In pastoral letter, Indiana bishops say needs of poor must be a priority

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The bishops noted in the introduction to the pastoral letter that they are called to carry on Christ's work in service to all people, but that they have a particular obligation to care for the most vulnerable members of God's family, especially the poor.

"Using the simple formula of SEE, JUDGE, ACT, we invite and challenge everyone, beginning with ourselves, to be more attentive to the poor in our communities, to identify the systemic issues that keep individuals and families poor, and to take concrete steps to reduce the long-term impact of poverty in our state, even as we reach out and help those who, here and now, suffer from its devastating effects," the bishops wrote.

A record 1,015,127 Indiana residents are living in poverty (at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level), according to the The Status of Working Families in Indiana, 2015 Report by the Indiana Institute for Working Families. The bishops said it is their hope that Catholics throughout the state will read the pastoral letter, reflect on it and help the bishops consider bow the Church should respond. The letter contains several questions for reflection. The bishops are also asking people to take part in a survey to gather more information they will use to further address the issue of poverty in Indiana.

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By Natalie Hoefer

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The Sea of Galilee shimmers in the background on Feb. 7 in this view from the Mount of Beatitudes on the northern shore of the sea, also known as Lake Tiberius. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

See PILGRIMAGE, page 7A

‘There’s a militarized wall around Bethlehem?’ and other Holy Land pilgrimage observations

(Editors’ note: On Feb. 4–15, 52 pilgrims from in and around the archdiocese, including Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, traveled through the Holy Land. The following is a reflection written by staff reporter Natalie Hoefer, who covered the pilgrimage for The Criterion. See a related story on page 10A. A photo essay and quotes from pilgrims during the Galilee portion of the pilgrimage are included on pages 8A-9A. Next week’s issue will highlight the Jordanian portion of the pilgrimage.)

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Christian leaders pray in front of the Israeli separation wall near Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem, West Bank, on May 29, 2010, the beginning of the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel. Pictured in the center, from left, are Father Naim Atteek, director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center; Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos II of Jerusalem; and Melkite Father Youseb Abu Saada of Mother of Christ Melkite Catholic Church in Bethlehem. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

A land of calm and chaos

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The survey can be found in English at www.archindy.org/povertysurvey and in Spanish at www.archindy.org/povertysurveyspanish.

"Such reflection is crucial for our mission in the world today,” the bishops wrote. “Pope Francis invites us to see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every effort of evangelization” (The Joy of the Gospel: “#178)."

“We look forward to working with you to proclaim the Good News by strengthening family life, promoting just employment and ensuring a quality education and comprehensive health care for all Hoosiers, especially the poor and vulnerable.” 

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Court orders review of Notre Dame’s case on HHS mandate

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Supreme Court on March 9 ordered the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider its previous ruling and review in light of the June Hobby Lobby decision—whether the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana must pay for coverage of contraceptives, abortifacients and sterilization in employee and student health insurance plans.

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MANDATE

A full-time employee cannot be required to pick up the tab, could be counted as both a provision for private employers, religious orders, and organizations that oppose abortion and contraceptives.

Detected:)... in descriptions, about different people of the original 7th Circuit ruling, it is revealed. What is unknown is how an accommodation or exemption is defined. The Hobby Lobby ruling. Deacon Michael Braun, dean and pastoral associate of Family Life at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, appointed chaplain coordinator for pro-life at Father Thomas Sciclia Memorial High School in Indianapolis, continuing his appointment at St. Simon the Apostle Parish. The Becket Fund said more than 500 beneficiaries in nonprofit organizations have been protected from the mandate. Substantial fines apply if institutions refuse to comply with the HHS mandate.

Official Appointment

Effective immediately

Deacon Michael Braun, dean and pastoral associate of Family Life at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, appointed chaplain coordinator for pro-life at Father Thomas Sciclia Memorial High School in Indianapolis, continuing his appointment at St. Simon the Apostle Parish.

This appointment is from the office of the Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., archbishop of Indianapolis.
Cardinal Edward M. Egan, retired archbishop of New York, dies at age 82

NEW YORK (CNS)—Cardinal Edward M. Egan, who retired as archbishop of New York in 2009, died March 15 at his home in Bridgeport, Conn. He was 82.

“Join me, please, in thanking God for his life,” especially “plays a critical role in advancing Catholic-Jewish relations,” said Cardinal Egan’s contributions to the conference’s work “cannot be overstated.”

The archbishop of New York especially “plays a critical role in advancing Catholic-Jewish relations, and Cardinal Egan is remembered as a friend who humbly built upon his Jewish relations and lived out with the Jewish people the ‘Nestora Aetate’ ideal of the oneness of ‘the community of all peoples,’” said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the American Jewish Committee’s director of interreligious and intergroup relations.

“Nestora Aetate” is the Vatican Council’s 1965 Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.

Cardinal Egan was the first head of the New York Archdiocese to retire from the post. The three bishops and eight cardinals currently have no right to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.

A funeral Mass for Cardinal Egan was celebrated on March 10 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

The archbishop was born in Buffalo, N.Y., on Aug. 25, 1931. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 5, 1955, and was appointed as auxiliary bishop of New York in 1988.

In his earlier years in Chicago, the cities are home to two of the largest Jewish communities outside of Israel.

“The face-to-face interaction is debilitating to the purpose of the safe haven law,” Cox said. “Can we make the existing safe haven law better by providing a greater amount of anonymity? I think we can.”

“The problem with the safe haven law now is that these girls have to walk into a facility and hand over their baby,” she said. “They have gone nine months without telling anyone they were pregnant, and they are in crisis mode. They don’t want to be seen, and this is the only alternative that we have to keep these children safe.”

According to Kelsey, 13 babies have been relinquished in Indiana under the safe haven law. Thirty-three have been abandoned. Thirteen of those infants were found deceased. “We have a problem,” said Kelsey.

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The archbishop was born to the family of a child in certain circumstances. He noted that all 50 states have some version of the safe haven law.

Cox said that as long as there are no signs of abuse, Indiana’s current safe haven law allows the anonymity of not full anonymity. Current law requires an in-person, face-to-face interaction between parents, a police officer or a firefighter or hospital personnel in order to gain legal immunity protection.

“A safe haven law that allows for a greater amount of anonymity—can be a game changer,” Cox said. “Can we make the existing safe haven law better by providing a greater amount of anonymity? I think we can.”

The infant was turned over to a police officer who, in turn, told the mother that she could turn herself in and she would not be prosecuted.

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Sue Swazy, who represented Indiana Right to Life at the hearing, said, “We stand in support of the bill. We think it’s visionary. It helps a desperate mother with a place to put her baby.”

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Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York told Catholics of the late cardinal’s noble soul to God, the home to the Lord.”

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Recognition/John F. Fink

Remembering Father Ted

For his funeral, Father Ted chose the scriptural readings Is 26:6-9, Ps 23, Rom 14:7-12 and Mt 25:31-46. They reflect the interests of a man who devoted his life to justice and service to the poor. He was 97 when he died on Feb. 26. Father Ted, of course, was Holy Cross Father Theodore Marin Hesburgh, but people who knew him called him Father Ted—and he was known by a lot of people. Among the 13 people who spoke at a memorial tribute program after his funeral on March 4 were former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Indiana Gov. Mike Pence. President Barack Obama’s tribute was shared in a video message. Two cardinals and six bishops, including Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, participated at his funeral. Among the bishops Father Ted usually refers to his 35 years as president of the University of Notre Dame, his 16 presidential appointments, his service to four popes, his 150 honorary degrees, his Presidential Medal of Freedom, or his Congressional Gold Medal.

He was undoubtedly one of the most influential Catholic Americans of the 20th century simply because he worked in more capacities and on more boards and committees than any other—often the first or only Catholic to fill these positions. Even in his 80s, he was a member of numerous boards of directors and a member of boards that forced him to be out of the country.

But Father Ted always insisted, and meant it, that he was first of all a priest. For more than 70 years, he tried to celebrate Mass every day and succeeded, except for a few days.

He said Mass in some amazing places: in the Chilean Andes, in the middle of an African jungle, in Antarctica. He told me once that he smuggled altar wine into an African jungle, in Antarctica. He told me once that he smuggled altar wine into Saudi Arabia in a reamed-out deodorant container so he could say Mass. He pointed out that the Lord’s prayer is not quite to say Mass on the day of his death. He did.

He was faithful to praying the entire Liturgy of the Hours until macular degeneration took away his eyesight. Afterwards, he told me, he prayed three rosaries every day. Of course, he always had a great devotion to Mary. About that particular devotion, I don’t think most people realized that Father Ted was almost totally blind for about the last 15 years of his life. When he talked to you, he looked right into your eyes, and you had a hard time realizing that he couldn’t see you. He didn’t let his blindness stop him from learning. People read to him, and he regularly listened to audio books and recordings of the Bible.

Father Ted loved everything about being a priest: preaching, counseling, baptizing, witnessing marriages and hearing confessions. He always wore his Roman collar in public because, he said, he was able to help a lot of people who would stop him because of that collar. Somehow I got on the list of people who received Father Ted’s travel diaries. In return, at his request, I sent him mine. I was always amazed that, as busy as he was, he found time to read my diaries and comment on them.

After his retirement as president of Notre Dame, when he returned there after a year of travel, he devoted himself to five areas that he thought could make a difference: poverty, peace in a nuclear age; human rights and justice worldwide; human development in terms of both poverty and structural changes in the Third World; the abuse of the ecology, the great threat to humanity, and ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.

I have long kept this daily journal that reflects the key to life’s success is the ambition to do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as long as you can, and give it up over the things you cannot do.” That is what Father Ted pledged to do, and I think he was successful.

May he have eternal happiness in heaven.

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion. He graduated from Notre Dame in 1957. He is the first or only Catholic to fill those positions.)

Opinion

Father Hesburgh leaves legacy of devoted priesthood, friendship to many

On Wednesday, March 4, I joined thousands of University of Notre Dame alumni, friends and religious leaders, including our own Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, on the Notre Dame campus to remember Holy Cross Father Ted Hesburgh, who died on Feb. 26 at 97.

Our family held a special friendship with Father Ted since the 1970s. He remained one of the Gospel message of faith, hope and love.

Our worldly as his life was in service to God, country and Notre Dame, at the end of the day his priesthood and devoted friendship define him.

He traveled often to Indianapolis. Bill McGowan, Class of 1957, or I would always meet him at his Notre Dame plane on the runway to drive him to appointments and dinners. Those will always be our favorite memories—driving on the Indianapolis sharing stories with Father Ted that we never forgot.

Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis as he told me he’d just flown in from Boston, having just been elected chairman of the Harvard Board of Overseers. He was incredulous they would want a Catholic priest.

My final visit to him was in the fall of 2014. As we gazed at the Golden Dome from the window in his library office, we reminisced about our families and friends and offered a prayer. He also gave me his blessing.

Father Ted is such a rare treasure for our Church, our own family and our beloved Notre Dame. God bless him.

We have to work harder to serve others, just as he did over his 97-year on this earth.

(John D. Short is a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis and a 1974 graduate of the University of Notre Dame.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be brief, relevant, well-written, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful.

The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, content and should be informed, relevant, well-organized and free of errors.

Letters must be signed, but, for reasons of space, names may be withheld. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1800 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-3267.

Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.

Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana

The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana

Toward a Church that is poor and for the poor

Upon his election as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis declared himself to be one with the poor. He also shared with the world his longing for a Church that is poor and for the poor.

Jesus said, “The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me” (Mt 14:7, Mt 26:11).

Was Jesus telling his disciples that the poor are not a priority? Not at all. That would hardly be consistent with his words and actions throughout his public ministry. Jesus was poor, and he was for the poor, in exactly the way the Pope Francis longs for.

This week, the Catholic bishops of Indiana issued a pastoral letter “Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana.” The purpose of this letter is “to call attention to the poverty that exists right here within the state that calls itself the ‘Crossroads of America.’”

Using the simple formula of See, Judge, Act, the bishops invite and challenge everyone, beginning with ourselves, “to be more attentive to the poor in our communities, to identify the systemic issues that keep individuals and families poor, and to take concrete steps to reduce the long-term impact of poverty in our state, even as we reach out and help those who here, and now, suffer from its devastating effects.”

See. The bishops quote the parable (Lk 16:19-21) about the poor “street person” named Lazarus and the rich man who passed him every day without noticing him. “It is apparent that the rich man could not see Lazarus—and he did not see the poverty that was right in front of his eyes.” Does this parable apply to us, the bishops ask? “Have we chosen not to see our brothers and sisters who are poor?”

Judge. Poverty is not just a personal or family problem. It is an indictment of the societies and civil institutions that are based on wealth, inequality and the survival of the fittest. Poverty destroys families. It creates an unbalanced and imprudential economy.

It weakens our schools and our health care institutions. It promotes addiction, crime and all sorts of immorality. Christians are called to make informed decisions about policies and practices at the local, national, state and global levels that will identify the root causes of poverty and work to eradicate them. We are challenged to elect political leaders who do more than give lip service to the needs of the poor and oppressed, especially the most vulnerable members of our society—the unborn, elderly, infirm and marginalized.

Act. “We invite all who read these words to join us in reaching out to the poor members of our state. We challenge everyone, beginning with ourselves, to engage the leaders of business, government and voluntary organizations throughout our state in effecting meaningful changes in the policies and practices that perpetuate in all its manifestations.”

