Local observances of Roe v. Wade decision raise voices for the voiceless

By Natalie Hoster

It was a typical winter day in Indianapolis and Terre Haute on Jan. 22—biting cold, with gray skies overhead and gusts of blistering wind.

What was atypical about the day was the number of people who braved such weather to march, pray aloud and hold signs declaring that all life is sacred, from conception to natural death.

In Indianapolis, several hundred people gathered in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral for Mass, followed by a several city-blocks march, as part of a local solemn observance of the 1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion.

“In an excavation of one Phoenician settlement in northern Africa, the bones of 20,000 children were found,” Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin noted in his homily. “They were sacrificed to the pagan god Melch. Many more than 20,000 children have been sacrificed in our country since January 22, 1973.”

The archbishop asked the congregation, “How do we deal with the injuries that have been inflicted upon 60 million children, as well as on the soul of our country?”

The answer, he said, lies in a paraphrasing of the words of the third chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, which served as the second reading during the Mass: “Put on gentleness, kindness, meekness, and above all, forgiveness,” the archbishop said.

“In our protests against the darkness that descended on our country 43 years ago, we reject all violence, be it physical violence or violent words. But we do not take a vow of silence. We tell the truth about God, human beings, human sin and divine mercy.

“On this day, we commit ourselves to pray for our country. We commit ourselves to reject all forms of violence, whether it is bombing, rejection of the other, fear of the foreigner or destruction of the voiceless. We promise with God’s help to tell the truth about human life and about God’s mercy.”

Foot-washing ritual not limited to men, Vatican says in new decree

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Following a request by Pope Francis, the Vatican issued a decree specifying that the Holy Thursday foot-washing ritual can include “all members of the people of God,” including women—a practice already observed by the pope and many priests around the world.

In a letter dated December 2014 and addressed to Cardinal Robert Sarah, the head of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, the pope said the rubric of the Roman Missal, which mentions only men as participants in the foot-washing rite, should be changed so that priests can choose from all members of the Church.

The pope said the change would help express the full meaning of Jesus’ gesture at the Last Supper, his “giving himself ‘to the end’ for the salvation of the world,” and his endless charity. However, the pope insisted those chosen be given “an adequate explanation of the meaning of the rite itself.”

The pope’s letter and the congregation’s decree were
March for Life marks 43rd anniversary of decision legalizing abortion

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“As we join in the fight against the scourge of abortion, our differences and our differences are there to be able to create the same amount of space for each other.”

Later, at the March for Life rally at the Washington Monument, attended by nearly 50,000, Carly Fiorina, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard who is running for the Republican presidential nomination, reminded the audience that the next president “will have the awesome responsibility to step up to the Supreme Court justices who will decide issues of life and religious liberty.”

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A pro-life advocate prays near the Supreme Court building during the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 22, the 43rd anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion in the U.S.

Pro-life supporters walk up Capitol Hill toward the U.S. Supreme Court building during the March for Life on Jan. 22, the 43rd anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion in the U.S. (CNS photo/Gary Cameron, Reuters)

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Evening Vigil for Life reflects ‘darkness’ and the call to be light

By Natalie Hoefer

Pro-life advocate Maria Hernandez did not travel to Washington for the March for Life this year as she has for the past three years. This year, she was one of the few who did not cite the weather as the reason.

Addressing the participants of the Vigil for Life, she explained her absence from the March for Life: “This year, I am blessed to be seven months pregnant with my fifth baby,” she said. “But I still wanted to be part of this most important day. So I was very surprised and excited to receive the call inviting me to share my story with all of you on this important day.”

Hernandez, who is the Ann Parish in Indianapolis, was one of three speakers at the archdiocesan Vigil for Life held at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Jan. 21 before the 43rd anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion.

This is the second year for the vigil, an event the archdiocese hopes to make annual, according to Deacon Michael Braun, director of the archdiocesan Secretariat of Pastoral Ministries.

“It’s important [to offer this vigil] because on Jan. 22, many people can’t participate in the local solemn observance of Roe v. Wade,” he explained. “This gives them an opportunity to pray the night before.”

About 250 people participated in the event, many of them lining up for the sacrament of reconciliation while praise and worship music resonated in the cathedral. Hernandez presented the first witness. She spoke of her own unwanted pregnancy, and how her choice to have her baby changed her life.

“Because I did that, God has blessed me in so many ways,” she said. “[My husband and I] were ready to have our little [Sara]. I met my wonderful husband Daniel, who legally adopted her. If Sara didn’t exist, my family would not exist either. Abortion destroys lives, families and entire generations!”

Hernandez chose to have her baby despite being far from her home in Mexico, despite being in a dead-end relationship, despite feeling lonely and angry with God. “[Sara] helped me understand how big and pure is the love that God has for us, his children, regardless of our mistakes.

“If you have messed up big time, like I did, you have a treasure in your hands. You have the power of your testimony. You have the power to save others from making huge mistakes. Don’t be afraid to share your story. God can turn our mess into a message!”

Debbie Miller, the next speaker, used her “mess” to create Healing Hidden Hurts, a ministry that provides counseling to those “afflicted by abortion to reconciliation, restoration, and peace of mind and heart.”

She shared how, married and having two children, she came to have an abortion at the age of 23. Her husband had been out of work, and when he told her she was expecting their third child, she worried that they could not afford another baby. She was told to get an abortion, or he would leave her.

“I told myself it was one of those hard things in life, that I had to put it behind and move on.” Miller said. “It wasn’t that simple. Her suffering increased over the course of the next 10 years.

Immediately afterward, I experienced a deep sadness, the sharp pain of anger, followed by emotional numbing, an inability to express sadness or joy. Toward the end of [the 10 years] I was crying, sobbing for no reason, with intense emotional pain, which led to impulses to commit suicide.

The thoughts of suicide scared Miller. She returned to Mass, then participated in a Christ Renews His Parish weekend that led to her reversion back to Catholicism and her relationship with God. She went to confession, had her civil marriage blessed and again started to receive the Eucharist.

“It was only by the grace of God and our commitment that my husband and I remained married,” she said. “A few years ago, my husband was baptized and entered the Church. Recently, we celebrated 44 years of marriage.”

Miller started the ministry Healing Hidden Hurts in 1999 “to be the woman that I had searched for when I needed help to heal from my abortion pain. In addition to the divine touch of the holy spirit, I believe it is the human touch from another woman—someone to listen, cry with us or hold us.”

The need for such a ministry as a result of the culture of death meshed with Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin’s reflection on darkness and light.

“It’s fitting that we meet in vigil, after the sun goes down,” he said. “We gather conscious of a darkness that is produced not by the setting of the sun, but by the eclipse of an ethic that recognizes all life as a gift from God.”

“How much darkness has been created by the decisions of the Supreme Court that were published on Jan. 22, 1973? How much has this darkness brutalized the American soul? When has it been acceptable for highly trained and idealistic people who are sworn to heal, to speak about selling body parts while sipping wine and eating a salad?” he asked, referring to the release of secretly taped videos in 2015 allegedly exposing Planned Parenthood of selling fetal remnants.

The battle against the culture of death is not an easy one, the archbishop said.

“Changing hearts is always the hardest part,” he admitted. “Hearts that are hardened are the hardest to change. But we must never tire of clarifying the message that abortion is not protecting life there where there is myth and confusion, demonstrating empathy and compassion and a deeper vision. Our task is to present the truth with civility, empathy and clarity.”

Archbishop Tobin reminded those present that they “are [God’s] people, called-out of darkness into his own wonderful light. In the darkness of this vigil, in the darkness of our world, we witness together the vulnerability of God who is hopelessly in love with his creation.”

He concluded his talk by addressing Christ in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar before him. “Lord Jesus, present here in the Holy Eucharist, you are the light of the world. No darkness can overcome you.”

Archbishop Tobin then began a eucharistic procession along the aisles of the cathedral before concluding the vigil.

Moving on from the abortion did not prove so simple. “I had to put it behind and move on,” Miller said.

“I’m glad we have this opportunity for those of us not able to take off work and travel, to link our hearts with the Church in 2013, felt that coming to the vigil was “the same thing as going to D.C. in heart.”

Love has never attended the March for Life, whose trips to the March for Life in Washington were cancelled due to the impending snowstorm. Students from Marian University, Roncalli High School and St. Mary Deanery parish schools—all in Indianapolis—and even from high schools in the Lafayette Diocese, cancelled trips yet a desire to pray in union with those in Washington as their reason for coming to the vigil.

“I’m glad there’s something to do to be in solidarity with everyone tonight,” said Olivia Kalscheur of Marian University.

Madeline Smith, a 16-year-old home-school student and a member of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, agreed. “It’s not as big [as the March for Life], but it’s still great to be connected,” she said.

David Love, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis who was received into the full communion of the Church in 2013, felt that coming to the vigil was “the same thing as going to D.C. in heart.”

Love has never attended the March for Life, but is drawn to the Catholic Church’s active stance in support of the sanctity of life.

“Being pro-life just wasn’t a focus of my former faith tradition,” he said. “You knew abortions were bad, but it wasn’t a major topic.

“I’m glad we have this opportunity for those of us not able to take off work and travel, to link our hearts with those who are there [in Washington].”

Durian adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the Vigil for Life at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, Brie Anne Eichhorn and Matt Faley, director of the archdiocese’s Office of Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, provide praise and worship music.

MARCH

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been enacted since 2010 including laws to stop dismemberment abortions, restrict medication abortions and informed consent.

Kristi L. Dugger, said the House override vote of President Barack Obama’s recent veto of a bill removing all federal funding to Planned Parenthood was scheduled for next week.

The rally was the evangelical community’s first formal involvement in the annual March for Life, which is held on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion virtually overnight.

“We are grateful for your leadership on the culture of life,” said Daly, president of Focus on the Family. “It’s been an honor to serve you and be a part of the fight the human rights abuse of abortion,” Monahan-Mancini told the crowd.

After the rally, participants marched up Massachusetts Avenue to the U.S. Supreme Court as snow began to fall—the beginning of what turned into a major blizzard and left more than two feet of snow in Washington, with outer suburbs receiving even more. Among those headed to the court were Little Sisters of the Poor, wearing buttons that read “Life, Liberty and Loving Service.” and a reference to the government mandate: “We will have nun of it.”

