lent and Easter bring Christians closer to God’s love

By Jim Scheliman

A few years ago, I lost my father. This was the first in an expected series of deaths of those who are close to me. One day I presume I will be a source of that same experience for others that I love.

No one can journey to the threshold of death with a beloved family member or friend without confronting that horrible, natural question of whether this is all, whether this is the end.

We journey toward that new life together. That is why the fires of faith are first lit and then fanned within a community of faith, the Church.

Lent and Easter bring us to the center point of this great mystery—the fact of real and bloody death, an ejection in fact, and the faith-filled vision that love will not be denied or extinguished by death, that those we love continue, as does their love for us, that love reigns supreme and will have the final word.

These two seasons make up the great 90 days in which we go there, into that mystery, together and in the company of Christ. This we understand as the journey toward baptism and into baptismal living, a form of life that always holds together the two mysteries of death and life.

Lent begins with our Lord being drawn by the Spirit into the desert for 40 days following his baptism by John. The community of the Church follows him there in our great 40-day Lenten retreat as we prepare our new Penitents, our catechumens who are new elect, for baptism, and prepare ourselves to renew our baptismal covenant alongside them.

We simplify our lives and strive to walk more consciously with the Lord through prayer. We experience hunger through fasting, our weakness and our simple humanity. We are opened by the Spirit to the physical and spiritual hungering of others, and learn new ways to offer them both kinds of bread through almsgiving.

As we newly experience these central communal disciplines, we immerse those preparing for baptism in them with us.

Lent makes the transition to Easter during the three days of the Easter Triduum. The liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday have no concluding rite. The community is not sent forth. We simply depart.

These three holiest of Christian days form one continuous act of worship that holds in vital tension the whole central mystery of human life redeemed in Christ—a voluntary, salvific death and a thing—will never be—the same resurrection.

What is the central act of the three days in which the community of faith proclaims this seminal mystery?

It is nothing less than the plunging of new believers into the dying and rising of Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism. In that same central baptismal liturgy, all of us then renew our baptismal commitment to Christian discipleship.

This is a discipleship that does not deny suffering and death, but stirs it in the face, in the strength of Christ, and declares that love has won and we will live forever in that love, beginning in these waters.

By baptism, we are plunged into the dying and rising of our Lord (Rom 6:3-11). We share in that great mystery and are offered its full grace in the living out of our lives. In this way, our dying has already happened in baptism—dying to a world that lives for itself, not for God and others.

Our physical death will only be the final act of that dying begun in these waters. But the dying is part of the rising, the coming up from those waters with fresh heart and hands—the heart and hands of Christ still living and feeding a hungry, longing world.

This real, sacramental experience is the very rhythm of our lives through baptism. Lent and Easter plunge us anew into that deep and mysterious rhythm, simplify us to see once again a Lord who longs to transform us into that new garden place where tears and suffering and, yes, death simply have no space to call their own.

The resurrection of the Lord is the centerpiece of this great hope! Isn’t this the full force of St. Paul’s heartfelt cry to the Corinthians?

“If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:16-17).

(Jim Scheliman is executive director of the North American Forum on the Catechumcnate.)

God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:3-4, 9-11).

In his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul emphasizes, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14).

Therefore, our deepest desire, St. Paul explains in his Letter to the Philippians, should be “to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death” so that we, too, can be resurrected from the dead (Phil 3:10-11).

While we celebrate the Resurrection, we must also remember that it’s the cross which deepens its meaning for Christians.

(Carole Norris Greene is the associate editor of Faith Alive!)
Psalms of confidence and thanksgiving

(Seventeenth in a series of columns)

Many of the psalms of lament that I wrote about the past week include sentiments of gratitude to, and confidence in, God. (Ps 146:4-12) An example of that, mixing fervent pleas with expressions of confidence in God.

