Nebraska town’s immigration law puts it on path with no clear end

WASHINGTON (CNS)—When residents of Fremont, Neb., voted on June 21 to bar undocumented immigrants from renting housing or getting jobs in their city, they stepped onto a path that other U.S. towns have already blazed, with legal and political results that remain unclear years later.

One thing that is clear, however, is that similar ordinances have been costly, both financially and to relationships within the communities.

Fremont’s voter initiative, approved by a vote of 3,900 to 2,900, will require people to get a permit from the city to rent property. The permit application requires proof of legal U.S. residency for anyone who says they are not a U.S. citizen.

Those unable to prove their legal status would lose their occupancy permits and would be subject to a daily fine of $100 if they don’t vacate the property, according to an analysis by Jim Cunningham, director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, published in the Catholic Voice, newspaper of the Omaha Archdiocese.

The law also will require employers in the city to verify job applicants’ immigration status. Businesses that fail to comply would be “tied at a public hearing before the City Council,” the law says.

Lawsuits challenging the ordinance are already being prepared, and the city has opened a legal defense fund to cover expected costs estimated at anywhere from $270,000 to more than $5 million, reported the local newspaper, the Fremont Tribune.

In the past four years, Hazleton, Pa., Farmer’s Branch, Texas, Valley Park, Mo., Escondido, Calif., and Riverside Township, N.J., all have attempted to pass laws similar to Fremont’s.

Various courts have overturned or blocked most of those laws. Others were withdrawn as legal defense bills mounted—into the millions of dollars in some cases—and as ordinances elsewhere were struck down as usurping federal immigration law.

A dual celebration

St. Mary-of-the-Knobs parishioners break ground for new church, honor retiring pastor

By Leslie Lynch

FLOYD COUNTY—There were two reasons to celebrate at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish on June 27. The oldest existing parish in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis broke ground for a new church, and a farewell picnic was held for Father John Geis, the parish’s pastor for the past 17 years.

About 900 people gathered for a special outdoor Mass, where Father Geis was the principal celebrant.

From its exterior design to the choice of matching bricks and mortar, the new church building will mirror the 100-year-old existing church.

Gary Libs, co-chairperson of the parish’s “Upon This Rock” capital campaign, said, “Today’s groundbreaking is another step as our parish continues to give glory to God and strives to meet the spiritual, educational and human needs of our parish and neighbors.”

Father Geis added, “The Holy Spirit has been guiding us and leading us to this moment for years, and it is now happening through the grace of God.”

Located in scenic Floyds Knobs, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish serves an ever-growing rural community in Floyd County and the surrounding area.

The re-establishment of an elementary school on the parish grounds in 2001 pushed the current parish campus to its limits and, unable to expand the existing facilities, Father Geis appointed a steering committee four years ago to explore options.

From the beginning, prayer and a reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit have been an integral part of the process.

A special prayer has been said after every Mass, and a writing of St. Henry inspired both vision and purpose: “...we think it fitting not only to enlarge churches constructed by our ancestors, but for the greater glory of God to build new ones and to raise them up as the most grateful gifts of our devotion.”

Eric Atkins, director of management services for the archdiocese, said the new $4 million church will increase the seating capacity from 400 people in the current church to nearly 1,200 people in the new one.

The new church will also meet the parish’s growing need for more gathering, fellowship and hospitality space. Following the lead of their ancestors, parishioners are looking to the future and have crafted a plan that allows for further expansion as needs arise.
IMMIGRATION
continued from page 1

Appeals of some rulings are still pending. For instance, the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments over Hazleton’s law in October 2008 and has yet to issue its ruling. None of the cities has been able to enforce the laws. But that hasn’t precluded consequences in the communities.

Msgr. Joseph Kelly is director of Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Scranton, Pa., which includes Hazleton. He also is episcopal vicar for Hispanic ministry for the diocese and administrator of Holy Rosary Church in Wilkes Barre, about 20 miles up the road from Hazleton.

When Hazleton’s City Council passed its immigration ordinance in 2006, many immigrants who lived there left the immediate area, with a lot of them ending up in Msgr. Kelly’s parish, he told Catholic News Service.

Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta has estimated that as many as half the city’s 25,000 people, are somewhat isolated—Dominican Republic.

“They have largely been replaced in the area, with a lot of them left the immediate community by new immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Msgr. Kelly told CNS he had identified 25,000 people, are somewhat isolated—Dominican at least two miles from Omaha—and have low-skill industries that in the past couple of decades have attracted Hispanic immigrants who bolstered the previously shrinking populations.

But the new residents who were hired at direct-mail operations in Pennsylvania and meat-packing plants in Nebraska, who opened businesses and enrolled their children in schools, also came speaking Spanish and with cultural customs unfamiliar in their new communities. The changes were uncomfortable for many of the long-time residents.

Mary Ellen Blackwell, director of parish social ministry for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., said CNS that when Riverside Township passed an immigration law in 2006, hostility toward the largely Brazilian immigrants was open and vocal.

She described a prayer vigil in August 2006, held shortly after the law was passed, where the law’s backers tried to drown out the prayers with shouts of “go home” and hoovered around the outdoor event, waving Confederate flags and taunting participants as they walked from the town hall to the Catholic Church.

“It was like Jesus walking to Calvary,” she said. “There was this amazing sense of how the crowd mentality works.” Such attitudes are what Fremont activist Karen Ostrom attributes with causing what she described as a lack of involvement by the town’s religious leaders in the buildup to the immigration vote.

Ostrom, a Creighton University law graduate whose husband is pastor of a Lutheran church in Fremont, told CNS she started two years ago trying to bring together the town’s Hispanic immigrants and its long-time residents in small church-led events to try to head off burgeoning tensions. Efforts to have churches host small dinner gatherings, for instance with six Latinos and six white members of a parish, led to just one such dinner, she said.

She said more than one pastor told her she was unwilling to take a public stand against the initiative when longtime members of his church were promoting it and it was those members who represented the church’s history and financial backbone.

Father Joseph Taghoun, chancellor of the Omaha Archdiocese, told CNS the temporary lack of a pastor at St. Patrick’s Parish in Fremont this past spring was a significant factor in the low profile the Catholic Church had in community debate about the ordinance. He noted that the archdiocese and the state Catholic conference have actively opposed many state legislative efforts that would have negatively affected immigrants, and has worked to protect a law permitting students who came to the country illegally as children to obtain in-state tuition at Nebraska colleges.

Msgr. Kelly offered advice to the Church in Fremont as the town advances on the path Hazleton took a few years ago. “They need to be sure they are ministering to all the community, including the immigrants,” he said.

Inviting people to share in each others’ cultural celebrations, making sure the immigrants are a part of a longtime parish festival, for instance, and that long-term residents are invited to the immigrants’ events, is a start, he said.

“The Church needs to try to bring people together,” he said.

Pope says World Youth Day offers a chance for young to know Jesus

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Next year’s World Youth Day in Madrid is a wonderful opportunity for young people to know Jesus and to learn to trust his guidance in their lives, Pope Benedict XVI said.

In a July 2 meeting with Cardinal Antonio Rincón Varela of Madrid and members of the Madrid Youth Foundation that is promoting the event, the pope spoke of the young faithful who are looking forward to the chance to share their values and aspirations.

These young people, he said, will be brought together by “the faith that unites them and the desire to build a better world inspired by Gospel values.”

They will be able to listen to the “word of Christ who is always young,” the pope said.