Deacon Michael Braun, director of the archdiocesan Secretariat of Pastoral Ministries, leads a eucharistic procession during the Vigil for Life at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Jan. 21. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin carries the Blessed Sacrament at the back of the procession. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Rebecca Niemerg, right, director of the archdiocese’s Office of Young Adult and Family Life, accepts donations in the narthex of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. On Jan. 21 before the Vigil for Life, an event for prayer for those unable to attend a local Roe v. Wade solemn observance event on Jan 22.

Abbey Allen, left, Ashley Barnett, Megan Strobel and Mary Cole, all members of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, pose with Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin after the Vigil for Life at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Jan. 21. Abbey, Megan and Mary are among the middle school and high school students for whom Tobin is youth minister at St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

During adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the Vigil for Life at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, Brie Anne Eichhorn and Matt Faley, director of the archdiocese’s Office of Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, provide praise and worship music.
A challenge to care more deeply about our ‘neighbors’ in Christ


Young people, thank you for your witness of faith

Students attended a Jan. 22 Mass at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis marking the 45th anniversary of the tragic Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion on demand across the United States. After the liturgy, they participated in a prayerful procession along Meridian and Pennsylvania streets.

Other young people took part in peaceful, prayerful, pro-life gatherings that same day in Terre Haute and Bloomington.

And we can’t forget the students from central and southern Indiana who journeyed to Washington to participate in the annual March for Life on Jan. 22 to show their support for all life—from conception to natural death.

The groups provide more evidence that our young people are capable of changing hearts and building a culture of life. Though many secular media outlets in recent years have spent little time focusing on the Jan. 22 anniversary and its meaning for people of faith, God’s providence provided a unique news hook this year when pilgrims returning from the Washington march—including two groups from the archdiocese—and the surrounding area, our local Catholic Charities were once again the only long-term provider of disaster relief, maintaining a presence there for two and half years.

By far my greatest ongoing frustration in my role of leading Catholic Charities was to see so many unmet needs that we have not been able to tackle. The needs of the poor and vulnerable are profound, yet we have our limits.

For example, although we have a presence in the small town of Tell City at the southwestern tip of our archdiocese, there is a tremendous need for a homeless shelter. However, to date, we have not been able to find the necessary resources to support a shelter. This same situation repeats itself in nearly every comer of the archdiocese—especially in our rural areas—which happens to constitute the majority of our archdiocese.

I am proud to have played a role in bringing the Indiana bishops’ pastoral letter on poverty to fruition in 2015. After about 10 years of talking, the bishops asked a group of us to begin work on a document that would later become their pastoral letter on poverty. I am excited that a study guide to accompany the pastoral letter is being made available for use across the archdiocese.

The hope that I carry with me—and the challenge that I leave you with—are contained in the bishops’ pastoral letter on poverty: that you will all be inspired to care more deeply and faithfully for Christ, in our own way, as the bishops and sisters. May we all go forth, glorifying the Lord with our lives!

(David Siler, former executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities)

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Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from readers and delete those that meet any of the following criteria: Vague, less than 300 words,

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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

Letters to the Editor, The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

Reflection/David Siler

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**Answering the call to be missionary disciples**

*In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples* ("The Joy of the Gospel," #120).

**Te Liturgy of the Hours, the prayer of the Church that begins early in the morning and extends throughout the day at various appointed hours, concludes with Compline, just before bedtime.**

Compline always includes the prayer of Simeon, the old man we encounter in St. Luke’s Gospel when the infant Jesus is presented to the Lord in the Temple. Following his encounter with Jesus, the old man prays: “Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel” (Lk 2:29-32).

Two important themes are embedded in this prayer of Simeon. The first is his surrender to God, his willingness to be taken into God’s service. Abraham, confident that God’s promises to his chosen people are being fulfilled. The second theme is his recognition that what has been revealed in this child is for all people—Jews and gentiles alike. All who follow this child will be called to go out to the whole world.

Pope Francis has repeatedly urged all baptized Christians to accept our responsibility to be “missionary disciples” who spread Gospel joy to everyone we encounter. What’s more, he has challenged us to move beyond our “comfort zones” and go out to the peripheries, the margins of society, where people are different from us. The Church must be impelled to be missionary, not insular or self-referential.

Pope Francis has said, “The Church must step outside herself. To go where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but she must step out. Jesus tells us, ‘Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!’—But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, if I had a Church that was unwilling to take accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed: Go out, go out!”

When we throw off our comforters and go out into the street, we take a risk. We may encounter danger. But in taking this risk, we are following in the footsteps of Jesus who sent his disciples out two by two to become missionaries.

On the road to Emmaus, for example, Jesus accompanied two very discouraged and fearful disciples. He opened their eyes so that they might become missionaries who would proclaim with burning hearts his Good News—fearlessly and with great confidence—to others.

As Pope Francis writes in *The Joy of the Gospel,* “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’ If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, hardly after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: ‘We have found the Messiah!’ (Jn 1:41).”

*The Holy Father continues, “The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus, and many Samaritans came to believe in him ‘because of the woman’s testimony’ (v 39). So too, St. Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, ‘immediately proclaimed Jesus’ (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21).”* So why are we so slow to see what Simeon saw—the salvation which God has prepared in the sight of all peoples? And why aren’t we eager to “go out” and proclaim Gospel joy to everyone we meet?

*Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus.* Perhaps our hesitation stems from infrequent encounters with God’s love, a lack of closeness to the Lord. The remedies for that, of course, are prayer, more frequent reception of the sacraments and the practice of charity (love and service) toward our neighbors.

Let’s not hesitate. Emboldened by prayer, sacraments and love of neighbor, which reveal to us God’s mercy, let’s be true missionary disciples!
January 30
SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi School, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood. Annual Chili cook-off, 6-9 p.m. Information: j.valvo-indpls@comcast.net.

February 4
St. Lawrence Church, 6950 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Open house, 4-6 p.m. Information: 317-235-2619 or karolvarfiejko@gmail.com.

February 5

February 6
Marian University chapel, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. Lumen Divi Catholic Business Group, Mass and monthly meeting, 6:30-8:30 a.m., break, $15 per person. Information: 317-435-3447 or lumen.dh@comcast.net.

Families to attend for unfolded Planned Parenthood at 30 S. St. for prayers, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at St. Patrick Adoration Chapel at 1807 Poplar St. for Divine Mercy Chaplet, completed around 10:30 a.m.


The Willows, 5729 Westfield Blvd., Indianapolis. St. Michael’s parish on Tap, Msgr. Joseph F. Schardel, presenter, 7-9:30 p.m., $35 per couple includes dinner, cash bar available; registration required by Jan. 31 at stmichaelind.org or call 317-259-8373.

Holy Family Church, 181 W. Main St., Richmond. Chocolate Fest and silent auction, 5-8 p.m., $5 children 6-12 years of age, $10 couples 13 years of age and older, advance ticket sales only. Information: 765-835-2552 or Karen.milb@comcast.net.

February 7-8
St. Agnes Church, 1008 Mcloyd Road, Nasville. “The Gifts of the Gospel” Parish Mission, led by Msgr. Paul Koetter, Feb. 7 light lunch at noon, followed by first session from 1-2:30 p.m.; Feb. 8, Mass at 9 a.m., followed by second session from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; third session from 7-8:30 p.m., reconciliation available for all, all are invited. Information: 317-288-2778 or 317-543-5915.

February 9
St. Lawrence Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Indianapolis, Life in the Spirit Seminar, session three of seven, 7-9 p.m. Information: Joseph Valvo, 317-546-7328 or vjohnvalvo@comcast.net.

February 10
St. Luke Parish, 4536 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Parish Assisted Living, 10 a.m.-noon, and prayer, 5 p.m. followed by station of the cross; exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 5-8 p.m., Feb. 10, Msgr. Paul Koetter, Feb. 11, St. Luke Parish, 4536 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Parish Assisted Living, 10 a.m.-noon, and prayer, 6-8 p.m., Feb. 11, Msgr. Paul Koetter, Feb. 12, St. Luke Parish, 4536 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Parish Assisted Living, 10 a.m.-noon, and prayer, 6-8 p.m., Feb. 12.

February 11
St. John the Evangelist Church, 5946 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. The retreat begins at 7 p.m. on Feb. 12 and ends at 1 p.m. on Feb. 14.

A “Weekend of Peace for Women” retreat will be offered at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Drive, in Mt. St. Francis, on Feb. 12-14. The weekend is an opportunity to contemplate your walk with God and with his help for your life. It offers mutual direction by retreat leaders from the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. To register, call the office of Mount St. Francis, 317-851-8344. †

February 12
Mount St. Francis to offer weekend of Peace for Women retreat on Feb. 12-14

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February 13
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February 14
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March 1
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March 2
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March 3
Mount St. Francis to offer weekend of Peace for Women retreat on Feb. 12-14

A “Weekend of Peace for Women” retreat will be offered at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Drive, in Mt. St. Francis, on Feb. 12-14.

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March 4
Mount St. Francis to offer weekend of Peace for Women retreat on Feb. 12-14

A “Weekend of Peace for Women” retreat will be offered at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Drive, in Mt. St. Francis, on Feb. 12-14.

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March 5
Mount St. Francis to offer weekend of Peace for Women retreat on Feb. 12-14

A “Weekend of Peace for Women” retreat will be offered at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Drive, in Mt. St. Francis, on Feb. 12-14.

The weekend is an opportunity to contemplate your walk with God and with his help for your life. It offers mutual direction by retreat leaders from the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. To register, call the office of Mount St. Francis, 317-851-8344. †
By Gina Kuntz Fleming

As a product of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, I have fond memories from every grade. I cherish the wonderful teachers who challenged me and supported me, as well as the dedicated volunteers who coached our teams through the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). I recall countless occasions when I witnessed and experienced our faith in action. I am reminded of the numerous opportunities for faith formation, intellectual development and social growth presented throughout my tutelage, and I continue to treasure the incredible friendships established in Catholic schools that remain with me today.

And now, as I serve as superintendent of our Catholic schools, my team and I strive to ensure that the nearly 24,000 young people in our schools today have the same great formational experience I had.

