Supreme Court hears arguments on president’s deferred deportation programs

WASHINGTON (CNS)—All eyes are once again on what seems to be an evenly divided Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments on April 18 in a major case impacting a U.S. immigration policy.

After the 90 minutes of oral arguments in United States v. Texas, the eight Supreme Court justices must now determine if the U.S. president can temporarily protect undocumented parents of American citizens from deportation and give them temporary work permits.

At issue are President Barack Obama’s 2015 executive actions expanding a 2012 program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, and creating the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, known as DAPA.

The program had been put on hold last November by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, upholding a Texas-based federal judge’s injunction against Obama’s actions.

Twenty-six states, including Texas and Indiana, are suing the federal government in the case, saying the president went too far with his actions. Texas Solicitor General Scott Keller said the president was not just putting a temporary block on deportations, but giving undocumented immigrants a “lawful presence” in this country that would enable them to qualify for benefits such as Social Security and Medicare.

The justices spent a lot of time focused on the phrase “lawful presence,” and Chief Justice John Roberts in particular quizzed U.S. Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. about it before noting that being lawfully present, having a license and a job did not necessarily mean someone was legally present in the United States.

Verrilli pointed out that the primary point of the primary

Chief Justice
John Roberts

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Pope prays for refugees and brings 12 Syrians back to Rome

MYTILENE, Greece (CNS)—Pope Francis’ five-hour visit to Greece ended with him offering safe passage to Italy to 12 Syrian Muslims, half under the age of 18.

The Vatican had kept secret the pope’s plan to invite the members of three Syrian families to fly back to Rome with him on April 16. Rumors began swirling in the Greek media a couple hours before the flight took off, but it was confirmed by the Vatican only as the 12 were boarding the papal plane.

The Vatican Secretariat of State made formal arrangements with the Italy and the Greek

See related editorial, page 4.

April 16. The pope concluded his one-day visit to Greece by bringing 12 Syrian refugees to Italy aboard his flight. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Unexpected death helps lead family to forgiveness and reconciliation

RICHMOND—In her desire to move closer to God, Lynn Lineback knew she knew she had caused great pain.

As she considered how she would try to make amends, Lineback also wondered how many people were just like her—people who had let their need to be right overwhelm their ability to reach out in love to someone.

For too many years, Lineback says, she let the distance and the bitter feelings continue between her and her sister-in-law, the second wife of her only surviving sibling.

What began as a small rift turned into a deep divide for more than 30 years.

Lineback asked her weekly prayer group to pray for their reconciliation, too.

“Toward atonement, I thought of something I could do,” Lineback says.

“I asked her to forgive me for all the things said and unsaid, done and undone. I also told her I was willing to do whatever I could to make it up to her.”

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“It was a God moment”

A time of great sorrow has led to the life-changing gift of reconciliation for Lynn Lineback, who is pictured here by a cross inside Holy Family Church in Richmond. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Editor’s note: Pope Francis has declared a “Holy Year of Mercy” in the Church that continues through Nov. 20, 2016. As part of the “Year of Mercy,” The Criterion is inviting our readers to share their stories of how their lives have been graced by the mercy of God and other people. Here is the fourth in a continuing series of stories.

By John Shaughnessy

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What began as a small rift turned into a deep divide for more than 30 years.

There were misunderstandings, unmet expectations, judgments,” says Lineback, a member of Holy Family Parish in Richmond “I knew in my heart that there were some decisions I made concerning her and her children that caused her great pain.”

Believing she was being nudged by the Holy Spirit, Lineback decided to write her sister-in-law in Texas a letter.

“I asked her to forgive me for all the things said and unsaid, done and undone. I also told her I was willing to do whatever I could to make it up to her.”

Lineback asked her weekly prayer group to pray for their reconciliation, too.

And on Aug. 3, 2012, Lineback added her request for forgiveness and reconciliation into the prayer book she keeps.

Then she waited for a response from her sister-in-law.

“It didn’t come.

In fact, another three years would

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See DEPORTATION, page 3

See REFUGEES, page 8
continued from page 1

FAMILY

pass—and a great loss would have to occur—before a moment that Lineback describes as “miraculous” would happen.

The call that changed everything

During the nearly three years that passed, Lineback and her brother continued a relationship that was never particularly close.

“I was 9 or 10 when he left home to go into the military,” she recalls. “I feel sad that our relationship was never close because of the age difference and him being around the world, serving in the Air Force. I saw him about once a year and talked to him just a little more than that.”

During those visits and conversations, her brother made it clear that his allegiance to his wife was his priority.

“Over those three years, I would ask my brother from time to time if he thought there was any chance she might forgive me,” Lineback says. “He said "no." He would tell me that when called, she would walk out of the room.”

Then came the call that started to change everything.

On July 10, 2015, her brother told Lineback that he—her lifelong smoker—had been diagnosed with lung cancer. While Lineback debated whether she should visit her brother, she received another call from Texas on July 27. Her brother’s daughter informed her that he had died that day.

“We didn’t even have time to process that he had cancer,” Lineback notes. “It happened too fast.”

His military funeral was scheduled for the following week.

“I struggled with whether I should go to the funeral to show my support to move closer for my sister-in-law or my children. I decided to go because he’s my brother. I needed to bring closure for myself with him.