World Youth Day will be held in the Spanish capital on Aug. 16-21, 2011. Pope Benedict will join the young people for a vigil on Aug. 20 and Mass on Aug. 21.

The pope told the Spanish cardinal the event “is not just a mass gathering, but a private occasion for the young of your country and of the entire world to allow themselves to be conquered by the love of Christ Jesus, the Son of God and of Mary, the faithful friend, the visitor over sin and death.”

The young people will find, the pope said, that “those who trust in him will never be disillusioned, but will find the strength necessary to choose the right path in life.”

Peace Cup soccer tournament in South Africa bridges cultural and religious divides

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS)—Soccer fans know all about the World Cup, the quadrennial competition taking place in South Africa that is sending people around the globe into a frenzy while boosting—or deflating—national pride.

Then there is the Peace Cup, a modest attempt to bring peace building.

The Vatican said that with his new appointment, Bishop Koch would become an archbishop and served on the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Msgr. Ignacio Carrasco de Paula, a member of Opus Dei, to become cardinal and around Pretoria and represent 16 countries, according to a June 29 statement from the bishops’ conference.

The Peace Cup matches, one of which saw a team with a Peace Cup soccer tournament in South Africa bridges cultural and religious divides.

In major appointments, Cardinal Ouellet to lead bishops’ congregation

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI has appointed new heads of several Vatican departments, naming Cardinal Marc Ouellet as prefect of the Congregation for Bishops.

Cardinal Ouellet, 66, will head the new department that is responsible for the appointment of bishops for Latin-rite dioceses around the world. The cardinals appointed by Pope Benedict will decide which bishops are chosen for each diocese.

Cardinal Ouellet was named president of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization in 2007 and was later appointed as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, replacing German Cardinal Walter Kasper, who had headed the council since 2001.

Cardinal Ouellet, 66, was born in Canada and was ordained a priest in 1964. He served as bishop of the Italian diocese of Rome from 1992 to 1998. He taught theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, where he was named rector in 2002, a position he continued to hold until his latest appointment.

Msgr. Ignacio Carrasco de Paula, Archbishop Fisichella’s replacement as president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, has been a Vatican representative to the United Nations in New York since 2002, delivering numerous speeches on international topics and helping to arrange Pope Benedict’s visit to the United Nations General Assembly in 2008.

Second Vatican Council.

Errors, or better, imprudence in formulating the truth have been committed by both theologians and philosophers. Still, the cardinal said, the high-level ecumenical representation at the funeral of Pope John Paul II and at the installation of Pope Benedict in 2005, “showed that just how solid ecumenical relationships were even if the goal of full unity still remains far off.”

Cardinal Ouellet will head the first major Roman Curia department created by Pope Benedict. The pope announced the formation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization on June 30 and will help find ways to “re-propose the perennial truth of the Gospel” in regions where secularism is smothering faith.

Details about the council and its tasks were to be announced in early July, Vatican sources said.

Cardinal Ouellet was appointed as bishop of Rome from 1998 to 2006. He taught theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, where he was named rector in 2002, a position he continued to hold until his latest appointment.

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God's law always comes first—no matter what

In a private conversation with pilgrims from the United States who were in Rome for the papal villa, Miguel Diaz, the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, made the following statement: “Once Americans elect a president, they must stand behind him—no matter what. If they don’t like what he says or does, they can replace him in the next presidential election.”

Because Ambassador Diaz was speaking off-the-cuff and was not aware of his remarks would be published, we give him the benefit of the doubt. Surely a man who possesses Ambassador Diaz’s unusual and political gifts knows that his comments, if taken literally, are profoundly un-American.

Certainly the ambassador, who is a Catholic and a distinguished professor of theology, knows that following the president “no matter what” is a statement that cannot be morally acceptable to Catholics or anyone who values religious freedom. As we say, we give the ambassador the benefit of the doubt.

Even in his role as commander-in-chief, the president of the United States must be obeyed only insofar as his directives do not violate the moral law. In matters of domestic or international policy, citizens of the United States have every right to disagree with the president and to make their disagreements known and to replace him if they so desire. We assume that Ambassador Diaz was simply overstating the importance of giving the president the respect that is due to him as our elected leader.

The recent resignation of General Stanley A. McChrystal after he criticized the president, who was simply overstating the importance of giving the president the respect that is due to him as our elected leader, was no immediate economic or geopolitical threat to our nation’s security. Officers in the field is inexcusable, and a direct violation of the moral law. The president had no immediate interest in the president’s opinions regardless of their implications for our nation’s security.

It is not easy being a Catholic priest today. The recent clerical scandals have disgraced us. They have eroded our self-respect. But we are grateful to you for taking the risk of being a Catholic priest.

As a result, the president had no choice but to accept the general’s resignation. If this is the kind of support that Ambassador Diaz was referring to when he said that all of us must stand behind the president, then we agree wholeheartedly.

What is troubling is his added phrase “no matter what.” Loyalty and respect are one thing. Blind obedience and an uncritical acceptance of the president’s policies regardless of their implications for our nation’s security is quite another.

Too many American lives have been lost during the past two centuries defending our freedoms to permit us to stand behind our president “no matter what.” That is what tyrants demand of people who have been subjugated to their will. It is not what elected officials in a free society can require of—or expect from—their fellow citizens.

The U.S. ambassador to the Vatican is not required to deal with the kind of practical complexities that ambassadors to other countries must face. America has no immediate economic or geopolitical interests in its dealings with the Catholic Church. The relationship between the United States and the Vatican City State is important because of the Church’s worldwide influence and its role as a voice for moral and religious values.

Given the uniqueness of this relationship, it is especially important that America’s ambassador to the Vatican represent our American values faithfully and be able to enter into dialogue with Church leaders on matters of religious and moral significance.

Ambassador Diaz has the experience and the education required of our country’s representative to the Vatican. He was duly appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. His appointment last year was warmly welcomed by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the apostolic nuncio to the United States, and his credentials were accepted by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI.

At the time of his appointment, the ambassador said that his goal was to be “a bridge between the United States and the Vatican.”

We wish Ambassador Diaz every success in his important bridge-building work on our behalf. We also urge him to keep in mind the important distinction that we Americans make between loyalty and respect for our country’s leaders—especially the president—and an uncritical acceptance of whatever they say or do.

As Americans, and as Catholics, we hold ourselves and our leaders to a higher standard.

—Daniel Conway

Parish Diary/Fr. Peter Daly
A letter to the newly ordained

This summer, 440 men are being ordained to the priesthood in service to the Church. Welcome to the vineyard of the Lord! We need you.

There are many things that we older priests might like to say to our newly ordained brothers. But first and foremost, we want to say thank you.

It is not easy being a Catholic priest today. The recent clerical scandals have disgraced us. They have eroded our self-respect. But we are grateful to you for taking the risk of being a Catholic priest.

We live in an age of skepticism and cynicism. You are a man of faith. Right from the start that makes you out of place. Many people will not believe in the value of our vocation. Even though some members of your own families might question your decision.

Don’t be afraid. God’s grace will sustain you. Your parishioners will affirm you. What you are doing is noble and worthwhile. Have confidence in Christ, who called you into his service.

Every age has presented challenges to priests. It was not easy being a priest during the Roman Empire or during the Black Death. Priests were targets in the French Revolution and still are under communism. Priests continue to suffer greatly as missionaries. And they suffer today when they stand up for the poor and oppressed.