My husband and I rely upon the support of the Catholic community as we raise two young men, one a sophomore at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis and the other a seventh-grader at Holy Name School in Beech Grove. Through it all, God’s grace and love have been evident in the pastors, employees, parishioners and school family members with which we have been blessed.

As Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin recently shared, “Academic research demonstrates that Catholic schools are anchor institutions in neighborhoods and communities throughout America. As communities of faith, they are centers of formation that develop graduates who are more likely to vote and be civically engaged, are more likely to engage in community service, are less likely to engage in criminal behavior, and who have higher earning potentials throughout their lifetimes.”

For further information about the benefits of Catholic schools, you can visit our friends at the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education at ace.nd.edu/resources/catholic-school-research/research-case-studies/catholic-schools.

Catholic Schools Week is a wonderful time to pause and thank all those responsible for the amazing impact our Catholic schools have had on our communities.

I am honored to serve beside dedicated professionals who profess their faith through their work and service both in the Office of Catholic Schools and on each school campus.

I am thankful for the pastors and school leaders whose focus on mission and Catholic identity, leadership and governance, academic excellence and operational vitality result in unceasing improvement of and continued prosperity for students, families and parish communities.

I am grateful to our parents, grandparents and generous benefactors who invest in our youth, valuing their formation in the faith that is integral to the life of our Church.

Please join me in thanking a teacher who has made a positive difference in the life of your child.

Thank the school leaders who go above and beyond to ensure a well-rounded, comprehensive educational experience for our youth.

Please pray for the continued growth of each child and family we serve. And, if you have not yet had the privilege of experiencing our Catholic schools firsthand, please contact a nearby school for a tour—it promises to bring you hope for a bright future in our Church and our world.

Happy Catholic Schools Week to all! †
Unique process ‘enhances Catholic teaching,’ develops leadership skills

By Natalie Hoeter

Alison Stevens puts first things first, making sure her homework is done before she plays. Danny O’Gara doesn’t worry about the end in mind, knowing that everything he does is toward the bigger goal of getting to heaven.

Lucy Clark likes the synergy in her school, seeing how students work together to accomplish goals.

And Patrick McPherson now seeks to understand others, developing a friendship with a classmate he used to have trouble accepting.

These are just some of the impacts the four students of St. Pius X School in Indianapolis noted about their school’s “The Leader in Me” (TLIM) initiative, three years into the process.

The Leader in Me is a school-based process created by the FranklinCovey company. Based on Stephen Covey’s book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, it is designed to teach students how to be empowered leaders not just in school but at home, in the community and—as at St. Pius X School implemented it—in their Catholic faith.

‘The big goal is that you want to get to heaven’

The idea for implementing TLIM at St. Pius X emulates the first three of the seven habits: “be proactive,” “put first things first” and “begin with the end in mind.”

The process started four years ago, when then-principal Bill Herman read Covey’s book. Thinking proactively, Herman wanted to start reading it with eighth-graders to have them be leaders in the school,” said Keith Yost, the school’s director of student leadership and physical education.

“That led to, ‘Why wouldn’t we want this for all our students?’

Several teachers and administrators attended a TLIM summit in Ohio, conducted research, and spoke to leaders at St. Joan of Arc School in Indianapolis, which implemented TLIM in 2012. The most important question of the St. Pius X School team revolved around the end goal of the school: to create students who know, live and love their Catholic faith.

‘Could we do this for our school to enhance Catholic values?’ asked Yost of the administration’s litmus test for implementing the process. “That’s our biggest focus. We wanted to use it as a tool to enhance Catholic teaching.”

With St. Joan of Arc School’s examples and ideas, the St. Pius X administration saw clear connections between the seven habits and living the faith.

For instance, hanging in the main hallway of the school are canvases painted by students, listing the seven habits and the beatitude each represents.

The connection between the habits and the Catholic faith is clear to teacher Brian Stoffel, who is in the sixth grade.

“One of the habits that connect with the Catholic faith is ‘begin with the end in mind’—the big goal is that you want to get to heaven. ‘Put first things first’—mean putting God first,” he said.

In terms of school and family life, the four students interview the Criterion for TLIM. ‘The parents are impressed by the kids’

The parents are impressed by the kids by the students’ lighthouse kaizen that informs other parents and the community about The Leader in Me, created “synergy” at home.

“Our family chose to plant gardens with butterfly-attracting fauna to support the butterflies that her class raised and released as a science project.

She also described how her mom, a member of the parents’ lighthouse kaizen that informs other parents and the community about The Leader in Me, created “synergy” at home.

“We would always fight over who had to do the dishes,” she said. “Then my mom created a list of who had to wash, who had to set the table, who had to clean the countertops. It created synergy at home.”

“Our family chose to plant gardens with butterfly-attracting fauna to support the butterflies that her class raised and released as a science project.

“Now I have kids come up to me and say, ‘Hey, I heard you have this going on. I want to help.’ ”

Real estate hears positive feedback from parents after they’ve attended a student-led parent-teacher conference, a process the school started two years ago.

“The kids have binders where they keep track of their grades and victories both inside and outside of school,” she explained. “With the teacher there, the students go over their binders and tell their parents how they’re doing, where they think they might need help or to improve. The parents are really impressed.

“I think [TLIM] has been a really good thing for our kids. I would recommend it to any school.”

Veteran teacher embraces students and their differences

By John Shaunnessy

In her 20 years of teaching at the same Catholic school, Annette Brack has always had a special place in her heart for children who need an extra measure of love and compassion.

And she always smiles when she thinks of the girl that she offered a unique deal.

“Twenty years ago, I had a little girl who was being raised by her father,” recalls Brack, a third-grade teacher at St. Michael School in Brookville. “Her mother wasn’t part of her life at all. The girl had a challenging time being honest. I caught her in several lies before the first month of school had passed.

“I talked to her about how lying was never OK and how Jesus always knows when we lie, even if no one else does.”

Brack also understood that the girl “wanted to be like everyone else.” So she used that knowledge to her advantage.

“We eventually got to this goal, ‘OK, you can only lie one time today,’” says Brack, a finalist for the 2015 Saint Theodora Guerin Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor for an educator in the archdiocese. “She asked, ‘It’s OK to lie once?’ My response was, ‘Well, you can, but no one else can.’ She said, ‘I want to be like everyone else. I won’t lie anymore.’ As far as I know, that was the end of the lies.”

Even though Brack knows that children want “to fit in” with their peers, she also encourages them to accept what makes them special.

“God made us all special, different and unique in his own image and likeness,” she says. “We must embrace our differences and each other’s. I’m very compassionate when it comes to making all children feel special and loved for their differences.”

Above, in this Jan. 6 photo, pictures of kindergarten classmates with caps foretelling their graduation from St. Pius X School in Indianapolis in 2024 serve as an example of one of the seven habits the school promotes in its “The Leader in Me” process: ‘Begin with the end in mind.’ (Photos by Natalie Hoeter)
The success stories in Catholic schools in the archdiocese are countless. They range from a young child in grade school learning to read and learning the fundamentals of the Catholic faith to a high school student preparing for college and becoming involved in service that helps change the life of another person.

There are also the success stories that come when a student gives everything they have to their academics, their athletics, their artistic pursuits, their faith.

The 2015-16 school year in the archdiocese has already led to numerous successes, ones that happened quietly and others that gained headlines. Here is a small sampling of those successes, captured in a recap we call, “16 Success Stories of Catholic Schools in 2016.”

(Gina Fleming, the archdiocese’s superintendent of Catholic schools, also contributed to this story.)

1. During the past school year, more than 600 Catholic school students in the archdiocese were baptized as Catholics.

2. More than $5.6 million was raised in tax credit scholarship gifts in 2015 to help children in the archdiocese receive a Catholic education.

3. Troy Cockrum, the director of innovative teaching at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) School in Indianapolis, was one of just 28 educators in the United States who was chosen to fly on NASA’s Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, the world’s largest flying telescope.

4. When Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis won the Class 3A state championship in football, it also established an Indiana record for most state championships in football—13.

5. Jay Ruckelshaus, a 2011 graduate of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, was selected as a Rhodes Scholar, just one of the 32 recent college graduates from across the country to receive the prestigious academic honor this year.

6. Catholic high school students in the archdiocese provide more than 100,000 hours of service during the school year.

7. The girls’ volleyball team of Our Lady of Providence Jr./Sr. High School in Clarksville won their third straight state championship, this time in Class 3A.

8. Audrey Shannon of Our Lady of Providence Jr./Sr. High School was named the winner of the state Class 3A Mental Attitude Award for girls’ volleyball, recognizing her mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability.

9. Keith Owen of Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis was honored for those same qualities when he was selected as the winner of the state’s Class A Mental Attitude Award for boys’ soccer.

10. About 94 percent of Catholic high school students in the archdiocese went on to college.

11. A team of teachers at St. Barnabas School in Indianapolis was chosen for a special three-year program at the University of Notre Dame that focuses on helping teachers inspire student learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math. St. Barnabas is just one of 10 schools from across the country chosen for this summer-based program.

12. The girls’ soccer team of Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis won the state championship in Class 2A.

13. Lindsay Corsaro of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis was named a McDonald’s All-American, a prestigious national honor for high school basketball players.

14. The girls’ volleyball team of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis won the Class 4A state championship—completing an undefeated season that solidified its ranking as the number one team in the country.

15. St. Anthony Catholic School in Indianapolis made the transition from being a charter school to a Catholic school at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.

16. Enrollment in Catholic schools across the archdiocese is nearly 24,000 students, an increase of about 2,000 students since 2010. And all schools continue to focus on the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth of every young person, with the main goal of preparing them for heaven.

Focus on Catholic faith and prayer guides teacher and her students

As she strives to make faith the central part of her students’ lives, Amy Plant makes sure it has a visible place in her classroom, too. “My favorite part of my classroom is the Faith Focus wall,” says Plant, a third grade teacher at St. Patrick School in Terre Haute. “On this wall, we have the Beatitudes, common prayers we use daily, the Apostle’s Creed and pictures of all of our families. This wall represents the journey we are taking while becoming Jesus’ disciples in our classroom, school and Church community. The wall has a caption stating, ‘Every child is a story yet to be told.’”