Some psalms, though, express only those sentiments without cries of lament. Psalm 23 is an example of that. Most Christians know best because it is often prayed at funerals and other occasions when we might feel isolated. “The Lord is my shepherd,” it begins, “there is nothing I lack.” The image of God’s good shepherd is one that is common in both the Old and New Testaments.

The prophet Ezekiel said, “Thus says the Lord God: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep” (Ez 34:11-12). The passage continues for four more verses. Jesus compared himself to a good shepherd: “I am the good shepherd, A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). That passage continues for seven more verses. Some psalmists expressed in the psalm include, “You guide me along the right path,” “Even when I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm for you are at my side,” and, “Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life.” Those are another example of that psalm of confidence in God. In the first column in this series, I noted that St. Thomas More wrote an extended commentary on it. The Church assigns that psalm for night prayer into the Liturgy of the Hours for Sundays and the feastdays of both Christmas and Easter, and recommends that it be prayed by anyone who wants to pray night prayer from memory.

This psalm includes the verses, “God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways. With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” These were the words the devil used when he tempted Jesus in the desert (Mt 4:6 and Lk 4:1-10). Other psalms of confidence include 11, 62, and 131. Individual psalms of thanksgiving include 9, 10, 11, 30, 32, 34, 41, 116, and 138. They express gratitude to God for his protection and favors granted. The favors are usually spelled out, but sometimes we anticipate the blessing the psalmist is sure to come.

The Church assigns Psalm 118 to day prayer on the Sunday and Sundays in the fourth week of the psalm replaces it into the Liturgy of the Hours for Sundays and the feastdays of both Christmas and Easter, and recommends that it be prayed by anyone who wants to pray night prayer from memory.

Friendship is based on mutual trust and loyalty and, like love sometimes be stubbornly unrealistic. That’s when we realize a friend has betrayed us or that we don’t want the person we thought they were. It is quite possible, though, that we have been the one to betray a friend. Perhaps we were false with a friend we cared about in discovery of “poor me” arise, and we all know that true love upon love, and we all know that true love always makes me suspicious of the same as our parents. A child learns that love sometimes be stubbornly unrealistic. That’s when we realize a friend has betrayed us or that we don’t want the person we thought they were. It is quite possible, though, that we have been the one to betray a friend. Perhaps we were false with a friend we cared about in discovery of “poor me” arise, and we all know that true love.

Thinking about God’s kind of friendship

Some psalms I have written about in the past weeks were not about confidence, but thanksgiving. How would we have reacted? We would have joined in the chorus of “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord?” (Lk 19:38). When things turn around for the worse for Christ, we would have gotten so excited to him for everything else ever turned away?

Meditating on the fickleness of humanity, I have discovered that we go back in our hearts and minds 2,000 years through time. It’s important to see that every day we love the most every day in my life with my young sons. When it’s almost time to get ready for bed and the y are busy playing, “I’ll tell you then” or “in five minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my for the past hour. Each day of the week is a new beginning for me. I am struggling to learn all that I’m meant to learn in the course of a week. Sometimes I wake up to that day, and I am thankful that giver up your writing and find more profitable work, and you can have a greater chance of being taken for its value. It may increase the respect of your peers and the value of your time, and also be more important.” It’s a battle that goes on inside my head, but there’s no doubt where my heart lies. So while I might want to complain for a moment, really, I’m over it. Thank you. Lord, for my sinner, and the demons.”

Friendship is based on mutual trust and loyalty and, like love sometimes be stubbornly unrealistic. That’s when we realize a friend has betrayed us or that we don’t want the person we thought they were. It is quite possible, though, that we have been the one to betray a friend. Perhaps we were false with a friend we cared about in discovery of “poor me” arise, and we all know that true love. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my minutes, it’s pajama time.” They’ll dutifully say, “Yes, Daddy.” I’ll even ask them if they want to make sure that they were really listening. Then, five minutes later when I tell them to stop playing and put on their pajamas, they will protest loudly and put off bed time as long as possible. Now I shouldn’t hold my breath for my sons. We do, for ourselves, and we all be very fickle, too. I have to remember to be patient. I focus on the eternal good, not my
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 28, 2010

- At blessing of the Palms
- In the Liturgy of the Word
  - Isaiah 50:4-7
  - Philippians 2:6-11

We are beginning Holy Week with the Palm Sunday liturgies, coming to the fulfillment of the Lenten season and drawing us face to face to the ultimate reality of salvation—that Jesus, the Son of God, died to reconcile us with the Father and then forever opened for us the gates to heaven by the Resurrection.