“My niece said I could stay with her and her family. I would see my great nieces for the first timeever if I could go because he’s my brother from time to time if he thought there was any chance she might forgive me,” Lineback says. “He said "no." He would tell me that when called, she would walk out of the room.”

“Tis taught me to never give up on prayer. It’s also taught me to forgive more instantly to measure the decisions we make. In Luke, chapter 7, verse 47, it says that ‘little is forgiven the one whose love is small.’ What great love our God has given—to provide in the midst of such sorrow such an overwhelming joy of being forgiven.

Jesus is the great reconciler. To be like Jesus is the goal. He took all the sins of humankind to reconcile us to our father. And all he was asking me to do was to reconcile with my sister-in-law. I thought I had right before the decisions I made. But being right doesn’t matter. I hurt her, and she cut me out of her life.”

Lineback remembers how this whole journey began with a desire to be closer to God.

“If you want to be closer to God, you have to move closer to the people in your life. When I recognized that, everything started to change. I have an overwhelming gratefulness to God.”

(The Criterion continues to invite our readers to share stories of how their lives have been graced by the mercy and forgiveness of God and other people—and how that mercy and forgiveness have made a difference.

We are also seeking stories from our readers who have shown mercy and forgiveness to others—and how that act of mercy and forgiveness has made a difference to the person offering it.

Please send your stories and responses to assistant editor John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail to The Criterion Press Inc., 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.)

It was a God moment

When she arrived in Texas, Lineback was greeted by her niece and her niece’s husband.

“We drove directly to my brother’s home. I was very apprehensive,” she recalls.

“Upon entering the house, I looked for my sister-in-law and found her in the computer. We said nothing to each other, but we put our arms around each other and cried and cried. That moment was everything to me. It was a room. We said nothing to each other, but we put our arms around each other and cried and cried. That moment was everything to me. It was a God moment. It was like a complete release.

She considered the date important because of what happened with her sister-in-law on the day of the funeral.

“We rode together to the funeral. And at the funeral, she reached out on several occasions for my hands,” Lineback says.

“During the remainder of my stay in Texas, we talked. We are still having regular communications. She called on Easter to see how I was doing. She has shared pictures of her grandchildren. We’ve been texting back and forth, and we sent Christmas cards. All those things were happening in a family. It’s regrettable that we didn’t have that relationship before my brother died.”

Even with the regrets, Lineback prefers to focus on the reconciliation—what it means for her, and what it could mean for other people in similar situations.

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Pope Francis

“Word and example edify the house of God, which is the Church,” he said in his homily on April 17, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

“Celebrating Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis ordained 11 new priests; nine were ordained for the Diocese of Rome and two of the new priests—including one born in Baghdad—are members of the Regnum Coeli prayer community. In his homily, the pope urged the men to read, reflect on and teach the word of God, and to be a living example of what they preach.

He asked that they imitate Jesus in their lives, including “caring Christ’s death” inside of them and walking with him in new life. “Without the cross, you will never find the true Jesus. And a cross without Christ has no meaning.”

In administering the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance, show mercy, he told them. “Please, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, and in the name of the Church, I ask you to be merciful, very merciful.”

He reminded the men that they were called by Jesus to continue his mission as teacher, priest and shepherd, and to serve the Church and the people of God.

“Always have in front of your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who didn’t come to be served, but to serve and to look for and save those who were lost,” he said.

Later in the day, the pope told those gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the “Regnum Coeli” prayer that the image of a shepherd with his flock “shows the close relationship that Jesus wants to establish with each one of us.

“He is our guide, our teacher, our friend, our role model, but above all, he is our shepherd.” The pope said.

Christ has saved humanity, and “nothing and nobody will be able to wrench us from Jesus’ hands because nothing and no one can overpower his love,” he said. “Jesus’ love is invincible.”

While the devil and his minions try all sorts of ways to tear this promise of eternal life apart from people, “the evil one cannot do anything unless we open the doors of our soul to him, and follow his deceptive enticements,” he said.

Words and deeds can’t be separated, Pope Francis tells new priests

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—What you say and how you live always go hand in hand, building up the Church and the people of God, Pope Francis told new priests.

“Therefore, may your doctrine be nourishment to the people of God. [May] joy and supporting those faithful to Christ [be] the fragrance of your life, because the word and example go together,” he said.

Pope Francis

“Jesus is the great reconciler. To be like Jesus is the goal. He took all the sins of humankind to reconcile us to our father. And all he was asking me to do was to reconcile with my sister-in-law. I thought I had right before the decisions I made. But being right doesn’t matter. I hurt her, and she cut me out of her life.”

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Young nun, postulants among hundreds of Ecuador earthquake victims

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Six members of the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother, including a young nun from Northern Ireland, are among the dead in the strongest earthquake to strike Ecuador since 1979. 

Sister Clare Theresa Crockett, 33, of Londonderry, died in the massive earthquake that struck communities in the northern part of the country. Authorities reported that nearly 3,000 people were injured, and that an unknown number of buildings were destroyed or damaged.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the U.S. bishops’ relief and development agency, was partnering with local relief organizations to determine how best to respond in the communities most affected by the tremble. Water, food and emergency shelter are the biggest needs, the agency said on its website.

“Some of the poorest provinces are located near the coast, and we expect thousands of people to need immediate help,” Tom Hollywood, CRS’s representative for South America said in a statement.