Plant has plenty of stories to share about her students, including a favorite from a year she taught children in the first grade.

“This group was full of energy, inquisitiveness and a hearty helping of faith,” says Plant, a finalist for the 2015 Saint Theodora Guerin Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor for an educator in the archdiocese.

“Each day, we would always begin religion with our class prayer circle. In previous years, my prayer circle would take about five minutes to pass Prayer Bear around the circle of friends. During that particular year, our prayer circle would last between 15 to 20 minutes.

“Although we were missing out on 10 minutes of science or social studies, I knew that the time spent praying with one another was more important. My students learned to respect each other’s petitions. They learned to listen with an open ear and heart. Most importantly, they learned that their prayers were important to the group and to me.”

Teacher Amy Plant listens as Amyah Lewis shares her observations about her project on plant seedlings. (Submitted photo)
High school campus ministry programs help deepen students’ faith

By Sean Gallagher

There’s a great variety in the 12 Catholic high schools across central and southern Indiana. Some are located in the middle of large cities. Others are found in small towns. Their student enrollments extend from more than 1,200 to less than 200. Some have student bodies that are largely Catholic. Others have students from a broad mixture of faith communities.

But an essential goal of each is to help students grow in their relationship with Christ and the Church, or at least give them the spiritual knowledge and tools to be able to start that relationship.

“It’s the same mission in every domestic Church in the archdiocese,” said Jeff Traylor, director of campus ministry at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. “Every parent has that mission and goal. It’s got to be our goal, from a home-schooled class of one to a Roncalli school of 1,300. It’s our mission as the Church.”

How that mission is achieved can vary depending on the circumstances of a particular high school, but there are campus ministry programs in them all dedicated to striving toward that goal.

Chea-Mign Drumm does this as the faith formation director at Father Michael Shavez Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison.

Unlike larger schools that might have a full-time campus minister, Drumm teaches six classes a day in addition to leading campus ministry efforts at Shavez. But she actually takes joy in wearing so many hats.

“I toss them on and off, and wear them all at the same time,” Drumm said with a laugh.

Having a smaller number of students allows her to get to know them well, and better serve their spiritual needs.

“They feel comfortable coming to me, sharing whatever about their day, whether it was a good thing or a bad thing,” Drumm said. “It’s easy to have one-on-one conversations about their faith life.”

“I wouldn’t trade it for the world. I can deal with all of the lack of resources to have what I have with these kids.”

Brad Macke is in a similar position at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, which has an enrollment of around 215 students. He likes being able to build relationships with the students there.

“Part of passing on our faith is the relational element, because the faith itself is relational,” Macke said. “The kids are never really anonymous. They’re known by their teachers.”

One of his students is senior Maggie Bruns. Since the start of her junior year, she has helped to organize the school’s service projects, which have included assembling packages of food and then distributing them to homeless people in Cincinnati.

“Packaging the food and handing it out to the people who needed it who were so grateful makes me want to do [more] stuff for other people and help them,” said Maggie, a member of St. Michael Parish in Brookville.

She also said that her time at Oldenburg Academy has helped deepen her faith.

“Going to a Catholic school where there are more teenagers who I can connect with on my level helps to make me feel more connected,” said Maggie, a member of St. Michael Parish in Brookville.

By John Shaughnessy

For example, in the seventh grade, when we read the story of the Good Samaritan, the students learn that they are to live the Samaritan’s compassionate act by encouraging a downcast student, including lonely classmates, or simply listening to one another,” notes Klee, who teaches sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade religion at Christ the King School in Indianapolis.

That was the case with seminarian Charlie Wessel, who graduated last year from Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis.

He is now a freshman at Bishop Simon Bronté College Seminary and is also enrolled at Marian University, both in Indianapolis.

Wessel said that the retreats that he went on annually during his four years at Chatard helped prepare him for his future.

“They definitely put me in an atmosphere of being closely connected to people I wasn’t normally connected with,” he said. “That definitely prepared me for the atmosphere of the seminary, because now I am in an atmosphere of an almost permanent retreat. I know what I should be striving for because of the retreats that I went on.”

Wessel’s time at Chatard also gave him opportunities to live his faith through service that he continues at Bronté.

One opportunity that made a lasting impression on him happened in his sophomore year at Chatard when students in a theology class visited with a group of homeless people living in a camp under a bridge in downtown Indianapolis.

“They had a big impact on me,” Wessel said. “Now, at the seminary, my roommates and I at least once a week go downtown and pass out food to the homeless and interact with them.”

Although Catholic schools in the archdiocese have campus ministry programs that are distinct from classes that teach students about the faith, Chatard principal Deacon Rick Wagner said that students experience them as a unified whole.

“They view it as what Catholic schools do,” said Deacon Wagner, who also serves as Chatard’s vice president for mission and ministry. “They form them in the faith. We pray before every class. We have adoration once a month. We have Mass once a week. We have service. This is what we do. Together, all of those elements create what should be our identity as a Catholic school.”

Students experience a deep connection between their faith and their classroom experience, in part, Deacon Wagner said, because a broad variety of Chatard faculty members help lead the students’ retreats.

“They see what the kids go through,” he said. “That, then, carries into the classroom.”

With an enrollment of about 700 students, Chatard is able to speak its Catholic identity strongly, says Deacon Wagner.

“We want every child engaged in the life of campus ministry through retreats, service and opportunities in other ways,” he said. “They’re being formed in the faith. They’re not being taught. They’re being formed.”

Deacon Wagner said having such a large student body makes planning all of the campus ministry events a logistical challenge.

Traylor faces the same and other obstacles at Roncalli, where the enrollment is more than 1,200.

“When you have this many students, it’s harder to spend more time one-on-one with them,” Traylor said. “That’s a challenge. But it’s a great problem to have.”

“I’ll take it any day of the week, because it means that we have students who want to be encountered and want to have those experiences.” †

Religion teacher hopes his approach will connect students with God

By John Shaughnessy

Daniel Klee is always looking for an opportunity to connect Bible stories to everyday life for his middle school religion students.

For example, in the seventh grade, when we read the story of the Good Samaritan, the students learn that they are to live the Samaritan’s compassionate act by encouraging a downcast student, including lonely classmates, or simply listening to one another,” notes Klee, who teaches sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade religion at Christ the King School in Indianapolis.

“For Klee, it’s all part of the process of stressing the bonds that connect us, a process that will hopefully lead to unity with God.”

“Jesus lived in a divided world, and middle school students today face many issues of division whether due to family circumstances, feelings of social isolation or even self-identity,” notes Klee, a 2015 finalist for the Saint Theodora Guérin Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor for an educator in the archdiocese. “It is comforting and challenging to know that a fundamental principle of Catholic teaching woven throughout our curriculum is unity.”

Klee takes a three-year approach with his students.

“In the sixth grade, students learn that God chose to send Jesus for our salvation. We talk about ways we can harm our close friendship with God, as well as how we can participate in the sacraments that Christ made possible to restore our friendship with him.”

“In the seventh grade, students learn that we are to develop responsible relationships with an emphasis on honesty, love and respect. I ask the seventh-graders to develop modern-day situations in which they must express these values.”

“In the eighth grade, students develop a moral conscience informed by Church teaching. Students read about different moral dilemmas, and then respond with how a well-formed conscience would help them make the right choice.”

It all leads to one goal.

“The challenge for the students is to apply what they learn to their own lives, so that one day they can be in union with God in heaven.” †
New program builds bridge between science and faith

By John Shaughnessy

At 13, Caroline Prentice looked forward to the challenge—a challenge that would combine a fun, different way to learn with an opportunity to better understand the troubling situations that some people face around the world.

In the challenge, Caroline and her classmates focused on the area of water filtration—a major problem in areas across Africa.

“We took soda bottles, cut them in half and filled them with things like tissue paper, sand and dirt and charcoal, and we tried to see if the water came out clean,” Caroline says. “The water project related back to how we have clean water, and how there isn’t clean water in parts of Africa.”

“I learned that it is not easy for people in Africa to get water, and they need people in developed countries to help them because water aids them in connecting with other resources like education, food markets and medical aid.”

It helps us be more grateful for what we do have, and it inspires us to believe we can make a difference in the lives of others who don’t have what we do.”

Caroline’s interest and inspiration reflect the enthusiastic response of many students at St. Barnabas School in Indianapolis—one of the outcomes of a team of teachers from the school being chosen for a special three-year program at the University of Notre Dame that focuses on helping teachers inspire student learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The team from St. Barnabas was just one of 10 schools from across the country to be chosen for the summer-based, Notre Dame program. The teachers hope to share what they learn with schools across the archdiocese.

“The number of kids in America who are going into STEM careers has nose-dived,” says Autumn Scheer, a member of the St. Barnabas team along with Doug Bauman, Megan Burnett and Ryan Schnurr.

“Around fifth- and sixth grade, students stop identifying themselves as an engineer, a scientist, an astronaut, a mathematician. It’s because they haven’t had enough authentic real-world experiences in those areas. They need competent teachers to get kids excited and keep that identity.”

To challenge her fifth-grade science students, Burnett created a fun assignment that combines creativity and teamwork with one of the most popular snacks for both children and adults: popcorn.

“The mission of Catholic schools is to form the entire student—academically, spiritually, physically, mentally,” Bauman says. “My wife teaches kindergarten here, and we have three kids here. When we say, ‘Today is STEM day,’ they leap out of bed. It gives kids another window of opportunity to express who they are.”

“In a firm believer as a Catholic that God has blessed us with our own unique set of gifts. Prior to us implementing STEM, our kids weren’t given the full opportunity to display their math and science skills in a very creative way. By having these STEM initiatives, it gives these kids an outlet. As a dad, I’m so happy that my kids are able to use the gifts God gave them in such a fruitful and fulfilling way.”

A team of teachers at St. Barnabas School in Indianapolis has been chosen for a special three-year program at the University of Notre Dame that focuses on helping teachers inspire student learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Here, math teacher Doug Bauman poses with his students after they worked to create new pizza boxes—a challenge that Bauman made after he ordered an extra-large pizza that was placed in a box that wouldn’t fit in his car. (Submitted photo)

While the Notre Dame program focuses on developing interest in STEM for fifth- to eighth-grade students, the teachers at St. Barnabas are trying to bring it to all grade levels at the school, including pre-kindergarten classes.

