A match made in heaven

Ten months after they met as strangers through the IndyCatholic Young Adult Intramurals program, Katie Coonan and Matt Duffy became engaged. Their wedding is scheduled for July 25. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Wedding plans set for young couple drawn together by volleyball and Catholic faith

By John Shaughnessy

Considering that they first met on a volleyball court, Katie Coonan and Matt Duffy know that some people will call the young couple’s upcoming marriage “a match made in heaven.”

Besides, that’s exactly how Katie and Matt feel about their love story so far—a love that began through their interest in sports and that has grown deeper through their mutually strong Catholic faith.

“It’s divine intervention at its best,” said Matt as he sat next to Katie in a coffee shop on the north side of Indianapolis.

Looking at Matt, Katie smiled and added, “We just live four blocks away from each other, but we never would have met if it wasn’t for being on the same intramural team.”

Katie and Matt, both 26, were randomly assigned in early 2014 to the same volleyball team during the first season of the IndyCatholic Young Adult Intramurals program.

Started by the archdiocese’s young adult and college campus ministry, the program reflects the desire to use sports and friendly competition to create a sense of community and a connection to the Catholic faith for young adults.

It’s also led to another kind of deep, personal connection between Katie and Matt, neither of whom imagined that they would be engaged to each other just 10 months after they met as strangers.

A setting of sports, friendship and faith

Two main interests guided Katie as she stepped onto the volleyball court for the team’s first game last winter. She enjoyed sports, having played basketball and soccer at Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., where she grew up.

The 2011 graduate of Marian University in Fort Wayne, Ind., where she grew up.

At the same time, she has a strong connection to the Catholic faith.

“I just feel that as young adults, we have to follow the path God has set for us,” said Matt.

Considering that Katie and Matt first met in early 2014 after being randomly assigned to the same volleyball team, they both felt called to follow this path.

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we’re in a limbo state of life. We’re out of college, and we’re starting our adult lives,” said Katie, a third-grade teacher at St. Joan of Arc School in Indianapolis. “It’s easy for young adults to not feel connected in their parish church. The young adult group in general builds a sense of community, and I thought the intramurals would be a good time with good people. And I like that we go before and after the games.”

Matt also had two reasons for joining the volleyball league.

“I was moving from Michigan to Indianapolis for his first job as a civil engineer in August of 2013. Matt still commutes to his job, but Indianapolis is his best local friend because the brutal winter of 2013-14 sent the city into a prolonged, deep freeze. Realizing that Matt needed more human connection, his librarian—mother looked online from her home in Michigan and learned about IndyCatholic Young Adult Intramurals.

“She told me, ‘You’re going to sign up,’ I said, ‘Yes, I want to.’” Matt recalled with a smile. “I was desperate for friends. But it was also good to know I’d be surrounding myself with people who have similar beliefs and values.”

A court leads to courtship

When Matt and Katie played for the first time on the court together, neither of them were thinking it would eventually lead to a courtship.

At the same time, the leaders of the intramural program have encouraged the idea that teammates and other players should hang out together before and after games, emphasizing the social connections more than the sports competition.

As Matt and Katie individually joined their regular groups, it came out that Matt was involved in a long-distance relationship.

“I respected that,” Katie recalled. “We only saw each other in group settings. Yet the more we were around each other, there was no denying there was an attraction between them.”

“I started to like Katie for the qualities she has—her genuine kindness and loving nature, and she tries to include people in things, and her competitive nature,” Matt noted.

Katie added, “I think what made a difference was hanging out before the games. I got to know him. He was funny, athletic, Catholic and cute. I always said that the guy I married, I wanted to be friends with him. I was drawn to him.”

Their friendship continued in group settings after the volleyball season ended. And when the intramural program had a sign-up for a kickball season, they decided to team up together.

“I thought we were just being friends,” Katie recalled about her relationship in the beginning. “I didn’t know how the other person was feeling.”

When Matt knew his feelings for Katie couldn’t be denied, he ended his long-distance relationship in May. A month later, he asked Katie for a date.

“June 22 was our first date,” he noted. “I went back to Detroit two weeks after we started dating. I told my best man, ‘I’m going to marry this girl.’”

Katie soon learned that his feelings were matching hers.

An unexpected proposal

There was a time, a month into dating, when we were about to see my family in Fort Wayne,” Katie recalled. “On the way back, we had a really great conversation. And he told me he loved me. He said, ‘It’s my choice to love you, and I want to help you get to heaven.’”

Matt nodded at the memory of those words and said, “I know that’s what real love is. That’s what I felt: I want to do this for you.”

Katie added, “It’s hard to explain how much Matt encompasses things I’ve always wanted in a relationship—the value of marriage and the commitment of marriage.”

Matt promised that commitment when he proposed to Katie on Christmas Eve after the midnight Mass at her family’s church in Fort Wayne—St. Vincent de Paul Church.

“I wasn’t expecting it,” Katie recalled. “After Mass, he asked if there was a Nativity where we could pray for Christmas. We walked over to it together. As we stood in front of the Nativity together, he was telling me several moments from our relationship when he knew he was in love with me. He got down on one knee and said, ‘I love you, and I want to help you get to heaven.’”

Katie said yes, and the celebration began as they were soon surrounded by her parents and many of her seven siblings. A phone call to Matt’s delighted parents followed shortly.

They plan to be married in that same church on July 25, during a Mass concelebrated by two of her older brothers who are priests in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.—Father Matthew Coonan and Father Terrence Coonan.

“To me, there is no other option than to be married in the church,” said Katie, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, along with Matt. “The whole story of how we’re here is to get to heaven and bring as many people with us. I absolutely love my Catholic faith, and we need as much grace in our lives to help us out. We’ve always talked about Christ being the center of our marriage.”

Matt added, “I want our marriage to be a testament to our beliefs. I believe that God made marriage part of his plan for us. I can’t imagine being married in any other place. We want people to know this is what we believe.”

Their shared belief includes the wonder and the joy of a journey that has taken them from strangers to teammates to friends to an engaged couple. Looking at Matt, Katie said, “It’s amazing how God has things work out for you.”

Sports program draws young adults to faith, friendship

By John Shaughnessy

Sometimes the game plan works just as you hoped it would.

Matt Faley has that feeling as the second year of the IndyCatholic Young Adult Intramurals program is underway. Started last year as a groundbreaking effort in the archdiocese, the program’s emphasis on sports and friendship has already been successful in creating a sense of community and a connection to the Catholic faith for young adults.

“We offered volleyball as our first sport; kickball as our second,” said Faley. “Our young adults are in life, instead of hoping against hope that they will sometimes the game plan works just as you hoped it would.

The Indy Catholic intramural league combines two things that I am passionate about—sports and the Catholic faith. It has allowed an increasing number of participants to benefit from the joy of staying connected, on and off the court.”

Faley notes that the participants represent about 35 percent. Others are still searching—either about their faith or a parish to call home.

“Ultimately, we hope intramurals is an impetus for young adults to come to the Church or come to an event that we host,” Faley says. “Through the natural bonding of sports, we’re hoping to build—a relationship with other young adults, with the Church, and ultimately with the person of Jesus.”

The intramurals program allows us to invite invitations to go deeper,” Faley says. “We plan our other ministries—like retreats, small groups and speakers—around our seasons so we have opportunities to invite young adults into them. This is where we see great things happen. Young adults accept the invitation, and we have a front row seat to watch the Lord work.”

Krisry Vargo has seen the impact of the program on her and other young adults.

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that has worked well in the federal RFRA continues to support Senate Bill 101, to clarify RFRA's intent. However, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), who a bill that promotes discrimination,” said mischaracterization of Senate Bill101 as efforts to address and correct the clarification, which is popularly known as a “fix,” raises questions about religious discrimination, which is popularly known as a “fix.”

Long said, “Religious rights and individual rights can come together.” He added that Hoosier hospitality is more than just a saying. “It’s a way of life here.”

Following a swift passage of Senate Bill 50, Gov. Mike Pence promptly signed it. “I believe resolving this controversy and making clear that every person feels welcome and respected in our state is best for Indiana,” he said.

Many Democrats, including House Minority Leader Rep. Scott Pelath, D-Michigan City, and Sen. Tim Lanane, D-Anderson, the Senate minority floor leader, said the “fix” didn’t go far enough and wanted the Indiana legislature to “repair” RFRA to ensure that religious beliefs were exempt from state and federal laws, according to Hoosier Equality, which supports the clarification, said, “This statement is a stronger statement than a repeal of RFRA.”