This call to act affirms that “actions do speak louder than words,” but it also underscores the seriousness and complexity of the problem. If eradicating poverty is uncomplicated, or easily accomplished, it would have been done long ago.

Unfortunately, the poor are always with us, which is another way of saying that the root causes of poverty are deeply ingrained in our social system. To eliminate poverty, we must convert our minds and hearts; we must change the way we see ourselves and our world; and we must allow the grace of Christ to transform our individual and communal actions so that we build up (rather than tear down) our sisters and brothers who are poor.

“If we give priority to family life, work, education and health care,” the bishops write, “an economically strong, well-educated and healthy Indiana” can be the result. It is simple, but not easy.

What can we do to help alleviate poverty? Pray. Strengthen families (starting with our own). Advocate for quality, accessibility and affordability in education and health care. Support Catholic Charities and other social service agencies in Indiana through generous yearly giving of time, talent and treasure.

“Catholic social teaching insists that the needs of the poor must take priority,” the bishops say in “Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana.”

Now is the time to see and for what it is, to make judgments about root causes and solutions, and to act as Jesus did to help all who suffer from the devastating effects of poverty—and now—in the Crossroads of America.

—Daniel Conway
Geography of Holy Land gives witness to God’s involvement with all creation

The geography of Holy Land is testimony of the intervention of God in all creation. Having followed in the footsteps of Jesus last month—up high mountains with breathtaking views, across the barren desert and the lush Galilean countryside—and having sailed on the Sea of Galilee and gazed at the wonder of the Dead Sea, I have a whole new understanding of what the fifth Gospel means.

Since the beginning of time, men and women have searched for God on mountain peaks and in arid deserts. The Gospels tell us that Jesus spent a lot of time by himself, away from the crowds, in the presence of his heavenly Father. He prayed, he fasted and he overcame temptation by giving himself completely to his Father’s will in these moments of silent prayer and meditation. But as Pope Francis tells us in his Lenten message this year, God is never aloof from his people. The time that Jesus spent in desert or mountain retreats prepared him to be fully engaged with the people he loved.

Our recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land took us to many of the places that witnessed Jesus’ interaction with large crowds. For example, we visited the mountain where he fed more than 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish. We toured the town of Capernaum in Galilee where four men lowered a paralyzed man through a hole in the roof of the house where Jesus was teaching. We also walked through the ruins of a local Capernaum synagogue where Jesus proclaimed himself to be the bread of life.

It’s amazing how the geography of the Scriptures can augment the story of God’s love for us in the most concrete and vivid detail. The Scriptures come alive in new ways as a result of the illustration provided by the places where Jesus teaching and his miracles actually took place!

Picture yourself in a small boat on a large body of water during a sudden storm. One word from Jesus, and the raging sea is calm, the crisis is averted. All of nature is humbled before the mystery of the Creator God. But God is not distant or aloof. He is one with his creation. He is present with us no matter what, or where we are—and regardless of the internal or external forces that attempt to pull us away from the power of God’s love.

Pope Francis’ theme for this Lent is overcoming the temptation that the Holy Father calls “indifference.” Life’s challenges, personal hurts and disappointments, and the unfairness we often have to endure can cause us to build protective walls around our hearts. Being closed in on ourselves, we think we are safe from what Shakespeare’s Hamlet called “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” But this safety is only an illusion, the pope tells us. Only by opening our hearts and casting off our indifference can we be truly happy and fulfilled.

Our Lord was never aloof or indifferent to the suffering of others. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. Why? Because he cares deeply about us and is deeply engaged in our lives.

The geography of the Holy Land gives witness to God’s personal involvement with all his creation—wind and sea, deserts, mountains and fertile valleys. This is the kind of testimony regularly given by St. Francis of Assisi, who insisted that God’s glory is revealed in Brother Sun and Sister Moon and in animals wild and tame who praise God in all that they do.

My fellow pilgrims and I experienced firsthand the miraculous truth that the land where Jesus walked underscores how much he cared for others, especially the poor and suffering people who sought him out precisely because they knew how much he loved them.

This Lent, let’s thank God for the wonder of all creation. And let’s also pray that we will be able to open our hearts to others as Jesus did whether he was teaching on a high mountain, cooking breakfast for his disciples beside the Sea of Galilee, or passing through the locked doors that prevented his followers from “going out to the peripheries” (as Pope Francis would say) to be deeply engaged in the lives of the Jews and Gentiles they were called to evangelize in Jesus’ name.

La geografía de Tierra Santa es testimonio de la intervención de Dios en toda la creación

En esta Cuaresma démosle gracias a nuestro Señor, el cual ha llamado a evangelizar en el nombre de Jesucristo. Tras haber caminado sobre los pasos de Jesús durante el pasado mes, en las alturas de montes con vistas espectaculares, por el desierto y por las exuberantes campiñas de Galilea, y luego de haber navegado por el Mar de Galilea y haberme maravillado con las vistas del Mar Muerto, tengo una nueva noción de lo que significa el “quinto evangelio.”

Desde el inicio de los tiempos, hombres y mujeres han buscado a Dios en las cimas de las montañas y en los desiertos áridos. Los evangélicos nos dicen que Jesús pasó mucho tiempo solo, alejado de las multitudes, en presencia de su Padre celestial. Allí oró, hizo ayuno y resistió tentaciones entregándose por completo a la voluntad de su Padre en esos momentos de oración y meditación silente.

Pero tal como nos lo dice el papa Francisco en su mensaje para la Cuaresma de este año, Dios jamás es indiferente a su pueblo. El tiempo que pasó Jesús solo en sus retiros en el desierto o la montaña lo preparó para estar completamente unido al pueblo al que amaba.

Nuestra reciente peregrinación a Tierra Santa, nos condujo a muchos de los lugares que presenciaron la interacción de Jesús con las multitudes. Por ejemplo, visitamos la montaña donde alimentó a más de 5,000 personas con tan solo cinco hogazas de pan y dos peces. Realizamos un recorrido por el puerto de Cafarnaúm en Galilea, donde cuatro hombres hicieron descender a un paralítico a través de un agujero en el techo de la casa donde Jesús estaba impartiendo sus enseñanzas. También caminamos por las ruinas de la sinagoga de Cafarnaúm, donde Jesús proclamó a sí mismo como el poc de vida.

Resulta increíble cómo la geografía de las Escrituras sufre un efecto amplificador sobre la historia de amor de Dios por nosotros, y le imparte detalles concretos y vívidos. Las escrituras cobran vida de nuevas formas gracias a la imagen que brindan los lugares donde Jesús enseñó y donde verdaderamente sucedieron sus milagros.

Imagina que estás en una pequeña embarcación en un enorme océano durante una tormenta repentina; con una palabra de Jesús, el mar embravecido se calma y la crisis se supera. Toda la naturaleza se doblega ante el misterio del Dios creador. Pero Dios no es un ser distante ni indiferente. Él es uno con Su creación. Se encuentra presente entre nosotros, sin importar quiénes seas, qué hagamos o donde estemos, en el mar, en las montañas, en el desierto o en las minas de minerales, en las guerras exteriores o interiores que intentan apartarnos del poder del amor de Dios.

El tema del papa Francisco para esta Cuaresma es superar la tentación que el Santo Padre llama “indiferencia.” Los desafíos de la vida, las heridas personales y las desilusiones, así como la injusticia que a menudo debemos soportar, pueden provocar que levantemos un muro protector a través de nuestros corazones. Al encerrarnos en nosotros mismos creemos estar a salvo de lo que el Hamlet de Shakespeare llamó “sufrir los golpes y dardos de la insuperable fortuna.” Pero el Papa nos dice que esta seguridad es tan solo una ilusión. Únicamente al abrir nuestros corazones y desterrar nuestra indiferencia podemos sentirnos verdaderamente felices y plenos.

Nuestro Señor jamás se mostró indiferente ni fue ajeno al sufrimiento de los demás; alimentó al hambriento, curó al enfermo e incluso levantó a los muertos. ¿Por qué? Porque nos quiere profundamente y porque está muy comprometido con nuestras vidas.

La geografía de Tierra Santa es testimonio de la intervención personal de Dios en toda Su creación: viento y mar, desertos, montañas y valles fértiles. Este es el tipo de testimonio que dio San Francisco de Asís, quien insistía en que la gloria de Dios se revelaba en el Hermoso Sol y la Hermena Luna, así como en los animales salvajes y domesticados que alaban a Dios con todas sus acciones.

Mis compañeros de peregrinación y yo vivimos de primera mano la milagrosa verdad de que la tierra por la que caminó Jesús resalta cuánto se preocupaba por los demás, especialmente por los pobres y los afligidos que lo buscaban precisamente porque sabían lo mucho que él los amaba.

En esta Cuaresma démosle gracias a Dios por la maravilla de toda la creación. Y también oremos para poder abrir nuestros corazones al prójimo tal como lo hizo Jesús, ya sea al enseñar en la cima de una montaña, al preparar el desayuno para sus discípulos junto al Mar de Galilea, o atravesando las puertas cerradas que impedían a sus seguidores “sair a la periferia” (como diría el papa Francisco) para participar activamente en la vida de los judíos y los gentiles a los que estaban llamados a evangelizar en el nombre de Jesús.
March 13
St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 N. Indiana Ave., Indianapolis. Holy Rosary, Mass, Stations of the Cross, Benediction, 6 p.m. Mass, 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-283-5508 or mryl@comcast.net.

St. Lawrence Parish, Fr. Conen Hall, 694 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Fish fry, 5:30-7-30 p.m. Information: 317-546-4065.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, parish hall, 1125 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Fish fry, 5-7 p.m., carry-out available, Stations of the Cross, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis, 7 p.m. Information: 317-638-5551.

Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 89 N. 17th St., Beech Grove. Fish fry, 5-7 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454 or mthurn@stjohnscatholic.org.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, 833 S. Triangle Road, Paul. Stations of the Cross, 4:30 p.m., fish fry available. Information: the stations. Information: 317-546-4066 or ChelseaK19488@gmail.com.

Retreats and Programs
March 27-29

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events

Irish singer and songwriter Euan Mclntyre to perform at Marian University on March 21

Marian University Theatre, 3200 Cold Springs Rd., Indianapolis. “Hope for the Canal” short film project debut, 7-8 p.m. preceding the film is a rosary walk and Mass. Information: 317-383-5508 or healinghiddenhurts.org.

Cardinal Ritter students seek help for food drive for Indianapolis charities

Students at Cardinal Ritter R.C./Sr. High School in Indianapolis are hoping to collect 15,000 items in a drive to help Holy Family Shelter, food pantries and other local charities in the Indianapolis area.

Through March 20, items such as canned goods, paper towels, toilet paper and packaged, non-perishable foods can be brought to the school’s main lobby at 3360 W. 30th St., Indianapolis.

The drive is oriented toward the school’s goal of changing the world one small step at a time.

For more information, contact Joel Hubert, the school’s service learning coordinator, at sheber@cardinalritter.org.

Discount for May 16-17 marriage retreat in Indianapolis ends March 19

A team of five couples from St. Michael Parish in Greenfield have coordinated a Catholic Marriage Retreat to be held at Marriott East Hotel, 7202 E. 21st St., in Indianapolis on May 16-17.

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin has approved the retreat, which will include provision of the Blessed Sacrament, opportunities for confession, renewal of marriage vows and Mass.

The two-day retreat will feature presentations from three bishops, a Legioary of Christ Father Matthew Summe, the eighth of 10 children who has led many retreats, provides spiritual direction and serves as chaplain to St. Ruprecht Church members in the greater Indianapolis area; Christine Turo-Shields, ASCW, LCSTW and LCAM, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis who has 25 years of counseling experience with individuals, married couples, families and groups; and Scott Seibert, MSW, LCL, the archdiocesan coordinator of marriage and family enrichment who has five years of marriage and family counseling experience and training in Theology of the Body, and who is a member of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield.

The retreat includes presentations, roundtable discussions, a question-and-answer session, and time to meet with counselors or to receive spiritual direction in small groups.

The evening includes dinner, house of hospitality” sessions and an evening dance.

The cost of the retreat is $350 for couples who register by March 19, and $450 for couples who register by May 1. Any couple married less than five years will receive a $50 discount.

The cost includes materials, lunch and dinner on May 16, and breakfast and lunch on May 17.

For more information or to register, contact Seeger at marriage.retratrc@kyc.android.com.

Scholarship recipients

Colleen, Leonard and Anthony Mark Lahr pose with Brooke N. Lahr fund scholarship award recipients Renner Gunz of immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis and Christine Campbell of St. Charles Borromeo in Bloomington on Feb. 22, the birthday of the late Brooke Lahr, who died in 2013 after being struck by a car while serving as a missionary in Mexico. The Lahrs established the fund through the archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation to create scholarships for teens and young adults in the archdiocese seeking to participate in international mission trips, a passion of their deceased daughter. The photo was taken in the St. Agapius Ligouri Chapel at the Archbispchop Edward T. O’Meora Catholic Center in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)
PILGRIMAGE
continued from page 1A

To the east and the north, green hills continued their watch as they did in the time of Christ. To the west, the mountains of Jordan seemed to slumber in a shroud of mist.