Palm Sunday, of course, recalls the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which for the Evangelist Luke was the outer apex of the entire ministry of the Lord. In general, Luke’s Gospel sees Jesus as the embodiment of God’s mercy, literally God in human flesh, the son of Mary, a Jewish woman.

Jesus seeks out the wayward and the despended. Everything leads to the fulfillment of reconciling sinners with God. Thus, everything occurs on the way to Jerusalem, which Jesus visits once, and on this one visit Jesus is sacrificed on Calvary and then rises again.

For Catholics, the depth of meaning of this event is brilliantly conveyed in the majesty and drama of the liturgy. As the palms are blessed and then ideally given to the young, it is a perfect moment for families to reflect and share the significance of this event.

The readings from Third Isaiah and the Gospel of Luke contain themes of salvation and reconciliation. Third Isaiah speaks of reconciliation as a “righteousness that makes us joyful.” Luke depicts Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the Son of God, who is resolute. Salvation was God’s will, the apex of the entire ministry of the Lord. Jesus is sacrificed on Calvary and then rises again.

My Journey to God

The Prodigal Father

The old man lowered his head to conceal the tears ready to fall as he lingered at the gate watching his youngest hurry away.

Oh, the excitement in the youth nearly sparked the same in him, but the sadness of absence soon smothered it.

The long days, void of his child, drew him each twilight and dusk to scan the road’s length in never ending hope.

Many moons later, as he habitually checking, his saddened eyes were quickly wiped to assure him of his son’s return.

Yes! It was his boy! Bearing nothing. (Benedicite Sister Norma Gettelfinger is a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. Her poem was inspired by the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the Gospel of Luke, which is recounted in Lk 15:11-32. A cyclist makes his was past trees that line Seneca Parkway in Rochester, N.Y., on Oct. 29, 2009.)

Daily Readings

Monday, March 29
Isaiah 42:1-7
Psalm 27:1-3, 13-14
John 12:1-11

Tuesday, March 30
Isaiah 49:1-6
Psalm 71:1-4a, 5b-6b, 15
John 13:23-33, 36-38
Mass of Christ the Lord
Isaiah 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9
Psalm 89:21-22, 25, 27
Revolution 1:5-8
Luke 4:16-21

Wednesday, March 31
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34
Matthew 26:14-25

Thursday, April 1
Holy Thursday
Holy Thursday evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
Exodus 12:1-8, 14-14
Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-15

Friday, April 2
Good Friday
Celebration of the Lord’s Passion
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

Saturday, April 3
Holy Saturday
Holy Saturday night
The Easter Vigil
Genesis 1:1-22
or Genesis 1:1-26, 31a
Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35
Psalm 33-44, 13-12, 20, 22
Genesis 22:18-24
or Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Psalm 16:5, 8, 11
Exodus 14:15-15:1
(Responsory) Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18
Isaiah 54:5-14
Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-12, 13
Isaiah 55:1-11
(Responsory) Isaiah 12:2-3, 4-6
Baruch 3:9-15, 32-44
Psalm 19:8-11
Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28
Psalm 42:3, 5, 43-34
or, when baptism is celebrated, Isaiah 12:2-3, 4b, 5-6 or Psalm 51:12-15, 18-19
Romans 6:3-11
Psalm 118:12, 16, 17-22
Luke 24:1-12