“I’m working with teachers in grade one and two,” says Schnurr, a fifth-grade teacher of math and social studies. “STEM has helped us understand what is being required at all grade levels. So we’re continuing to make these bridges.”

The best bridge, the teachers say, is how the focus connects to faith.

“The mission of Catholic schools is to form the entire student—academically, spiritually, physically, mentally,” Bauman says. “My wife teaches kindergarten here, and we have three kids here. When we say, ‘Today is STEM day,’ they leap out of bed. It gives kids another window of opportunity to express who they are.”

“In a firm believer as a Catholic that God has blessed us with our own unique set of gifts. Prior to us implementing STEM, our kids weren’t given the full opportunity to display their math and science skills in such a very creative way. By having these STEM initiatives, it gives these kids an outlet. As a dad, I’m so happy that my kids are able to use the gifts God gave them in such a fruitful and fulfilling way.”

Blessings abound as teacher creates special moments for students

By John Shaughnessy

In her 17 years as a teacher, Laura Domingo has kept a “gratitude journal” to capture special moments with her students.

“When I see a ‘light bulb’ moment, or when I see them practicing their faith in countless ways, these are the memories I record,” says Domingo, the fourth-grade teacher at St. Mary School in Greensburg. As one of the best blessings of her teaching career, she lists the ability to share her Catholic faith with her students.

“We use effective teaching strategies, and also have the faith component,” Domingo says.

“By John Shaughnessy

Laura Domingo always looks for ways to share her Catholic faith with students through the lessons she teaches and the books they read together. (Submitted photo)

Over the years, I’ve realized how important it is to tie God into our curriculum, and have challenged myself to do this,” says Domingo, a finalist for the 2015 Saint Theodora Guérin Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor for an educator in the archdiocese. “Prayer is first in our day. My students witness impromptu talks and prayers with God as I share our successes or pleasures, or give thanks for what God provides.”

“They smile when I pause and take a moment to say, ‘Hey, God, Joe really needs you right now. He doesn’t think he can get this, and we both know he can. Help me to convince him.'”

She often uses this approach as she works to strengthen her students’ reading ability.

“I tie in the moral perspective on characters as we read. What would Jesus do if he were praying?” “What commandment did Jesus just break in this chapter?” “What advice would you give?”

Write a post-it note prayer that a character might need at this point in the novel.

“It is the day-in, day-out successes that bring me joy. I put blood, sweat and tears into my students.”
Learning through play builds strong foundation for pre-K children

By Natalie Hoffer

Sunshine filtered through the row of windows as the group of 3- and 4-year-olds chose their desired group activity at Holy Cross Central School in Indianapolis. At one table, eight children pounded and rolled playdough.

“Look! It’s a octopus!” shouted one girl, holding up a playdough ball with dangling playdough legs.

“Mimi Barry smiles as a pre-school student at Holy Cross Central School in Indianapolis shows her a ball of playdough she made on Jan. 6. (Photo by Natalie Hoffer)

At another table, eight children used Q-tips, glue, construction paper and paint to make snowflake designs if they wanted. “I’m making a monster!” one little boy shouted, opting against a snowflake pattern. His teacher affirmed that “yes,” it was a scary monster.

The average person looking in on the scene might see children just being children. But Mimi Barry sees children learning social skills, dexterity, shapes and other skills while doing what they naturally do at this age—play.

“feel it’s important at this age, especially between the ages of 3-5, to begin with their learning just through play,” she said. “They’re not being rushed and pushed to learn their letters on worksheets, because eventually they get worn out, in my opinion. You want them to start off because they are strong, competent and capable. That influences what you expect from children, and also what you give them in their classroom in terms of activities. It’s very child-driven, experiential and hands-on.”

Sherman’s description of the Reggio Emilia approach mirrored Barry’s comments about learning through play.

“You would never see a child at St. Mary’s sit down with a workbook page,” Sherman said. “They work with real objects and natural material, and have conversations about what they are doing. We do a lot of project work, so children might have literacy and math and science that fall under project work.”

But is such “play learning” effective? The numbers indicate yes.

For many [children living in poverty], this is their chance to have a good future,” said Sherman. “Most [impoverished children] go into school one-and-a-half to two years behind. They lack the experience others are exposed to because their families are so challenged.”

Yet she went on to say that of last year’s class at St. Mary’s—93 percent of whom came from families living below the poverty level—89 percent entered kindergarten at the appropriate developmental age and skill level.

“If a child is involved in a program like [ours], it’s much more likely they won’t be incarcerated, will graduate from high school, and don’t go into special education,” Sherman said. “We believe that [such positive results] will happen at the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies.”

St. Mary’s success is supported by more than statistics. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has accredited the center, and the State of Indiana licensed it at the highest level on Indiana’s Paths to Quality rating scale.

While the Reggio Emilia approach has proven successful for the center, and while children at St. Mary Child’s Center and the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies schools are similar, the St. Mary’s coaches are “not there to force Reggio Emilia” on MTCA pre-K teachers.

“We are in there to support best practices in the classroom,” said Diane Pike, St. Mary’s director of curriculum and outreach.

“Coaches work side by side [with the teachers] and model ways to interact positively with children. They will support Mother Theodore Catholic Academies in best practices, doing what is best for the children. We’re not going in and making them do Reggio, but all [of our coaching] is through that lens, and when you do [what is seen through] that lens, it is best practices.”

Ruth Hittel, principal at Holy Cross Central School, welcomed the opportunity to receive pre-K best practices coaching.

“The majority of our staff are trained [in grades] K-8,” she said. “As we look to expand in the pre-school area, that’s not where our experience lies. But it is where the experience lies with St. Mary’s Child Center. The best choice of someone to coach our pre-school teachers would be the best early childhood program, which is St. Mary’s Child Center.”

One of the MTCA schools, St. Anthony School, recently received a grant to add an additional pre-school room, expanding their capacity from 20 students age 4 to 40 students ages 3 and 4. St. Mary’s Child Center has been hired to operate the pre-K program there next year.

“This school-in-school approach will allow the experts of St. Mary’s Child Center’s early childhood education to work with the experts of elementary education at St. Anthony’s,” said Gina Fleming, superintendent of the archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Schools.

“This makes for a natural transition from pre-K to elementary education, and builds a firm foundation for the young people. The best is that we’re capitalizing on the experience of those in the field, and meeting our core focus of serving every need of children in the context of Catholic education.”

Roncalli Celebrates Catholic Education

By Natalie Hoffer

The Class of 2015 earned over $20.3 million in college scholarships.

Over 74% of the RHS Class of 2015 graduated with an Academic Honors Diploma or higher.

Roncalli awarded more than $550,000 in need-based tuition assistance to RHS families for the 2015-2016 school year.

In the past 23 years, Roncalli students have collected more than 1.8 million canned food items for the poor.

The Class of 2015 completed over 51,000 hours of community service during their four years at RHS with every Roncalli student performing more than 150 hours of community service prior to graduation.

The archdiocese of Indianapolis north deanery schools

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The criterion Friday, January 29, 2016
Space flight helps educator lead students to a new dimension

By John Shaughnessy

As the NASA jetliner climbed to 40,000 feet in the night sky, Troy Cockrum became mesmerized by the stunning sight that suddenly came into view.

Straight ahead, he could see the stars that formed the Big Dipper. And just to the right, the brilliant, breathtaking Northern Lights flickered and danced in the distance, leaving Cockrum in awe.

That moment also left the director of innovative teaching at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) School in Indianapolis with one overriding wish.

“Troy Cockrum became mesmerized by the stunning sight that suddenly came into view.”

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What Makes a Catholic School Special

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• Centered in the person of Jesus Christ
• Contributing to the evangelizing mission of the Church
• Distinguished by excellence
• Committed to educate the whole child
• Steeped in a Catholic world view
• Sustained by Gospel witness
• Shaped by communion and community
• Accessible to all students
• Established by the expressed authority of the Bishop

(“Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools”; National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools)

RESEARCH SAYS …

• Catholic schools tend to operate as communities rather than bureaucracies, which links to higher levels of teacher commitment, student engagement and student achievement (Marks, 2009).
• In Catholic schools, the student achievement gap is smaller than in public schools (Grogger & Neal, 2000).
• In Catholic schools, the student achievement gap is smaller than in public schools (Marks, 2009).
• Students enrolled in Catholic schools are more likely to graduate from high school and college (Groger & Neal, 2000).
• Graduates of Catholic high schools are more likely to earn higher wages (Neal, 1997).
• Catholic schools tend to produce graduates who are more civically engaged, more tolerant of diverse views, and more committed to service as adults (Campbell, 2001; Wolf, Greene, Kleitz, & Thalhammer, 2001).
• When a Catholic school closes, neighborhood disorder increases (Brining & Garnett, 2009).

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Additional local scholarships may also be available. Contact your local Catholic School.
Spiritual development of school staffs is key to achieving ultimate goal

By Sean Gallagher

All schools encourage their faculty to develop themselves professionally and often offer opportunities for such growth. Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana also go a step further and seek to foster the faith of those who teach students and serve as administrators. This, in turn, helps Catholic school teachers and leaders pass that faith on to their students.

The faculty and staff of Our Lady of Providence Jr./Sr. High School in Clarksville nurture their faith during an annual retreat.

This academic year, the retreat was centered on the Church’s Holy Year of Mercy that began in December. The retreat took place on Jan. 18 at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad.

Educators heard a presentation on the importance of mercy in the life of faith, celebrated the Eucharist, had an opportunity to experience the sacrament of penance, and walked as a group through the holy door of the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln and said the prayers required to receive the holy year’s plenary indulgence.

“It was very powerful,” said Melinda Ernstberger, Providence’s principal. “It was a moment in time when we were taken out of our ordinary environment, and provided with a spiritual journey and an opportunity to experience the sacrament of penance, and walked as a group through the holy door of the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln and said the prayers required to receive the holy year’s plenary indulgence.”

“Leah Kelly, Providence’s director of campus ministry, thinks the retreat will help students have an encounter with Christ and grow in relationship with him and the Church.