Prior to the legislative clarification, the five Indiana bishops reiterated their support for Senate Bill 50, by issuing their own statement on April 1. In addition to affirming religious freedom, the bishops restated the Church’s call for “mutual respect for all persons” to “show mutual respect for one another.”

“We urge all people of good will to show mutual respect for one another so that the necessary dialogue and discernment can take place to ensure that no one in Indiana will face discrimination which is for their sexual orientation or for living their religious beliefs,” the bishops said.

While Indiana’s initial RFRA law did not mention sexual orientation, there were fears by the LGBT community that the law could potentially be used to deny services based on a person’s sexual orientation. In the final week of March, Indiana joined 30 other states to provide a state legal framework of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), this year 12 states in addition to Indiana are looking to add a state RFRA to their respective state’s laws.

The original RFRA legislation, Senate Bill 101, which Governor Pence signed into law on March 29, prohibits state or local governments from substantially burdening a person’s ability to exercise their religion, unless the government can show that it has a compelling interest and that the action is the least restrictive means of achieving it.

(A statement from the Indiana Catholic Conference regarding the law clarifying Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act and more information about the ICC can be found at www.inncic.org. By Brigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

Defending dignity of all people means both upholding religious freedom and opposing unjust discrimination. At the same time, people of faith should not be coerced to violate their conscience by the law. The ICC continues to support Senate Bill 101, and believes it strikes the proper balance that has worked well in the federal RFRA for more than 20 years. While well-intentioned, the changes may undermine religious freedom.

—Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC)

Indiana bishops issue statement on state’s religious freedom law

Indiana’s five Catholic bishops issued a statement on April 1 regarding the state’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which Gov. Mike Pence signed into law on March 26. In conclusion, the bishops expressed their support for efforts in Indiana both to defend the dignity of all persons and the rights of all people of all religions to be free from “undue burden from the government” in the practice of their faith. Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference, which represents the Church in the state on matters of law and public policy, expressed concern about the “polarization” of the discussion about the law.

He said that the bishops’ statement was an attempt to bring people to a dialogue to help each other know that we are not in an either/or kind of situation at all. “As the statement indicates, this isn’t an either-or kind of situation at all,” Tebbe said. “The Church’s support for religious freedom, as well as the dignity of all persons, is a fundamental principle of the Church. It’s not a matter of one or the other. It’s a matter of having both of them right beside one another.”

(To share the statement of the five Catholic bishops of Indiana regarding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, log on to www.archindy.org/archbishop/rfra-2015.html.)

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A Jubilee Year of Mercy

On this Sunday, April 12, the feast of Divine Mercy, Pope Francis will officially and solemnly proclaim an extraordinary holy year, a Jubilee Year of Mercy, to be celebrated from Dec. 8, 2015, until Nov. 20, 2016. [CNS photo/Stefano Spaziani, pool]

Pope Francis hears confessions during a Lenten penance service in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on March 13. During the service, the pope announced an extraordinary jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy, to be celebrated from Dec. 8, until Nov. 20, 2016. (CNS photo/Stefano Spaziani, pool)

Our Global Family/Carolyn Woo

The strangers who care for us

A recent incident reminded me of how much we operate in the care of strangers. I realized I had left my purse in the taxi I took from the train station to my apartment. In it was the wallet that held my credit cards, passport, driver’s license, health and auto insurance cards—almost everything that allows modern life to function.

I didn’t have a receipt, a tax number, anything that would identify either the driver or the taxi. I went to my office, where my resourceful assistant immediately alerted the taxi companies to broadcast a message to their drivers. After an hour with no responses, I went about the business of canceling cards and notifying agencies.

Two hours later, deflated and exhausted, I went home. There was a message on the phone: “I am your taxi driver. I think I have your purse.”

The driver had not noticed my purse in the back seat until a second passenger, a big man, was about to leave the cab with it. He challenged the passenger, telling him that if the purse didn’t belong to him it left to be found by the lost one. He then drove to the place where he had left me, and went to several apartment houses to try to return the item. I was deeply touched by the trouble he went through. In my prayer that night, I became keenly aware of how much we rely on the integrity and care of strangers.

My beloved 96-year-old nanny, who has been with my family for 69 years, resides in a long-term care facility in Hong Kong. She is completely dependent on the staff, not just for proper care but also for how they joke with, affirm and engage her. I can only visit twice a year, and am always humbled by the fact that I am entrusting her to them. In return, except for my deep gratitude and trust, there is little I can do, as gifts and gratuities are not allowed.

When I started at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., as a terribly homesick student who knew no one, a generous professor and his wife opened their hearts and welcomed me into their home. In Malawi, when I had a nasty fall, a doctor attended to me immediately and declined payment as he was in the practice of free public care. There was an Easter Sunday when I left my family to travel and was in tears as I picked up my suitcase. A TSA agent at the airport asked what she could do for me.

In the book Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, Trappist Father Thomas Merton described an epiphany he had one day while running errands for the monastery where he lived in Louisville, Ky. While in a shopping district, he found himself with a certain realization: “I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.”

For me, this served as a Lenten reflection: We can never be strangers. We all are part of God’s family. We also are the way he sometimes chooses to care for us. Separateness, divisiveness, polarization, competitiveness are the nails on Jesus’ cross. Father Merton reminded us that when we see who we and others are in God’s eyes, “there would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed.”

God has spoken through the care of strangers. Harden not our hearts. (Carolyn Woo is president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services.)

MEGA DRAW

International World Youth Day has attracted huge numbers of participants. Eleven countries have hosted the multiday Catholic event.

Source: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops © 2015 Catholic News Service
Jesus’ resurrection frees us from the corruption of sin, death

Pope Francis makes a clear distinction between sin, which we’re all guilty of, and corruption, which is a form of grave, spiritual death that the Holy Father says is “unforgivable.” Does it surprise you to hear that the pope, who constantly emphasizes God’s mercy, believes that there is such a thing as an unforgivable offense against God?

In St. Mark’s Gospel, Jesus says, “All sins and all blasphemies that people will utter will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin” (Mk 3:28-29). Do you suppose that Pope Francis considers corruption to be a form of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Like Jesus himself, Pope Francis is comfortable with sinners (which is not the same thing as condoning our sins), but he draws the line at hypocrisy, which he calls the language of corruption. “They were sinners, like all of us, but they took a step further,” the pope says. “As if they had become consolidated in sin: they don’t need God! But this is only an illusion, because in their genetic code this relation with God exists. And since they can’t deny this, they create a special god: they themselves are god, they are the corrupt!”

For Pope Francis, corruption means the death of the soul, the total perversion of our relationship to God. We are all sinners. We turn away from God—sometimes in ways that are gravely serious or mortal. But the corrupt take human sinfulness “a step further.” According to Pope Francis, they have allowed the corruption of evil, hypocritical attitudes and sinful actions to transform them into “the anti-Christ.”

These are very strong words for the pope, who consistently proclaims God’s mercy. As we prepare for the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, let’s look more closely at our freedom to totally reject God (thereby allowing ourselves to be corrupted by sin and death) and God’s never-ending mercy. God always forgives us. We don’t always accept his mercy.

Si John Paul II, in his encyclical “Divina Misericordia” (“Rich in Mercy”), reminds us that mercy is a distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish and Christian understanding of who God is, how God relates to his people, and what he expects from us.

“Slow to anger and rich in mercy” is a phrase that is repeated over and over again in the Scriptures. The parables, teaching and example of Jesus consistently emphasize God’s mercy (and his demand that we also show mercy.)

There is something reciprocal about divine mercy. One who is loved and forgiven is expected to show compassion and forgiveness toward others. In the Lord’s prayer, we implore God our Father “to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

The passion, death and resurrection of Jesus represent the ultimate outpouring of divine mercy. “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” St. Paul tells us (Ti 3:5). But unless we acknowledge our own sinfulness and the mercy of God, which alone can set us free, we remain stuck in our sins, weighed down by the corruption of our minds and hearts, miserable people who cannot know Easter joy.

The resurrection of Jesus frees us from the corruption of sin and death. The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter shows us the disciples who are gathered in fear behind locked doors. The Lord calms their fears and entrusts them with a mission. He shows them his hands and his side, which bear the marks of the passion, and tells them, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:21–23). Jesus entrusted to them the gift of forgiving sins, a gift that flows from the wounds in his hands, his feet, and especially from his pierced side.

From there, a wave of mercy is poured out over all humanity.

Those who are so corrupt that they cannot accept, or share with others, the redemptive gift of God’s mercy are in the throes of spiritual death. They have aligned themselves with liars, deceivers and hypocrites (“the anti-Christ”).