Such a peaceful feeling it was, riding upon the lake in the early morning quiet. Yet thanks to the small size of the “sea” (33 miles long by 13 miles wide), its shallow depth and its location between two mountain ranges which trap weather systems, a storm on that placid lake can create waves as high as 12 feet, large enough to swamp the Apostles’ boat and cause them to cry out, “Lord, save us!” (Mt 8:25)

That contrast of calm and chaos on the Sea of Galilee is an apt analogy to describe the Holy Land in general. It is a land where views like the deep blue of the Mediterranean Sea and the lush vista from Mount Tabor can produce such serenity, yet where religious, ethnic and political differences create a palpable tension that seems ready to combust at any moment.

One simply can’t walk away from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land without spiritual growth. As life moves forward, I find myself reading Scripture in a more engaging manner, visualizing the places we visited. I read the New Testament now with cultural and historical insights shared by our tour guide Tony Azraq, a Melkite Catholic whose historical insights were imparted by our tour guide Tony Azraq, a Melkite Catholic whose historical insights were shared by tour guide Tony Azraq, a Melkite Catholic whose historical insights were shared by tour guide Tony Azraq, a Melkite Catholic.

To Nazareth, the childhood home of Jesus, Christians and Muslims now comprise nearly 70 percent of the population, according to a 2009 Israel Central Bureau of Statistics report. The town used to be predominantly Christian.

It was jarring and, for me, disturbing to hear the intoned Muslim prayers blare from the loudspeaker of a nearby mosque into St. Joseph Church in Nazareth as Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin celebrated Mass.

And there was no hiding the shock on my face when Azraq mentioned the wall constructed by Israel around Bethlehem, located about six miles south of Jerusalem. Within that militarized wall, Bethlehem—which lies in the political mess known as the West Bank—is governed by the Palestinian Authority.

I never saw the Berlin Wall, but I imagine in its day it resembled the wall now encompassing Bethlehem: thick concrete slabs about 20-25 feet tall, with barred wire and electrical fencing on top. Driving through the military checkpoint into Bethlehem felt like entering a prison compound.

The Israeli government says the barrier, erected more than 10 years ago during a surge in Palestinian suicide bombings, is necessary for the country’s security. Palestinians see it as an illegal effort by Israel simply to grab land.

There is likely truth in both arguments. But regardless, the wall results in checkpoints that limit the coming and going of Bethlehem’s population.

According to Azraq—and confirmed by a search I did of several reputable websites—Bethlehem residents are only allowed into Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank with special permits; must wait in long lines and endure invasive searches before being allowed through a checkpoint; are restricted as to what roads they are allowed to drive on; and occasionally are subject to strict curfews.

The economic impact of these restrictions was obvious. Whereas Nazareth, Jerusalem and other places we visited moved with the obvious ebb and flow of daily life, Bethlehem seemed dormant, almost devoid of commercial life and the activity of a normal town on a normal business day.

Like Nazareth, Bethlehem used to be predominantly Christian. And like Nazareth, the town now boasts a Muslim majority, with the Christian population down to an estimated 20-25 percent, according to Christians and Christianity in the Jewish State, published in 2012.

But that’s just a statistic. No amount of reading or research can relay the psychological, emotional and cultural impact of living in such a tense, challenging environment day in and day out.

Take, for instance, the story Azraq told us presents a Jerusalem-born brother—making him technically an Israeli citizen—and his Bethlehem-residing sister-in-law, who as a resident of that town is considered a Palestinian. To live with her husband, she had to be smuggled out of Bethlehem because a 2006 law bans marriage between Israeli and Palestinian citizens.

After she gave birth to their first child, it was discovered at the hospital that she was a Palestinian from Bethlehem. Azraq’s sister-in-law was deported back to Bethlehem, where she now lives separate from her husband and child.

It matters not that both Azraq’s brother and sister-in-law are Christian, or that they love each other deeply, or that she is needed to care for their infant. She simply came from the wrong side of a wall, and that is that.

Azraq’s brother is appealing to an Israeli court for permission for his wife to move to Jerusalem. They are praying for a compassionate judge.

Such restrictive laws, economic hardship and a rise in Islamic extremism have caused an exodus of Christians from the Holy Land. Granted, Christians are not the only ones to suffer or flee. But it is the Christian presence—or lack thereof—in the land where God chose to become incarnate and Christ established his Church that leaves me disheartened.

The desire for the holy high ground in the region—and I mean that in a figurative rather than moral sense—has made the area a hotbed of hatred and unresolved conflict.

What a dichotomy this is, in the land where the God who is love came to dwell among us, that we “might not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
Galilee portion of the 2015 Archdiocese of Indianapolis pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Emotions evident as pilgrims reflect about walking in the footsteps of Christ

“It was such a beautiful day with a lovely breeze. I was very conscious we were celebrating Mass near where Jesus established the primacy of Peter. I took a good look at that beach, and thought of Peter jumping in the water because he couldn’t wait [to get to Jesus on the shore].”
—Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin

“I think we’re walking where the blood of Christians was spilled. It is sobering.”
—Katherine Krapf, a member of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis

“The view [from Mt. Carmel] was unreal in every direction.”
—Mary Klasus, a member of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood

“I picture the Apostles moving from place to place. We’re on a bus—they were walking it.”
—Mary Dougherty, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis

“What a great blessing it was to be able to renew my baptismal vows on my birthday.”
—Pat Maher, a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis

“It’s something to travel and see things you only see on TV, but when you travel and see things like this and it’s in your spirit, too, there’s no comparison. It’s such a wonderful feeling.”
—Domoni Rouse, a member of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis

“When you looked in [the Church of the Primacy of Peter], you saw that big rock. Someone asked me, ‘Could that be the rock where Jesus spread out the fishes?’ I said, ‘Well, there aren’t too many rocks that size in this area.’ I mean, that was a huge rock. It probably was the rock he used, and they just preserved it.”
—Larry Dougherty, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis

“Our predecessors of faith certainly have not forgotten the home where Mary lived. We can be confident that’s the same home, not just on faith but by the fact of the early Christian-era mosaics discovered by it.”
—James Dubach, a member of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis

“It was so nice to renew our [wedding] vows, with so many others who were renewing their vows, with the archbishop [presiding].”
—Ron Greulich, a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis

“I think the visit to the synagogue at Capernaum was important for me because of Jesus’ famous sermon there in Luke [chapter] four, which is also what St. Alphonsus [Liguori] cited as the reason for starting the Redemptorists.”
—Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin

“I was just amazed at the bravery of my fellow pilgrims who went into the Dead Sea, especially Rita [Casey], who had had 86 springtimes!”
—Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin
Catholic Bishops of Indiana

Poverty at the Crossroads

The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana

INTRODUCTION

Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society’s most neglected members. —Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation The Joy of the Gospel, n. 186

As bishops who serve the people of God, our concern is for everyone, regardless of their religious affiliation, race, ethnic background, economic or social status. Christ came to save all humankind. As his ministers, we have been given the responsibility to carry on Christ’s work in service to all our sisters and brothers here in the state of Indiana. At the same time, we bishops have a particular obligation to care for the most vulnerable members of God’s family. That is why we pay special attention to the unborn, to the sick and the elderly, to prisoners, to those who suffer from various forms of addiction or mental illness, and to the education of people from many different backgrounds and circumstances. That is also why we care, in a very special way, for those brothers and sisters of ours who are poor.

With this particular responsibility in mind, we bishops address this pastoral letter to faithful Catholics as well as to all people of good will here in Indiana. We want to call attention to the poverty that exists right here within the state that calls itself the “Crossroads of America.”

The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana

We believe it is important to point out that the consequences of the severe economic downturn that began in 2008-2009, a period that some call the “Great Recession,” caused many more Hoosiers to face the despair of poverty. A growing number of our small towns and rural communities, which had been the backbone of our state, have seen crucial economic conditions caused by poverty in its causes?

We may not encounter poor people as we go about our daily business, but they are there just the same. As an appendix to this letter, we include some sobering facts that we hope will help us to “see” the poor in our midst, we might want to consider a definition of poverty in terms of its impact on everyday life. Father Larry Snyder, former president of Catholic Charities USA, draws upon the experience of Catholic Charities workers throughout the country to explain that individuals are poor if:

• they cannot afford housing that is clean, safe, and in good repair;
• they cannot afford nutritious food for themselves and their family on a regular basis;
• they cannot consistently pay their utility bills even though it is a priority;
• their children are not adequately clothed for school with clean clothes that fit and are in good repair, and they do not have proper clothing for work; or,
• they cannot afford to go to the doctor for any kind of illness for fear that the visit will be beyond their means to pay for it.

Many Hoosiers live in these circumstances. What are some of the realities that we are challenged to see clearly as citizens of Indiana concerned about human dignity, family life and the social and economic health of our state?

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L. SEE

There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.

—Luke 16:19-21

Jesus tells the powerful story of a poor “street person” named Lazarus, and the rich man who passed by him each day without noticing him. It is apparent that the rich man could not—or would not—see the poverty that was right in front of his eyes. As a result, he was blind to the poor man’s need and—just as tragic—to the opportunities God gave him day after day to share his abundant gifts. At the conclusion of the story, we learn that this blindness cost the rich man a place in the company of Abraham.

How does this parable of Jesus speak to us today here in the state of Indiana? What are we not seeing as, day after day, we go about our busy lives? Are we incapable—or worse—have we chosen not to see our sisters and brothers who are poor? Are we blind to the impact poverty has on families, neighborhoods and entire communities, and unques?”

I. SEE

We may not encounter poor people as we go about our daily business, but they are there just the same. As an appendix to this letter, we include some sobering statistics regarding poverty, homelessness, unemployment and hunger right here in the Hoosier State. Most of us have no idea how serious—and widespread—this problem is. Like the rich man in Jesus’ parable, we fail to see what is right before our eyes. In addition, we miss the opportunities our Lord gives us to recognize him in the face of the poor.

Statistics can appear cold and impersonal. If those facts do not help us to “see” the poor in our midst, we might want to consider a definition of poverty in terms of its impact on everyday life. Father Larry Snyder, former president of Catholic Charities USA, draws upon the experience of Catholic Charities workers throughout the country to explain that individuals are poor if:

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these communities as well as in our larger cities have had serious consequences, including the breakdown of the family and an increase in the manufacture, sale and use of drugs; violence in our homes and in our streets; and the resulting increase in our state’s prison population.

Multigenerational poverty, measured by the number of individuals in economic distress whose parents, grandparents and perhaps great-grandparents also suffered severe economic instability, is a reality whose impact on human dignity, family stability and healthy communities is immense. Members of families in the grip of multigenerational poverty are far less likely to possess the internal, intangible resources that would encourage them to acquire the education, life skills and employment opportunities that are available to other members of their communities and that are critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. Without the skills and experiences necessary to make positive personal and employment decisions, poor choices appear predetermined and the vicious cycle of poverty remains intact.

Catholics in the five dioceses of Indiana remain committed to serving those who are in immediate need through our charitable agencies, parishes, schools and health care organizations. The generosity of our people is extraordinary and evident through thousands of hours of loving service every week, the length and breadth of our state. As bishops, we recognize the goodness of diverse people and institutions throughout Indiana, and we thank God for the love and compassion shown to so many of our brothers and sisters in their time of need. Yet, this compassionate response does not absolve us from asking hard questions. We believe it is essential that we make a prayerful, honest assessment of how we arrived at where we are today. If we truly are going to identify the causes and manifestations of poverty and create a pathway for positive, long-term and sustainable change, we must strengthen the foundations upon which individuals and families build economic stability and realize their hopes for the future.

As Christians, we are called to recognize Jesus in the face of the poor. Seeing our brothers and sisters as they are—members of God’s family who have gifts to share with us and whose need compels us to respond—recognizes the fundamental principle that grounds all human endeavor. It is an essential element of Christian charity. Seeing ourselves as stewards of all God’s gifts and whose need compels us to respond is integral to authentic Christian charity. If we neglect the more thorny public policy issues, we risk missing the essential element of Christian charity.

In the face of the Final Judgment in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 25:31-46), both the good and the evil people are surprised at how closely the glorified Lord identifies with the poor. Hence they ask "Lord, when did we see you...?" If we truly seek to follow Jesus and to live as he lived, we will clearly acknowledge the poverty of those around us, and we will respond with open and generous hearts to their immediate and long-term needs.

Questions for reflection
1. Have you been surprised to discover relatives, friends or neighbors in distress as a result of changes in our state’s economy over the last five to ten years?  
2. Where do you see the reality of poverty in Indiana?  
3. How is your parish, school and diocese now responding to the poor in its midst?

II.Judge

Both Christian preaching and life are meant to have an impact on society. —Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, n. 180

In his apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis observes: "No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions." He makes it clear that the Church "cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice," but must work with all people of good will to build a better world (cf. "Evangelii Gaudium" n. 183).

The root causes of poverty are complex, and must be addressed effectively by a holistic and multifaceted approach to social, economic, cultural and spiritual development. While we may be tempted to direct our attention and charitable resources toward addressing the immediate needs of the poor for food, shelter and health care, in justice we cannot neglect the more thorny public policy issues. We need to face these, if we wish to address the fundamental causes of poverty here in Indiana, as well as in our nation and global community.

As bishops, we claim no expertise in the practical details of political economy, or economics or social sciences. We must, however, embrace some universal truths that make us the Church—every human person, the basic human rights that apply to all, regardless of their economic, social, racial or cultural circumstances; the dignity of every human person, regardless of sex, race, religion or economic or social status is deserving of the respect of others can give" (Pope Francis, "Mater Et Magistra," n. 42).