Some of the hardest-hit communities in the earthquake zone, including in Esmeraldas and Manabi provinces, were inundated with rain and flooding in the days before the disaster, making them prone to potential landslides and complicating the relief effort, the agency said.

“It’s been really difficult to get in touch with our local partners,” Hollywood said, explaining that communications networks are down or working intermittently.

“Last night, even here in Quito, the whole network collapsed.”

Pope Francis sent words of condolence to Ecuador and Japan after praying the “Regina Coeli” with pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square on April 17.

Japan’s Kyushu region was shaken by a pair of strong earthquakes on April 16 and 17, which killed 41 people, injured hundreds and forced 180,000 people from their homes.

The Ecuadorean bishops’ conference offered prayers for the victims in an April 17 statement sent to the Vatican’s Fides news agency. “Our thoughts go especially to our brothers and sisters in the provinces of Manabi and Esmeraldas, who seem so far to be the most affected, and we invite everyone to participate in the national collection for the victims in order to help in their most urgent needs,” the statement said.

Sister Clare’s family described her as a “superstar,” while friends said she lit up a room when she entered, reported the Belfast Telegraph in Northern Ireland.

A relative told the Derry Journal she was “a diamond of the family” who died as she lived, “helping people.”

“The Independent” London reported that Sister Clare wanted to be an actress, and wrote and acted in local theater productions. She admitted to spending her weekends drinking and attending parties before joining the Sister Servants of the Home of the Mother.

She discovered the religious order by accident when she signed on for a free 10-day trip to Spain, thinking it was a chance to party. After learning it was a pilgrimage with mostly middle-aged women to the order’s 16th-century monastery, she tried to back out, but ended up attending and discovered her religious vocation.

The order said in a statement that it mourned the loss of its six members, but realized that “death is not the end of the path.”

“In our last meeting she had expressed a wish,” the statement said.

Three other sisters and two postulants in Playa Prieta were injured in the building collapse. They suffered various injuries, including broken bones and bruises, but none of the injuries was life threatening, the order said.

To donate to relief efforts for the earthquake victims, go to www.crs.org.†

DEPORTATION continued from page 1

issue at stake was the “pressing human concern” to avoid breaking up families of U.S. citizen children.

Someone who knows that firsthand was seated in the court listening to the arguments. Six-year-old Sophie Cruz, from Los Angeles, might not have been able to explain the legal issues used by the attorneys and justices, but she did know that her parents could face deportation if Obama’s plan to block deportations was lifted.

Sophie brought her concern to Pope Francis on his visit to the United States last September, crossing a security line to give the pope a note begging that her parents be allowed to stay in this country.

The plight of such families also was supported by many who gathered in front of the Supreme Court long before the oral arguments began. They carried placards saying: “Fight for families,” and “Love your neighbor” while a mariachi band played alongside them.

In early March, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and several other Catholic organizations joined in filing friend of the court briefs urging the Supreme Court to support the Obama administration’s actions that would temporarily protect from deportation more than 4 million immigrants in the country illegally and enable some immigrants to legally work in the United States.

Justice Anthony Kennedy wondered if the president can defer deportations for millions of people without specific congressional authorization, calling it a “legislative task, not an executive task.”

“If it’s as the president is defining the policy, and the Congress is executing it, he added, noting: ‘That’s just upside down.’

A key issue in the arguments was not just immigration, but whether the states had the legal standing to challenge the president’s executive actions.

Part of the concern voiced by Texas officials is over the issuing of driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants, which Keller noted was an issue for the state because of the cost.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor said she understands frustrations with obtaining licenses because there are often long lines and it’s not an ideal situation, but she seemed to indicate that this was surmountable.

She stressed that the 4 million immigrants who might be given a temporary reprieve from deportation “are living in the shadows,” and “are here whether we want them or not,” adding that the government had limited resources available for deportations.

Thomas Saenz, a lawyer representing three undocumented mothers of U.S. citizen children, told the court his clients live in “daily fear that they will be separated from their families and detained or removed from their homes.”

More than 325 immigration groups, civil rights, labor and social service organizations have filed amicus briefs to urge the high court to uphold the Obama administration’s executive actions. In addition to the USCCB, other Catholic groups filing briefs included the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., or CLINIC, and as least three Catholic colleges, which joined in a brief with more than 75 education and children’s advocacy organizations.

Other briefs were filed by House Democrats and a group of more than 60 entrepreneurs and business leaders, including Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.

The court is expected to rule on the case in June. If the decision is a 4-4 split, it would leave in place the appeals court ruling blocking the Obama administration’s plan.†

Pope Francis’ prayer intentions for May

• Universal: Respect for Women—That in every country of the world, women may be honored and respected and that their essential contribution to society may be highly esteemed.

• Evangelization: Holy Rosary—That families, communities, and groups may pray the Holy Rosary for evangelization and peace.

(To see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to www.ewtn.com/faith/panel/Prayer.htm)†
All are God’s children and should share in God’s gifts

We are taught in our formative years that actions speak louder than words, and if we examine our lives, we most certainly can remember times when that phrase rung true—including the actions done by the universal shepherd of the Catholic Church during its 2,000-plus year history.

A little more than a week after the much-anticipated release of his apostolic exhortation ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (The Joy of Love), on Love in the Family,” Pope Francis made national headlines again on April 16 by bringing 12 Syrian refugees living in a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos back to Rome with him.