The resurrection of Jesus frees us from the corruption of sin and death. God’s mercy is extended to everyone—no matter how sinful or corrupt.

The question is: Can we open ourselves to the liberation of God’s grace? Can we say “yes” to God’s merciful love and then be merciful to others?

La resurrección de Jesús nos libera de la corrupción del pecado y de la muerte

El papa Francisco distingue claramente entre el pecado, del cual todos somos culpables, y la corrupción que constituye una forma de muerte espiritual grave que el Santo Padre tilda de “imperecedero.” ¿Le sorprende escuchar que el Papa, quien constantemente hace énfasis en la misericordia divina, considere que existe algo que representa una ofensa imperecedera contra Dios?

En el Evangelio según San Marcos, Jesús dice: “Les aseguro que todos los pecados y blasfemias se les perdonarán a todos por igual, excepto a quien blasfeme contra el Espíritu Santo. Este no tendrá perdón jamás; es culpable de un pecado eterno” (Mc 3:28-29). ¿Acaso el papa Francisco considera que la corrupción es una forma de blasfemia contra el Espíritu Santo?

Al igual que Jesús, el papa Francisco acoge a los pecadores (que no es lo mismo que justificar nuestros pecados), pero define el límite en la hipocresía a la que denomina el lenguaje de la corrupción. “Eran pecadores como todos nosotros, pero que dieron un paso más—expresa el Papa—. Se consolidaron en el pecado y ya no sienten la necesidad de Dios. O al menos, se creen que no la sienten, porque en el código genético existe esta tendencia hacia Dios. Y como no pueden negarlo, se hacen un dios especial: ellos mismos. He aquí quiénes son los corruptos.”

Para el Papa Francisco la corrupción significa la muerte del alma, la total perversión de nuestra relación con Dios. Todos somos pecadores; todos nos alejamos de Dios, a veces de formas graves o mortales. Pero en cuanto al pecado, el corrupción “da un paso más.” De acuerdo con el papa Francisco, han permitido que la corrupción del mal, las actitudes hipócritas y las acciones pecaminosas los transformen en “el anti-Christo.”

Estas son palabras muy fuertes para un Papa que sistemáticamente proclama la misericordia de Dios. A medida que nos preparamos para el Segundo Domingo de Pascua, el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia, analicemos con mayor detenimiento nuestra libertad para rechazar por completo a Dios (con lo que podemos corrompernos por obra del pecado y de la muerte) y la infinita misericordia de Dios. Dios siempre perdona; pero nosotros no siempre aceptamos su misericordia.

En su encíclica “Divina Misericordia” (“Ricos en misericordia”), San Juan Pablo II nos recuerda que la misericordia es una característica distintiva de la comprensión de Dios para judíos y cristianos, de cómo Dios se relaciona con Su pueblo y de lo que espera de nosotros.

“Lento para la ira y grande en amor” es la frase que se repite una y otra vez en las Escrituras. Las parábolas, las enseñanzas y los ejemplos de Jesús sistemáticamente enfatizan en la misericordia divina (y en nuestra obligación de demostrar misericordia). La misericordia divina tiene un aspecto de reciprocidad, se espera que aquel que es amado y perdonado demuestre compasión y perdón hacia el prójimo. En el Padrenuestro le imploramos a Dios nuestro Padre que “perdone nuestras ofensas así como también nosotros perdonarnos a los que nos ofendan.”

La pasión, muerte y resurrección de Jesús son la máxima expresión de la misericordia divina. “El nos salvó, no por nuestras propias obras de justicia sino por su misericordia,” nos dice San Pablo (Ti 3:5). Pero a menudo nos reconocemos nuestra condición de pecadores y la misericordia de Dios—que es lo único que puede liberarnos—se arraigan en nuestros pecados, atrayendo el lastre de la corrupción en nuestras mentes y corazones como personas miserables que no pueden llegar a conocer la alegría de la Pascua.

La resurrección de Jesús nos libera de la corrupción del pecado y de la muerte. El Evangelio del Segundo Domingo de Pascua nos presenta a los discípulos reunidos y atemorizados a puerta cerrada. El Señor calma sus temores y les confía una misión. Le muestra sus manos y su costado que establece las bases de la pasión y les dice: “Como el Padre me envío a mí, así lo envío a ustedes. Reciban el Espíritu Santo. A quienes les perdonen sus pecados, les serán perdonados; a quienes no se los perdonen, no les serán perdonados” (Jn 20:21–23). Jesús les confió el óelo de “perdonar los pecados,” un don que procede de las heridas en sus manos, sus pies y, especialmente, de su costado perforado. De ellos emana la misericordia para toda la humanidad.

Aquéllas que están tan corruptas que no pueden aceptar ni compartir con los demás los dones redentores de la misericordia de Dios, se encuentran al borde de la muerte espiritual. Se han alineado con embusteros, impostores e hipócritas (“los anticristos”).

La resurrección de Jesús nos libera de la corrupción del pecado y de la muerte. La misericordia de Dios se extiende a todos sin importar su condición de pecador, de corrupto. Sin embargo, la pregunta que debemos formular es: “Podemos alinearnos con la gracia, la libertad y la misericordia de Dios?” Podemos decir “sí” al amor misericordioso de Dios y ser misericordiosos con los demás? 

Traducido por: Daniela Guanapu
April 11  St. Roch Parish, Family Life Center, 3003 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Single Seniors meeting, 1 p.m. Information: 317-784-4207.

April 12  St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3350 E. 9th St., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 1 p.m. Information: 317-523-4193 or stmichael914@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infants Jesus (La Sacre Coeur), 3119 Block Ave., Indianapolis. Class of 63 monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Information: 317-841-6389, ext. 1475.

April 13-18  Old WSPM 89.1 FM/WSYMQ 90.9 FM, Faith in Action Radio. “St. Maximilian Kolbe,” Leo deFilippis, 10 a.m. April 13 and 14, 4 p.m. April 14 and 17, 9 a.m. April 18, “National Crime Victims Week.” Information: 317-236-1586 or stmax789@yahoo.com.


April 15  Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 355 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, archbishop Mass at 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-236-1490 or rector@archindy.org.

April 16  Joseph and Mary, 1375 S. Mckee Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, a time set apart for the priests to meditate on Scripture passages, 6 p.m. Information: 317-888-7625 or rector@archindy.org.

April 19  St. Columbus, 1005 W. Main St., Danville. Runnymeade sale, sponsored by the Women’s Club. 9 a.m. Information: Anina Wray, swdg@malleynville.org or 317-295-4284.


April 21  St. Michael the Archangel Church, 335 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Helpers of God's Precious Infants, Mass and Divine Mercy Chaplet at 8:30 a.m. followed by prayer at a local abortion center. and prevent the church for babies, 9 a.m. Information: 317-236-1586 or stmax789@yahoo.com.

April 22  St. Thomas More Parish, 1200 N. Indiana St., Beech Grove. Interior Garage Sale to benefit youth programs, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

April 27  Castleton United Methodist Church, 7160 Shadetown Station, Indianapolis. April 25. Stephen Stephen Hoffman, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Information: 812-373-9535, or at lvadivahanks.sbt@yahoo.com.

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
Latin Patriarch: Light of peace must emerge from war

JERUSALEM (CNS)—Christians in the Middle East are called to help the light of peace emerge from the violence and anguish of war in much of the region, drawing inspiration from the resurrected Jesus, Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal said in his Easter homily.

“Our future in this region and in the world is uncertain and even incomprehensible, but do not be afraid. Christ assured us, he is ‘with us always until the end of time,’ ” Patriarch Twal told the congregation at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on April 5.

Following the darkness and death of Good Friday, Christians can “believe and sing, ‘Christ is risen,’” and relive “the miracle of the resurrection as did the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross and Jesus’ disciples who became joyful witnesses in suffering for Christ,” he said.

“Therefore, let us bury in the tomb of Christ our worldly inclinations, our contradictions, our religious divisions, our hostilities, our lack of faith and our fears,” Patriarch Twal said.

“Believe in good, believe that peace is possible. From this tomb emerged light and peace. And here today, from this hallowed Holy Land, light and peace must spring out again. Let us pray for the grace of God for the Holy Land and the whole world,” he said.

“As people of faith struggle to find Jesus in the world, neither politics, business, nor familiar surroundings seem to ‘quench the thirst,’ he said. And like the women at the tomb who came to anoint the body of Jesus and found it empty, fear pervades before the emptiness, he said.