Family teaches us that we are God’s children, brothers and sisters called to participate in the life of God himself. This is where we learn to recognize the sacredness of every human life as well as the beauty and necessity of living together in peace. This is where we discover the fundamental principle that grounds all human rights and dignity for every person, regardless of sex, race, religion or economic or social status is deserving of our respect. Experience teaches us that the family is the only lasting, solid foundation on which healthy societies can be built. Family teaches us how to live: In the family, we learn the basics of economy, the value of work, the meaning of sexuality, the joy of self-giving, the importance of breaking bread together and having fun with family members and friends. These are not small things. They have a huge impact on our quality of life and on our ability to interact with others...extended family, neighbors, fellow citizens and even strangers (including "aliens" or "enemies" who are unlike us and whose differences appear to threaten our security).

We are keenly aware that this understanding of the meaning of the family represents an ideal that rarely is achieved in its fullness. A significant brokenness can exist in families today (as in every age), and each of us can name the ways that families fail to live up to the grand vision that our Church proposes for marriage and family life. Our own experience of brokenness teaches us the value of compassion and forgiveness. We believe that it is worth fighting for the family. We are convinced that our individual lives and our world are enriched by "the sanctuary of life and love" that good families provide. We believe that every child should grow up warm and protective care of a loving family. We deeply regret that the challenges facing families today threaten the health and happiness of individuals and the common good of human society.

As pastors, we witness the struggle that young families, especially single-parent families, have in breaking out of the cycle of poverty in order to provide food, clothing, shelter, education and health care for their children. Finding (and keeping!) good jobs is much more difficult for teenage parents, especially if they are not married, because they frequently lack the necessary education, skills and experience to compete in today’s job market. Add to this handicap the costs associated with transportation and health care, and the challenges can be overwhelming.

In addition, as the number of underaged and single-parent families continues to grow, the number of fathers who are unable or unwilling to support their children also increases. Strong marriages and healthy families provide an environment that can help overcome the most severe economic challenges. Unfortunately, the stress of economic instability, substance abuse and domestic violence, combined with other social and cultural factors, contributes to the disintegration of marriages, disrupts stable families and often results in substance abuse and other addictive behaviors.

See JUDGE, page 3B
Our society today permits—even encourages—behavior that works against a healthy family life. These social trends can promote reckless spending and unsustainable debt. Promiscuity is fueled by media that do not reflect the beauty of human sexuality and the sanctity of marriage and family life. All segments of society suffer from the depreciation of cultural and economic threats to the health and vitality of families, but the poor, especially the multigenerational poor, are especially vulnerable to negative social and economic influences that undermine family life. It has been said that stable marriages are increasingly the luxury of the rich.

In the absence of long-term effects of poverty in our society, we must strengthen marriage and family life. As St. John Paul II wrote in his apostolic exhortation on the family, “Familiaris Consortio,” “The future of humanity passes by way of the family” (n. 86). When families are strong, society is strong. When families are broken and undermined by all human communities suffer. At the same time, we recognize that instability of marriage and family life is intensified by poverty, which can produce an intolerable stress that limits human development. And, since single-parent families are increasingly the norm for the poor, the Church must make a special effort to understand their circumstances and offer the wisdom of her tradition.

**EDUCATION**

There is an intimate connection between family, employment, and education. Parents are the first and principal educators of their children. As we noted above, this is one reason why we first learn the value of work, the importance of collaboration and teamwork, and the fundamental principles that are key to a faithful, productive, and successful work environment. The Catholic Church is uniquely committed to education and, particularly, the education of the poor. More than two centuries of experience have convinced us about the powerful role that education plays in breaking the cycle of poverty and helping families to educate and prepare citizens, workers and professionals.

We also attest to the effect that poverty has on the family’s ability to provide children with a quality education. Poor children are often hungry, undernourished and prone to limited attention spans. Crying for attention, they frequently exhibit inappropiate behaviors. They may live in cars or temporary shelters, and seldom find sufficient physical rest. Recurrent moves mean that regular school attendance is difficult, if not impossible. No wonder poor children struggle to learn, develop and test their skills and abilities, and recognize the importance of completing their education in order to compete with others in demanding job markets.

Our Catholic tradition commits us to the education of the whole person—body, mind and soul. We must not be fatalistic about the future hopes and dreams of families and children who are poor, including the multigenerational poor. We have seen with our own eyes the difference that a quality education can make in the lives of children and their families.

As Pope Francis reminds us, to be truly “with and for the poor,” we must not provide all children—but especially those who are poor—with “an education that teaches critical thinking and ability to develop the development of mature moral values” (“The Joy of the Gospel,” n. 64). This is the way out of poverty for individuals and families, and the best way to build a society that is just, economically productive and devoted to providing opportunity and defending the human dignity of all its citizens.

**HEALTH CARE**

For decades, the Catholic bishops of the United States have been unswerving advocates for comprehensive reforms that will lead to healthier lives for all, especially the weakest and most vulnerable. We believe that health care is fundamental to human life and dignity. It is also a critical component of our Church’s ministry. In collaboration with professionals throughout Indiana, the Catholic Church provides health care, purchases health care and tries to enhance the health care system. The Catholic community serves the sick and uninsured in emergency rooms, homeless shelters and on the doorsteps of our church doors. We bring both strong convictions and practical experience to the challenge of health care.

Many lower-income individuals and families in our state lack the resources to meet the expense of their health care. For these families, single-parent families, and new families in our state lack the resources to meet the expense of their health care. For these families, single-parent families, and new families in our state lack the resources to meet the expense of their health care. For these families, single-parent families, and new families in our state lack the resources to meet the expense of their health care. For these families, single-parent families, and new families in our state lack the resources to meet the expense of their health care.

People all, regardless of their circumstances, should have access to comprehensive, quality and affordable health care. It should not depend on where they were born, their stage of life, where or what world they or their parents work, how much they earn or where they live.

**Questions for reflection**

1. Do you agree that the Church has a responsibility to speak on behalf of the poor?

2. Is there an issue that is more critical for the Church’s consideration than the four mentioned in this section? (Family Life, Employment, Education and Health Care)

**III ACT**

It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric. Realities are greater than ideas ~Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, n. 231

This letter is a call to act with justice and charity. We invite all those who follow these words to join us in reaching out to the poor members of our society. We challenge every beginning with ourselves to engage the leaders of business, government and voluntary organizations throughout our state in effecting meaningful changes in the policies and practices that perpetuate poverty in all its manifestations.

Actions do speak louder than words especially when we intend to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless, and provide employment, education and health care to all members of our community. Together with women and men of good will, we want to offer hope to all who suffer, and we seek to build a just society that can alleviate the long-term effects of poverty here in Indiana and throughout our nation and the world.

Through institutions and organizations such as Catholic Charities, Catholic hospitals, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, parish social ministries, elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities our Church responds to an increasing number of people who are in desperate need of housing, medical care, food, transportation, education and other necessities. The Catholic Church in Indiana is a leading advocate for just social structures that will preserve families while addressing the systemic problems of poverty. The challenges are formidable, but with transformed and hopeful hearts, we must act.

At the same time, we join all people of good will in calling for the development and implementation of strategies that address the root causes of poverty here in the “Crossroads of America.” Our response intends to provide for the immediate needs of our sisters and brothers and, at the same time, take seriously the underlying issues that prevent our state’s employment, educational and health care systems from effectively meeting the needs of individuals and families in all corners of Indiana.

The call to act justly demands an organized and systematic response to the issues of poverty in Indiana. Direct service at the poor at the level of our parishes and other communities is necessary and should be esteemed as a means of practicing Christian charity. However, isolated action alone will not suffice. A multi-faceted, community-wide approach will truly reduce the debilitating and demoralizing effects of long-term, multigenerational poverty throughout our state.

**FAMILY LIFE**

We invite the Catholic faithful and all people of good will to work to reduce poverty by intentionally focusing on one of the root causes of poverty in Indiana. Grounded in our Catholic faith and tradition we recommend that we:

- strengthen and support Indiana’s families by assigning the highest priority to the well-being of children in the family and society.

Supporting families requires that we support marriage and the ideal of families with two parents who live together and share responsibility for their children. Today, many families are broken, and most struggle under significant stress. All families need our loving support and assistance now, even as we work together for a future in which healthy families can thrive. Therefore, we propose that a single question guide us in all service and program decisions made by government agencies, private institutions and Church ministries regarding families:

- Do programs and policies place a priority on child welfare and enhancement—not detract from—strong marriages and family life?

The task of strengthening support for Indiana’s families is formidable. In order to be successful, organized and sustained efforts are needed throughout the state. We propose that every Catholic diocese, parish, educational institution...
and health care organization in our state serve as a catalyst for local, grassroots efforts based on mitigating poverty in its community. All people of goodwill, regardless of their religious tradition, should be invited to join a collaborative and systematic effort to attend to the needs of Hoosier children and their families. We propose that we set clear, measurable goals for our efforts to alleviate poverty by meeting the needs of married couples and families in our state. While not all outcomes can be easily calculated, clearly defined goals will assist us in setting and accomplishing objectives that are ambitious but achievable with the help of God’s grace.

As we have already observed, there are undeniable links between family life, employment, education, and health care. Poverty brings intolerable stress on the family’s ability to carry out its mission as the fundamental unit of society. Families are called to be stewards of all God’s gifts, and this requires an environment of stability and peace that can provide each family member with opportunities to exercise his or her responsibilities for the common good. A supportive family environment results in healthier, happier and more hopeful individuals who are more likely to make wise and good choices and to participate in community activities.

**EMPLOYMENT**

To address the serious challenges facing our economy in the state of Indiana today, we must look carefully at the impact of policies, legislation and governmental regulations on real people—the women and men who struggle to earn a living, support their families and make ends meet. We cannot ignore the impact that policies for teaching and learning, including class size, length of school days, and other educational policies per year, tutoring and mentorships; Attracting, retaining and rewarding teachers and administrators who place the education of children first and who possess the formation necessary to meet the needs of children from economically challenged and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

**HEALTH CARE**

We bishops in Indiana repeat the call for a genuine reform of health care that is accessible and affordable for all. We invite all Hoosier citizens to work for health care systems that will: Promote and defend human dignity from the moment of conception until natural death; Attend to the whole person (body, mind and spirit), while pursuing a genuine pluralism that respects freedom of religion and conscience; Care for poor and vulnerable persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, economic or social status; Practice a careful stewardship of health care resources by restraining costs and reaping them equitably across the spectrum of those who may pay for health care.

If we give priority to family life, work, education and health care, an economically strong, well-educated and healthy Indiana will have fewer individuals, especially men, in prison. Unwed pregnancy rates will decrease. More young women and men will be able to pursue post-secondary education and training for careers. The number of multiple-family residences and the constant migration from one residence to another will decrease, helping to provide more consistency in educational opportunities for children. For young grandparents will be required to assume full responsibility for rearing children, because more mothers and fathers will be present and active in their children’s lives.

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**

What can we do to help alleviate poverty in Indiana, now and in the future? What actions can we take that will make a difference in the lives of our fellow Hoosiers who suffer from the immediate and long-term effects of poverty? First, we can “storm heaven” with our prayers. We are invited and challenged to respond to the needs of the poor, whom he loves, surely he will show us the way. Next, we can work to strengthen families. Starting with our own families —our spouses, children, grandchildren and extended families—we can show that family comes first. We can work to set aside some of the whirlwind of distractions promoted in contemporary culture in order to spend time with family, supporting and encouraging those whom we love most in the world. Reaching beyond the limits of our own families, we can share our time and talent with our neighbors, our fellow parishioners and members of our communities. We can support legislation and public policies that are pro-marriage and pro-family life. We can work to elect public officials whose actions really do speak louder than their words when it comes to protecting and enhancing family life.

Then, we can advocate for economic vitality and for access to affordable, quality education and health care. As we have tried to demonstrate, employment, education and health care are critical means for alleviating the root causes of poverty in our state. To this end, we bishops strongly urge all individuals, families and Catholic institutions to speak on behalf of comprehensive and just legislation and social policies in the political arena. We invite all people of good will to join us in finding and implementing both immediate and long-term solutions to the problems faced by those who are poor and vulnerable in our communities.

Finally, we all can support Catholic Charities and other social service agencies in our state through generous stewardship of our time, talent and treasure. As stewards of all the gifts we have each received from a generous and loving God, we are invited and challenged to respond to the Lord with increased gratitude and generosity.

**Questions for reflection**

1. How do our community (parish, school, institution) directly serve the needs of the poor?

2. How could my community unite with others in a strategy to alleviate the most fundamental causes of poverty in Indiana?

**CONCLUSION**

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the great King, who sends his servants to “the highways and hedgerows” to invite everyone to his feast (cf. Lk. 14:23). Today, Jesus sends us, his disciples, to the “Crossroads of America,” to extend his loving care for the least of his brothers and sisters.

Loving care for the poor and vulnerable is a consistent theme in Sacred Scripture. Our Lord’s teaching about the least judgment is quite specific. We will be judged worthy or unworthy of eternal life based on how we treated Christ himself in the “least” of his brothers and sisters—especially the hungry and thirsty, the naked and homeless, the prisoner and the stranger. Jesus’ admonition about how our lives will be judged is pointed and unequivocal: what we do to the poor and the destitute—the “least of these my brothers and sisters”—we do to the Lord himself.