Suffering comes with following Christ, the suffering servant.

Just love as Christ loved. Love the people God puts in your path.

If you love them, they will love you in return.

Be kind. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, a great priest of the last century, said there were three rules to priestly service: kindness, kindness, kindness.

You were ordained for people, not paper. The diocesan paper can wait; the sick person can’t.

—Rev. John F. Fink, Editor Emeritus

Looking Ahead

U.S. adults looking ahead to the year 2050 see a future full of promise and peril.

72% believe the world will face a major energy crisis.

68% believe race relations will improve.

65% say religion in the U.S. will be as important as it is now.

50% believe life will be found elsewhere in the universe.

41% expect Jesus Christ to return to Earth.

From a survey of 1,546 U.S. adults taken April 21-26. The sample has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press ©2010 CNS
Clos padres sucumben a la tentación de otorgar a sus hijos mayor obsequio que los padres pueden arte de la vida cristiana son nuestras futuros religiosos sobre una base que se les enseñe el arte de la vida cristiana. ¿Cómo podré saberlo? ¿A quién me llama al sacerdocio o a la vida consagrada? ¿Por qué estoy aquí? ¿Existe Dios verdaderamente? ¿Quiero, y por qué? Se debe decidir de una vez por todas, pero no es el momento adecuado. No se trata del momento adecuado para echar a la suerte o para tomar decisiones en cuanto a la religión y la fe. Esto es en nombre de la libertad de elección, de la posibilidad de Christian parents is to teach their children the truth of Jesus Christ and his life, so that they may be capable of making the right decisions in the future. This is no time for abandonment or a curta fatherhood. Is it possible to teach this truth to young adult children? Is it the time for our parishes and university Catholic centers to build a bridge between high school and their young adult years through outreach and catechesis.

Our parish communities play a crucial role in teaching the art of Christian living. "Educating new generations in the faith is a great and fundamentally important task that involves the entire Christian community," one that has become "particularly difficult" today and, is "even more important and urgent," according to Pope Benedict (Address to U.S. Catholic Educators, April 17, 2008). The parish is a living family which ensures this essential task of Catholic education.

The U.S. Catholic bishops, in their pastoral plan "Communities of Salt and Light," define the parish as a place "where the Church lives. Parishioners are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where God is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the Earth. Parishioners are the heart of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishioners are where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life." This truth of Church places an even greater emphasis on the important role on young adult and college ministry in our archdiocese.

In the community of faith, it is the parish family which takes a vital role in welcoming, engaging and evangelizing young believers and non-believers. (Address to U.S. Catholic Educators, April 17, 2008).

Do you have an intention for Archbishop Buechlein’s prayer list? You may mail it to him at: Archbishop Buechlein’s Prayer List P.O. Box 1410 Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis 440 N. Meridian St. Indianápolis, IN 46202-1410

El mejor fundamento del arte de la vida cristiana es la familia

Con frecuencia, en un mundo relativista, un mundo en el que no se puede conocer la verdad. La primera responsabilidad de las familias es mostrar que este camino es real, un camino que conduce a la verdad. "El arte de la vida," define la parroquia como un "lugar donde el pueblo de Dios se encuentra con Jesús en palabra y sacrificio y entra en contacto con la fuente de la vida de la Iglesia."

Esta verdad acerca de la Iglesia imprime un énfasis aún mayor al papel que desempeña el ministerio en universidades y para jóvenes adultos de nuestra Arquidiócesis.

Dentro de la comunidad de fe es la familia parroquial la que asume un papel vital para dar la bienvenida a los jóvenes creyentes y no creyentes, para interactuar con ellos y evangelizarlos. (Address to U.S. Catholic Educators, April 17, 2008).
Events Calendar

Independence Day float

Students, staff members and other supporters of St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington posse for photos on a float which represented the school in an Independence Day parade on July 3 in Bloomington.

Knights of Columbus to host meeting on international adoption

The Santo Rosario Council of the Knights of Columbus is sponsoring a meeting about international adoption beginning at 6:45 p.m. on July 21 in Priester Hall at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 720 Stevens St. in Indianapolis.

Michelle Jackson will be speaking on the topic. She is an Indianapolis-based lawyer who helps facilitate international adoptions through MLJ Adoptions, which is one of the three federally accredited agencies working in international adoptions in Indiana.

Jackson also is the founder of the Fatherless Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that works to bring orphans and materials, pre-registration program, six-week program, Information: 317-888-5451 or 317-872-6420 or admin@indianapolislittlesecrets.com.

July 17


July 18

St. John the Baptist Parish, 25743 State Road 1, Dover. “Summer Festival,” 11 a.m.-7 p.m., fried chicken dinner, 11 a.m.-8 p.m., games, crafts. Information: 812-576-4302.

St. Mary Parish, Navilion, 7500 Navilion Road, Floyd Knob. Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., chicken dinner, games, quilts. Information: 812-933-5349.

St. Michael Parish, 101 St. Michael Dr., Charlestown. Church concert music, 5:30-8 p.m. Information: 812-256-3200.

Saint Meinrad Parish, St. Meinrad. Quilt show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Information: 812-357-5533.

Richmond Catholic Community, 701 N. “A” St., Richmond. Charismatic prayer group, 7 p.m. Information: dicken@catholicindy.org.

Retreats and Programs

July 10


July 11

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Pre-Cana Conference” for engaged couples. Information: 317-545-7681 or spasott@archindy.org.

July 12, 13 or 14

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Eighth annual garden retreat, “How Does Your Garden Grow?” $45 per person session, includes lunch, space limited, registration deadline: July 1. Information: 317-788-7581 or bendictin@saintbenedict.org.

July 16-18

Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat, post-abortion reconciliation weekend for women and men, confidential location, All calls are confidential. Information: 317-216-1521, 800-382-9836, ext. 1521, or 317-831-2892.


July 17

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Come Away and Rest With Our Lord,” silent, non-guided reflection day, 8:45 a.m.-4 p.m., $25 includes lunch. Information: 317-788-7581 or bendictin@saintbenedict.org.

July 22

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Come Away and Rest With Our Lord,” silent, non-guided reflection day, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., $25 includes breakfast and lunch. Information: 317-788-7581 or bendictin@saintbenedict.org.

July 23-24

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Leadership Blast,” leadership conference for students entering sophomore year of high school, $50 per student includes room, meals and materials. Information: 317-788-7581 or spasott@archindy.org.

July 23-25

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Early July is when things usually slow down at the Vatican as top Church officials wrap up loose ends and prepare to go on vacation.

But the mood at the Vatican this year is anything but serene. Pope Benedict XVI and his key advisers are facing a series of external and internal conflicts that threaten to make this a long, hot summer of problem-solving and strategizing.

One hesitates to use the word “unprecedented” to describe the situation in the Vatican. But it is difficult to remember a time when so much bad news has landed at the Vatican’s doorstep in a single year.

The Belgian police raid on the archdiocesan headquarters and residences near Brussels on June 24 left Vatican officials stunned, and illustrated just how much the sex abuse crisis has lowered the Church’s standing in the eyes of some civil authorities.

The country’s bishops were held for nine hours as police confiscated files, computers and cell phones. The ultimate affront came when the police drilled into the tombs of two dead cardinals and inserted cameras to look for supposed hidden documents—

which were not found.

Police officers stand outside the residence of the archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels in Mechelen, Belgium, on June 24. Belgian investigators searched the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Belgium, the archbishop’s residence as well as the home of Cardinal Godfried Danneels as part of an investigation into alleged priestly sexual abuse.