“This tomb, where thousands of people are seeking God every day, no longer contains the body of the Crucified. God is not necessarily where we seek him. It is not in obscure and isolate corners, it is right beside us, in our brother and sister, in our neighbor,” he said.

Patriarch Twal also recalled the plight of hundreds of refugees and internally displaced people in the Middle East. He said that “contemporary martyrs continue to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ,” even though political leaders and the international community seem less concerned with people’s freedom.

In their April 1 Easter message, the heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem noted the hope which springs from Jerusalem as a Holy City.

“In the face of so much that threatens to devalue or diminish human life, the hope that springs from the Resurrection is rooted here in Jerusalem,” they said. “The message of Easter has shaped the very identity of this holy city over many centuries. Here is located the site of the empty tomb, the place where God’s sovereignty over death and the powers of darkness was manifested in the raising of Jesus from the dead.”

Citing attacks on ancient Christian and other minority communities in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Asia, Patriarch Twal expressed concern with the excessive violence used in the name of religion in parts of the Middle East and elsewhere.

“There is no true religion which advocates the violent suppression of the human person or the victimization of minority groups in society, and we condemn such actions in the strongest possible terms. Those who engage in such barbaric behavior dehumanize not only their victims, but themselves,” the leaders said.

“Let us bury in the tomb of Christ our worldly inclinations, our contradictions, our religious divisions, our hostilities, our lack of faith and our fears. Believe in good, believe that peace is possible. From this tomb emerged light and peace.”

― Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal

At Easter, Middle Eastern patriarchs encourage hope despite turmoil

BEIRUT (CNS)—Catholic patriarchs of the Middle East in their Easter messages urged the faithful to cling to the hope of the risen Christ amid raging wars, human suffering and the uprooting of Christians from their homelands in the region.

“We have spent 40 or even 50 days in fasting and prayer, that God may remove from our Eastern countries, especially Syria and Iraq, this evil spirit that can only go away through the death of a syrian-born Melkite Catholic Patriarch Gregoire III Laham said.

“We say to everyone in the East and in the West: dismiss any idea that this conflict is over religion,” he said.

“When I look at what is happening in our countries, it seems to me that Daesh [the Arabic acronym for Islamic State] has nothing whatever to do with religion,” he said.

“Religious conflict has become marketable. Killing the innocent has become a commodity and instrument, and slaughtering Christians has become a tool,” he said.

“Despite the violence and death, he called on the faithful to “strengthen our faith in life, in the risen Christ who has conquered death and bestowed life and calls us all to be children of the resurrection and life, to be bearers of the Gospel of life and work for success and the conquest of death by life, enmity by love, and hatred and revenge by forgiveness and reconciliation.”

Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan acknowledged in his Easter message the years of suffering of Christians caused by the turmoil in Syria and Iraq.

“We, however, sons and daughters of the Syriac Catholic Church, are so proud to model ourselves to the one who suffered carrying his cross, died and was risen for our salvation,” the patriarch said.

“We mean it when we recall the very words of our Savior to the disciples of Emmaus,” he said, citing Luke 24:26. “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

“Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the basis of our faith, the pillar of our hope,” Patriarch Younan explained, adding that “it gave us a firm reassurance and a strong reason for our own resurrection.”

Cardinal Bechara Rai, Maronite Catholic patriarch, called attention to the “enormous economic and social challenges” facing Lebanon, noting that one-third of Lebanese live in poverty and that the number is increasing. Lebanon’s population stands at about 4 million, of which about 33 percent are Christian. The country has faced an influx of 1.5 million Syrian refugees and thousands of Iraqis, overwhelming the country’s economy and straining social relations.

Furthermore, Lebanon’s presidential vacuum has created a “political death” in the country, crippling the government and the parliament, Cardinal Rai said.

“The presidential post is reserved for a Maronite Catholic under the country’s power-sharing system. Legislators have failed to agree on a successor since the term of President, Michel Sleiman, ended in May 2014. As for the raging conflicts in the region, Cardinal Rai urged world and Arab leaders to stop supporting mercenaries and fighters with money and weapons, appealing to them to find peaceful solutions.

“And do not forget the suffering of our people in the Holy Land, Iraq, Syria and Yemen,” he continued.

“We seek for us and for all of them the peace of Christ.”

Our volunteers are paid daily in everlasting gratitude.

Volunteering is a tradition in our country and in our churches rooted in the belief that everyone has the power to promote happiness and our empathy for the suffering. Please help us to keep our tradition alive and make a difference by volunteering. Whether at our Distribution Center or our Food Pantry, you’ll give families new hope and keep children from going hungry. The only requirements are to have an open heart and appreciate being appreciated.

To schedule pick-up of household items go to svdpindy.org or call 317-687-1006. You can also make a monetary contribution or become a volunteer online.
AWARDS
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buying run-down homes, rehabbing them, and then helping poor families buy them. That idea became a non-profit organization called Hearts & Hands of Indiana—an organization that called to Rasmussen’s big heart and talented hands. He even loaned the money to purchase the first home. Since then, the man who had saved lives as a firefighter has been trying to give a new life to families who never would have had a chance to own a home. Five families are already in these houses. Another four houses are being rehabbed.
Members of Hearts & Hands praise him for his “passion” and “his constant, knowledgeable and tireless work.” Rasmussen deflects the praise. “I’ve been blessed,” says the father of eight and the grandfather of 22. “I’ll tell you how blessed I am. There are religious sisters from Nigeria who live in the old rectory at Holy Trinity and help in the neighborhood. I’m there repairing stuff all the time. I tell Nancy, ‘They give me hugs, an apple, and they say they’ll pray for me.’ It doesn’t get better than that.”
He laughs and adds, “I just like helping people. That’s been my way of life for at least 30 years, and I thank Nancy for that. God’s given me the ability to do things, people call, and Nancy volunteers me for everything. I can’t say enough about her. This whole thing has been a partnership.”
Zach Smith
Since he was born, 18-year-old Zach Smith has been challenged by a physical condition that has made him rely on crutches and a wheelchair to get around. During his childhood, he also struggled with questions about his abilities and his place in the world: “Can I do this? Am I physically capable of being impactful?”
Then came his breakthrough moment when he was 13. His orthopedic doctor recommended that he take part in a program that takes youths with disabilities for a scuba-diving-certification trip to the Cayman Islands.
“That trip was monumental for me,” says Zach, who will receive the Spirit of Service Youth Award. “Being able to scuba dive and go through all the exercises was the first real achievement I had on my own. That trip drove me to expect more of myself and do more in my community.”
Still, even he is amazed at the list of ways he has tried to make a difference to others in the past five years.
He has served on the inclusiveness committee and taught in the Vacation Bible School at his parish, St. Mark the Evangelist in Indianapolis. He’s given talks at schools and churches about his life and his relationship with God.
During his years at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, the senior has mentored other students with disabilities, helped out at the school’s day care center, and participated in a club that helps at an animal shelter.
He plays violin during the school’s Masses and for its theater productions. He’s also a member of the youth board for Anna’s Celebration of Life Foundation, a group that focuses on children with special needs. And he’s part of the organization team for the Midnight Mile, “a glow-stick run” that raises money for equipment for children with disabilities.
“That’s huge for me—to be helping kids similar to what I’ve been through,” says Zach, the son of Jeffrey and Rebecca Smith.
“For a long time, I’ve always felt happier helping others than helping myself,” Zach adds. “It’s learning to get a helping of your own right back from others.”
“Steve Rasmussen,
Sr. Norma Rocklage, O.S.F.

Hofstra University in Long Island, N.Y. It’s his way of giving back to society.
“I don’t have an older brother, but I remember the older guys in the neighborhood who would look out for me,” recalls Hawkins, who grew up in Queens, N.Y. “They spent time with me, let me be the sixth man on the basketball team, and told me about the guys to stay away from. And I saw they went to church.”
Hawkins also learned from his parents.
“My parents were big time volunteers. My mom is deceased now, but she was like the neighborhood mayor. My dad is 82, and he’s still volunteering. That’s what we were raised to do.”
Hawkins has followed that example with amazing dedication, especially since he became a member of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis in 1995. He’s served as an usher, a lector, a confirmation catechist, a member of the parish council, and the executive director of the parish’s capital campaign.
“I chose my home up the block from Holy Angels,” says Hawkins, a father of two who has been married to his wife Michelle for 15 years. “I can walk there. I’ve been in everything I can think of at Holy Angels. It’s good for me, my family and my kids. My wife knows where to find me when she’s looking for me.”
He’s also active in his community, serving as the executive director of education formation outreach for Marian University in Indianapolis. Sister Norma Rocklage constantly strives to connect Marian’s students, faculty and staff in interfaith efforts to improve the lives of the vulnerable.
She’s followed that path in her own life as she has served in other roles for the archdiocese and her university.
Starting in 1953, she taught for three years at St. Mary School in North Vernon. From 1965 until 1974, she served at Marian as an assistant professor of classical language, dean of academic affairs and director of schools.
From 1974 to 1982, Sister Norma was a member of the general council for the Oldenburg Franciscan community. She was also the community’s novice director for two years. In 1989, she returned to Marian as acting president for six months and then served as vice president for mission effectiveness until 2001.
It’s the idea of really living out the call of God to help others,” she says. “It’s a moral imperative for us to share what we have with those who do not have not just in words but in giving what we have. The service we do helps us to come close to God and experience God.”
“We can help transform the world.”