The members of the three Syrian families, including six children, had all the necessary paperwork from the Greek and Italian governments in time to fly with the pope, Church officials said.

This is not the first time The Criterion has reported about Syrian families being relocated. In December, a Syrian family of four (two small children and their parents) that fled violence in their homeland was resettled in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis thanks to the efforts of the archdiocese’s Refugee and Immigration Services.

As reported on page 1 of this week’s issue, the Vatican will assume financial responsibility of the Syrian families who traveled with the pope. They will be assisted by the Rome-based Community of Sant’Egidio.

The fact that the 12 are all Muslims did not enter into the equation, the pope told reporters on the papal flight back to Rome. “I gave priority to children of God,” he said.

The pope’s actions provided another poignant life lesson so appropriate during this Holy Year of Mercy, when we encounter tales of elderly men running after women who are young enough to be their granddaughters. The wheelchair-bound billionaire oil tycoon J. Howard Marshall was 89 years old when he married the 26-year-old Anna Nicole Smith. He had met the Playboy model and reality TV star in a strip club. Anna insisted that she really did love the old man, and wasn’t in it for the money.

With age should come wisdom. It’s appropriate and fitting for older men to leave behind their former ways, and no longer live and act like college frat boys. It’s time to expect growth in self-control as we mature, and to expect a more reflective and sober approach to life.

Growing old invariably offers us the opportunity to redirect our focus, and as our body weakens, our mind and soul can be drawn to consider matters we may have previously avoided, like death and that which awaits us beyond death’s threshold. Our later years can powerfully provoke us to come to terms with our destiny and with higher truths.

In a recent column, Father Ron Rolheiser, quoting James Hillman, speaks of the graces that aging and infirmity can bring our way.

“Why have God and nature so structured things that we age and mature and are finally more in control of our lives, our bodies begin to fall apart, and we need a bevy of doctors and medicines to keep functioning? Is there some wisdom in the very DNA of the life process that mandates the breakdown of physical health in late life?” Hillman says “Yes. ‘There’s an innate wisdom in the process of aging and dying: the best wines have to be aged in cradged old barrels. The breakdown of our bodies deepens, softens, and matures the soul.’

I once overheard a hospital nurse chatting with one of her patients and we were both a bit surprised when the nonchalantly declared, with a little twinkle in her eye, “… when we get to be over 40, who doesn’t have hemorrhoids?” The comment, I thought, reflected a healthy, positive attitude toward aging and infirmity. Unbelievable. As we age, so do our strength. We get hemorrhoids and warts and cancers and high blood pressure and male pattern balding.

As expected, all of it, we can accept our lot with grace and gratitude. A serene acceptance of our struggles, and even of the sense of death that awaits us, is surely a great virtue.

But aging gracefully is not something many of us seem to do well. We resist the idea. We may cling to the fantasy of eternal youth. Some in our society even push the notion that we shouldn’t have to put up with the challenges of infirmity, and instead ought to receive help from the medical system so we can beat a hasty retreat to the exit. By pushing for physician-assisted suicide, they encourage us to despoil the good of our own lives and to reject the graces that arise from our struggles by choosing to ingest any of a number of doctor-prescribed poisons.

On the other hand, by embracing our particular path into death and by offering up our trials, we acquire a pose of soul and human maturity that orients us toward our destiny, a destiny in the hereafter that so many seem largely oblivious to. By letting our infirmities existentially speak to us, and to coming to realize how true it is that we have no permanent dwelling place here, we begin to grapple with that mysterious truth that heaven and home are synonymous.

Aging gracefully also involves recognizing and accepting the shortenings of the time ahead of us and the lengthening of the time behind us. Even as we achieve a much-sought independence in our lives, we begin to cycle back toward a renewed dependence on others, on caregivers, family and the community. We may even come to realize that the activation of our own willfulness once again like little children, and returning to a humble framework of interdependence in our shared destiny with others and with God.

(Father Tadeus Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience at Yale University and did post-doctoral work at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org)
Christian love is self-sacrificing, open to all, forgiving

During this Holy Year of Mercy, we are given a lot of thought to the mystery of God’s love as it has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. His teaching about love and the example he gave us, through the supreme sacrifice he made dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, allow us to see love in a whole new light.

We hear a lot about love every day. Human love is celebrated, and often abused, in advertising and the media. Most of the time, what passes for love in our culture is only a pale imitation of the real thing.

Genuine love—the love that Jesus commands us to share with one another—is of a different order. It is more than kindness or affection or even a romantic attachment or friendship with another person. The love that discipuljes Christ are called to demonstrate has an edge to it, a tougher quality than we are used to associating with love.

What makes Christian love different from other forms of love or affection? There are many different ways this question can be answered, but I’d like to focus on the following three: 1) Christian love involves sacrifice; 2) Christian love is selective, but embraces all; and 3) Christian love requires forgiveness (mercy). Let me say a few words about each of these.

The self-sacrificing love of Jesus, and all the martyrs who followed him, really does set Christian love apart from other kinds of love. Jesus has set the standard, and he has made it very clear that there is no greater love than to give up everything, including our very lives, for others.