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Police officers stand outside the residence of the archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels in Mechelen, Belgium, on June 24. Belgian investigators searched the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Belgium, the archbishop’s residence as well as the home of Cardinal Godfried Danneels as part of an investigation into alleged priestly sexual abuse.

The Belgian police raid on the archdiocesan headquarters and residences near Brussels on June 24 left Vatican officials stunned, and illustrated just how much the sex abuse crisis has lowered the Church’s standing in the eyes of some civil authorities.

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New church features include a circular floor plan and sloping floor for enhanced visibility, two reconciliation rooms, two cry rooms that can double as dressing rooms for weddings, four side altars that will feature mysteries of the rosary, and a full immersion baptismal font.

The current church will continue to accommodate daily and children’s Masses after the new one is completed, which is slated for December 2011. Construction of an activity center is under way, and is expected to be completed by September. Additionally, soccer, baseball and football fields will be built.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, numerous people were recognized for their contributions to the project. Many parishioners participated in various committees during the planning phase, which longtime parishioner Pat Byrne credits to Father Geis’ focus on keeping people involved.

A capital campaign resulted in raising more than $10 million for the new church and activity center. Three shovelfuls of dirt were turned at the site of the future altar in honor of the three persons of the Trinity.

The celebration continued with a potluck dinner honoring Father Geis’ ministry at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish.

Parishioner Brenda Crockett was among those who said the longtime pastor made a difference in the parish family’s life of faith.

“We’re going to miss Father John. He has allowed the youths to be so involved in the Church,” she said. “That has had a big impact on my family.”

Parishioner Charlie Koopman praised Father Geis’ style of leadership and his emphasis on hospitality, and noted how the new church is being built around that concept.

“You [Father Geis] have become a brother to me as well as a friend,” he added.

Susan Isaacs, parish director of adult faith formation, said that, under Father Geis’ direction, the parish has gone from a staff of two full-time employees to five employees. There has also been growth in part-time help, and an explosion of ministries, including a school full of teachers, aides and volunteers.

“You’re calm, prayerful, selfless demeanor humbles us,” Isaacs said. “You have cultivated a ministry staff who believes that what we must do is what we are called to do, and our calling is much bigger than us.”

Many of his fellow priests joined in celebrating Mass and Father Geis. Concelebrants included Benedictine Archabbott Justin DuVall of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad; Father Gerald Kirkhoff, pastor of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis, temporary administrator of Holy Cross Parish in Indianapolis and vicar of advocacy for priests in the archdiocese; Father Wilfred “Sonny” Day, pastor of Holy Family Parish in New Albany and vicar of advocacy for priests in the archdiocese; Father Wilfred “Sonny” Day, pastor of Holy Family Parish in New Albany and dean of the New Albany Deanery; Father Juan José Valdes, administrator of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville; Father Randall Summers, pastor of St. Louis Parish in Batesville; Father Michael O’Mara, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis; and retired Father William Ernst.

Of the gifts presented to Father Geis, the biggest surprise came with the announcement from parishioners that the new activity center will be named after their parish. The longtime pastor made a difference in the parish family’s life of faith.

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Of the gifts presented to Father Geis, the biggest surprise came with the announcement from parishioners that the new activity center will be named after their retiring pastor.

“I feel lucky, privileged to share this with you. It’s been a wonderful trip,” Father Geis said.

In his retirement, Father Geis plans to reconnect with family near Greensburg, and pursue his “sea” ministry—fishing. He will also assist at parishes as needed.

(Submitted photo: photo by Paul Schellenberger)
Bishop William Higi reflects on a lifetime of ministry

(EDITOR’S NOTE: On June 16, Criterion reporter Sean Gallagher interviewed Bishop William L. Higi for Catholic Radio Indy 89.1 FM’s show “Faith in Action.” The following is an edited transcript of that interview.)

By Sean Gallagher

Bishop William L. Higi of Lafayette, right, prays part of the eucharistic prayer during a Mass of Thanksgiving on Oct. 16, 2006, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome following the canonization of St. Theodora Guerin on the previous day. Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, the principal celebrant at the Mass, left, joins Bishop Higi in prayer.

LAFAYETTE—For much of his life, Bishop William L. Higi has been closely connected to the Diocese of Lafayette, which he has led for the past 26 years.

He was 11 and lived in his native Anderson, Ind., when the diocese was created in 1944—on the same day that the Diocese of Indianapolis became an archdiocese.

A few years later, Bishop Higi was a junior in high school when he became a seminarian for the Diocese of Lafayette.

Bishop John J. Carberry, the second bishop of Lafayette, who would later succeed New Albany native Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter as the fifth bishop of Lafayette. It was less than three months after Bishop George A. Fulcher died in an automobile accident—just 11 months after being appointed to lead the Church in north central Indiana.

Now 76, Bishop Higi is on the verge of retirement after ministering for 51 years.

On May 12, Pope Benedict XVI accepted Bishop Higi’s letter of retirement, which bishops are required by Church law to submit on their 75th birthday. On that same day, the pope appointed Msgr. Timothy L. Doherty, 59, a priest of the Diocese of Rockford, Ill., to succeed him. Since then, Bishop Higi has served as the apostolic administrator of his diocese.

Bishop-designate Doherty will be ordained and installed on July 15, the day on which Bishop Higi will truly hand over the leadership of the Lafayette Diocese that he has led for the past quarter century.

Q. You became a seminarian just four or five years after the Diocese of Lafayette was created. So you’ve been connected closely to your local Church since very early on in its 66-year history. Does that have some importance to you?

A. “Well, when you’re a kid, a diocese doesn’t mean that much to you. You’re just a member of a parish. I was aware that I belonged to the Diocese of Lafayette. But I didn’t know much about the history of it. I had been confirmed by the bishop of Fort Wayne–South Bend, the Diocese of Fort Wayne at that time. Bishop [John F.] Noll I went off to the seminary, and pretty soon I was ordained a priest.

There are pluses to being a local man. But I think that they are far outweighed by the negatives of it. The tradition of the Church in this country is to bring in someone to be bishop from the outside.

“[That] didn’t happen in my case because there was a trauma to us when our fourth bishop died in an automobile accident. And so I was pushed ahead, so to speak, rather quickly.

“It has its good points. It has its pluses. It also has its negatives to it. But it is nice to be able [to share memories] when people talk about the old days, names of priests. I remember some of those. That is a helpful part of it."

Q. Are what are some of the highlights of your 26 years as a bishop and 51 years as a priest in the diocese?

A. “Well, I think to focus on the 26 years as a bishop. Of course, it’s difficult, really, to isolate one specific highlight. There have been so many moving experiences. But I tend to focus on the privilege of ordaining men to the priesthood. It’s really at the top of my list. It’s a tremendous privilege.

“I have now ordained 50 men to the priesthood—41 of them to our diocesan Church. And, in the interim between the ordination to the priesthood in 1959. Nearly 25 years later, Pope John Paul II appointed then-Father Higi as the fifth bishop of Lafayette. It was less than three months after Bishop George A. Fulcher died in an automobile accident—just 11 months after being appointed to lead the Church in north central Indiana.

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The Mass and the sacraments are the cornerstone of the Church. The Mass is the heart of Catholicism, and the sacraments are the outward signs of the inner grace that God bestows upon us. They are the means through which we receive the grace of God.