Colts’ Jack Doyle will be featured speaker at Spirit of Service Awards Dinner

Jack Doyle will be the featured speaker at the archdiocese’s 17th annual Spirit of Service Awards Dinner in Indianapolis on April 30.
The dinner will benefit and celebrate the efforts of Catholic Charities Indianapolis to help people in need. It also offers an opportunity for business, community and religious leaders to support Catholic Charities as it continues to improve the community of central Indiana by providing services to the poor and vulnerable.
The event at the Indiana Roof Ballroom begins with a reception at 5:30 p.m., and dinner at 6:30 p.m. Table tickets can be purchased at these levels: $10,000 for a benefactor, $5,000 for a patron, and $1,750 for a partner. Individual tickets are available at $450.
“Funding from the Spirit of Service Awards Dinner supports our programs that send people to a more independent life,” said David Bethum, agency director for Catholic Charities Indianapolis. “Often, it starts with direct services that lead to other programs to help stabilize families and individuals. We are always grateful to our donors whose gifts help their neighbors succeed.”
(Reservations for the Spirit of Service Awards Dinner can be made online at www.archindy.org/spirit. For more information about the event, call Valerie Sperka at 317-592-4072 or send an e-mail to her at vsperka@archindy.org.)
Archbishop calls faithful to renew society at annual chrism Mass

Holy oils used in the Church’s sacraments were blessed during the archdiocese’s annual chrism Mass celebrated on March 31 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

Representatives from parishes across central and southern Indiana then received oils that will be used to anoint people in the celebration of baptism, confirmation, and the anointing of the sick in their faith communities during the coming year.

In his homily during the chrism Mass, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin connected the blessing of the oils and sacraments that will be celebrated with them to the effect that this worship of God has in broader society.

“Because we have been anointed, our ministry will become a healing balm that is poured out on a society that has been wounded by intolerance, hatred and a shrill and cynical indifference,” said Archbishop Tobin. “Together, we will bear witness to Jesus Christ, himself the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of this Earth.”

He noted that the 133 parishes of the archdiocese spread across 39 counties are “communities of the missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, nourished by the word of God and by the saving power of Jesus, the sole high priest. In that priesthood, all the baptized share.”

Sheila Girth received blessed oils for St. Mary-of-the-Woods Parish in St. Mary-of-the-Woods at the far western end of the archdiocese.

“I’m from a very small parish,” Bird said. “It’s almost hard to remember sometimes that we’re a part of so much more. It makes you feel proud that the faith is growing, getting stronger, and that we’ve overcome so much.”

She also said that attending the chrism Mass deepened her experience of the solemn liturgies of Holy Week.

“After you’ve picked up the oils, you feel like there’s so much more,” Bird said. “You do not want to mass one of the Masses. You want to go to all of them. You want all of it. And you want more.”

Also participating in the Mass were representatives of several religious communities located in the archdiocese, all of whom are attending the Church’s Year of Consecrated Life.

Benedictine Novice Timothy Herrmann came to the Mass from St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad in the southwestern corner of the archdiocese.

He was received as a novice at St. Meinrad in January, shortly after the Year of Consecrated Life began.

“It’s nice to be present here to understand better how we can pray for the archdiocese, and also be a witness to the people here of what consecrated life is,” he said. “I was able to say, ‘Yes’ more freely and so much more beautifully, even than I did a year ago.”

Witnessing Father Syberg and so many other priests renew their ordination promises was his brother, transitional Deacon Andrew Syberg, who will make those same promises when he is ordained a priest in about two months.

“It was pretty moving, especially with my brother having been ordained last year,” Deacon Syberg said of seeing the many places can be brought together as one in worship.

“One of the things that I really like about being a Catholic is that, no matter where you go, Catholicism is the same,” he said. “There are people from all over who are Catholic that go to the same Mass every Sunday and have the same readings.”

Sue Garth received the blessed oils for St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus near the geographic center of the archdiocese.

It was her first time to participate in a chrism Mass. She looked forward to seeing more than 130 priests who minister in central and southern Indiana renew their ordination promises during the Mass.

“I’m looking forward to being a witness to that,” Garth said. “It’s rejuvenating to see their dedication and see them renew their vows and make that continuous commitment that is a part of their lives.”

Father Benjamin Syberg, associate pastor of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, near the northern end of the archdiocese, renewed his ordination promises for the first time since being ordained a priest last June.

“Those promises were much more clear to me — having been a priest for this past year,” he said. “I was able to say, ‘Yes’ so much more freely and so much more joyfully, even than I did a year ago.”

Witnessing Father Syberg and so many other priests renew their ordination promises was his brother, transitional Deacon Andrew Syberg, who will make those same promises when he is ordained a priest in about two months.

“It was pretty moving, especially with my brother having been ordained last year,” Deacon Syberg said of seeing the priests renew their promises. “It’s always a beautiful moment, but knowing that I’ll be renewing my promises in a year made it a little bit more special.”

In his homily, Archbishop Tobin reflected on the dedication of the priests ministering in the archdiocese who have remained faithful to their promises through many years of challenges and change.

“Those of you who have come this afternoon as representatives of your individual parishes are daily witnesses to the goodness, the generosity and sincerity of your priests,” Archbishop Tobin said. “Let there be no doubt about it. We have great priests in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.”

(To view a gallery of photos from the annual archdiocesan chrism Mass, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.)

By Sean Gallagher

More than 130 priests who minister in central and southern Indiana joined Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin in blessing chrism oil during the annual archdiocesan chrism Mass celebrated on March 31 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The Mass featured the blessing of holy oils used in several sacraments and in the dedication of altars and church buildings. During the Mass, the priests also renewed their ordination promises. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)

Sue Garth received the blessed oils for St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus near the geographic center of the archdiocese. It was her first time to participate in a chrism Mass. She looked forward to seeing more than 130 priests who minister in central and southern Indiana renew their ordination promises during the Mass.

“I’m looking forward to being a witness to that,” Garth said. “It’s rejuvenating to see their dedication and see them renew their vows and make that continuous commitment that is a part of their lives.”

Father Benjamin Syberg, associate pastor of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, near the northern end of the archdiocese, renewed his ordination promises for the first time since being ordained a priest last June.

“Those promises were much more clear to me — having been a priest for this past year,” he said. “I was able to say, ‘Yes’ so much more freely and so much more joyfully, even than I did a year ago.”

Witnessing Father Syberg and so many other priests renew their ordination promises was his brother, transitional Deacon Andrew Syberg, who will make those same promises when he is ordained a priest in about two months.

“It was pretty moving, especially with my brother having been ordained last year,” Deacon Syberg said of seeing the priests renew their promises. “It’s always a beautiful moment, but knowing that I’ll be renewing my promises in a year made it a little bit more special.”

In his homily, Archbishop Tobin reflected on the dedication of the priests ministering in the archdiocese who have remained faithful to their promises through many years of challenges and change.

“Those of you who have come this afternoon as representatives of your individual parishes are daily witnesses to the goodness, the generosity and sincerity of your priests,” Archbishop Tobin said. “Let there be no doubt about it. We have great priests in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.”

(To view a gallery of photos from the annual archdiocesan chrism Mass, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.)

By Sean Gallagher

More than 130 priests who minister in central and southern Indiana join Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin in blessing chrism oil during the annual archdiocesan chrism Mass celebrated on March 31 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The Mass featured the blessing of holy oils used in several sacraments and in the dedication of altars and church buildings. During the Mass, the priests also renewed their ordination promises. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)
of another humanity, in which we seek to live in service to one another, not to be arrogant, but rather respectful and ready to help.