Sunday, April 3
Easter Sunday
The Resurrection of the Lord
Acts 10:34a, 37-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Colossians 3:1-4
or I Corinthians 5:6b-8
John 20:1
or Luke 24:1-12
or, after an afternoon or evening Mass,

Question Corner/ Fr. John Dietzen

In matters of life and death, we are all beggars at the door of God’s mercy

Q

A

A much of the Catholic Church’s stance about suicide is expressed in the fact that your friend—very properly—had a Catholic funeral liturgy celebrated for her after her death.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reflects our teaching today when it says that we each have responsibility for our own lives, but we should not despair of the salvation of persons who take their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God has ways of providing for them spiritually, and the Church always prays for them—and it does all the departed—in its prayers (#2283).

Catholic understanding of the subject is reflected also in its funeral policies. Canon law lists those who are to be de皮ed of Catholic burial. Among these are “manifest sinners for whom ecclesiastical funeral rites cannot be granted without public scandal” (#1184).

Insofar as they are covered at all, people who commit suicide would be part of that group. But are such people really open public “sinners” whose Catholic burial would give scandal?

Particularly today, with our much better understanding of the factors that determine human behavior, bishops and other pastors generally believe the possibility.

The scandal would be if a Christian burial were refused. We are aware of how limited is our understanding of what really was happening spiritually and morally with the deceased person, and perhaps even more aware of the need for compassion and loving care for those left behind.

Taking one’s life is a serious matter. But how can one reflect on reflection on what he or she was doing? How much true consent of the will was there? I have had the sad experience of dealing with suicide many times in my 56 years as a priest. Circumstances surrounding these deaths have strong hints to everyone who knew them that the deceased were hampered mentally or emotionally—often to a severe degree—at the time of death.

Sometimes those hints are overt—with erratic behavior pointing to some crippling psychological condition. Sometimes they are less obvious—when such a self-destructive action contradicts every experience with that person. There is no evidence of any plan or reflection beforehand. To all appearances, something inside the person “erupted” and likely we will never know what that might have been.

In the face of a Christian burial, we make no judgment about that individual’s relationship with God. As it does for all of us, whatever we are, the Church, with and in Christ, asks God’s mercy on the one who has died and on those who have been hurt by that death.

What happened after the death of your friend, therefore, was strictly in accord with our best understanding of what whatever the circumstances of our life and death, we are all beggars at the door of God’s mercy.

Easter egg

Easter egg

The Criterion Friday, March 26, 2010

BARLOW, Michael A., 58, 2231 N. Springdale Rd., March 11. Husband of Mary (Leach) Barlow. Father of Ben Barlow. Brother of Mary Jo Bender, Katie Nolte, John and Robert Barlow II.


O’BOYLE, Karen Sue, 51, 120 N. Main St., Greentown, March 14. Mother of Casey, John, Patrick and Thomas O’Boyle. Sister of Renee Lane.

OWEN, Mary E. (Boeing), 87, 1100 N. Main St., Greentown, March 15. Mother of Mary Marks, Jacqueline Nieble, David, John and Michael Ward. Brother of Barbara McClure and Joseph Ward. Grandfather of five.


DAUGHERTY, Thomas, 90, 2411 S. Main St., Greentown, March 12. Father of Patricia Crowe, Steven and Tom Low. Grandfather of 7.


WEBER, James R., 69, 2411 S. Main St., Greentown, March 11. Step-grandfather of five.

REES, Alyssa P., 80, 2411 S. Main St., Greentown, March 11. Mother of Eileen Dwyer, Celia Hettinger and Thomas Wallman. Step-grandmother of three.

CNS photo/Mike Nelson, The Tidings

In the garden

Jesus and an angel are depicted in the Garden of Gethsemane in this stained-glass window at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles.

For the Week of March 20-26

The Criterion  Friday, March 26, 2010  Page 14

Walk with Msgr. Joseph Schaedoel, Vicar General, and the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus as they pray the Stations of the Cross.