Q. You were ordained a priest a year after Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council. That brought about many changes in the Church in the past half century. There are other things that have stayed the same, both universally and also here at the local level.

When you became bishop in 1984, the population in Hamilton County was much less than it is now, and there were less parishes there. What’s it been like for you to experience changes in the Church?

A. “It takes a while to realize that the Church is a living organism, and, because of that, it’s the same, but it changes. The core beliefs are the same, but we certainly do things differently than we did 50 years ago.

“The Mass and the sacraments are the same. But how we celebrate them has changed very significantly. Our understanding of them is quite different now. The language we use, the various roles of participation in the Mass [is different now]. The Mass, particularly, has shifted from private prayer to communal prayer. The laity, now, are very highly involved in almost all aspects of the Church.

“When hasn’t it changed? Well, people are human. The need to catechize is as great as ever, maybe even more so because the cultural support for Judeo-Christian values and institutional religion has diminished very significantly with the secularization of our society.

“The basic generosity of people is still a fact of life. I often marvel at the way that people in the mid- and later part of the 19th century built the huge churches that we have with their nickels and dimes and maybe even pennies.

“But, today—you mentioned Hamilton County—the growth here has been phenomenal. It’s hard to keep up with. We struggle ourselves with significant debt. And yet, the generosity of people makes that expansion possible. And those parishes are really thriving.

“There’s a love for the Church today and there’s a desire to be a part of it and to support its mission that I, suppose, has always been there.

“But those that are involved are more deeply involved than in
New York priest urges pro-life teenagers to ‘bring your joy into the debate’

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 By Alison Graham
 Special to The Criterion

 Religious vocations to the priesthood or religious life are stereotypically viewed as bad choices. When thinking of a priest, nun or monk, people are quick to think of unhappy people. I was always accustomed to believe saints prayed and attended Mass 24 hours a day and never had any fun, until I actually took the time in my seventh-grade year to visit the sisters at St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration.

 Upon being told that we were to visit a convent, I moaned and groaned the entire way. My attitude didn’t change until I arrived and actually began to talk with the Sisters of St. Francis. I met many sisters who inspired me and taught me the value of being a part of their order. I also met a young woman training to become a sister at St. Francis. I have never seen a happier, more excited person in my entire life. I couldn’t believe how thrilled she was to be a nun.

 Not only did they teach me about what they actually do, but most importantly showed me that they love to have fun. The sisters told us in love to go sledding during the winter in their habits, chat all day, and sometimes play Ping-Pong and other games during their free time. My entire outlook on the life of nuns, monks and priests completely changed that day.

 Once someone becomes open to the thought of religious life, they can truly hear God’s call and respond to it. The number one way in which priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters invite others to come and see their own vocations is to show them what their vocation is really like.

 Once they open up, answer questions, and share their own stories, many people become interested and open to the idea of becoming a priest, deacon, brother or sister. Priests, deacons, and religious brothers and sisters can truly affect others through their ministry. At my grade school, St. Luke, we had an associate pastor named Father [Jonathan] Meyer. His ministry truly made a difference at my school because his spunk and originality drew the students in to listen to the homilies and learn about God. His license plate stated “GO 2 MASS,” and he would break dance at youth rallies and retreats.

 He was truly a priest that my school will never forget, and we will all cherish the memories we have of him. Like Father Meyer, there are many other deacons, priests, and religious brothers and sisters who can add their personalities to their work. Showing who they are is another way they call others to see Christ and discover their own vocations.

 While there are many ways people discover their vocations, many are led there by deacons, priests, brothers and sisters. They show them the life of their vocation, answer questions, share their stories, and add uniqueness to their ministry to invite others to come and see Christ and discover their own vocations.

 I discovered how important it is to see the value of faith and loving God, while the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration were responsible for opening my eyes to the wonders of Christ and our Church.

 (Alison and her parents, Robert and Pamela Graham, are members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. She completed the ninth grade at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis last spring, and is the ninth-grade division winner in the Indianapolis Serra Club’s 2010 John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest.)

 PITTSBURGH (CNS)—It can be difficult keeping a smile on your face when dealing with people who don’t share your pro-life views. Conversations can sometimes erupt into hurtful arguments so it’s vital that you maintain a steady sense of compassion and understanding.

 Msgr. Jim Lisante of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., gave young people that advice on June 26 during the National Teens for Life convention held during the National Right to Life Committee convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel at Pittsburgh International Airport.

 “Bring some joy to the situation. I find, very often in the Church especially, people feel that somberness or somberness is a sign of holiness. And I’m a big believer … that you earn more opportunities for changing people’s hearts if you approach with joy,” Lisante said.

 “Be joyful that you are a pro-lifer, but bring your joy into the debate, too, and don’t become negative, critical, nasty or put [people] down because they don’t see things the way you do,” he said.

 Besides being a pastor for 14 years and former director of the diocesan family life office, Msgr. Lisante is well known as the host of “Personally Speaking” on TV and Sirius XM satellite radio. He formerly hosted “Christopher Closeup” on television, and a new TV program, “Close Encounter,” is coming soon to CBS and PBS affiliates.

 “What the show’s about is what these all show are about: It’s me interviewing people about their faith, and how they got to where they are with Christianity and religion as a positive force in their world,” he said in the interview with the Pittsburgh Catholic, a diocesan newspaper.

 Recent interviewees have included actors Carol Channing and Stephen Baldwin, novels Nicholas Sparks and Mary Higgins Clark, and shortstop Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees. Upcoming guests include New Orleans Saint and quarterback Drew Brees and actor-comedian Billy Crystal.

 “They all bring different perspectives. I discover so much with each guest, that’s what I love,” Msgr. Lisante said.

 Among his favorite TV guests were actresses Rue McClanahan and Patricia Neal.

 The late McClanahan, who was best known for appearing on “The Golden Girls” sitcom, once spoke of her faith journey.

 “What I loved was she said she was raised in a Baptist tradition in Oklahoma and there was so scared of everything about God from an early age,” Msgr. Lisante said. “But when McClanahan was in her 70s, Msgr. Lisante said, she was relieved to have a conversation to an understanding that Jesus was far more loving. Neal, who recently became a Catholic, spoke movingly about how, in the early 1950s, she became pregnant by actor Gary Cooper, who was married.

 “And she just said on the show, ‘I have for 41 years, alone in the night, cried for the stupid decision I made to abort that child,’ and she said, ‘So my message would be, don’t make my mistake and lose your child love.’ ”

 Msgr. Lisante gave the keynote speech at National Right to Life’s closing banquet on June 26, focusing on keeping the Faith in Obama-esque Times. He said President Barack Obama’s battles illustrate the pro-life message.

 “If I worked at Planned Parenthood and someone came in to me and said, ‘I’m in an intra-uterine marriage, we’ve got a lot of money, I have an abusive husband who’s rarely present and my child is going to have to be raised for several years by the grandparents, what should I do?’ they would certainly have indicated abortion. And that’s my point,” Msgr. Lisante said.

 “He could just get that, that he wouldn’t be here if we followed the traditional pro-choice thinking. ‘I’m a believer that we have to approach him [Obama] with respect and love,’” he said. “He is, in fact, in my mind a great example of our message.”

 Msgr. Lisante considers health care reform and concern over the use of taxpayer funds to pay for abortion to be the most urgent life issue.