This is a sober warning. Most of us think mainly about ourselves and about our families and our friends. The poor? We may feel a vague sense of moral obligation to them, but too often the poor are distant, anonymous and invisible. That is why Catholic social teaching insists that the needs of the poor must take priority. Otherwise, we might not see them or quickly forget about them as we go about our daily business.

We do not mean the publication of this letter to be the final word about the Church’s response to poverty in our state. We hope that every Catholic community will consider this letter, and the five dioeceses of Indiana intend to collect this reflection and continue the conversation. Such reflection is crucial for our mission in the world today. Pope Francis invites us to see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every effort of evangelization (“The Joy of the Gospel,” n. 178). We look forward to working with you to proclaim the Good News by strengthening family life, providing just employment and ensuring a quality education and comprehensive health care for all Hoosiers, especially the poor and vulnerable.

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Archdiocese of Indianapolis

**Most Rev. Timothy L. Doherty**
Diocece of Lafayette-in-Indiana

**Most Rev. Donald J. Hying**
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

**Most Rev. Kevin C. Rhoades**
Diocese of Gary

**Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson**
Diocese of Evansville

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**ACT continued from page 38**

A good, well-rounded education, one that begins as early in life as possible and is pro-marriage and pro-family life. We may feel a vague sense of moral obligation to them, but too often the poor are distant, anonymous and invisible. That is why Catholic social teaching insists that the needs of the poor must take priority. Otherwise, we might not see them or quickly forget about them as we go about our daily business.

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INTRODUCCIÓN

De nuestra fe en Cristo hecho pobre, y siempre cercano a los pobres y excluidos, brota la preocupación por el desarrollo integral de los más abandonados de la sociedad.

—Papa Francisco, exhortación apostólica Evangelii Gaudium

La alegría del Evangelio, n.º 186

Como obispos que sirven al pueblo de Dios, nos concierne todo el mundo, independientemente de su credo, raza, origen étnico o situación socioeconómica. Cristo vino para salvar a toda la humanidad. Como sus ministros, se nos ha entregado la responsabilidad de proseguir con la labor de Cristo al servicio de todos nuestros hermanos y hermanas aquí en el estado de Indiana. Al mismo tiempo, los obispos poseemos la obligación especial de cuidar a los integrantes más vulnerables de la familia de Dios. Es por ello que prestamos especial atención a aquellos seres que todavía no han nacido, a los enfermos y los ancianos, a los prisioneros, a aquellos aquejados por distintas formas de adicción o de padecimiento mental, y a quienes carecen de los medios para satisfacer sus necesidades básicas. Como obispos que vivimos en esta comunidad, al mismo tiempo que nos acercamos y ayudamos a aquellos que sufren de las necesidades más urgentes, también tenemos la responsabilidad de acercarnos y escuchar a aquellos que se sienten olvidados.

Teniendo presente esta responsabilidad especial, los obispos dirigimos esta carta pastoral tanto a los fieles católicos, como a toda la gente de buena voluntad de Indiana. Deseamos llamar la atención sobre la pobreza que existe aquí mismo, dentro del Estado que se hace llamar la “Encrucijada de Estados Unidos”. Esperamos contribuir a lograr un mejor entendimiento de los numerosos desafíos que enfrentan nuestros hermanos aquí en Indiana y reflexionar junto con ustedes de qué manera debe responder la Iglesia. El evangelio hace énfasis en que en el corazón de Dios existe un lugar especial para los pobres, tanto así que se “hizo pobre” (2 Cor 8:9). Jesús reconoció su sufrimiento y era compasivo ante su soledad y sus temores. Jamás pasó por alto sus sufrimientos ni se comportó como si no los importaran. Nuestro Señor siempre estuvo al lado de los pobres, consolándolos en sus tribulaciones, sanando sus heridas, y nutriendo sus cuerpos y sus almas. Jesucristo exhortó a sus discípulos a reconocer la verdades de los pobres y que no permanecieran impasivos. Todos los discípulos de Jesucristo están llamados a amar a los pobres tal como él lo hizo. Como pueblo de fe, se nos invita a reconocer al pobre, a dejar que la Palabra de Dios ilumine la realidad de la pobreza y a responder con corazones transformados. Mediante una fórmula sencilla, VER, JUZGAR, ACTUAR—invitamos y eshortamos a todos, comenzando por nosotros mismos, a prestar más atención a los pobres de nuestra comunidad, a identificar las cuestiones sistemáticas que perpetúan el ciclo de la pobreza para personas y familias, y a aplicar medidas puntuales para reducir las repercusiones a largo plazo de la pobreza en nuestro estado, al mismo tiempo que nos acercamos y ayudamos a aquellos que sufren las devastadoras consecuencias aíí y ahora.

I. RECONOCER

Había un hombre rico que se vestía lujosamente y daba espléndidos banquetes todos los días. A la puerta de su casa se tendía un mendigo llamado Lázaro, que estaba cubierto de llagas y que había querido llenarse el estómago con lo que caía de la mesa del rico.

—Lucas 16:19-21

Jesús relata la poderosa historia de un pobre que deambulaba por las calles, llamado Lázaro, y del hombre rico que pasaba junto a él todos los días sin percibir de su existencia. Resulta evidente que el hombre rico no podía—o no quería—ver la pobreza que tenía justo delante de sus ojos. En consecuencia, no era capaz de reconocer la necesidad del hombre pobre y, casi tan trágico como esto, las oportunidades que Dios le presentaba día tras día para compartir sus abundantes dones. Al final del relato, nos enteramos de que esto le costó al hombre rico un lugar en la compañía de Abraham. ¿Cómo se aplica esta parábola de Jesús a nosotros aquí en el estado de Indiana?

¿Qué es lo que no estamos viendo día tras día mientras nos afanamos con nuestras vidas? ¿Acaso somos incapaces—o peor aún—hemos elegido ignorar a nuestros hermanos y hermanas pobres? Somos incapaces de ver el efecto que surte la pobreza en las familias, los barrios y en comunidades enteras, sin preguntarnos qué la origina?

Quizás en el transcurso de nuestra vida cotidiana no veamos personas pobres, pero eso no quiere decir que no estén allí. En un anexo a esta carta incluimos algunas estadísticas impresionantes en relación con la pobreza, la indigencia, el desempleo y el hambre aquí mismo, en el estado de los hoosier. La mayoría de nosotros no tiene idea de la gravedad de este problema y de lo difundido que está. Al igual que el hombre rico de la parábola de Jesús, no logramos ver lo que se encuentra ante nuestros ojos. Además, perdemos las oportunidades que el Señor nos presenta para reconocerlo en el rostro de los pobres. Las estadísticas quizás huyan frías e impersonales; pero si esos hechos no nos ayudan a “ver” a los pobres que se encuentran entre nosotros, quizás nos convendría analizar la definición de la pobreza en cuanto las repercusiones sobre la vida cotidiana. El padre Larry Snyder, el ex presidente de Catholic Charities USA, se apoya en la experiencia de los trabajadores de Catholic Charities de todo el país para explicar que una persona se considera pobre si:

• no puede costearse una vivienda limpia, segura y en buenas condiciones;
• no puede costear sistemáticamente alimentos nutritivos para sí mismo y para su familia;
• no puede pagar sistemáticamente las facturas de los servicios, aunque esto sea una prioridad;
• sus hijos no van vestidos a la escuela con ropa adecuada y limpia, y que estén en buenas condiciones;
• no puede permitirse al médico por ningún tipo de enfermedad, por temor a que la consulta esté muy por encima de lo que puede pagar.

Muchos habitantes de Indiana viven en estas condiciones. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las realidades que se nos desafía a ver claramente, como ciudadanos de Indiana preocupados por la dignidad humana, la vida familiar y la salud económica y social de nuestro Estado?

Consideramos que es importante señalar que las consecuencias de la grave desaceleración económica que comenzó entre los años 2008 y 2009, un período que algunos denominan la “Gran Recesión”, provocó que muchos más habitantes de Indiana se enfrentaran a la desesperación de la pobreza. Una cantidad cada vez mayor de nuestros pequeños poblados y comunidades rurales, que antiguamente eran la esquina dorsal de nuestro Estado, han presenciado la desaparición de industrias cruciales para ellos. Las consecuencias económicas y sociales que ocasiona la pobreza en estas comunidades, así como en las grandes ciudades, han tenido consecuencias graves, inclusive el desmoronamiento de la vida familiar, un aumento en la fabricación, venta y consumo de drogas, violencia en los hogares y en las calles, y un aumento de la población en los penales. Estas realidades que se nos desafía a ver no son tan lejanas para ningún de nosotros.

La pobreza multigranacional, medida por la cantidad de personas que atraviesan dificultades económicas y cuyos padres, abuelos, e incluso bisabuelos, también sufrieron inestabilidad económica grave, es una realidad que tiene enormes repercusiones para la dignidad humana, la estabilidad familiar y la salud de las comunidades. Es mucho menos probable...
En su exhortación apostólica, el Papa Francisco observa: “nadie puede exigirnos que releguemos la religión a la intimidad secreta de las personas, sin influencia alguna en la vida social y nacional, sin preocuparnos por la salvación de las instituciones de la sociedad civil, sin opinar sobre los acontecimientos que afectan a los ciudadanos”. Deja muy en claro que la “pausa religiosa” debe no quedar al margen en la lucha por la justicia, sino que debe colaborar con las otras personas para poderse volar para construir un mundo mejor (Evangelii Gaudium, n.º 183).

El origen de la pobreza es complejo y sus causas deben abordarse de forma eficaz mediante un enfoque integral y multisectorial que responda a las condiciones económicas, culturales y espirituales. Y bien que quizás sí sintamos tentados a concentrar nuestra atención en la pobreza y en sus causas inmediatas para solucionar las necesidades inmediatas de alimentación, vivienda y salud para los pobres, en propiedad no podemos ignorar las cuestiones más escabrosas relativas a la política pública. Si deseamos brindar solución a las causas fundamentales de la pobreza aquí en India, así como en nuestro país y en la comunidad global, deberemos enfrentar estas cuestiones en profundidad.

Como obispos, no pretendemos afirmar que somos expertos en los aspectos prácticos de doctrina religiosa, económica o de las ciencias sociales. Sin embargo, debemos hacer énfasis en ciertas formas versales, como la dignidad de cada persona humana, los derechos humanos fundamentales que nos corresponden a independientes de las circunstancias económicas, sociales, culturales o culturales, y la importancia de las rentas aleatorias que se obtienen de nuestras vidas y las comunidades. Como pastores, deseamos entablar un diálogo con y en representación de los ciudadanos, para que los efectos nefastos de la pobreza aquí en India, en lo que abarca las víctimas de la pobreza en las comunidades urbanas y rurales que a estas circunstancias económicas, sociales, culturales o culturales. Con ello, no nos interesa que aprendan discernir las consecuencias de esta enseñanza, si bien es cierto que estos varios planteamientos podrán ser de ayudar en las complejidades de estas cuestiones en detalle, ofreceremos algunas sugerencias que esperamos estén de interés para sus vidas con propósito y conlleven a una acción positiva.

Vida Familiar

Los católicos creemos que el matrimonio es un elemento crucial del plan de Dios para la humanidad, entendido como la unión de un hombre y una mujer que prometemos establecer con el fin de criar y educar a sus hijos y a ellas en “una sola carne” (Gn 2:24). Esta unión sagrada conforma la familia, la unidad esencial de la vida que se dedica a la transmisión de nueva vida (los hijos) y al mantenimiento de la cría de los hijos. Los roles de la familia, los roles que el matrimonio transmite a través de la familia” (n.º 86).

Observamos que los aspectos que abordamos a continuación son una cuidadosa reflexión y estudio por parte de los católicos y de todos los habitantes del mundo. Como puede parecer un ejercicio académico fútil, sin embargo, es un paso necesario para las decisiones que conllevan a tomar importantes decisiones. En algunos aspectos claves son: vida familiar, empleo, educación y atención de salud. Si bien en estas cuestiones podemos ser susceptibles de la influencia de las circunstancias políticas, económicas y culturales, contribuyen a la desintegración de la familia, pero los pobres, especialmente los niños, son más vulnerables a las consecuencias de la pobreza multigeneracional, son especialmente vulnerables a las consecuencias de la pobreza en nuestras familias, pero en el momento en que las decisiones de la vida familiar, la vida y los intereses, en el miedo, pero no en la vida de vivir juntos, ni en la alegría de preservar nuestra humanidad” (papa Francisco, Encíclica Lumen Fidei, n.º 51).

La familia nos enseña que somos hijos de Dios, hermanos y hermanas llamados a participar en la vida misma de Dios. Es así que decidimos reconocer el carácter sagrado de cada vida humana, así como la belleza y la necesidad de vivir juntos de forma pacífica. Al observar la experiencia que la familia constituye los cimientos sólidos y duraderos sobre los cuales se construyen sociedades sanas, la familia nos enseña a vivir. En la familia aprendemos las nociones básicas de la sociedad, el valor del trabajo, el significado de la sexualidad, la alegría de la entrega desinteresada, la importancia de la ayuda mutua y el trabajo en grupo con familiares y amigos. Estos no son aspectos únicos sino que ejercen una influencia importante en nuestra percepción de vida y nuestra capacidad para interactuar con los demás, ya sea con la familia en general, los vecinos, otros ciudadanos e incluso con los extraños (inclusive con los “extranjeros” o los “enemigos” que son distintos de nosotros y cuyas diferencias percibimos como una amenaza a nuestra seguridad).