Providing for the spiritual development of the faculty and staff furthers this goal.

“If we really want to do something extraordinary in faith for our kids, we have to start with the faculty and staff,” Ernstberger said. “We have to model it for them. We have to cheerlead it. We have to feel it deeply ourselves.”

The administrators and religious studies faculty at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis have sought to grow in their faith in order to help their students grow in their faith, challenge them, and cause them to make these things engage these kids in their faith, challenge them, and cause them to challenge back, so that they can re-examine every aspect of their work to make these things engage these kids in their faith, challenge them, and cause them to challenge back, so that they can re-examine every aspect of their work.

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Archbishop shares special bond and story with seniors

By John Shaughnessy

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin feels a special connection with this year’s Catholic high school seniors in the archdiocese. “You, the Class of 2016, and I grew up together,” Archbishop Tobin told the seniors at the beginning of a special Mass for them on Dec. 2 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. “Three years ago, you were freshmen. Three years ago, I began my service to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. You and I grew up together. I don’t know about you, but I’ve learned lots of stuff.”

In his homily that day on the Gospel story of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, the archbishop touched upon a story that he thought the seniors had likely heard earlier in their lives—the story of a stone soup.

“The villagers in this story were starving,” Archbishop Tobin said. “A newcomer suggested that they boil water in a large pot, and put a stone in it. And he added onions and a cabbage. When they tasted it, someone said it would be better if a potato could be added. So someone brought a potato, and others later added onions and a cabbage. Finally, someone produced meat,” the archbishop said. “And when everyone gave what little they had, they had a large and nourishing meal.”

After a pause, Archbishop Tobin told the seniors, “Although there is no miracle in this story of ‘stone soup,’ it may be very much what Jesus, through today’s Gospel, is teaching the Class of 2016. Do you suppose Jesus was teaching the crowd—and especially the Class of 2016—that we already have been provided for, if only we care and love each other enough to share?

“If we learn this, we’ll have more than enough to satisfy us. Sometimes, we have to cooperate with God—and be patient. The miracle will occur. The Lord will come. Blessed are those who are prepared to meet him. Blessed are those whose final year is a gift to their schools.” †

The villagers did what the stranger recommended, and when they tasted it, someone said it would be better if a potato could be added. So someone brought a potato, and others later added onions and a cabbage. This year is a gift to their schools.” †

Student savors the bonds with classmates and Christ

By John Shaughnessy

As one of 21 seniors at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond, Cliff Dickman savors the special bonds he has with his classmates.

“A lot of us have been together a long time,” says Cliff, who has been a part of Seton Catholic Schools since his pre-school days. “We’ve shared our Catholic faith, good times and a lot of memories. It’s going to be hard to leave here. The bond we’ve formed—I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world.”

The 17-year-old member of St. Mary Parish in Richmond has the same feeling for the parochial school education he has received.

“My Catholic education has always been important to me,” Cliff says. “It’s instilled values and morals in me so I can interact with others and those in the community. Having Mass weekly is very important to me. And the prayer services we have get my thoughts deep into what Christ wants us to do. One of the messages Christ gives to each of us is to help others.”

Cliff has lived that message through a commitment to service, including preparing meals at a community food pantry for people in need.

His Catholic education has also had an impact on the three sports he plays at Seton—soccer, basketball and baseball. “Catholic education plays a part in showing good sportsmanship, having a positive attitude and always working your hardest,” Cliff says.

“Like the values I’ve learned here are values I’ll carry with me later. When you think of what Christ has done for me and everyone else in the world, it really hits me. My faith in Christ has led me to become a better person.” †

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Catholic education: A gift that keeps giving through the generations
By Christa Hoyland

As a Catholic school, we are charged with the dual mission to educate the mind and nurture the spirit through the development of future Christian disciples. Catholic education at Immaculate Heart of Mary School is not only the work of our dedicated staff, but also the support and involvement of our pastor, Fr. Bob Sims, our parents and the community at large.

Please visit us at our open house on Friday, Jan. 29 from 9:30 to 11 AM or Sunday, Jan. 31 from 10:30 to 12 noon to experience our 4-star, A-rated Blue Ribbon school in action! Enjoy a tour led by current students and parents, meet our fabulous educators and visit our classrooms. We look forward to sharing wonderful programs like The Leader in Me and STEM (Science, Technology, Mathematics, Engineering), and providing information about a learning environment that fosters children academically, spiritually, athletically and socially.

If you have any questions, please call Hayley Nester in the school office at (317) 255-5468.

Catholic education: A gift that keeps giving through the generations

By John Shaughnessy

Amy Wilson is the recipient of the 2015 Saint Theodora Guérin Excellence in Education Award, the highest recognition given by the Providence Academy. Wilson is a 1990 alumna of the school. Kirchdorfer donated from Carolyn Kirchdorfer, a 1960 alumna of the school. Kirchdorfer’s sons followed in their father’s footsteps and graduated from St. Xavier High School in Louisville, Ky., and Marian University, “notes Wilson, the assistant principal at St. Roch School in Indianapolis.

“Each of these schools provided a working model of the characteristics necessary to provide a quality education based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and his holy Church. This model was focused on a faith-driven community that strived to teach its children the meaning and values of traits such as compassion, empathy and hard work in an effort to shape the next generation of Catholic leaders. The overarching theme was always the need to serve others as Christ had come to serve us.”

To achieve that goal, educators must help their students “develop the heart of a servant,” Wilson says. “My fellow teachers and I attempt to achieve this goal through our living example. We take every opportunity in the classroom to discuss how each action—good or bad—provides a quality of experience to that of my own, and will serve them well as they transition into becoming our next group of Catholic leaders. “


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Value of Catholic schools to country and Church is indispensable, speaker says

By John Shaughnessy

The compelling question came in the midst of a celebration—a celebration in which the archdiocese continued to move closer to raising more than $5.6 million this year to help children receive a Catholic education.

The question was posed by Holy Cross Father Timothy Scully, the featured speaker during the 20th annual Celebrating Catholic School Values Awards event at Union Station in Indianapolis on Oct. 26.

“Sometimes, it’s interesting when you’re thinking about the value of something to think about what our life would be like without it,” said Father Scully, the co-founder of the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE), which trains educators to serve in Catholic schools in economically challenged communities across the United States.

“What would be different in America today, in our Church, in our communities, if Catholic schools never existed?”

Father Scully started his answer by focusing on the impact of a Catholic education on the most vulnerable children in American society.

“It’s been shown when Catholic schools close in an urban neighborhood, crime increases, delinquency rises, urban decay sets in,” Father Scully told the 600 people at the event. “Catholic schools represent islands of hope in the midst of lives often bereft of hope, generating untold social capital.

“Our graduates are more likely to be engaged in community service as adults. They’re far less likely to be incarcerated, and they experience far higher lifetime earnings. Moreover, in the aggregate, Catholic schools are in fact more racially and socially plural than their public school counterparts. In many of our poorest urban communities, more than 90 percent of our students are minorities and many of them are not Catholic.”

“The truth of the matter is that Catholic schools are absolutely essential, sacred places serving civic purposes. Their existence and vitality are essential to the life and health of our nation.’ — Holy Cross Father Timothy Scully

From an economic standpoint, Catholic schools also “save the public purse in our country more than $21 billion a year,” Father Scully noted.

‘The truth of the matter is that Catholic schools are absolutely essential, sacred places serving civic purposes. Their existence and vitality are essential to the life and health of our nation.’ — Holy Cross Father Timothy Scully

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A special thank you is extended to the corporations, foundations, schools, parishes and individuals who made the 2015 Celebrating Catholic Schools Values event a success.

The Celebrating Catholic School Values event celebrated more than $5.6 million in Indiana tax credit scholarships and event support this year and allowed families to choose a Catholic school for their children.

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Clothing the naked can apply to more than material needs

By David Gibson

Something seemed different about the giving tree in my parish this past Christmas. One after another of the tree’s tags requested a gift of diapers and baby wipes. I always catch a tag from our parish’s tree that requests new shirts or maybe a jacket for an 8- to 12-year-old. It’s a great feeling to offer something small as “cool,” to a child who needs it and may well enjoy it.

But this time, moving from tag after tag, I kept seeing “diapers” and “baby wipes.” I searched for one listing—shirts, socks or jeans. But then something clicked. “I like ‘diapers’ and ‘baby wipes,’” I suddenly realized. So diapers and wipes it was.

There was more than one reason for my reaction, I suppose. Deep in the recesses of my mind, a message undoubtedly started to replay, reminding me of my amateur disco years ago, soon after becoming a father, that diapers definitely were not cheap. To make matters even worse, there were those darned containers of baby wipes that had to be purchased over and over.

From day one in a newborn’s life, parents face the great task of clothing their child. It begins with diapers, onesies and blankets, but in short order moves on to shirts, pants, sweaters, hats, socks and—oh, I say it to shoes. But let’s not even talk about the high cost of children’s shoes in this brief article!

All parents are called to clothe a child, though not only with what covers the body from head to toe. Thirst is a call to clothe a child with patience, continual care, protection, essential knowledge, a sense of self-worth and a home where smiles are not rare.

That means parents are called to become practitioners of the corporal works of mercy. By definition, a parent is someone who clothes the naked.

The call to clothe a child in all the ways that matter has a way of consuming whatever a parent can muster in terms of time, energy, faith, hope and material resources. But naturally, true love and care for children is not the preserve of those able to call all the necessary material resources into play. The call to clothe a child fully, however, can prove particularly taxing for parents whose resources are marked sometimes, or at all times, by poverty.

The Church’s current Holy Year of Mercy invites all the faithful to consider thoughtfully the realities that confront parents and others who are poor in the Gospel and for the faith community, the poor represent a mystery that demands attention. Pope Francis made this point when he asked the entire Church to spend a year contemplating the meaning of mercy and traveling along contemporary paths of mercy.

In his April 2015 letter, “Misericordiae Vultus,” formally declaring the Holy Year of Mercy, the pope spoke of it as “a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty” (#15). He looked ahead to this year as a time to enter “more deeply into the heart of the Gospel, where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy” (#15).