ALL ARE WELCOME!
Cardinal Newman was an Anglican cleric who founded the Oxford Movement to bring the Anglican Church back to its Catholic roots. He became Catholic at the age of 44 after a succession of clashes with Anglican bishops, and was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. He died in Birmingham in 1890 at age 89.

His beatification was announced in July after the Vatican declared that the inexplicable healing of Deacon Jack Sullivan of Mansfield, Mass., from a crippling spinal condition was the result of Cardinal Newman’s intercession.

The announcement of Pope Benedict’s decision to beatify Cardinal Newman himself was welcomed by Father Richard Duffield, provost of the Birmingham Oratory, the community that founded the 19th century, and postulator of the cause for the cardinal’s beatification.

“The Holy Father’s lifelong devotion to Newman has made a profound contribution to understanding the depth and significance of our founder’s legacy,” he said in a March 16 statement. His decision to beatify Newman in person confers a unique blessing upon English oratories and all who have drawn inspiration from Newman’s life and work.”

Prior to the press conference, the papal visit was announced by Buckingham Palace, which said the pope will fly to Scotland to be welcomed by Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, at the Palace of Holyrood House.

During his visit, the pope will address an audience in Westminster Hall, London, the site of the trials of such Catholic martyrs as St. Thomas More and St. Edmund Campion.

Other key events will include a public Mass in Bellahouston Park in Glasgow, Scotland, and a prayer vigil in London. The pope will visit Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace in London, and pray with other Church leaders at Westminster Abbey.

The exact details of the pope’s itinerary will be released at a later date.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, who was one of the great intellectual minds of the Catholic Church in the 19th century, is seen in a portrait in a church in Rome. Pope Benedict XVI will preside at the beatification ceremony of Cardinal Newman in Coventry, England, during a four-day visit to the United Kingdom on Sept. 16-19.
By Sean Gallagher

SHELBYVILLE—A recent Saturday evening Mass at St. Joseph Church in Shelbyville was a bit different than most liturgies celebrated throughout the year at the Batesville Deanery parish.

Yes, the church was filled with hundreds of worshippers, who sang with gusto. And the Eucharist was celebrated.

But March 6 was extra-special for the members of St. Joseph Parish to show their appreciation for the priests who serve there during this Year for Priests.

The hundreds of people who filled the pews all wore buttons that read in English or Spanish "appreciation for the priests who serve there this year."

Father Christopher Craig, the pastor of St. Joseph Parish, usually celebrates the Saturday evening Mass by himself.

But on this occasion, he was joined by concelebrants that included retired Franciscan Father Leon Reuter, a son of the parish who is in residence at St. Joseph, and Franciscan Father Tom Fox, who assists in Hispanic ministry there.

Following the Mass, a spaghetti dinner was held in the priests’ honor with approximately 300 people filling the parish’s cafeteria.

"It’s very humbling because we’re used to serving others rather than being served," Father Craig said. "I’ve really appreciated this being the Year for Priests. Every year, I feel more and more renewed as a priest.

It’s a life that I’ve fully embraced. I can’t imagine doing anything else."

During the dinner, children representing St. Joseph’s parish school and religious education program gave gifts to the three priests.

Also on display were photos and information about the 12 resident priests that the parish has had since 1886.

St. Joseph parishioner Loretta Eckstein, 81, helped put the display together.

"I was employed by Catholic Social Services when I got to look at pictures that I hadn’t looked at for a long time," Eckstein said. "I remembered all the things that I’ve known about all of the priests over the years. It’s wonderful to see them get together like this because it’s been a long time since we’ve let the priests know how much we love them."

Eckstein has been a member of the parish for 75 years, and has assisted in music ministry there since she was in the seventh grade. As a result, she has worked closely with the many priests who have ministered at St. Joseph since the 1940s.

“They are a big part of my life, a big part,” Eckstein said. “I’ve loved my association over the years with all of the priests. They’ve been wonderful, marvelous."n
It has only been during the last decade that a Hispanic ministry outreach has started at St. Joseph Parish. Father Tom has celebrated Mass in Spanish there for the past five years. He expects to end his ministry at the parish later this year.