“This is not weakness, but true strength!” the pope said. “Those who bear within them God’s power, his love and his justice, do not need to employ violence; they speak and act with the power of truth, beauty and love.

As is traditional for the “urbi et orbi” message, Pope Francis offered prayers for an end to war and violence in specific countries, mentioning by name Syria, Iraq, the Holy Land, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Congo, Yemen and Ukraine. In better news, the pope said, “in hope, we entrust to the merciful Lord the framework recently agreed to” in order to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. The pope prayed that it would be “a definitive step toward a more secure and fraternal world.”

As he had at every Holy Week and Easter service, Pope Francis offered special prayers for persecuted Christians, asking that “Jesus, the victor over death,” would ease their suffering. For an end to war and violence, he sent special prayers for persecuted Christians, asking that “Jesus, the victor over death,” would ease their suffering.

Easter service, Pope Francis offered

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Pope Francis waves to the crowd during his Easter message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on April 5. (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano)
Faith

Faith that, you had the people who lived in the circles, the monks at the center. Beyond Ireland. "And so you had these concentric Msgr. Hugh Connolly of Maynooth, characterized mainland Europe, but we did following the example of the monks. sacrament toward the end of his or her life. stood up and proclaimed yourself a sinner. once in a lifetime event, administered by made to the universal Church: the gift of Skellig Michael, but perhaps we are the island for good. Church in Ireland, resulted in their leaving when storms and cold weather, and Michael until about the late 12th century, which is home to thousands of gannets is an extraordinary place and not surprisingly designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. There is no fresh water on the stone island, and community. an austere, robust life of prayer, fasting and not surprisingly designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. The monks remained on Skellig Michael until about the late 12th century, when storms and cold weather, and changes in the structure of the Catholic Church in Ireland, resulted in their leaving the island for good. Many know of the monks on Skellig Michael, but perhaps we are not fully aware of the amazing gift they made to the universal Church: the gift of individual confession. In the early Church, confession—what we now call the sacrament of reconciliation or penance—was often a once in a lifetime event, administered by the bishop and normally in public. You stood up and proclaimed yourself a sinner. Typically a person would receive the sacrament toward the end of his or her life. What became known as "Celtic penance" came from the monasteries following the example of the monks. "We didn’t have the great cities that characterized mainland Europe, but we did have monasteries, centers of civilization which were places for the people," said Msgr. Hugh Connolly of Maynoo, Ireland. "And so you had these concentric circles, the monks at the center. Beyond that, you had the people who lived in the vicinity, and it was natural for them to take up the practice of the monastery. Each monk had an "anam cara," or soul friend, to whom he would bear his soul. Seeing the way the monks lived, the people who lived close by wanted to share in this practice. Usually a senior monk was entrusted with a junior monk, said Msgr. Connolly, "and he would conduct a review of life with the monk, and with people who asked for this, and he would reveal the areas of life where they needed to improve in the light of the Gospel." What was new about the practice was that it could be repeated. The "anam cara" accompanied the penitent, conscious of his sinfulness. "It wasn’t helping from on high. It was the idea that all were engaged as human beings in the human condition," said Msgr. Connolly. The notion of restorative justice or satisfaction, so strong in traditional Irish law, became enmeshed in the practice of Celtic penance. If a man killed the breadwinner in the home, for example, he might be asked to provide for the family. There was a very strong sense that those going to confession should do something to undo some of the harm they had done," said Msgr. Connolly, an expert in early Irish monastic penitenz. Another principle operating in Celtic penance was the principle of "contraries, in which every vice is countered with a virtue, with hopes of changing sinful behavior. If a person confessed to greed, the confessor would advise him or her to do something generous. "They might say, 'We expect you now to go and do the poor because you are an avaricious person, and so we’ve got to get over this sense of hoarding and holding on and learn how to give and be someone who is generous.' " Over time, senior monks drew up charts of sins and penances that the younger monks learned by heart. The penances called for fasting and abstinence, but had humanizing elements, too. Over time, the discipline and practices of the Irish monasteries were adopted across modern Western Europe. "It really spread by people voting with their feet as the Irish monastic movement spread through the wanderings of these Irish monks who came from Ireland into a Europe which had grown cold in terms of its faith," said Msgr. Connolly. They became the sparks of light. But also the practices which they brought with them became little flames of light as well. And the older canonical model of penance literally gave way over time to the private penance." Msgr. Connolly said that, in penance, we might take a page from the monks’ practices. "If we are sorry, shouldn’t we try to express it in a way that actually undoes some of the harm and the hurt we caused?" he asked. (Susan Gately is a freelance writer from Dublin, Ireland.)

Individual confession historically rooted in Irish monasticism By Susan Gately

Confession in Bible includes affirming faith in God, acknowledging sins By Daniel S. McHattil

A painting titled "The Return of the Prodigal Son," by an unknown artist, is pictured at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York. The biblical notion of confession is broad, including both confession of sins and an affirmation of faith in God. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)
Between Easter and Pentecost, the first liturgical readings in the Church take us from the Acts of the Apostles. It tells how the Church spread beyond Jerusalem, all the way to Rome, for the first time, in the year 60. But Acts has its limitations. We can’t find a week-by-week Mass readings really don’t much of Acts during those seven weeks before Pentecost. Once Massgoers really don’t hear much of Acts, we can still ask about the early history of Christianity. But what happened to the Church in Jerusalem as an historian of the early Church, who wrote both his Gospel and Acts, explained that she’d done door-to-door by that I don’t mean uneducated people. They proclaim that they’re in favor of Jesus are the public intellectuals who know how extremely intelligent they appear to be idealists who know how extremely intelligent they see them entitled to tell everyone else what’s what. They’ve forgotten that a truly satisfying life can only result from doing God’s will. Moira’s not forgotten, in the year 44, when he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa, and became the first Apostle to be martyred. Peter was imprisoned, but was miraculously rescued by an angel. I’ll begin next week’s column with that story. Jesus is there somewhere? Easter people say ‘Yes!’

Meeting Jesus isn’t always easy. That’s recognizing Jesus when we see him. Think of the men on the road with the Galilean or doubting Thomas, or those who saw Jesus immediately after the Resurrection. They couldn’t, or wouldn’t, believe their eyes.

We have the same problem. A Lenten reflection I read described Moira Faracci as one of the rare people who did recognize Christ in everyone. And she taught her students and administrators to do the same, saying we must ignore the scent of death or any other distraction when we encounter Jesus.

Frankly, I think we can relate better to people who are poverty-stricken or socially unacceptable, than we can to some others. I find it easier to empathize, or at least sympathize, with folks whom I see I understand. I can hold my heart, and I can easily see Jesus in them. I can even relate to stupid people, and by that I don’t mean uneducated. It’s the mean and stupid, the willfully stupid ones who are hard to figure. The missionaries tell Moira the story of a pregnancy test, and learned that she was pregnant. Moira ran out, got a pregnancy test, and learned she was pregnant.

Bruce, you have a gift for Jesus in all these folks. As for me, I jumped out. She ran to Mary, hugged her, and wept. She explained that her boyfriend had a drug dealer friend whom they’d let room with them, even though they were afraid of drug dealing in old habits. Sure enough, they’d both fallen back into drugs. Then, in the midst of her relapse, Moira ran out, got a pregnancy test, and learned she was pregnant. They kicked the drug dealer friend out of the house.

But for Jesus in all these folks. As for me, I jumped out. She ran to Mary, hugged her, and wept. She explained that her boyfriend had a drug dealer friend whom they’d let room with them, even though they were afraid of drug dealing in old habits. Sure enough, they’d both fallen back into drugs. Then, in the midst of her relapse, Moira ran out, got a pregnancy test, and learned she was pregnant.

They suggested some Scripture for her to learn more about the Easter people, that should be clear. †

One of the ironies of our age of excess is, recognizing Jesus when we see him. Think of the men on the road with the Galilean or doubting Thomas, or those who saw Jesus immediately after the Resurrection. They couldn’t, or wouldn’t, believe their eyes.

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When it comes to hearing God speak, Pope Francis has taught that everyone—everyone even this inner, has the capacity to “Open your heart and listen to what God is saying to you.”

Moira had not solved all the problems of her life, but with her heart open, she was able to hear God speak to her another, this time about the sale of the National Geographics—that a recurring strip of canary yellow—and her 50 percent success rate of persuading people to get rid of it.

Nearly all her clients hug her when she leaves, describing the weight lifted off their shoulders. It’s not that they are not busy, or that they now keep a bare counter can fill your lungs and clear your mind.