This kind of radical love is not for everyone. Most of us will not be required to die for another. But to the extent that we seek to follow Jesus day in and day out, we will be called upon to sacrifice our own desires, our ego and many of our creature comforts for the good of others. Pope Francis frequently exhorts us to move beyond our “comfort zones” in order to share the joy of the Gospel with others, especially the weakest and most vulnerable among us. Christian love is not self-serving or self-aggrandizing. It is given for the sake of others—usually at some cost to ourselves.

When I say that Christian love is not selective but embraces all, I mean that it forces us to broaden our horizons and look beyond what is most familiar to us—our own kind. The parables of Jesus frequently jar the sensibilities of his audience by making Samaritans, who were the cultural pariahs of Jesus’ time, the good guys. Tax collectors and sinners find a place at our Lord’s table when most good Jews wouldn’t have anything to do with them. And Jesus heals everyone—even the detested Romans. His love was never selective. It burst all boundaries, and was accessible to everyone who sought his healing power.

Finally, what distinguishes Christian love from all other forms of warmth and affection is its readiness to forgive even the most heinous offenses against God and humanity. From the cross, Jesus begged his Father to forgive his enemies, the foolish, ignorant and self-centered people who insulted, tortured and murdered him.

God’s mercy is boundless, as Pope Francis reminds us. It is not limited to those who have repented and are “deserving” of forgiveness. Divine mercy extends to all without exception. This is perhaps the hardest edge of Christian love. Whereas we want to think of love as soft and malleable, God’s loving is unrelenting. He pursues us aggressively, inviting us to turn to him and accept his love and forgiveness, and never settling for the “cheap thrill” of retribution or vengeance.

Christian love is self-sacrificing, open to all and forgiving. It is the kind of love that we encounter every time we reflect on the Gospels or read the lives of the saints. “I give you a new commandment,” Jesus says in the Gospel reading for this weekend, the Fifth Sunday of Easter. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35).

The key phrase is “as I have loved you.” It is no ordinary love. It is a supernatural gift from above that we are privileged to receive and commanded to share with others if we wish to be his disciples.

This Easter season, in the Holy Year of Mercy, let’s pray that our love will be different. Let’s love one another as Christ loves us.†

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El amor cristiano es abnegado, receptivo e indulgente

Durante este Año de la Misericordia dedicaremos tiempo a reflexionar sobre el misterio del amor de Dios tal como se nos ha revelado en la persona de Jesucristo. A través de sus enseñanzas sobre el amor y el ejemplo que nos dio mediante el sacrificio supremo que hizo al morir en la cruz para que nuestros pecados fueran perdonados, contemplamos el amor desde una perspectiva totalmente nueva.

Todos los días escuchamos muchas cosas sobre el amor. Ensalzamos el amor humano—en ocasiones abusamos de él—en la publicidad y los medios de comunicación. La mayor parte de las veces lo que se ilustra como amor en nuestra cultura es solamente una pobre imitación de su verdadera esencia.

El amor genuino, ese que Jesús nos ordena que compartamos mutuamente, es un tipo de amor distinto. Es más que gentileza o cariño, e incluso que el apego romántico o la amistad con otra persona.

El amor que los discípulos de Jesucristo estamos llamados a demostrar tiene otro cariz, una característica distinta de lo que normalmente asociamos con amor.

¿Qué hace que el amor cristiano sea distinto de otras formas de amor o de afecto? Esta pregunta admite muchas respuestas, pero quisiera concentrarme en las siguientes tres:

1) El amor cristiano conlleva sacrificio; 2) El amor cristiano no es selectivo sino que acoge a todos; y 3) El amor cristiano exige perdón (misericordia). Permitanme ofrecer algunas reflexiones acerca de cada uno de estos desafíos.

El amor abnegado de Jesús y de todos los mártires que lo adoraron se distingue del amor cristiano de los demás tipos de amor. Jesús marcó la pauta y dejó muy en claro que no existía amor más grande que el de entregarlo todo—incluso la vida—por los demás.

No todo el mundo puede vivir este tipo de amor radical. La mayoría de nosotros no tendrá que morir por otra persona, pero en la medida en que procuramos seguir a Jesús todos los días estaremos llamados a sacrificar nuestros propios deseos, nuestro ego y muchas de nuestras comodidades para el bien de los demás.

El papa Francisco a menudo nos expone a “abandonar nuestra comodidad” para poder compartir la alegría del Evangelio con los demás, especialmente con los más débiles y vulnerables entre nosotros. El amor cristiano no es selectivo, sino que abarca a todos. Cuando digo que el amor cristiano no es selectivo sino que abarca a todos quiero decir que nos obliga a ampliar nuestros horizontes y a ver más allá de lo que usualmente nos resulta familiar; a aceptar a Dios en su propia raza. Las parábolas de Jesús nos invitan a extender nuestra empatía hacia aquellos que son diferentes de nosotros. En la película Los recaudadores de impuestos y los pecadores encuentran lugar a la mesa de nuestro Señor en una época en la que la mayoría de los juzgados respetables no se relacionarían con ellos. Y Jesús sana a todos, incluso a los romanos, detestados por todos. Su amor no tiene límites. Rompió todos los límites y fue accesible a todos los que buscaron su poder sanador.

Por último, lo que distingue al amor cristiano de otras formas de cariño y afecto es su disposición a perdonar, incluso las ofensas más aborrecibles contra Dios y la humanidad. Desde la cruz le rogó a su Padre que perdones a sus enemigos, esa gente insensata, ignorante y egoísta que lo insultó, lo torturó y lo asesinó.