 “There’s no doubt that the more we create laws that in any way service or promote abortion. And at a time when you have polls showing the majority of Americans consider themselves pro-life, this is exactly the time to stop that,” Msgr. Lisante said.

 He is disturbed when opinion polls indicate that Catholics are as likely, if not more likely, to undergo or support abortion than the rest of American society. Certainly there is a need for more catechesis and preaching, he said, though priests often seem afraid to deliver a powerful pro-life talk because some parishioners may have had abortions.

 “We say to people, ‘Know the Church teaching,’ but I wonder how well they know it, how deeply they know it,” he said. “You don’t do an adult education in the parish and you’re not preaching about it, why should we presume people know something when we don’t talk about it? Whether it’s about contraception or whether it’s abortion itself, at least give people the facts.”
Immigrant families struggle to persevere through challenges

By Sheila Garcia

Like many immigrants, Carlos wanted a better life for his family. So he gave up his career as an engineer in his South American country. He and his family headed to the United States. With limited English, Carlos found work in construction—until the recession hit and the building trades dried up.

Suddenly, without a steady income, Carlos joined the ranks of day laborers who were hoping for quick jobs and a few dollars. More and more, the family depended on his wife's job at a childcare center.

As the recession continued, Carlos grew increasingly discouraged. He wanted to return to his home country, but his wife refused to give up on their dream.

Life became even more difficult, however, when their daughter’s illness resulted in a medical bill for thousands of dollars. There was no insurance to cover it.

Carlos is one of approximately 38 million first-generation immigrants living in the United States. More than one in five children—most of them U.S. citizens—live in immigrant families.

Each immigrant family tells a unique story, but while the details differ the theme is often the same: They persevere simply to get through the day, the week, the month—survive.

For many, the challenges begin with the decision to relocate, a move that often forces the family to leave children behind. The separation puts enormous stress on the family, making it difficult for parents to care for their children and keep their marriage intact.

To ensure that family ties are maintained, some Latino parents send a child back to the home country for a few weeks during the middle of the school year. These long absences can have devastating effects on academic progress.

Education is key to an immigrant child’s future success, but even schools present challenges to both students and parents.

One high school guidance counselor tells immigrant students, “You have to work twice as hard as anyone else.” She points out that, “While all students must learn the subject as hard as anyone else.” She points out that, “immigrant students, ‘You have to work twice as hard as anyone else.’”

Many immigrant parents do not understand grading policies, PTAs or parent-teacher conferences. In their home countries, they expect to defer to the teacher. The idea of “working the system” to advocate for their children, especially if they have special needs, is foreign to them.

A family’s financial struggles can also affect a student’s academic performance. Some teenagers feel pressured to work to supplement the family income. For example, one student who routinely arrived home from his restaurant job at 10:30 or 11 at night had little time for homework. When he began to nod off in class, concerned teachers approached a counselor, who gently suggested that he limit his work hours to the weekend.

Like all families, immigrant families must deal with conflict between parents and children, especially teenagers. Immigrant youths can find themselves caught between two worlds, neither fully American nor fully part of their parents’ country of origin.

While parents try to hold onto their own cultural customs and values, children want to be like their American peers. Music, clothes, parties and dating can all be sources of conflict.

Some conservative immigrant parents do not want their teenagers, especially their daughters, to go out or to have friends over. Teens may react to such restrictions with extreme behavior, including drug use and poor school performance.

Another gap can occur between parents, who often hold low-paying, low-prestige jobs, and their children, who are moving in a different direction. In school, children develop an expectation that they will earn their living with their minds and not through manual labor. Their parents’ world can seem more and more remote—and unattractive.

Language can be another source of tension in immigrant families. Many adults find it hard to learn English later in life, and many do not have time to attend classes. Their children, who usually pick up the language quickly, can end up as informal interpreters.

Parents then become dependent on their children’s interpretation skills, which puts an unfair burden on a child or teen, especially if the issue is a difficult legal or medical matter. In addition, the inequality of language skills can put the parent in a subordinate position.

On a brighter note, many immigrant families hold tight to their faith, which sustains and comforts them in their struggles. Latino families, for example, often identify with the suffering Jesus on the cross.

Despite the challenge, many immigrant parents successfully hand on religious beliefs and practices to their children. The celebration of such feasts as Our Lady of Guadalupe binds families together. Religious devotions that are unique to a particular culture help to preserve the immigrant family’s identity and bridge the gap between generations.

(Sheila Garcia is the associate director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat of Life, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.)

Immigrants work hard to preserve their culture

As an immigrant family, how have you kept alive the traditions of your native country?

“One way was my name. My father was born on Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and he was named Guadalupe after her. Then he named me Guadalupe, which means ‘roots.’ We have a birthday, and today we celebrate both days with our family.”

—Raquel Franco-Torres, Tulsa, Okla.

“I am from Poland, and I speak the language with my children, whom I homeschool. For our oldest daughter, who is 8, Polish was her first language. Also, each of the four children was named for a saint, and we celebrate that saint’s feast day. We talk about the saint and have cake, and the child gets a present.”

—Kasia Wright, Ypsilanti, Mich.

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: After you were married, did either you or your spouse see a need to attend workshops or marriage encounters to enhance your marriage?

To respond for possible publication, send an e-mail to cgreene@catholicnews.com or write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.
Of the characters in Jesus’ parable about the prodigal son do you recognize any? That’s a common question for those who probe parables. But why parable because it is a good way to examine our current state.

We all know the story told in Luke’s Gospel of the younger son who received his inheritance. The father had two sons. The younger son asked for his share of his father’s inheritance. The father gave his son what he asked for. The younger son spent all his money on a life of sin. When the younger son spent all his money, he was hungry and there was no one to feed him. He thought of his father and regretted what he had done. So, he went back home to his father and confessed that he had sinned. His father welcomed him back home. He quickly called his son. But the father not only welcomed him back home, he quickly arranged for a celebration for his son. The father explained that the older son was only always close to the father. The older son had also been close to the father, but “now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life; he was dead and has been found.” (Luke 15:1-23).

Thus, we have partisans of Indiana Jones and Spider-Man in the same camp, as the proverbial parent is a great teacher. The young hero should thank his father, confess that he had sinned, and ask his father to treat him as one of his hired servants. If he had done so, he would have brought food to his father's table.

Jesus told the parable, his longest one, to illustrate his particular concern for the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The father is like God, who will take back those who are sorry for their sins no matter how great the sin or how unworthy the sinner.

From the Editor Emeritus

This is good news for us, to be sure, since we are all sinners. Perhaps we are not as bad as the younger son in the story, but we are sinners nonetheless. Perhaps the detail about the man’s sins other than to say that he “squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation” (Luke 15:31) is less than is needed. Perhaps we are in the same situation that required his father to say, “now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life; he was dead and has been found.” (Luke 15:1-23). But it is not for us to imagine the father’s thrill at allowing him to return to the family to celebrate a great celebration for him.

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Shall we hold truth to be self-evident?

"Acceptance is not giving up, but may mean letting go of the fear of a situation fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty." They then cite the "Serenity Prayer":

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

"Humor. I believe humor forces a person to look at things in a lighter. He knows how to keep the light burning. A tweet may be just 140 characters, but it’s long enough to communicate a thought or a prayer. And those are the little moments that allow for the big ones that bring us to our knees."