He praised the evening to honor the priests of the parish.

“I really appreciate it,” Father Tom said. "I think it’s a very good thing for the parish to do. We have to certainly raise the awareness about vocations to the priesthood. … I’ve been around here for a long time, and I’ve been very happy with the participation of the Spanish-speaking community in this event. They’re saying something to me about my years here."

Father Leon, who often celebrates Mass at the parish when Father Craig is away, said he enjoys being in retirement at the parish and appreciates how the members of the parish value his presence.

“It’s very comfortable, very nice. I love it,” he said. “I always knew that I was appreciated here."

Leigh Ann Mills, St. Joseph Parish’s business manager, helped organize the Year for Priests event and was pleased by how many people attended.

“It gives me goose bumps,” she said. "I think it says a lot—that we are really, truly blessed that we have the priests that we have.”

Eckstein said she hopes the event and the appreciation the parish has for its priests might plant seeds for future priests vocations.

But while it is true that, at some point in time, there will be some young person from this parish who looks up to our priests in the present as mentors and says, “I think I want to become a priest.”

I hope, more than anything else, that people come to understand that the priesthood is an excellent life,” she said. "It’s a beautiful life to live for those that are called to that particular vocation.”

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A new analysis of religious identification data finds that, contrary to popular belief, U.S. Latinos are not leaving behind Catholicism for Protestant congregations, but instead are becoming more secularized, affiliating themselves with no faith at all.

A study released on March 16 by the Institute for Social and Public Affairs at Trinity College, a secular liberal arts school in Hartford, Conn., reported that although Latinos remain predominantly Catholic, those who have left the church since 1990 have shifted more toward secularism than previous studies of Latinos and their faith, such as the influx of Latino immigrants continues to be a factor in maintaining the size of the Catholic population in the United States.

"Over the 18-year period, the influx of 9 million Latino Catholics accounted for most of the 11 million additions to the U.S. Catholic population and, as a result, Latinos comprised 32 percent of all U.S. Catholics in 2008 compared to 20 percent in 1990," it said. Among Latinos, 66 percent in 1990 said they were Catholic, compared to 60 percent in 2008.

The study by Juhem Navaro-Rivera, a research fellow, and professors Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar noted that just as in the general U.S. population, Latinos became less identified with Christianity between 1990 and 2008, down from 91 percent to 82 percent. Those who said they identified with a faith grew from 6 percent in 1990 to 12 percent in 2008, the researchers found.

While some faiths, particularly Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists, nearly tripled in the number of Latino adherents, and Pentecostals doubled in number, the percentage of Latinos who belong to those faiths declined.

Referring to the percentage of Latinos who belong to a particular faith as “market share,” the study noted that the ratio of Catholics to other Christians remained the same over the 18-year period.

"The widespread assumption that non-Catholic Christian traditions are gaining ground among U.S. Latinos is not supported,” it said. "Obviously, this ratio is affected by the preferences of new immigrants, who remain overwhelmingly Catholic. Other non-Christian religions, comprising a wide range of groups, also lost market share.”

The report also found that a significantly larger portion of Latinos were living in suburban areas in 2008 than in 1990. The percentage of Latinos in urban areas declined from 76 percent to 70 percent, while the percentage in suburban settings increased from 12 percent to 20 percent. The percentage living in rural areas changed only slightly, from 12 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2008.

Taking into account their increased numbers in the population, in real numbers that translated to an increase in suburban Latinos from nearly 1.8 million in 1990 to more than 6 million in 2008.

The report was based on 2008 telephone interviews of 54,461 adults, 3,169 of whom identified themselves as Hispanic. The 1990 data came from a sample of 113,713 adults, of whom 4,808 identified themselves as Hispanic. The margin of error for the Hispanic sample of the study is plus or minus 1.7 percent.†