Tal como lo recordaba el papa Francisco, la misericordia de Dios no tiene límites. No se limita a quienes se han arrepentido y “merecen” perdón. La misericordia divina se extiende a todos, sin excepción. Este es quizás uno de los aspectos más difíciles del amor cristiano.

Si bien pensamos que el amor es algo suavemente halagador, el amor de Dios es constante. Nos busca incessantemente, inviendónos a acudir a Él, a aceptar su amor y su perdón, y siempre se conforma con la “emoción barata” del castigo o la venganza.

El amor cristiano es abnegado, receptivo e indulgente. Es el tipo de amor que descubrimos cada vez que reflexionamos sobre los evangelios o leemos sobre las vidas de los santos. En la lectura del Evangelio de este quinto domingo de Pascua, Jesús nos dice: “Un mandamiento nuevo os doy: que os améis unos a otros; como yo os he amado, que también os améis unos a otros. En esto conocerán todos que sois mis discípulos, si tenéis amor los unos con los otros” (Jn 13:34-35).

La frase clave aquí es “como yo os he amado.” El seyo no es un amor ordinario, se trata de un obsequio sobrenatural del cielo que hemos tenido el privilegio de recibir y que se nos ha ordenado que compartamos con los demás si deseesa ser sus discípulos.

En esta temporada pasustral, en el Año de la Misericordia, creemos que nuestro amor sea diferente. Amémonos los unos a los otros como Cristo nos ama.†

Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa
April 25
Marian University, Ruth Lilly Student Community Resources, 5200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis, Faith and Ideas Series: “Ministry to and Pastoral Care for LGBTQ Youth and Emerging Adults in the Catholic Church,” Canales, associate professor of pastoral theology and ministry, presenting, providing recommendations for encouraging ministerial programs and activities for LGBTQ youth and emerging adults, and offering pastoral and pedagogical strategies to implement on college campuses. Noon, free. Information: 317-955-6166 or rchrist@marian.edu.

April 26
Online webinar: “Parenting in a sexualized culture,” 9-10 p.m., sponsored by Office of Pro-Life and Family Life, useful advice and strategies for parents, grandparents and all who minister to help children thrive in a secularized, digitized age. Registration: goo.gl/d3UtC0.

Habanas Blues Tapas Restaurant, 320 Pearl St., New Albany. “Theology on Tap,” 5:30-6:30 p.m., on “Sacrament of Reconciliation.” May 4
Ritz Charles, 12156 N. Meridian, Carmel. St. Augustine Guild “Hats Off to Spring” Luncheon and Style Show, silent auction 10 a.m., lunch and fashion show noon, proceeds to benefit Little Sisters of the Poor’s St. Augustine Home for Women, Indianapolis, co-sponsored by St. Vincent Hospital and Indianapolis Catholic Women’s Ministries reservations required by April 22. Information: Feb. 22. Peggys, 317-326-4471.


Archbishop O’Meara Catholic College, 400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and socially active, singles, 50 or over, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome: 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

May 6
Marvin Methodist Church, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. “Women in Dei Catholic Business Group,” Mass and monthly meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m., breakfast, $5 person. Information: 317-455-3447 or luminum@marvinmethodist.org

Most Holy Name of Jesus, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. First Friday devotion, expositions of the Blessed Sacrament, 5:30 p.m.; recollection, 5:45-6:45 p.m.; Mass, 7 p.m.; Litany of the Sacred Heart and prayers for the Father, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mass, 5-45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following 5 p.m. Mass. Information: 317-887-2861 or stmaryofm jadx@gmail.com

St. Lawrence Church, 664 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Charismatic Renewal Ministry, praise and worship 7 p.m., Mass 7-30 p.m. Information: goo.gl/yuh3Lp.

May 7
Helps of God’s Precious Infants of Our Lady of the Rosary of Perpetual Indulgence, Terre Haute, 7:30 a.m. Mass at the Carmelite Monastery at 95 Allendale, 9:45 p.m. on Ohio Blvd., 9:30 a.m. on assembly of Dei Catholic Women’s Ministries, reservations required by April 27. Information: Feb.22. Peggys, 317-326-4471.

St. Michael Church, 145 S. Michael Blvd., Brown County. First Friday Devotional Prayer Group, prayers, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 317-675-4462.

May 8
St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, 30 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 9 a.m.; special May 9 St. Therese of the Infant Jesus Church, (Little Flower Church), 4720 E. 10th St., Indianapolis, “Our Lady of May” Mass of monthly gathering, 11 a.m.; Mass, 1 p.m.; special May 10 Gandhi Club Golf, 1964 Burning Tree Lane, Carmel, Ind. (Occasional of Lafayette) Golf For Faith, golf outing fundraiser for archdiocese’ “Catholic in Keeps” charity program, cost for prizes, 10 a.m.; golf registration, 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. contest, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.; lunches, 12:30-4 p.m., shirts. Information: 317-486-6986.

May 9
Christopher Club, 1964 Burning Tree Lane, Carmel, Ind. (Occasional of Lafayette) Golf For Faith, golf outing fundraiser for archdiocese’ “Catholic in Keeps” charity program, cost for prizes, 10 a.m.; golf registration, 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. contest, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.; lunches, 12:30-4 p.m., shirts. Information: 317-486-6986.