Llenamos plenamente conscientes de que esta interpretación del significado de la vida personal representa un ideal raramente alcanzado, pero que ha sucedido históricamente, hoy en día puede existir muchos quebrantamientos que amenazan la familia, pero los pobres, especialmente las familias que viven en condiciones negativas que socavan la existencia de la vida familiar. Incluso se ha llegado a afirmar que los matrimonios estables son cada vez más un lujo que solo los ricos se pueden dar.

Para abordar los efectos a largo plazo y el mantenimiento del matrimonio, debemos fortalecer el matrimonio y la vida familiar. Tal como lo explicó San Juan de la Cruz en su exhortación apostólica Gaudium, n.º 51.

Empleo

“La economía debe estar en función de los pueblos, no al contrario” es lo que asegura la declaratoria de servicio público más universal de la Iglesia. “También el trabajo, en ‘función de la familia’” (n.º 86). Cuando las familias son fuertes, también lo es la sociedad; cuando las familias se quebrantan, también lo hacen las comunidades humanas sufren. Al mismo tiempo, reconocemos que la pobreza intensifica la inestabilidad del matrimonio y de la vida familiar, ya que puede provocar una tensión intolerante que limita el desarrollo humano. Y, dado que las familias constituidas solo por el padre o la madre se están convirtiendo cada vez más en la norma para los pobres, la Iglesia debe realizar un esfuerzo especial para comprender estas circunstancias y brindarles la salud y la seguridad de su tradición.

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Preguntas para la reflexión

1. ¿Le ha sorprendido descubrir que hay familares, amigos o vecinos que enfrentan estas dificultades que enfrentan nuestras familias hoy en día?

2. ¿Dónde ve usted la realidad de la pobreza a su alrededor?

3. ¿De qué manera responde su parroquia, escuela y diócesis a los más necesitados entre nosotros?
PONDERAR

de Pousa

e, esta poderosa afirmación de que "el trabajo está en función del hombre y no el hombre en función del trabajo", es el principio rector del éxito o del fracaso de todos los hombres. La existencia del hombre es lo más importante, no la teoría económica ni las estructuras sociales. La persona humana trabaja para dar sentido a su vida, para mediar en un logro sin aliento, sin el ser benefactor de su propia labor.

La trabajadora de la dignidad fundamental porque él o ella está hecho a imagen y semejanza de Dios. Los trabajadores son hijos de Dios, co- creadores en la construcción de la comunidad humana; no son bienes ecclesiásticos, no son instrumentos de producción ni herramientas en las manos de propietarios o supervisores, que se sienten con el derecho de usurpar y luego marginarlos al final del día o tras culminar un proyecto en particular. Indiana es hogar de miles de personas denominadas "trabajadores pobres". Estos son hombres y mujeres que por opción propia o por mero azar no les alcanza para mantenerse o para cubrir las necesidades básicas de la vida, como por ejemplo, el alimento, vivienda, atención médica, transporte y cuidado infantil. Para estas familias, el trabajo a tiempo completo durante más de un año no es suficiente para salir de la pobreza. strong san Juan Pablo II nos enseña que "el trabajo no se puede poner en la casilla de la pobreza en la verificación concreta de la justicia de todo el sistema socio-económico. (Laborem Exercens, n.º 19). ¿Por qué? Porque el trabajador es verdaderamente digno de su salario (cf Lc 10,7), y porque una sociedad que se rodea del más necesitados de sus ciudadanos, inclusive los desempleados, los infravalorados y los marginados no goza de libertad, es una sociedad que florecerá a la vista de Dios, así como en su bienestar material y espiritual.

EDUCACIÓN

Existe un vínculo íntimo entre familia, empleo y educación. Los padres son los principales educadores y formadores de los más importantes. Tal como señalamos anteriormente, en el seno familiar es donde se aprende el trabajo, el valor del trabajo, la importancia de la colaboración y del trabajo en equipo, y los principios morales que convierten al trabajo para gozar de un entorno laboral, productivo y exitoso.

El papa Francisco posee un compromiso férreo con la educación y especialmente la educación de los pobres. Más de dos siglos de experiencia nos convencen acerca de la poderosa función que desempeña la educación para romper el ciclo de la pobreza y ayudar a las familias, y para producir ciudadanos, profesionales y trabajadores prósperos. Además, la educación es un factor del efecto que produce la pobreza sobre la capacidad de una familia para brindar educación de calidad a sus hijos. Los niños y niñas pobres a menudo tienen hambre, están desnutridos y tienen a tener períodos de inasistencia escolar. La falta de atención, con frecuencia demuestran comportamientos inadecuados. Quizás viva en una familia con menos recursos, queda temporal y raramente disfrutan de suficiente descanso físico. Las mudanzas constantes, la inseguridad económica, la escuela se torna difícil, cuando no imposible. A nadie debería sorprender que los niños y niñas pobres tengan menos oportunidades para aprender, desarrollar y poner a prueba sus aptitudes y habilidades, así como para reconocer sus fortalezas y debilidades culminar con sus estudios para poder competir con los demás en un mercado laboral exigente.

Nuestra tradición católica nos exige el compromiso de educar a la persona con una ser integral: mente, cuerpo y

ESPÍRITU. NOS REBUSCAMOS A SER FATALISTAS EN RELACIÓN CON LAS EXPECTANAS Y SUEÑOS PARA EL FUTURO DE LAS FAMILIAS Y LOS NIÑOS POBRES, INCLUIDOS LOS DEFENSORES DE LA POBREZA MULTIGENERACIONAL. Hemos visto con nuestros propios ojos la incapacidad para que uno o más de ellos sea capaz de cumplir el sueño de la vida en las vidas de los niños y sus familias. Tal como nos lo recuerda el papa Francisco, para estar verdaderamente "con y para los pobres", debemos proporcionar o bien se afrontan a los niños, especialmente a los pobres, "una educación que enseñe a pensar críticamente y que ofrezca un camino de maduración en valores" (Evangelii Gaudium, n.º 64). Esta es la forma de salir de la pobreza para las personas y las familias, y la mejor forma de construir una economía económicamente productiva y dedicada a la promoción y la defensa de la dignidad humana de todos sus ciudadanos.

ATENCIÓN DE SALUD

Durante décadas, los obispos católicos de Estados Unidos han sido los defensores insistentes e incansables de los derechos de los más indefensos. Creemos que la atención de salud no es un privilegio sino un derecho y un requisito para proteger la vida y la dignidad de cada persona. Todas las personas, sin importar sus circunstancias, deberían tener acceso a atención de salud integral, de calidad y asequible. Esto no debería depender de la riqueza de los médicos o de la etapa de la vida en la que se encuentren, de dónde trabajan sus padres —o si de hecho trabajan—, qué tipo de vida lideran y si están en el trabajo.

Preguntas para la reflexión

1. ¿Estás de acuerdo con que la Iglesia no debería abstenerse de hablar en nombre de los pobres?
2. ¿Existe algún argumento más importante que la Iglesia debería aportar, fuera de los cuatro mencionados en esta sección (vida familiar, empleo, educación y atención de salud)

III. ACTUAR

Es peligroso vivir en el reino de la sola palabra, de la imagen, del sofisma. La vida es más que el sofisma. III. ACTUAR

Este es un llamado a actuar con justicia y caridad. Invitamos a todos aquellos que lean estas palabras a que nos acompañen a acercarnos a los miembros de nuestro estado. Desafiamos a todos, comenzando por nosotros mismos, a incitar a los líderes del gobierno y organizaciones voluntarias en todo el estado, para que estimulen cambios efectivos en las legislaciones y prácticas, que perpetúan la pobreza en todas sus manifestaciones.

Las acciones dicen más que mil palabras, especialmente cuando pretendemos alimentar al hambriento, atendernos, al desamparado, vivimos y compartir los recursos, y ofrezcan esperanza. Las acciones dicen más que mil palabras, especialmente cuando pretendemos alimentar a los hambrientos, atender a aquellos que no tienen la oportunidad de una buena educación, vivimos al desamparado, y ofrezcan esperanza. Las acciones dicen más que mil palabras, especialmente cuando pretendemos alimentar a los hambrientos, atender a aquellos que no tienen el acceso a una buena educación, vivimos al desamparado, y ofrezcan esperanza.

Atención de salud es fundamental para la vida y la dignidad humana, y constituye un componente esencial del ministerio de nuestra Iglesia. En colaboración con profesionales de todo el estado de Indiana, la Iglesia Católica promueve la atención de salud, adquiere asistencia médica e intenta mejorar el sistema de salud. La comunidad católica atiende a los enfermos y a aquellas personas que no tienen seguro médico en las salas de emergencia, en los albergues para indigentes y en el portal de nuestras iglesias parroquiales. Enfrentamos al desafío de la atención de salud con corazoncitos transformados y llenos de esperanza.

La vida humana es lo más importante, no la teoría económicamente productiva y dedicada a la promoción y la defensa de la dignidad humana de todos sus ciudadanos.
ACTUAR

continuado de la página 78

están en juego. Tal como lo expresa San Juan Pablo II, no podemos simplemente tomar nota de las necesidades materiales (alimento, vivienda, vestido, atención de salud, etc.), sin menospreciar la importancia que tienen para las personas, las familias y las comunidades. También debemos fomentar el trabajo espiritual, que reconoce su profunda relación sobre la vida intelectual, social, cultural y religiosa de las personas, las familias y las comunidades. La Iglesia no propone programas detallados dirigidos a crear plazas de trabajo o promover el desarrollo económico. Sin embargo, la Iglesia recuerda a los líderes gubernamentales, empresariales y de las comunidades que deben principalmente para proporcionar una comunidad sana. Los programas gubernamentales pueden dedicarse principalmente para proporcionar una protección social adecuada para aquellas personas que se encuentran en situación de transición o que sufran enfermedades o lesiones incapacitantes.

Por consiguiente, proponemos que el estado de Indiana dedique recursos para mejorar las oportunidades para las familias, para encontrar trabajos importantes y que sean económicamente satisfactorios. Los planes para el desarrollo económico deben incluir estrategias tendentes a romper el ciclo de la pobreza multinacional.

EDUCACIÓN

Una educación buena y balanceada que comience tan pronto como se pueda en la vida, establece la base para un futuro prometedor para los niños y fomenta la formación de ciudadanos productivos y familiares sanos. Cada niño debe tener la oportunidad de desarrollar su máximo potencial y es responsabilidad de los padres, la comunidad y el estado de dar una educación de calidad, de contribuir al crecimiento y al éxito de todos los niños.

Teniendo esto en cuenta, los obispos dedicamos a nuestras diócesis, parroquias, escuelas y agencias de servicio social para que trabajen con líderes del gobierno estatal y local, así como con líderes empresariales y cívicos, para alcanzar los siguientes objetivos:

• fortalecimiento del matrimonio y de la vida familiar mediante el apoyo a la educación que fortalezca los padres como los principales educadores de sus hijos (inclusive programas que permitan a las madres que se esfuercen por sus hijos y que participen más efectivamente en la educación de sus hijos);

• exhortar al estado de Indiana para que dedique los recursos necesarios para brindar una educación infantil temprana, especialmente en las poblaciones marginadas;

• reforzar la segregación de facto o el aislamiento por raza, origen étnico o ingresos, para proporcionar a todos los niños la oportunidad de aprender junto con y de sus compañeros procedentes de distintos entornos sociales y culturales;

• encontrar las “mejores prácticas” y las políticas más eficaces para enseñar y aprender, lo que comprende la cantidad de alumnos por salón, la duración de la jornada escolar, la cantidad de días escasos por año, tutoría y orientación;

• atraer, conservar y premiar a maestros y directores que coloquen en primer lugar la educación de los niños y que posean la formación necesaria para atender las necesidades de los niños procedentes de hogares que enfrenten dificultades económicas y/o se encuentren en situación de desventaja social.

ATENCIÓN DE SALUD

Los obispos en Indiana repetimos el llamado para que se logre una reforma de salud genuina que sea accesible y asequible para todos. Invitamos a todos los habitantes del estado a que se unan a nuestro esfuerzo por conseguir un sistema de salud que:

• promueva y defienda la dignidad humana, desde el momento de la concepción hasta su muerte natural;

• atienda a la persona como un ser integral (cuerpo, mente y espíritu), practicando al mismo tiempo un pluralismo genuino que respeta la libertad de creer y de conciencia;

• atienda a los pobres y a los vulnerables, sin distinción de raza, origen étnico, situación económica, social o legal;

• administre cuidadosamente los recursos mediante la reducción de costos y su aplicación equitativa en todo el espectro de quienes deben pagar por la atención de salud.

Si otorgamos la prioridad a la vida familiar, el trabajo, la educación y la atención de salud, en Indiana económicamente fuerte, educado y saludable verá menos personas — especialmente hombres — en la prisión. Disminuirá la tasa de embarazos fuera del matrimonio. Más jóvenes podrán cursar estudios de educación secundaria y capacitarse para sus carreras. Disminuirá la cantidad de residencias donde habitan varias familias y los constantes traslados de una residencia a otra, lo que ayudará a proporcionar más coherencia en las oportunidades educativas para los niños.