Pope Francis spoke explicitly of the mystery of the poor on an earlier occasion. Christians must “embrace the mysterious wisdom that God wishes to share” through the poor, he wrote in “The Joy of the Gospel,” his 2013 apostolic exhortation (#198).

“We are called to find Christ” in the poor, “to lend our voice to their causes,” to become “their friends” and “listen to them,” the pope wrote (#198).

Just as parents clothe their children not only with garments, but by embracing them in a manner that respects them as images of God and nurtures the best within them, aren’t there multiple ways to clothe the poor by enhancing their sense of self-worth and demonstrating respect for their God-given dignity?

Could this holy year prompt informed discussions about how to clothe people with needed education, jobs and health care? Is this a time to ask what kinds of courageous support in local communities might help vulnerable people on society’s margins to take a chance on a different kind of future?

In the face of poverty, actions “speak louder than words,” the Catholic bishops of Indiana said in a spring 2015 pastoral letter on poverty. This is especially true, they added, “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.”

The bishops added, “We want to offer hope to all who suffer, and we seek to build a just society.”

The poor are the only worthy beneficiaries of a corporal work of mercy like clothing the naked. The simple mention of this specific way of acting mercifully, however, definitely calls the poor to mind and highlights the Gospel’s view of them.

In “The Joy of the Gospel,” the pope said: “We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor” (#48).

(David Gibson served on Catholic News Service’s editorial staff for 37 years.)

Giving to those in need helps build up the kingdom here and now

By Mike Nelson

Before Jesus began teaching about mercy, exhorting his followers to share with and care for their neighbor, his cousin John the Baptist made the same point to all who would listen.

“Whoever has two tunics,” said John, “should share with the person who has none” (Lk 3:11).

For me, that teaching brings to mind the old joke in TV comedy, in which a frazzled woman flings open her closet, surveys her wardrobe—"an inventory equal to that of a fair-sized department store—and wails, "I haven’t got a thing to wear!"

I suspect that millions throughout the world who can’t afford closets, much less closets full of clothes, wouldn’t find that joke quite so funny. I can imagine these folks, surveying (to use an older frame of reference) Imelda Marcos’ shoe collection and wondering, "How many feet did this woman have?"

Which brings us to “clothing the naked,” a corporal work of mercy aimed at addressing a very basic need for all people.

Several times a year, our family donates items to a local agency that serves people in need. Those items almost always include clothing. They’re not high fashion, certainly, but are good, wearable clothing to assist people who might otherwise have very little.

Thanks to my wife, I have a nice wardrobe, and I always enjoy receiving new items of clothing for Christmas and as birthday presents. And yet, I look at what I already have and I think—barring some significant change in body shape—I could probably make do with what I have for quite a few years.

Just last year, in the midst of closet and garage cleaning, I came upon the first sweater my wife gave me. I wore the heck out of for a good 15 years before the elbows began wearing thin. I kept it for sentimental reasons, and I was thrilled to see it again. I washed and wore it, even with the thin elbows.

It was still a good-looking sweater, the elbows notwithstanding. And partly because it was a happy but poignant reminder that we don’t necessarily need as much as we think we do.

John the Baptist—no fashion plate, judging by artists’ renderings of him over the centuries—knew this quite clearly, as he told the tax collectors who sought baptism and guidance from him: "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed" (Lk 3:13).

And in his Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus tells us—especially the Imelda Marcoses of the world—something more about clothing in the eyes of God.

"Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?” (Mt 6:28-30).

In other words, says Jesus, quit worrying about what to wear, or what to eat, or what to drink. "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all,” he says. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you beside” (Mt 6:33).

Fox is it through seeking the kingdom that we understand how sharing those “things” with those in need helps make that teaching a reality.

(Mike Nelson is former editor of The Tidings, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.)
Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

Terrorism exists closer to home than we may think

Did we ever think we’d be called upon one day to be serious defenders of the faith? It gives us visions of soldiers in full armor, brandishing the French flag and defending God’s Name.

After all, the Crusades and medieval holy wars and the Catholic faith itself are long gone. Even though Scripture tells us that we will be persecuted for the Name of the Lord, we somehow feel we actually felt persecuted that way, especially in the U.S. A.

Today, we’ve been called upon to times to inform non-Catholics or non-religious people in general about our beliefs and practices. But the small discomfort of setting someone straight about their misinformation is a far cry from facing the hatred and murderous attacks we face daily. Our martyrdoms and burnings at the stake come to mind, and it’s scary. Even though we have no cases like ISIS or other extremists who do terrible things in the name of religion. They behead people, rape women and children, and abandon other responsibilities.

On the other hand, when non-Catholics are committing suicide. They do these things in the name of their God, but what kind of God would ask us to commit these serious sins in order to gain salvation? Even non-religious, civilized people are scandalized at the thought.

Now, most of us, at least in the United States and most Western European countries, will not face such personal torments. Of course, there have been times when the clergy have been persecuted, but mostly we’ve been protected for centuries from such violence by distance, reason and the rule of law. Our civilization has progressed, while the ISIS factions still live in the tribal past.

But in a world where threats to us, equally as destructive to our moral well-being as ISIS’ tactics are to our mortal lives. Our freedom to express our religious faith, as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, is under fire.

In the present culture, religion is mocked, dismissed as a fairy tale, or accused of ptemotous motives in its beliefs and practices. The media, universities and government agencies denounce what used to be common understandings of truth: for example, that life is sacred, that marriage is a life-giving sacramental union between a man and a woman, and that stable families create a stable society.

Now, the moral standard seems to be whatever pleases us at any given time, as long as we won’t get arrested for it. We can abort babies, live in uncommitted sexual arrangements which may lead to parentless children, and abandon other responsibilities without finding this uncomfortable or may cost us money.

Sometimes we hypothetically attend church and claim a moral obligation toward the Church, while at the same time behaving in direct opposition to what the Church teaches. We seem to get away with it, despite God’s commandments: we don’t have to fear for our very lives. Visions of martyrs and burnings at the stake come to mind, and it’s scary.

It seems to me that what we have to work out for us: namely, to uphold what is right in every way we can. We need to pay attention to our laws and in our public attitudes in the media by voting, writing letters to responsible parties, and protesting any laws which we find uncomfortable or may cost us money.

Apathetic or non-religious folks need to be kindly reminded of what society will suffer if such terrorism continues. It may not be the Middle Ages, but defense of the faith is still a big issue.

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenwich, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

Emmanua Walk/Debra Tomassi

In good times and bad, recognize God’s omnipresent image

I’ll never forget the moment.

I was a teenager, riding home from an outing to White Sands National Monument, sponsored by our church’s youth group. Since my family had just moved to New Mexico, my parents, hoping I’d meet other kids, had signed me up for the trip.

We met at the church, boarded a school bus and headed south. Being the new kid, I ended up alone, with an entrance row to myself.

The bus chugged its way across the highway to our destination. When we arrived, I was amazed at the desolation of the desert and the long stretches of sand. At White Sands, the dunes are sparkling white, and they made a striking contrast against a star-lit sky.

The bus parked, and the leaders directed us, handed us kickballs and sleds, and set up food tables. Some kids gathered and talked. Some played kickball. Others, like me, raced to the top of the dunes, hopped on the makeshift cardboard sleds and raced down.

I met Maleley, a girl who was also going into seventh grade. Both of us had brothers, detested math, and liked sports. I spoke with Danny, a talented athlete whom I’d never heard of, and Mary, who was popular. However, meeting the new kids heightened my loneliness.

Then, there was no Facebook. No Internet. No texting. I missed my old school friends.

I climbed a dune, and surveyed the barren desert. It stretched far as the eye could see. There were no houses, no movement. No sound. It was silence like I’d never before heard before.

But there was divine beauty in this place. At dinner time, the leaders placed me in Mary’s group. When we returned, the leaders placed me in Mary’s group.

Our leaders took roll call. They led us in prayer, thanking God for the beauty of nature and fellowship. They blessed us. We prayed the Our Father and three Hail Marys. Then the engine rumbled to life, and the big yellow bus rumbled onto the highway. A full moon lit the way home.

I stared out my window, and cool air biffed through. On the way, I pondered my circumstances, which felt as bleak as the desert we’d just visited. As I struggled with loneliness, something suddenly changed. I started noticing, sitting there in that bus, none of that mattered.

Suddenly, I felt filled with the greatest love imaginable. It wasn’t like parental love, nor was it like a crush for a cute boy. It was greater than that.

I felt complete. I felt secure. I felt bubble-wrapped in love.

I was happy, but I didn’t know why. It took nearly a lifetime to realize that on that day, in the midst of desolation — something happened.

I believe that because everything did turn out all right. And throughout my life, as I think back, in good times and difficulties, and even now, as I battle cancer, he’s revealed himself to me finally, in union with Christ, as the fountain of love and unimaginable peace.

Oh, how he longs for us to recognize his omnipresent image.

Finally, I do.

(Debra Tomassi writes from Almonte, Springs, Florida. She can be reached at dtomassi61@att.net)
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thursday, February 4

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12
(Responsorial: 1 Chronicles 29:10-11b, 11cd)
Mark 6:7-13

Friday, February 5

St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
Sirach 47:1-11
Psalm 18:31, 47, 50-51
Mark 6:14-29

Saturday, February 6

St. Paul Miki and companions, martyrs
1 Kings 3:4-13
Psalm 119:9-14
Mark 6:30-34

Sunday, February 7

Mark 6:30-34
Psalm 119:9-14
St. Blaise, bishop and martyr
Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7
St. Ansgar, bishop
Mark 6:1-6

Reflection

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Daily Readings

Monday, February 1

2 Samuel 15:14-13, 30; 16:5-13
Psalm 3:2-7
Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday, February 2

The Presentation of the Lord
Malachi 3:1-4
Psalm 24:7-10
Hebrews 2:14-18
Luke 2:22-40
or Luke 2:22-32

Wednesday, February 3

St. Blaise, bishop and martyr
St. Ansgar, bishop
2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17
Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7
Mark 6:1-6

Thursday, February 4

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12
(Responsorial: 1 Chronicles 29:10-11b, 11cd)
Mark 6:7-13

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Forgiveness is tied to repentance and seeking to avoid sin in the future.