May 10
Carmel, Ind. (Occasional of Lafayette) Golf For Faith, golf outing fundraiser for archdiocese’ “Catholic in Keeps” charity program, cost for prizes, 10 a.m.; golf registration, 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. contest, 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.; lunches, 12:30-4 p.m., shirts. Information: 317-486-6986.

May 12
Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Heart of the Church Bible Study and Lunch,” 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Information: 317-835-6095 or dr@benedictinn.org

May 13
St. Meinrad Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 300 S. Limekiln Rd., St. Meinrad. “Monastic Life as it is Lived Today,” Benedictine Father Ramon Gil-Gigeppe, presenter, $225 single, $425 double. Information: 812-357-6855 or dr@benedictinn.org

May 19
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5533 E. 66th St., Indianapolis. Silent self-guided days, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., $33 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or www.archindy.org/fatima.

Protest at Planned Parenthood in Bloomington and Indianapolis April 23
The first annual national “ProtestPP” Planned Parenthood protest will take place at three locations in central and southern Indiana on April 23.

#ProtestPP is a coalition of state and national pro-life groups calling for public protest in response to the recent revelations that Planned Parenthood has allegedly been involved in the illicit trafficking of aborted babies’ body parts.

The primary sponsors of #ProtestPP are Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, Created Equal and the Pro-Life Action League.

These three national activist organizations are joined by more than 60 state and local pro-life groups and have been involved in the illicit trafficking of aborted babies’ body parts.

Anyone interested in participating can contact their local pro-life group or the national sponsors.

New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries hosts 5K Friar Fun Run and Mile Walk on May 21
New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries is hosting the 5K Friar Fun Run and Mile Walk at Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony Drive, in Mt. St. Francis, starting at 8 a.m. on May 21, with registration at 7 a.m.

This fundraising event is set on the beautiful grounds of Mount St. Francis. The run is on an off-road course, and the mile walk is on pavement.

Individuals, families and teams are all invited. In addition to the run and walk, family-friendly games will be offered.

The cost is $23 for adults, $21 for seniors ages 55 and older and military personnel, and $12 for children ages 4-11.

Children ages 3 and under will be admitted free of charge.

All proceeds include tax, beverages and snacks.

Purchase tickets in advance via cash or check only by contacting Sodexo at 812-535-5201, by purchasing tickets at Linden Leaf Gifts at the Providence Spirituality and Conference Center. For more information, call 812-535-4285 or log on to ProcCenter.org.

Providence Sisters to host special Mother’s Day Brunch on May 8
All are invited to join the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, 1 Providence Way, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, for a special Mother’s Day Brunch from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on May 8.

The brunch will take place in the O’Shaughnessy Dining Room, Providence Spirituality and Conference Center.

Attendees will have the chance to enjoy the extended menu, featuring all-time favorites such as shrimp cocktail, carved prime rib, apple onion pork loin, fresh salads, side dishes, homemade desserts and much more.

The cost to attend is $23 for adults, $21 for seniors ages 55 and older and military personnel, and $12 for children ages 4-11. Children ages 3 and under will be admitted free of charge.

All proceeds include tax, beverages and snacks.

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Deadline to register for Brunch for former St. Agnes Academy alumnae is May 31
This year’s St. Agnes Alumnae Brunch will be held at the Riviera Club, 5640 N. Illinois St., in Indianapolis, at noon on June 5.

For more information or to register, call 812-923-8355, log on to www.nawdy.org or call 812-923-8355. For further information, call Pat Douglass at 317-340-7550 or send an e-mail to pddouglass@gmail.com.
New Albany Parish seeks to build stronger families

By Natalie Hoffer

NEW ALBANY—After two synods focusing on families in the last two years, Pope Francis just published his document “Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love),” on Love in the Family,” which summarizes the results of those two special meetings. Meanwhile, the aptly named Holy Family Parish in New Albany is one step ahead in forming faith-focused families.

It started about a year ago when the parish’s director of religious education, Theresa Shaw, was inspired after attending a conference and a workshop that both reinforced the same message: families and catechists go hand in hand.

“The conference talked about [Church as] a ‘family of families’—I really liked that,” she said. “Then the workshop I went to at the Mount [Mount St. Francis Retreat Center for Spirituality in Mt. St. Francis] was called Engaging Parents—Forming a Family of Faith. My ideas started from there.”

Shaw presented ideas of multigenerational faith sharing and catechesis to Father Daniel Atkins, the parish’s pastor, parish staff and the members of the Faith Formation Commission she chairs. She received enthusiastic support.

“About 10 years ago when I was St. Paul [Catholic Center in Bloomington], a group wanted to do an alternate approach to faith formation,” said Father Atkins. “They suggested a program that would invite families, not just children, to participate in growing in their faith. It really caught on.

“So when Theresa suggested that we look into a more family-oriented way of going about faith formation, I supported that 100 percent.”

Learning the faith from other family members is one of the goals with the multigenerational catechetical and faith sharing concept. Through this method, family members are encouraged to learn from each other—not just children from parents, grandparents and siblings, but all from each other, Shaw explained.

She has put this method into action with her Catholic Faith Formation (CCF) classes for children making their first Communion and first reconciliation who do not attend Holy Family School.