In this season of spring cleaning, of open windows and Alleluias, of the pontiff who prays simple living, now is the time to de-clutter—time to travel light, to give freely, to be empty handed and open hearted.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn., and the editor of SisterStory.org.)
My Journey to God

Winter to Spring

By Linda Ricke

The cold wind howled thru the trees
Wondering what happened to all the leaves.
The leaves have fallen, and night and day
As if they were hurrying to be whisked away.

Then snow and ice covered the ground
And no footprints were to be found.
People silhouetted in their homes, sitting in front of the fire,
While the snow outside was comfortable.

Then God’s sun starts to shine
And puts snow and ice behind.
It won’t be long till winter’s frost is gone
And little green springlings will be on the lawn.

Linda Ricke is a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg. Flowers are seen in front of the Franciscan Monastery in Washington on March 20, 2012, the first day of spring that year. (CN photo/Rob Rolke)

Divine Mercy Sunday/Msgr. Owen E. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 12, 2015

• John 5:1-16
• John 20:19-31

As almost always in the Easter season, the Acts of the Apostles furnishes the Liturgy of the Word with its first reading. Acts is understood to be the record of the development of the infant Church over the course of several years, describing the planting of the Church in the first followers and students, whom Jesus commissioned to continue the Resurrection of the Lord. The first Christians revered the Lord’s first followers and students, as they were “of one heart and one mind.” Love for others, in the model of Jesus, forms the basis of the Church’s structure, as well as a powerful lesson in the basic beliefs that so compelled absolute loyalty and devotion from the early Christians whom Acts presages.

It also gives great examples of courageous faith—and of human ignorance and treachery.

In this weekend’s reading, Acts presents the first members of the Church as being “of one heart and one mind.” Love for the Lord and adherence to his teaching were central to their lives. The Apostles bore witness to the Resurrection of Jesus. The Lord encourages the Peace of the Lord. The first followers and students, whom Jesus commissioned to continue the work of salvation, literally had seen the Risen Lord. The first Christians revered the Apostles. Love for others, in the model of Jesus, forms the basis of the Church’s structure, as well as a powerful lesson in the basic beliefs that so compelled absolute loyalty and devotion from the early Christians whom Acts presages.

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Liturgy of the Word with its first reading.

Monday, April 13
St. Martin I, pope and martyr
Acts 4:23-31
Psalm 2:1-9
John 3:1-8

Tuesday, April 14
Acts 4:32-37
Psalm 93:1-2, 5
John 3:7-15

Wednesday, April 15
Acts 5:17-26
Psalm 34:2-9
John 3:16-21

Thursday, April 16
Acts 5:27-33
Psalm 34:2, 9, 17-20
John 3:31-36

Daily Readings

Friday, April 17
Acts 5:34-42
Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
John 6:1-15

Saturday, April 18
Acts 6:1-7
Psalm 33:2, 4-5, 18-19
John 6:16-21

Sunday, April 19
Third Sunday of Easter
Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-9
1 John 2:1-5a
Luke 24:35-48

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

The Church allows for general absolution only in exceptional circumstances

Q Our priest now has three parishes to take care of, so he is kept very busy. Can he be given permission to have a “rite three” penance service with absolution, perhaps once or twice a year? This would free up some time for him, and I also feel that it would help to bring some people back to Church. (Wisconsin)

A The short and simple answer is “probably not.” But let’s explain. First, so that readers understand the question: “rite three” is a form of the sacrament of reconciliation in which penitents do not make an individual confession of sins. Instead, they simply indicate their sorrow, perhaps by reciting the “confiteor” (“I confess”) together and then are granted general absolution by the priest. This particular celebration of the sacrament is generally known as “general absolution.”

What is clear from the Code of Canon Law is that this form is meant to be used only in specific and narrow circumstances and that individual confession and absolution is the ordinary way in which someone conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and with the Church.

The Code of Canon Law provides for the use of general absolution either in danger of death or when the diocesan bishop has decided that a “grave necessity” exists. The most frequent examples offered for danger of death are a large troop of soldiers about to go into battle or passengers on a plane that is about to crash.

As for “grave necessity,” a bishop’s discretion is somewhat circumscribed by canon 961, which indicates that it is limited to emergency situations. (The canons say that the permission would not apply particularly because a large number of penitents were to be gathered for a feast or pilgrimage.)

This code also specifies (in 963) that a penitent who has received general absolution for a serious sin must mention that sin in an individual confession as soon as it is reasonably possible.

So the determination of “grave necessity,” which would warrant general absolution, is ultimately the diocesan bishop’s call, but the code seems to envision only emergencies that could not have been foreseen.

In the case of your pastor (for whose workload, by the way, I have sympathy), he should extend the time period for confessions when he foresees a sizable crowd or frequent neighboring priests to help him conduct a penance service that would include the opportunity for individual confession.

Q Have a question with regard to the movie Fifty Shades of Grey. Is it a mortal sin to see that movie? Also, does the Church still rate movies, as it did in the past? And if so, where are those ratings listed? (Forest Hill, Maryland)

A I have not seen the movie Fifty Shades of Grey, nor do I have any intention or desire to see it. So I am limited to telling you what has been said by people whose opinions I value who have watched the film.

The Religious Alliance Against Pornography is an interfaith group that includes leaders from a wide range of religions—Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim. They have said that the theme of the movie “is that bondage, dominance and sadomasochism are normal and pleasurable.”

The group went on to observe that “the contrast between the message of Fifty Shades of Grey and God’s design for self-giving and self-sacrificing love, marriage and sexual intimacy could not be greater. The books and the movie undermine everything that we believe as members of the faith community.”

As to whether seeing the movie constitutes a mortal sin, that depends to some extent on the person’s motive for seeing it. If the purpose is a prurient desire for sexual gratification, it very well could be a mortal sin. (For purposes of review, a mortal sin requires serious matter, sufficient reflection and full consent of the will.)

My advice would be this: If the film could prove to be morally troublesome, why risk seeing it—even if it seems, as it seems, to be of any redeeming social value?

As to your question regarding movie reviews, Catholic News Service regularly reviews feature films in light of the background of the Church’s teaching and values. This important resource is available in many Catholic newspapers, as well as by Googling “Catholic movie reviews.”

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208)
Rest in peace

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


Biographies


HALL, David Lee, 61, St. Thomas of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, March 21. Father of Kendra Chavez, Patricia Hall, Kimberly Rangel-Chavez and Nicholas Kern. Grandfather of five.


JOHNSTON, Elizabeth, 92, St. Mary, Greensburg, March 19. Mother of Carol and Ross Johnston. Aunt of several.


NEWCOMER, Joseph Edward, 72, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Brother of Patricia and Thomas Newcomb.


SHEARER, Marilyn (Robbit), 69, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Indianapolis, Dec. 25. Mother of Margaret Boss, Elizabeth Todd, Patricia, Jim and Joe Sheritin. Grandmother of 13.


Franciscan Sister Angela Benediet served in Catholic schools for more than 50 years

Franciscan Sister Angela Benediet died on March 29 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 104.

The Most Holy Name of Jesus Funeral was celebrated on March 31 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Mary Angela Benedet was born on Dec. 12, 1910, in Chicago Heights, Ill. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on Dec. 27, 1929, and professed final vows on July 2, 1955.

During 85 years as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Angela ministered as an educator for more than 50 years in Catholic schools in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. In the archdiocese, she served at St. Louis School in Batavia, 1942, and at Lawrence School from 1951-52, the former Holy Trinity School from 1953-70, and St. Michael the Archangel School from 1970-85.

Sister Angela was also known for her musical talent, frequently playing violin solos during Masses in the parishes in which she served. She also sought to minister to the poor, sick and elderly in her ministry assignments.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100.
Billboards in Connecticut invite people to pray

BLOOMFIELD, Conn. (CNS)—Billboards along some of the major routes that invite drivers to pray, “I love you Jesus,” are all part of Father Edmund Nadolny’s prayer billboard campaign to form a parish without borders.

The blue and white billboards, which bear these words, a silhouette of Jesus and Father Nadolny’s name and telephone number, have been attracting attention for several weeks along state Routes 8, 9 and 89, Interstates 91 and 95, as well as some local roads.

“It can be read from two viewpoints. Either the driver is saying ‘I love you Jesus,’ or Jesus is saying, ‘I love you,’” explained Father Nadolny.

In either case, he said, prayer is banned in the schools, but “in either case, it’s a prayer.”

The billboard effort to build a parish without borders is just the latest of Father Nadolny’s many uses of the medium.