Regarding your recent column on forgiving ISIS, I think forgiveness is tied to repentance and seeking to avoid sin in the future.

O f course, to pray especially for their victims.

Few columns that I have written have generated as much response—most of it negative. The questions and responses above are just a sampling of the opinions expressed. As with any fair criticism, I think my responsibility is to evaluate it, re-examine the original question, and determine whether the comments they elicited might cause me to modify my first response.

I have done that—honestly, I hope—and my answer is still the same. Jesus said of his persecutors, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing” (Lk 23:34)—or St. Stephen forgiving those who had stoned him. (Connecticut)

Jesus said that we should forgive or our heavenly father will not forgive us. The forgiving of the offending person—or with my life or my wealth or anything else and repay, with God’s grace, even when I am still very hurt and angry. Forgiving does not mean that the person is exonerated, should be let out of prison if there has been a crime, or that I should trust him or even relate to him if he continues to be dangerous. (Pope John Paul II forgave his would-be assassin in prison, but never requested that he be released.) (Ohio)

And isn’t this what the Church has traditionally taught with regard to the sacrament of penance: that the absolution of the priest is predicated on remorse and repentance by the offending party? I am thinking of Christ being crucified and saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing?” (Lk 23:34)—or St. Stephen forgiving those who had stoned him. (Connecticut)

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A parish woman, standing alone

By Marc Tuttle

Facing the structure, feeling it exude its sincerest purpose, Godwomen stands alone.

Hands coldly together, sometimes clenched, sometimes folded,
She offers her prayers.

Aside outside, knowing inside is a multitude frenetically answering phones, talking, selling, prepping and yes, waiting.

A multitude alone inside, wishing those outside could only understand.

And standing alone on behalf of all of us outside,
She offers her prayers.

She walks across the prayer-worn grass,
Asking for healing, asking for divine intervention,
Asking that death might be conquered again today.
She shoves her frigid fingers deep in her pockets, and she offers her prayers.

The structure mocks her.

“We know who you are, we’ve seen you before,
Do you think you can stand alone against us?”
Inhabiting, wondering, turns her back to the structure.

Now with steel-eyes, she offers her prayers.
Silently, the cars come out, staring ghosts, never alone.
She feels them in her heart, each one as they leave.
And then one stops.
A girl smiling gently in the passenger seat,
Through the rolled-down window yells, “I want you to know, because I saw you out here,
I knew I wasn’t alone.”

As quick as that, she is reminded
The power of one woman, standing alone.
And she offers her prayers.


CHRISTIANS have harmed one another at times, but we do not want to allow the past to block us from moving forward to taste the salt and to light a candle as a proclamation that all Christians are to be salt and light to the world.”

In Rome, Pope Francis led the service at the basilica, which tradition holds as the burial site of the Apostle Paul. Orthodox Metropolitan Gennadios, representing the ecumenical patriarch, and Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, representing the archbishop of Canterbury, joined the pope in prayer at St. Paul’s tomb in the beginning of the service.

St. Paul and countless Christian martyrs throughout the centuries gave their lives for their faith in Christ, and now enjoy “full communion in the presence of God the father,” the pope said in his homily. He prayed the martyrs would sustain today’s Christians with their prayers and their example.

The annual week of prayer ended on Jan. 5, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Pope Francis told those gathered in the basilica that “the superabundance of God’s mercy” was the only basis for Paul’s conversion from being a persecutor of Christians to a preacher of the Gospel. Mercy saved him, and proclaiming that mercy to others was the mission God gave him.

For the 2016 week of prayer, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches chose the theme, “Called to proclaim the Good News.” (Reed-Stavrou) Carde. Father of Anthony and Kathy. Grandfather of two.

Moxon, the archbishop of Canterbury’s representative to the Vatican, as they arrive for a prayer service concluding the “full communion” week of prayer in Rome.

“Unity is made by walking.”

The answer, Pope Francis said, has to do with “the mystery of mercy and of God’s choice: The Father loves everyone and wants to save all,” so he chooses people and sends them out to share his mercy and love with others.

“Beyond the differences that still separate us,” he told the ecumenical gathering, “we recognize with joy that at the origin of the Christian life there is always a call which author is God himself.”

The path to Christian unity, he said, is not simply about drawing closer to one another but has more to do with each person drawing closer to Christ and finding each other there.

“When all Christians of different churches listen to the word of God and try to put it into practice,” the pope said, “they truly take important steps toward unity. “It is not only the call that unites us,” he said. “We are joined by the same mission: to proclaim to all the mighty acts of the Lord.”

Working together and working together, we will become aware that we are already united in the name of the Lord,” he said. “Unity is made by walking.”

(Assistant editor John Shaughnessy contributed to this story.)
Religious liberty is among freedoms to be protected under proposed bill

By Brigil Curtis Ayer

Indiana lawmakers are considering a bill to protect fundamental freedoms for all its citizens, including religious freedom. Senate Bill 66, authored by Sen. Mike Young (R-Indianapolis), would repeal Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and ensure that several fundamental freedoms that are guaranteed in the state Constitution will be state law. These freedoms include the freedom to worship God according to one’s own conscience; freedom to exercise one’s religion without government interference with consciences freedom of speech; free exchange of ideas; freedom to assemble; and the freedom to bear arms. In addition, the proposed law would codify for state law purposes the provision in the First Amendment that the state government will give no preference to any creed or religion.

The proposal to strengthen the fundamental freedoms was prompted in part because of the state’s passage of RFRA “fix” as “convoluted and difficult.” Young said his bill provides part because of the state’s passage of RFRA discrimination. Chris Paulsen, who told local news affiliates that Sen. Young’s supported last year’s amended RFRA because they felt it prohibited discrimination. Chris Paulsen, who represents Freedom Indiana, a group that fought for marriage redefinition in Indiana, told local news affiliates that Sen. Young’s bill was “back-tracking.” Young said he sees the civil rights issue as a separate issue from the fundamental freedoms bill, and says it should be treated that way.

Senate Bill 66 was heard in the Senate Judiciary committee on Jan. 27, and following committee passage it will move to the Senate floor for second reading.

“I’m hopeful the bill will pass the Senate before the end of January,” Tebbe said. “It’s hard to predict if Senate Bill 66 will pass this year. A lot can happen between now and March 16, when the Indiana General Assembly adjourns.

“What I do know is that the Indiana Catholic Conference will be doing our part so that these fundamental freedoms, namely our religious freedom, are strengthened and protected.” (Brigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion. For more information about the Indiana Catholic Conference, its Indiana Catholic Action Network and the bills it is following in the Indiana General Assembly this year, log on to www.indianacc.org)

If the government is going to take away one of my fundamental rights, the government better have a very, very good reason to do so. I want the highest standard of judicial scrutiny because it makes government less likely, and more difficult for government to take away my personal liberty.”

—Sen. Michael Young

‘When there is a compelling state interest for a law or regulation, it must be done in the least restrictive manner, protecting both the state’s interests and the conscience and fundamental freedoms of all.”

—Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

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  - What skills will you bring to a Catholic school?
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- Three letters of reference or contact information for three professional references

For questions about this position, please e-mail or call:

Rob Rash
Office of Catholic Schools
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**PRO-LIFE**

Conveying this truth was the goal of dozens of people in Terre Haute gathered in front of the Vigo County courthouse and across from the Terre Haute Planned Parenthood facility as part of that community’s local observance of Roe v. Wade. “Everyone braved the cold north wind and sacrificed all their labors, thoughts, prayers, inconveniences, sufferings and pains of the cold day to prevent precious lives from being denied the right to see the light of God’s day,” said Tom McTomm, coordinator of the Terre Haute observance. “People were from the nearby communities of Brazil, Cory, Riley and Rockville, as well as Terre Haute.”

At the Indianapolis event, youths from Oldenburg Academy of the Immulate Conception in Oldenburg, St. Luke the Evangelist School in Indianapolis, Lumen Christi Catholic School in Indianapolis, and every youths from St. Theodore Guerin High School in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, participated in the Mass and march. “We were supposed to go to Washington, but our trip got cancelled because of the blizzard, so [the school administration] said we could come to this [event] instead,” said Guerin sophomore Claire Gavin. “It’s the same message, whether here or [in Washington].”

Her classmate Conner Hadley was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Indianapolis Mass and march in place of the March for Life in Washington. “Every human deserves a right to life,” he said. “It’s inhumane not to give someone as small as a fetus a chance to live.”

Two students from DePauw University in Greencastle drove an hour to participate in the local solemn observance in Indianapolis. Both noted that the pro-life message extends beyond opposing abortion.

“It’s a beautiful thing to set aside time, especially on the anniversary of such an important day in our history, to pray for every life at every stage of life,” said senior Catherine Hinken. “I think the prayers of the unborn are important, but the prayers of mothers as well, and the prayers of those who don’t yet understand the dignity of life.”

Pilgrims

Catholics from the archdiocese had on their buses what they needed to stay safe—enough fuel for the trip, bathrooms and plenty of food and water. Their faith soon moved them to share what they had with people in cars around them that didn’t have those resources. “Our students were looking out the windows, and when they would see a car’s headlights going out in the middle of the night, they would walk to the front of the bus and say, ‘We have heat and they keep turning their car off. Can we go out and give them our blankets?’” recalled Ann Collins, administrator of the archdiocese’s Office of Ministry at Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis. “They were kind. They knew that they were beyond the normal sense of ‘Why aren’t we going?’ People patiently accepted it. They prayed and just waited it out. It got more attention on the news than it usually does. So something good came out of it.”

The 96 people in the two buses sponsored by St. Nicholas Parish were stranded on the turnpike several miles to the west of the group from Indianapolis. Father Shaun Whittington, pastor of St. Nicholas and St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris, was impressed by the March for Life participants. “We were all frustrated,” he said. “But nobody got beyond the normal sense of ‘Why aren’t we going?’ People patiently accepted it. They prayed and just waited it out. It got more attention on the news than it usually does. So something good came out of it.”

Collins said that the community brought together by the shared experience of being stranded by the blizzard extended up and down the turnpike through communication by motorists on social media.

“We made lots of friends with lots of people on lots of buses and on lots of cars,” said Collins. “There was a lot of communication.”

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