I’m saying yes to silence, to emptiness, to the absence of it all—a mode that doesn’t operate. "I am a young adult. I’m going to the Holy Land to see the bigger picture and the higher ground. I’m going to practiceumperkoning. Yes, there are some things in order to say yes to others. I’m going to the Holy Land to see the bigger picture and the higher ground. I’m going to practiceumperkoning. Yes, there are some things in order to say yes to others."

I’m proud to take a break from a habit that shortens, if not eliminates, the line between perceiving and publishing. I’m pleased to give a little less to a force that keeps demanding more. This spring, Twitter unveiled a tracking tool that pins an exact location to each tweet. When I was invited to activate it, I didn’t have to think twice. Thanks but no thanks.

Many others, evidently feel differently. Location-based applications like Foursquare are booming in popularity. Personally, I’d rather go off the grid, as they say. I’m not keen on that kind of accuracy. There is value in traveling lightly—no footsteps or footsteps. I’m seeking the kind of discovery that comes with being disconnected. After all, who needs 40 days—in a desert I’ll soon see!

So I’m packing my suitcase and preparing an adventure. Do you know how good that feels? Do you know how rare that feels?"

I’m inspired by my uncle, Mike, who went off the grid for two weeks last fall to serve as the keeper of a historic lighthouse. He spent his days scanning the horizon, playing his fly-fishing into the glassy water. Sans electricity and Internet, he attended his books. My Uncle Mike is going back again this fall, and he is planning to pack even lighter. He knows how to keep the light burning.

"Are you tweeting from Palestine?" It was a harmless question popping up in my inbox, and I had already begun typing my answer. I must say no to a few more followers when I re-read the offer I was about to make.

Shouldn’t we hold truth to be self-evident? Apparently, truth in our present culture is a relative thing, which explains why people feel free to stretch it, even twist it, and use it otherwise tinker with it. The idea is, if the truth is uncomfortable, let’s change it to suit ourselves and deny its immutability.

Thus, we have partisans of Indiana Jones and Spider-Man in the same camp, as the proverbial parent is a great teacher. The young hero should thank his father, confess that he had sinned, and ask his father to treat him as one of his hired servants. If he had done so, he would have brought food to his father's table.

Shall we hold truth to be self-evident?

"Acceptance is not giving up, but may mean letting go of the fear of a situation fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty." They then cite the "Serenity Prayer":

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

"Humor. I believe humor forces a person to look at things in a lighter. He knows how to keep the light burning. A tweet may be just 140 characters, but it’s long enough to communicate a thought or a prayer. And those are the little moments that allow for the big ones that bring us to our knees."

I’m saying yes to silence, to emptiness, to the absence of it all—a mode that doesn’t operate. "I am a young adult. I’m going to the Holy Land to see the bigger picture and the higher ground. I’m going to practiceumperkoning. Yes, there are some things in order to say yes to others."

I’m proud to take a break from a habit that shortens, if not eliminates, the line between perceiving and publishing. I’m pleased to give a little less to a force that keeps demanding more. This spring, Twitter unveiled a tracking tool that pins an exact location to each tweet. When I was invited to activate it, I didn’t have to think twice. Thanks but no thanks.

Many others, evidently feel differently. Location-based applications like Foursquare are booming in popularity. Personally, I’d rather go off the grid, as they say. I’m not keen on that kind of accuracy. There is value in traveling lightly—no footsteps or footsteps. I’m seeking the kind of discovery that comes with being disconnected. After all, who needs 40 days—in a desert I’ll soon see!

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The Book of Deuteronomy is one of the first five books of the Bible, collectively called the Pentateuch, from the Greek word meaning “five.” In terms of impact upon the development of the ancient Hebrew concept of religion, these books were most important. Together, they comprise the “Torah,” the basic pattern of human lives and is communicating with humans.

By speaking for God, obedience to God’s law reveals a person’s complete dedication to God. Obedient commandments must show a totally committed attitude of heart. Moses also makes clear to the people that God—while almighty and invisible, and therefore neither human nor bound to the Earth—is aware of human lives and is communicating with humans. The Epistle to the Colossians provides the second reading for this weekend. Originally, it was written to the Christians in Colossae, a relatively important city in the Roman Empire’s northern Mediterranean world. The spiritual vitality of these Christians was the concern that led to the writing of this epistle. The reading builds on the revelation given centuries earlier by Moses and by other prophets. God is invisible. He is seen, however, in the Lord Jesus, who rules over all creation and over all creatures. He is the head of the Church. The Church, this community, visible and alive with the very life of the Holy Spirit, was much, much more than a tissue of human flesh.

American culture has advanced much in the past 40 years. Americans are more alert to, and rejecting of, prejudice. Still, prejudice lives in this country. It is directed against any manner of human targets. The story of the Good Samaritan is more than simply a call to charity and compassion. It is that, but also is a proclamation of the dignity of each person, in the case of the victim of the robbers, and the potential of each person to do good, as in the person of the Samaritan. We all may be Samaritans from time to time, set apart from God by our sin. We can return to God. Loving God and loving others mean more than emotion. It means obeying God and showing love for all. –

Reflection
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Question Corner

Canon law requires priests to provide instructions on the holiness of marriage

Canon law requires priests to provide instructions on the holiness of marriage. The key to understanding the story is the disdain in which Jews of the first century A.D. held Samaritans. They regarded Samaritans almost as incapable of holiness or goodness. Jesus clearly taught the obvious. Everyone must love others, and everyone can love others. No one is beyond being good.

A Church law, marital priests are under heavy obligation in this part of their pastoral life. The Code of Canon Law binds a priest to assist all the faithful of that community in preserving and increasing the holiness of Christian marriage (#1063). He is to accomplish this in several ways: by instructing children, young people and adults on the meaning and duties of Christian marriage and parenthood, by instructing brides and grooms before their wedding concerning the holiness and responsibilities of marriage, by a meaningful celebration of the marriage liturgy, bringing out how the couple signify and participate in the unity and fruitful love of Jesus and his Church, and by helping married couples protect and increase the holiness of their family life. The parish priest is not required to provide all this instruction on a personal basis. The range of areas in which the couple needs assistance is vast. It involves instruction and counseling on finances, interpersonal communications, in-laws, sexual expression of their love, the care and upbringing of children, and other elements significant in the early years of their marriage and throughout their married life. Parish priests not only heavily on marriage instruction provided at Pre Cana Conferences, Engaged Encounters, Tobit weekends, sponsor couples and other programs for those preparing for marriage in the Church. Priests also depend on a whole range of programs to help husbands and wives in their relationship with each other and their children.

You told us several times that organ and tissue donations are an act of charity and approved by the Church. One organization has now surfaced that claims this is wrong, and we should not sign the driver’s license expressing our willingness to give our organs.

Having changed? (Pennsylvania) No, things haven’t changed. The Catholic Church strongly supports the principle and practice of donating one’s bodily organs and tissues to another after death, and even, under proper safeguards, while the donor is still alive. Pope John Paul II once spoke of the shortage of available donors for patients awaiting transplants. It is a matter of Christian generosity, he said, and “no solution will be forthcoming without a renewed sense of human solidarity,” based on Christ’s example, which “can inspire men and women to make great sacrifices in the service of others.”

Is it possible to do away with incense during Mass because it bothers so many people? I have asthmatic bronchitis. When incense is used in the church, I start coughing, my throat gets dry and sometimes I must leave the church. Other people have told me their allergic reactions to incense cause breathing problems that are worse than mine. (Illinois) I thought that incense manufacturers would have tried to address that problem with some sort of non-allergenic incense. However, I learned that, though two or three manufacturers have tried, there is no such product that works decently. The manufacturers all use natural resins—frankincense, myrrh and others—which, according to their experts, cannot be synthesized or modified without ending up with some not very pleasant odors. One manufacturer told me the only answer is to use good incense, but use less of it for fewer harmful effects to people like myself. Maybe your priest would be helped by knowing the severity of the incense problem for you.