Menos abuelos tendrán que asumir la responsabilidad total de la crianza de los niños porque habrá más madres y padres presentes y activos en las vidas de sus hijos.

¿QUÉ PODEMOS HACER?

¿Qué podemos hacer para contribuir a mitigar la pobreza en Indiana, ahora y en el futuro? ¿Qué acciones podemos emprender que mejoren la diferencia en las vidas de nuestros compañeros hoy y fomenten la oportunidad de trabajar para nuestros hijos y para que participen más efectivamente en la educación de sus hijos?

2. ¿De qué forma podría unirse estratéicamente mi comunidad a otras para aminorar las causas más fundamentales de la pobreza en Indiana?

CONCLUSIÓN

En el Evangelio, Jesús narra la parábola del gran rey quien envió a sus sirvientes “por caminos y veredas” para invitar a todos a su banquete (cfr Lc 14.23). Hoy, Jesús nos envía a nosotros, sus discípulos, a la “Encrucijada de Estados Unidos” para extender su auxilio amoroso a los menos necesitados de sus hermanos y hermanas. El auxilio amoroso de los pobres y los vulnerables es un tema recurrente en las Sagradas Escrituras. Las enseñanzas de nuestro Señor acerca del día del Juicio Final son bastante específicas: “... los hambrientos los sedientos, el huerto que en nuestro apoyo a Catholic Charities y otros organismos sociales para que se unan a nosotros para encontrar e implementar soluciones, tanto inmediatas como a largo plazo, para los problemas que enfrentan los pobres y vulnerables en nuestras comunidades.

Por último, todos podemos brindar nuestro apoyo a Catholic Charities y otras agencias de servicio social en nuestro estado, mediante la generosa administración de nuestro tiempo, talentos y tesoros. Como administradores de todos los dones que cada uno de nosotros ha recibido de nuestro generoso y amoroso Dios, nos invita y se nos desafía a responder al Señor con enorme gratitud y generosidad.

Preguntas para la reflexión

1. ¿De qué forma me concuerdo con el concepto de un “pueblo familiar” y cómo podría entender directamente las necesidades de los pobres?

2. ¿De qué forma podría unirse estratéicamente mi comunidad a otras para aminorar las causas más fundamentales de la pobreza en Indiana?

Esta es una advertencia aleccionadora. La mayoría de nosotros piensa principalmente en el propio ser, en familiares y amigos. ¿Y los pobres? Quizás experimentamos una vaga sensación de obligación moral para con ellos, pero demasiado a menudo resultan un concepto lejano, anónimo e invisible. Es por esto que las enseñanzas sociales del catolicismo insisten en que las necesidades del pobre deben tener prioridad. De lo contrario, quizás no lo veamos o nos olvidaremos rápidamente de él mientras nos ocupamos de nuestros githadres diarios. La publicación de esta carta no pretende ser la última palabra en cuanto a la responsabilidad de la Iglesia sobre el tema de la pobreza en nuestro estado. Esperamos que cada comunidad católica la analice, y en la intención de las cinco décadas de Indiana recopilar las reflexiones que provoque esta carta y proseguir con la conversación.

Tales reflexiones son cruciales para el éxito de nuestra misión en el mundo actual. El papa Francisco nos invita a ver la profunda conexión que existe entre la evangelización y el avance de la humanidad, que necesariamente debe hallar su expresión y desarrollarse en cada iniciativa de evangelización (Evangelii Gaudium, n.º 178). Esperamos con ansias la oportunidad de trabajar con ustedes para proclamar la Buena Nueva mediante el fortalecimiento de la vida familiar, el fomento de condiciones de empleo justas, y garantizar una educación que invierta nuestra atención de salud integral para todos los habitantes de Indiana, especialmente los pobres y los vulnerables.

Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.S.C.; Arzobispo de Indianapolis

Most Rev. Timothy L. Doherty; Obispado de Lafayette-in-Indiana

Most Rev. Donald J. Hying Obispado de Gary

Most Rev. Kevin C. Rhoades; Obispado de Fort Wayne-South Bend

Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson Obispado de Evansville

Most Rev. Kevin C. Rhoades; Obispado de Fort Wayne-South Bend

Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.S.C.; Arzobispo de Indianapolis

Page 88 The Criterion Friday, March 13, 2015

Jesús nos envió a nosotros, a nuestras familias, a nuestras iglesias, a nuestras parroquias e integrantes de nuestras diócesis: a nuestros consejos, a nuestras comisiones, a nuestros sindicatos, a nuestras organizaciones, a nuestras cátedras universitarias y a nuestras escuelas de formación de líderes. Dios, se nos invita y se nos desafía a usar nuestras habilidades, nuestras capacidades, nuestro tiempo, nuestras fuerzas, nuestras ideas, nuestras energías para servir a nuestra comunidad. Cuando los cristianos no prestan atención a estas responsabilidades, los demás les llamarán a nuestro servicio. Pero, cuando los cristianos hacen que la Iglesia se haga presente en el mundo, cuando los cristianos desempeñan el papel que Dios les ha conferido, entonces nos escucharán clamar por nuestro “pan de la vida”, por nuestra “libertad de creer y de conciencia” de que estas serán escuchadas en el cielo de oraciones, teniendo la plena confianza de que estas serán escuchadas.

1. ¿De qué forma concuerdo con el concepto de un “pueblo familiar” y cómo podría entender directamente las necesidades de los pobres?

2. ¿De qué forma podría unirse estratéicamente mi comunidad a otras para aminorar las causas más fundamentales de la pobreza en Indiana?
How Catholics in central and southern Indiana can help keep a Christian presence in the Holy Land

By Natalie Hoefer

After 11 days on the archdiocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I believe that were it not for the presence of the Franciscan order as pilgrimage site custodians, the Christian presence would all but evaporate from the region.

For centuries, the Franciscans have maintained the properties of numerous shrines, chapels and churches in the Holy Land, making them available for pilgrims to visit for veneration, prayer and spiritual renewal.

So what can we in central and southern Indiana do about the situation for our brother and sister Christians in the Holy Land?

The first and most obvious answer is to pray. Pray for Christ’s peace to reign in the region. Pray for the Christian families—and all of those negatively affected in terms of economy and freedom.

Next, when your parish hosts visitors from Bethlehem selling religious items, please buy something. It is not a scam. As of December 2013, the unemployment rate in Bethlehem was 23 percent. Those vendors truly need your financial support to help feed their families—and rather than just a donation, you get something lovely in return.

Third, consider donating to the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (www.ffhl.org), which exists to help stem the Christian emigration from the region through educational, humanitarian, job placement and housing programs.

Finally, if at all possible, make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We heard time and again from our Palestinian Catholic tour guide how much our presence means to the Christians there. Not just because we help them economically when we visit, but because in a world where Muslim prayers are broadcast over loudspeakers into their neighborhoods and churches, and where 75 percent of the country’s population is Jewish, it helps them know they are not alone in their Christian faith.

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Make a sacrifice of time spent in prayer during Lent

By Marcellino D’Ambrosio

Everyone knows that Lent is about sacrifice. But generally the notion of sacrifice in our pampered modern world is, to say the least, a bit impoverished.

To recover the authentic meaning and power of sacrifice, we need to take a few moments to review one of the most famous sacrifices of all time.

This notable sacrifice involved Abraham, who had already given up a lot. He left a settled life in the center of the world to wander in a trackless desert. But civilization and comfort are not what he wanted. He really only desired one thing: a son to lead to descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky. The only problem was that his wife was past childbearing age, and could not give him any children.

So he tried to solve the problem in his own way: He had a son with a slave girl. This did not work out well, and his wife sent away the slave and her son.

Next, God intervened, worked a miracle, and caused the elderly Sarah to conceive and bear a son for Abraham. His name was Isaac, and he became Abraham’s last hope. There was nothing more precious to Abraham than his son. Indeed, to give up his son would be to give up himself.

But what happened? Abraham heard a voice. God’s voice, no less, asking him to sacrifice his only son. This, by the way, is the true meaning of sacrifice in the ancient world. God deserves everything because he has given us everything. Our ancestors instinctively knew that authentic sacrifice could never be just a “nod to God.”

Rather, sacrifice had to be hard and precious enough to represent our entire lives.

That’s why human sacrifice was so prevalent in ancient times. The offering of the firstborn was seen as the only adequate worship of the gods responsible for our very existence. In Genesis 22, God stops Abraham before he slaughters his son, even though God had asked him to do so.

The ordeal had been a test to see if Abraham was truly devoted to God in faith, obedience and gratitude. God didn’t want Isaac’s blood. He wanted Abraham’s heart.

Instead of watching him give up his son, God provides Abraham with a substitute, a ram, which shows the true meaning of all authentic sacrifice: we give to God something that represents our very selves.

But the image of Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice up the slope of Mount Moriah should tip us off to something precious that represents our very selves. It’s us that God wants, not some extra time in prayer. (Rom 8:32).

So this is the true meaning of the Lenten sacrifice. We renew and deepen our dedication to God by sacrificing something that is truly meaningful to us, something that represents our very selves. It’s us that God wants, not our chocolate.

I would say that probably the most precious commodity in this harried age is time. So as we go about our fasting and almsgiving, let’s not forget to give God some extra time in prayer.

To tell the truth, I can find nowhere in Scripture where God asked us to give up chocolate. But after identifying Jesus as his beloved son on Mount Tabor, he did give us a very clear command: “Listen to him!” (Mt 9:7).

The greatest gift we can give anyone is our undivided attention.

So let’s resist the impulse to do one more thing on our almsgiving-to-do list. Instead, let’s try to silence the din and clatter of our media-saturated lives. Let’s sit at his feet as Mary did in her home at Bethany. This, more than anything, is the sacrifice that God wants.

(Marcellino D’Ambrosio writes from Texas. He is co-founder of Crossroads Productions, an apostolate of Catholic renewal and evangelization.)

By Janelle Alberts

Nothing has gotten me into more trouble in life than my mouth.

That fact hit me particularly hard as I considered Lent, and what it means to give up or to sacrifice something to

commemorate the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert where he was tempted by Satan.

I scanned Scripture and, for some reason, landed on the story of Zechariah at the moment the archangel Gabriel told him that he would lose his ability to speak because he didn’t believe that his wife would bear him a son. Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”

And the angel said to him in reply, “I am Gabriel, who stands before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.” (Lk 1:18-20).

The verses struck me in a new way because I hadn’t thought of talking too much as an extravagance—at least not in the manner that we consider during Lent. Voluntary self-denial or sacrifice, and spiritual exercises, such as finding more time for prayer, are an intrinsic part of Lent.

“One must not believe that in Lent voluntary self-denial is a duty, an extraneous act, something that is not closely related to our Christian religion. On the contrary, the Deacon’s Lenten Catechesis of the Catholic Church of Lent in #1438.

Sacrifice and fasting can draw the faithful closer to the Holy Spirit

By Janele Alberts

Nothing has gotten me into more trouble in life than my mouth.

That fact hit me particularly hard as I considered Lent, and what it means to give up or to sacrifice something to...
Most people seek the company of others at one time or another. People are social creatures, even when their play is side by side rather than interacting with one another. Children play alone, but who enjoy the presents and the cake and being the center of everyone’s attention. Parents arrange play dates and invite their children’s friends for sleepovers. When children have siblings, there are often more opportunities to learn about social creatures, even when their play is side by side rather than interacting with one another. Children learn to share with others through social occasions. They haven't been offended against a toy with a fellow daycare client at age 2, but by 5 or 6 they're usually able to enjoy sharing a toy. And when they matured to the level of social interaction which is love, they are ready to share their lives.

The result of such social connection is the building of community. We become good, healthy, building of communities that we can't imagine, but that community can still take satisfaction from doing good.

Now, some folks are more social than others, and that's okay. Some people have one or two close friends, while others have many. Some are always the life of the party and there's always a party, while others are happy to sit back and enjoy the scene. Still, both can contribute to a healthy social fabric in their area.

Children learn to share with others through social occasions. They haven't been offended against a toy with a fellow daycare client at age 2, but by 5 or 6 they're usually able to enjoy sharing a toy. And when they matured to the level of social interaction which is love, they are ready to share their lives.

A large part of this premise is based upon selflessness. Community builders are thinking of the good of others first. After all, they speak for the community. They teach cooperation, and the importance of listening to others and respecting their ideas, regardless of the wide range of human aspiration and imagination.

Many people in our archdiocese, through your reading of the pastoral letter, you will see how we will respond in love to help our state and our country constantly struggle with the struggles in mind as all of us discern the timing of the bishops' pastoral letter to the Synod of Bishops to discuss the family. At the same time, some of our key civic leaders in Indiana are calling for new attention to the breakdown of families, and the resulting poverty that often follows. All this is to say that the content and the timing of the bishops' pastoral letter (Pope Francis' call to those seeking to renew their cities to look upon the situation.

That definition, though not perfect, is used in the bishops' pastoral letter to offer a common understanding of the situation.