The priest, now 82, said he has been putting up billboards, on and off and to varying degrees, for 35 years.

The priest has been called “God’s salesman” by the Republican-American newspaper in Waterbury because his billboards have become such fixtures in the state.

Other billboards over the years have said, “Jesus, Mary, I love you,” “Thank you Jesus” and “Lord, I know you remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together cannot handle.”

“I did those when I had a parish, so now that I’m retired I’m building a different sort of parish, a parish without borders,” he said.

What was in the news on April 9, 1965? Changes to the local Catholic Charities agency, and rumors about mixed marriage laws

By Brandon A. Evans

This week, we continue to examine what was going on in the Church and the world 50 years ago as seen through the pages of The Criterion.

Here are some of the items found in the April 9, 1965, issue of The Criterion:

• Pontiff raps divisive elements in Church
• Lay board enlarged: Catholic Charities adopting new name

“The ‘upsetting’ process underway throughout the universal Church has reached still another major organization in the archdiocese—the Catholic Charities Bureau.

Father Donald Schmidlin, M.S.W., archdiocesan director of Catholic Charities, this week announced a new name for the agency and the appointment of nine additional people to its board of directors.

‘Catholic Social Services’ has been chosen as the new title for the well-known ‘Catholic Charities Bureau,’ which has carried on humanitarian activities in Indianapolis for over 100 years.

The name Catholic Social Services more accurately describes our function,” Father Schmidlin stated. ‘The agency is not simply a charitable organization to aid the needy. Our staff helps to families and individuals who can’t solve their problems alone—and these problems can be of an infinite variety.’

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org

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Ministry

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer an off-campus online theology classes.

• Courses on the Catechism of the Catholic Church from CDU
• All 12 courses for a Certificate in Lay Ministry available online
• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners
• Employees also receive reimbursement upon course completion

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

Employment

COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY
Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church
Louisville, KY

St. Gabriel the Archangel parish, a vibrant Catholic community of over 2,000 families in Louisville, KY, seeks an individual who feels called to minister to middle school and high school youth. This full time, salaried position will be responsible for growing and implementing programs that empower young people to live as disciples of Christ encouraging spiritual and personal growth.

The preferred candidate will possess the following minimum qualifications: practicing member of the Roman Catholic Church; bachelor’s degree in Theology, Religious Studies, or related field; two years practical experience with teens in a parish setting; leadership experience; and vision consistent with the guiding principles of “Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry.”

To apply, send cover letter, professional resume, and current recommendations by April 24th, 2015 to:

Saint Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church
ATTN: Youth Ministry Search
5085 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291
jschwartlose@stgabriel.net
Cloister’s restrictions allow them to be ‘free for God,’ say Carmelites

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (CNS)—Nestled beside St. Agnes Church and School, the Carmelite Monastery blends into the brick facades that line a busy stretch of Newburg Road in Louisville. Carpooling families and dwellers of the Highlands area zip by at all hours rushing from one commitment to the next.

In contrast, behind the monastery’s pale orange bricks, eight women religious—members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites—have only one commitment. They live a quiet, intense life of prayer in the tradition of St. Teresa of Avila, the 16th-century Spanish mystic and doctor of the Church.

On March 28, the nuns celebrated the 500th birthday of this saint who is credited with reforming the Carmelite Order and founding the branch of Discalced Carmelites, who include those living and working in Louisville.

About four dozen people attended the liturgy, including members of the Secular Order Discalced Carmelite Community of the Holy Spirit—a local lay organization—and Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville.

In his homily, the archbishop expressed his gratitude “for the gift of Carmelite Sisters.”

He noted that St. Teresa was a “woman of contemplation and action.”

“She proves that the farther we get away from prayer, the less we do, because we are concerned about ourselves,” he said.

“She reminds us that in prayer, not only do we receive the joy of coming close to the Lord Jesus, but also we receive the power, the energy for action and true concern in the world.”

During the liturgy, the Carmelites worshipped from behind their full enclosure, or papal enclosure, as it is called. The nuns are permitted to leave the cloister only under special circumstances and with the proper permission.

At the Louisville monastery, what in most churches is the rear wall of the sanctuary serves as a divider for the sisters. They worship on the other side of that brick wall.

The altar stands against the center of this wall and the celebrant faces the sisters—with his back to the rest of the congregation—during the liturgy of the Eucharist. Neutral-colored metal bars separate the altar from the nuns’ worship area.

The Carmelites live within their enclosure to safeguard the silence and solitude that make their contemplative lives of prayer possible, said the prioress, Mother John Baptist of the Lamb of God.

In the monastery’s reception and visiting areas, the sisters speak to visitors through “the turn”—a half-barrel shaped wooden divider that rotates and has a grid of tiny holes through which voices can carry.

Close friends and relatives may visit nuns “in the speak,” rooms that are divided by thick black grates—arranged in a grid of two-inch or so squares. Mother John and the sub-prioress, Sister Mary Teresa of Jesus, were interviewed by The Record, Louisville’s archdiocesan newspaper, in “the speak.”

The nuns said their monastery’s restrictive appearance belies the utter freedom, warmth and simplicity they feel within their enclosure and its regimented life.

“My hands and feet know where they need to be so my head and heart are free for God,” explained Sister Mary Teresa.

Mother John, in a gentle, halting voice, said that St. Teresa of Avila, also known as St. Teresa of Jesus, envisioned a domestic life for Carmelites, one that had the same dynamics and atmosphere as family life.

Life at the monastery revolves around prayer amid ordinary chores, she said.

Throughout the day—spent almost entirely in silence—the nuns move between solitary prayer in their cells, prayer as a community, and the work of the household.

Their schedule, seclusion and all the trappings of the life are designed to allow prayer to flow freely throughout the day.

Sister Mary Teresa noted, “We don’t just experience God in moments. It’s the very fabric of your life.”

While everything else is regimented, their individual prayer has no prescribed form.

“The approach is conversational,” said Mother John. “Prayer is intimate conversation with God. Our spirituality is very simple.”

Monastic life, she said, comes with an “inner freedom to focus on the one thing that is most important—relationship with God.”

While the sisters spend most of their time in solitary prayer, deepening their “friendship with God,” two hours of the day are dedicated to mental or “mental” prayer in the chapel—as a community.

The nuns also share each evening in recreation, a time when they may speak and interact. This time is important.

Mother John said, because it releases any tensions that may have arisen in the day and helps the nuns bond.

The nuns, however, don’t discuss their spirituality. That is something deeply personal, said Mother John.

Work at the monastery is much like work in any home—but on a larger scale.

The monastery was built for 21 sisters. They try to be self-sustaining. Caring for the needs of older sisters has become more and more a part of the life. Mother John and Sister Mary Teresa are the youngest sisters, and they have reached the half-century mark.

While the community is supported by donations, the nuns also support themselves by distributing altar breads. Most of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Louisville receive their hosts from the nuns. They also distribute the unleavened bread to churches in other states and Bermuda.

The monastery welcomes visitors to a daily 8 a.m. Mass. Visitors also are allowed to visit “the turn” from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., where they can ask the sisters to pray for a special intention.

(Prayer requests also may be mailed to the Carmelite Monastery, 1740 Newburg Rd., Louisville, Ky. 40205.)†

Pro-lifers criticize new abortion clinic offering spa-type of setting

CHEVY CHASE, Md. (CNS)—A new clinic in a Washington suburb that offers a spa-type setting for women seeking an abortion using RU-486 seems to be telling women “that abortion is not complicated at all,” said a commentary posted on National Right to Life’s online news site.

“A woman wants one. A woman [or a girl] gets one. She moves on—and woe be to anyone who dares to disagree that having an abortion is essentially indistinguishable from a quick trip to the spa for a pedicure,” wrote Dave Andrusko, the pro-life organization’s news editor.

He made the comments about a clinic called Carafem that opened on March 30 just outside of Washington in Chevy Chase. According to The Washington Post, its owners have created a “spa-like” experience for women with a very open and unabashed approach to pregnancy termination.

Carafem’s website says it specializes in first-trimester abortions, up to about 10 weeks of pregnancy, using only the RU-486 medical abortion procedure. It charges $400 for the procedure, about $100 less than the average cost of a surgical abortion. The staff, led by board certified OB/GYNs, will “greet clients with warm tea, comfortable robes and a matter-of-fact attitude,” the Post story said.

The clinic also offers manicures, pedicures and wraps. The “ spa” idea is not about to go away any time soon.

The clinic is the latest extension of the key-abortion-is-no-big-deal mantra.”†