I know from my mail that the problem you have is widespread, and for some people it is physically serious. (A free brochure in English or Spanish, answering questions that Catholics ask about baptism practices and sponsors, is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 3135, Peoria, IL 61612. Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail in care of dietzen@ad.com).
Rest in peace

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


MAGNELLA, Henry Schiff, formerly Sister Gertrude Madeline, a founding member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, died on May 18 at St. Paul Hermitage in Beech Grove. She was 94.

NEWLY RESTORED STATUE

The newly restored Christ the Redeemer statue is seen atop Corcovado mountain in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 30. The famous statue of Jesus with his arms wide open was revealed after being covered during a four-month, $4 million renovation. The 125-foot-tall statue was erected in 1931 and is overseen by the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro.

When it comes to property management in central Indiana, KMC knows the landscape.

Mary Henry Schiff served as a teacher and receptionist at Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the Diocese of Evansville. In 1981, after 47 years of teaching, Sister Mary Henry served as the receptionist and secretary at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville for three years. From 1984-93, Sister Mary Henry ministered at St. Paul Hermitage in Beech Grove. She retired to Our Lady of Grace Monastery in 1994, and also served as a receptionist for the monastery. Surviving are two sisters, Madeline Fletchall of Poseyville, Ind., and Pauline Nelson of Muskegon, Mich., as well as several nieces and nephews. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Benedict Retirement Fund, Our Lady of Grace Monastery, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove, IN 46107.

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the past. It’s much more than just going to Mass. It’s to be involved, really, to drive the mission of the Church.

"And that mission is no longer considered the sole occupation of clergy or sisters. People see themselves as part of the mission. I think that’s a tremendous thing."

Q. What was it like when you received the call in 1984 from the apostolic delegate to tell you that the pope had appointed you as the new bishop of Lafayette?

A. "Well, it didn’t come at the best time. I had been elected administrator of the diocese after the death of Bishop Fulcher. But I also had a small parish 70 miles north of here, in a little place called Luke Village. I would go up on Friday evenings, and I’d come back on mid-afternoon on Monday.

"And several things had gone wrong. And I got this phone call. It sounded to me like someone was trying to imitate a poor Italian accent. I thought it was a priest down the road. And if I had said to that caller what I was thinking, I wouldn’t have been chosen as bishop, I’m quite sure.

"I tried to demur. I had worked closely with two bishops, and I thought that I had some idea of what was involved. Even that was kind of naïve because it’s one thing to sit in judgment of someone who is a bishop, and it’s another thing to sit there with the ring on and try to have a make that decisions. There’s just no way that you can meet the expectations that the people have.

"So, I didn’t think that I had what it took. But I was reminded that when I was ordained a priest, I had made a promise of obedience. I had a great effect, pledged that I would accept whatever I was asked to do for the good of the Church as discerned by my superiors. I never really dreamed that the pope would be the one making those kinds of decisions for me.

"So, in my efforts to wiggle through this thing with the conviction that I didn’t think it was a good idea, I asked if I could consult with the archbishop [of Indianapolis]. And that was the biggest mistake that I could have made because Archbishop O’Meara was very much involved in my selection, I’m sure.

"At any rate, I told them, ‘You have the energy and I’m going to give you the energy.’ So I made an appointment to go see Archbishop O’Meara. Of course, he knew I was weighing things.

"And when the evening was over, he placed a call to Archbishop [Pio] Laghi (the apostolic delegate) saying, ‘The answer is yes; he has accepted.’"

"I’ve come, over the 26 years, to believe that God really was calling me to this position. And a person does his best and the rest is in the hands of God."

Q. What are your thoughts about the challenges and opportunities that are currently before the Church here in the Diocese of Lafayette and in Indiana as a whole?

A. "Well, the economy is a huge concern right now. The automobile industry was once a huge part of north central Indiana. At one time, I think General Motors employed some 25,000 people in my hometown of Anderson. General Motors doesn’t exist in Anderson anymore.

"Marion, Kokomo, Muncie— they all thrived because of the automobile industry. That’s a big concern.

"Hispanic ministry is a big one, too. Finding a way to integrate Hispanics and Latinos into our Catholic schools is imperative. It’s no easy challenge to figure out how we’re going to do that. Just providing ministry to Hispanics is a huge, huge challenge.

"Catechesis is another great issue. So many people just don’t really understand what it is, or what it means, or what it’s about. The values of Jesus Christ in this society that’s ever-more secularized. The secular media has a tremendous impact on how people think, what they accept as the truth and the voice of the Church. It’s tough to compete with that influence. So that’s a great concern.

"Ministry to an aging population is also a big issue. We’re going to need priests in the next 20 years. And yet, we’re not at replacement levels. So that’s also a big concern."

Q. What are your hopes for the future of the Lafayette Diocese and Bishop-designate Doherty. And what plans do you have for the future of the diocese?

A. "I have great optimism for the future. Bishop Doherty will bring a fresh vision. He’ll bring the energy and clarity of youth. He’ll bring energy that I don’t have anymore. He’ll bring a different experience of the Church. And in my judgment, I think that’s going to be exciting.

"I told him that I can see areas of benevolent neglect. Well, I can see that, he’s going to see a lot of that. And so there will be change. I think intellectually that I’m eager for that to happen. So I look to the future with enthusiasm.

"We had a very blessed moment here. The bishop-elect has spent some time here, several days at a time since the appointment. And on the Feast of the Sacred Heart [June 11], we celebrated Mass together in the bishop’s residence. There was just the two of us there.

"And the readings that day were like a job description of a bishop. And I became rather emotional and was saying to myself, ‘Thank you, God, that you have sent this man who’s standing next to me.’"

"I want to help him in any way that he sees appropriate for me. I’m staying in Lafayette. I’ve got a little duplex. My intent is to make myself available to help priests so that they can get away.

"What’s it been like for you to come to know and minister alongside, first, Archbishop O’Meara—he was the man who ordained me to the episcopate—and Archbishop Higi?"

A. "Archbishop O’Meara was always so pleasant. I was always amazed at how filled with energy he seemed to be in the mornings.

"I was at his home several times for breakfast. My goodness. He was just full of energy.

"I have very, very deep admiration for Archbishop Higi. I think he’s been a great bishop. He’s played on the national scene, too, and has played important roles in the bishops’ conference.

"He’s always a true brother, and I’m most grateful to him. I was particularly taken by his solicitation and support given at the time of The Indianapolis Star expose of the diocese, accusing us of all kind of irregularities relative to clerical sexual abuse.

"It was about 10 years ago, and was a combination of some truth and a great deal of manipulation. It was filled with a lot of fabrications. But it was a very painful time. And it turned out to be a blessing in disguise to me because it awakened me to the issue rather early on. We then took steps to put us on the cutting edge, well ahead of the ‘Charter for the Protection of Children [and Young People].’

"But the archbishop was very, very supportive of me—he has been in everything—but especially at that time."

(To listen a podcast of the complete interview with Bishop Higi, log on to www.catholicnews.com and click on “program archives” for Faith in Action at the bottom of the homepage.)

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