This definition of poverty explains that individuals are considered poor if:

- they cannot afford to go to the doctor for an illness or to school for a scholarship
- they cannot afford nutritious food for themselves and their family on a regular basis
- they cannot consistently pay their utility bills even though it is a priority);
- their children are not adequately clothed for school with clean clothes that fit and good repair
- they do not have proper clothing for work
- they cannot afford to go to the doctor for any kind of illness because they fear that the visit will be beyond their ability to pay.

Many people in our archdiocese, our state and our country constantly struggle with the struggles in mind as all of us discern how we will respond in love to help our brothers and sisters in need.
God ultimately freed his people through the human instrument of Cyrus, the Persian king who overthrew Babylon. St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians is the source of the second reading. It is an eloquent proclamation of God’s mercy. Paul declares that humans were doomed to eternally everlasting life through the salvation offered by Christ. St. John’s Gospel furnishes the last reading, recalling a moment in the Exodus, that long march by the Hebrews from Egypt, where they had been slaves, to the Promised Land. The march took them across the stark and unforgiving Sinai Peninsula. Trials were many, hunger and thirst among them. They lost their way. Another trial was the threat of venomous snakes. Again, God supplied relief. He told Moses, the leader, to lift a bronze snake on a staff, and to hold this staff high. God promised that all who looked upon the serpent on the staff would survive.

The implication of the crucifixion is clear. The Gospel subtly reminds us that all who place their faith in the crucified Lord will live. The Gospel continues. It is a moving description of God’s mercy. Humans can find joy, and they can find eternal life. But only in and through Jesus can they find joy and life.

Reflection

The Church gently, but firmly, leads us onward through Lent. It reassures us that Easter is not far into the future. In fact, it will come in only a few more weeks. If Lent has been productive, Easter should be a moment of joyful, personal resurrection. In faith, we then also should rise, ourselves being raised by our identity with Christ from the death of sin.

Lent’s productivity and effectiveness, however, depend upon us. We ourselves, by our commitment to God, and then by our prayer and penance, decide the value of Lent personally for ourselves. The Church today urges us to continue to make Lent effective, to look ahead to resurrection.

My Journey to God

I’m beginning to understand that I waver in faith. Because my spiritual vision is in a state of constant flux. I miss the mark so often because I fail to see

With the same perspective, Heavenly Father, as you.

So I repent of both near- and far-sightedness today. There are “cataracts” on the eyes of my heart.

With the skill of a masterful surgeon, dear Lord, WINDOW You remove them and take them away?

Cataracts of My Heart

By Ron Lewis

Ron Lewis is a member of St. Anthony Parish in Clarksville. Pope Francis adjusts his glasses as he leads his general audience at St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Aug. 27, 2014. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Daily Readings

Monday, March 16
Isaiah 65:17-21
Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b
John 4:3-54

Tuesday, March 17
St. Patrick, bishop
Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
Psalm 46:2, 3-5, 6-8, 9
John 5:1-16

Wednesday, March 18
St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop
Isaiah 49:8-15
Psalm 145:8-9, 13c-14, 17-18
John 5:17-20

Thursday, March 19
St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
2 Samuel 7:4a, 12-14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-3, 27-29
Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:45-51a

Friday, March 20
Wisdom 2.1a, 12-22
Psalm 34:17-21, 23
John 7:1-12, 20, 25-30

Saturday, March 21
Jeremiah 11:18-20
Psalm 7:2-3, 9b-12
Luke 7:40-53

Sunday, March 22
Fifth Sunday of Lent
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-3, 5-6, 8-15
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Stipends for clergy who officiate at weddings must be entirely voluntary

My son and his fiancee will be married later this year, and are wondering what the average stipend would be for the priest who officiates their wedding ceremony. They are assuming that there is no set fee, but want to give what is reasonable. (Indiana)

A some parishes establish suggested fees for the use of a church for a wedding. Sometimes this is referred to a “facility fee.” It helps to cover the costs for heat, electricity, cleaning, etc. Such fees may range from $100 for a smaller church to several hundred dollars for a large church or cathedral.

The amount is often reduced for parishioners because they help to maintain the parish by their weekly offerings. The parish where I serve has no such fee, and I would feel uncomfortable having one. But I recognize that another parish might be struggling financially and need this income. A stipend is something different. In this case, it would be a freewill offering given to the priest (or deacon) who officiated at the wedding ceremony. It should never be indicated that this offering is fixed, or even expected, since it is purely voluntary.

Where does this stipend go? Well, the Church’s Code of Canon Law stipulates (in #1267) that, unless the contrary is indicated, that money goes into the general parish fund. As a diocesan priest responsible for my own support, my rule of thumb is this: If a couple following the wedding gives me a check made out in my name, or cash, in a thank you note written to me, I honor what seems to be the intent of the donor and keep the gift. But if the check, as often happens, is made out to the parish, that gift of course belongs to the parish. If money is simply handed to me to give to a “tithing” or any other parish, I deposit it in the parish’s account.

To answer your question more specifically, in my diocese, a freewill offering for a wedding most commonly turns out to be $100 or $150. When couples realize that they are spending upward of $20,000 on the wedding clothes, flowers and reception, they tend to treat the celebrant generously.

In all of this, the overarching rule is set in canon #848, which mandates that the minister take special care to see “that the needy are not deprived of the assistance of the sacraments because of poverty.” Because of this, and because people have a natural reluctance to tell you that they are financially struggling, misguiding about suggesting any specific amount for fees or stipends.

Q I am a non-Catholic Christian, but for years have been wondering if I should “convert” to Catholicism. Spiritual things have always been of utmost importance to me, and one might say that the seeking of truth has been my life’s purpose.

I have come to have great respect for the Roman Catholic Church, and I believe that Pope Francis is truly a man of God. I have come close several times to becoming a Catholic, but want to be sure that it is the right thing for me to do.

And so my question is this: How can I know for certain that the Catholic Church is the one true Church? Is there anything that I can do (prayers, fasting, etc.) to get some kind of confirmation from God that the Catholic Church is the true one? And how certain do I need to be before converting to Catholicism? (Michigan)

A It strikes me that you are perhaps looking for more certainty than you need. The journey of faith does not normally produce the sort of mathematical certainty that results from a theorem in geometry. Faith comes essentially as a gift, and even the holiest of saints have had experiences of doubt in the midst of their belief.

For you to become a Catholic, you need to be comfortable with the basic teachings of the Catholic Church. You need also the conviction that, for all its human frailties, the Catholic Church approximates most closely the Church Jesus came to establish.

What I think you should do is seek out a priest experienced in working with those who would like to be received into the full communion of the Church and sort out with him your feelings and misgivings.

Most of all, continue to pray that the Lord will guide you in your search and lead you to inner peace.

(questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at pkdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.)
Patricia Ann DeVault, 89, gave significant support to the Church in central and southern Indiana.

Patricia Ann (Clarkey) DeVault, who made significant contributions to the ministry of the Church in central and southern Indiana in parishes, archdiocesan agencies and archdiocesan stewardship campaigns, died on March 2 at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis. She was 89.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on March 5 at the St. Augustine Home Chapel. Burial followed at Calvary Cemetery in Indianapolis.

DeVault was born on Jan. 5, 1926, in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of the former St. Catherine of Siena Parish. In 1947, she joined the Daughters of Charity. She earned a degree in nursing in 1951 at the St. Joseph School of Nursing in Chicago. DeVault subsequently served in the order in St. Louis and Nashville.

After eight years in the Daughters of Charity, DeVault left the order and married James P. Byrne. After her husband’s death in 1961, DeVault returned to Indianapolis with her son Anthony and continued her career in nursing.

In 1985, she married Indianapolis attorney Paul DeVault, who later died in 1993. In addition to her brother and other nursing, Patricia DeVault volunteered at St. Anthony Parish and served on the board of directors of Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, both in Indianapolis. She also assisted in the archdiocesan United Catholic Appeal.

In the late 1990s, DeVault served as a co-chair of the “Legacy of Hope: From Generation to Generation” archdiocesan capital and endowment campaign, the first such campaign in the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Of the campaign, which raised $94 million, DeVault said to The Criterion in 1999, “This is our Church, and we have to continue to support it. That’s simply how it is.”

She is survived by her brother, Anthony Byrne; a brother, Ted Clarke; one step-grandchild and one step-grandgreat-grandchild.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Carmelite Sisters, P.O. Box 260, Oldenburg, IN 47036. †
Rice Bowl effort helps people in need at archdiocese and world

By Michaela Raffin

The oddly-shaped little cardboard bowl which shows up during Lent on the doorsteps of many homes is familiar to so many Catholics. However, Catholics may not be familiar with the impact of that unassuming bowl on someone in great need.

The archdiocese of the Rice Bowl program, a fundraiser held throughout Lent for Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic Church in the United States. CRS works in 91 countries, reaching 100 million of the world’s poorest people regardless of race, religion or nationality.

The money raised during the Rice Bowl program goes toward aiding CRS initiatives worldwide. Of the proceeds collected, 25 percent will remain in the archdiocese to help the local poor and needy.

The Garden Door Ministry operated by St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis is one of the efforts in the archdiocese that will benefit from the Rice Bowl program.

The Garden Door Ministry is open five days a week and serves meals—usually a sandwich and a bottle of water—to neighbors or anyone who comes to the door of the parish. St. John parishioners volunteer to work the door, greet homeless neighbors and offer assistance. This includes providing toiletries, seasonal clothing and buses for those seeking transportation to and from a new job.

"St. John’s being located right in the heart of downtown has to be a beacon of truth, hope and love to the community," said Joshua Schaffner, director of catechesis and disciplship at St. John. "First and foremost, we must reach those in need—our homeless neighbors. If we don’t reach out to them, we miss the call of Christ to love our neighbors.

The parish plans to use the Rice Bowl funds to enhance those efforts and create other ways of bringing Christ to the community.

"We hope to do some kind of community event in the spring or summer for our neighbors similar to our fall neighborhood cookout where we just grill in our parish yard and have a big party where everyone is welcome," said Schaffner. "We hope to do that in the spring during Easter where we can evangelize as well.

Many other parishes have similar outreach efforts to help people in need. Judy Hogon is coordinator for the St. Benedict Parish Soup Kitchen in Terre Haute.

"One family—there were about 10 of them with their children—lived in one house and the stove went out," Hogon said. "They were hungry and broke, so I called the soup kitchen, and we would feed them, and then we would pass out containers of soup and leftover sandwiches to the family for the weekend.

Besides helping the parish to offer the hungry, the money received from the Rice Bowl program will help the soup kitchen to buy new pots and pans "so we don’t have scorchéd soup," said Hogon.

The Rice Bowl program encapsulates the sacrificial attitude that Catholics strive to attain during Lent. By sacrificing small amounts each day and putting that money in the cardboard Rice Bowls, Catholics can participate in almsgiving throughout the Lenten season.

"I think the statement that is on the top of a Rice Bowl box sums it up beautifully: ‘What you give up for Lent changes lives,’” said Theresa Schaffner, director of Catholic Relief Services for the archdiocese.

Although the connection between the Rice Bowl and almsgiving is clear, the program also does much more for Catholics wanting to grow spiritually during Lent.

"What many people may not realize is that the CRS Rice Bowl is not just about almsgiving, but there is an entire program built around prayer, fasting, learning and giving," Chambless said. "There are activities for young adults and families, with the goal to bring people closer to Christ and fulfill the commandment to love neighbors as ourselves—neighbors both locally and globally.”

This year, CRS has launched a new video initiative called "What is Lent?” The video series offers daily reflections, stories of hope and even mealless recipes for Fridays.

The app can be downloaded for free at www.crsricebowl.org.

Participating in the Rice Bowl program is about much more than simply giving. It teaches Catholics about the importance of charity, love and spiritual growth during the Lenten season.

"The CRS Rice Bowl helps me remember that there is a world greater than the one I perceive that I live in," Chambless said. "It provides me with a tangible way to live out our Lord’s two greatest commandments which are to love God with all my heart, soul, and mind, and to love my neighbor as myself."

(To participate, check with your parish or visit the CRS Rice Bowl website at www.crsricebowl.org or call Theresa Chambless, archdiocesan Rice Bowl coordinator, at 317-236-1404 or 800-282-9836, ext. 1404)

Lenten activities available online
Be sure to visit The Criterion’s Lenten Web page at www.archindy.org/lent.

The page consists of links to daily readings, archived Lenten columns by Archhhishop Emeritus Daniel M. Buechlein, a full list of communal penance services taking place at parishes and other features.

The Oddly-Shaped Little Cardboard Bowl Which Shows Up During Lent on Doorsteps is Familiar to Many Catholics. However, Catholics May Not Be Familiar with the Impact of That Unassuming Bowl on Someone in Great Need.
Terre Haute Deanery faith community reaches out through parish app
By Sean Gallagher

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The app was designed by Albuquerque, N.M.-based web developer Sue Jron, who specializes in creating apps for parishes and dioceses. Information about her work can be found at churchapappy.com.

Father Hollowell noted that while Annunciation Parish’s first time in months, if not years.

The app was quickly allowing people who downloaded it to let their smart phones or tablets to see the parish calendar, read daily Mass readings, make an appointment with Father Hollowell or view videos of his homilies and other videos about the sacraments. “One of the potential benefits of the app is to draw in parishioners who have fallen away from the faith,” Father Hollowell said. “If they download the app, they may be more likely to explore and watch a video or read an article, and thus hopefully come home to the Church. Also, visitors to the parish and those looking to learn more about our parish will have something to explore on their phones as well.”

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