“One Saturday a month for three hours, we have all the families with their children split up into different groups with a catechist,” she said. “We don’t split them up by age group—we have families of adults and children together with a catechist, and we have five groups like that. We read the Scripture for the next day, and then discuss the readings. [This method] helps coach and empower parents to learn how to talk about the Bible with their children. So many of them don’t know where to start, or they feel like they don’t know enough about their faith to teach their children. But as parents, they’re the first educators in teaching their children the faith.

Previously, the CCF parents and children would remain together for 20 minutes for prayer and a brief lesson, then the parents would leave and return for their children later.

“The way it was all set up, it was not conducive to visiting or sharing,” she said. “It was just rows of people. Now they’re in smaller groups. It’s more conducive to sharing. The people in the groups are becoming closer and bonding as a little family. And we include grandparents and other extended family in our definition of family. All generations can benefit from time spent together sharing their faith, so we encourage all ages to attend.”

The same is true for the several fellowship evenings the CCF families have throughout the year. Each CCF grouping of families has the opportunity to organize an evening of family fun, from soup and bingo to board games to playing a life-size version of the Hungry Hungry Hippos game.

“They may or may not have a religious theme, but it’s an evening to be together and have fun as families,” said Shaw. “One little first-grader said he really wanted to come (to one of the events) because he wanted to be with his ‘Church family.’

Shaw is seeing results from this family approach to fellowship and catechesis.

“I’ve noticed a difference in my religious education department, that families seem closer and are more likely to attend the events,” she said. “I think that now they’re starting to view the program as community as opposed to just classes for the kids.

“I think too that it’s caused many of the parents to examine their relationship with Jesus and improve on it. They’re starting to learn and get a spark to grow closer to Jesus… If you don’t have a relationship with Jesus, what good does the doctrine do you?”

Although the family focus initiative was started by Shaw within the realm of religious education, the idea is spreading to other areas of the parish.

The parish has declared the first Monday of each month to be “family night”—no parish committees or groups are to meet on that night so that time can be spent with families.

Additionally, a sign was placed in the church’s narthex inviting families with small children to sit toward the front where children can see and hear during Mass.

“I think really it’s important that you have the support of the priest, or it’s not going to go anywhere.”

From his perspective, Father Atkins sees the initiative as a way for the parish to help families grow together in faith.

“We need to help families to develop their own special spirituality, their own way of being a Catholic family, and encourage that.”

So far, the program is doing well and has received positive feedback.

“One little first-grader said he really wanted to come (to one of the events) because he wanted to be with his ‘Church family.’”

Shaw agrees.

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“I sing the hymns, prayers and voice the responses,” reads one of the statements on the sign. “Children learn liturgical behavior by copying you.”

Shaw is thankful for Father Atkins’ support of the initiative.

“He’s been very involved in this, very encouraging,” she said. “I think it’s really important that you have the support of the priest, or it’s not going to go anywhere.”

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“We need to help families to develop their own special spirituality, their own way of being a Catholic family, and encourage that,” he said.

Shaw agrees.

“We as a parish are here to help, guide and support parents in the role of teaching their children the faith,” she said. “With this focus on the family, we hope to give parents a role model for sharing with their children.”
Pope, Orthodox leaders listen to cries of refugees, urge help

MYTILENE, Greece (CNS)—Although they have been asked by policy makers, Pope Francis and Orthodox leaders focused their visit to the island of Lesbos on the faces, stories and draw the refugees.

Pope Francis, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Orthodox Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and all of Greece spent more time on April 16 greeting the refugees individually than they did giving speeches. The children received a pat on the head, and the men a handshake. In respect for the Muslim faith of most of the women, the leaders put their hands over their hearts and bowed in greeting them. The gratitude of those men, women and children was clear in their smiles, tears and sobbing pleas for help.

An Iraqi woman asked for the assistance of the pope and patriarch in finding medical care for her daughter with cancer. Another woman kept saying, in English, “We are very tired here.” A man told the pope that he had a brother and sister in Canada and was trying to join them. Another man pleaded with Pope Francis, “Please, father, bless me. Father, please, bless me.”

Pope Francis went to Lesbos expecting those who would come by boat. On the flight from Rome, he told reporters, “This is a trip marked by sadness, and that’s important. It’s a sad trip, we are going to meet so many people who suffer, who don’t know where to go, who were forced to flee, and we are also going to a cemetery—the sea where so many have drowned.

“We are going to encounter the greatest human catastrophe since World War II,” he said.

The pope asked reporters to make a special effort to share with their readers and listeners “what is in my heart.”

After briefly greeting each other at Lesbos’ Mytilene airport, the pope and Orthodox leaders rode together in a minibus to the Moria refugee camp, a facility that a year ago was an open center for some 2,500 newcomers wait out the slow process of their pleas for help.

Today it is a locked facility surrounded by walls toppled by razor wire, where some 2,500 newcomers wait out the slow process of discussing whether their asylum requests will be accepted or they will be put on a ferry and taken back to Turkey. Most of the refugees are from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and set sail for Greece in inflatable boats from the nearby Turkish coast.

Archbishop Ieronymos, speaking at the refugee camp, said he hoped to never again “see children washing up on the shores of the Aegean.”

The Orthodox archbishop spoke with pride of the Greek people who have opened their hearts and even their homes to the refugees, despite the country’s economic trouble and a government almost crippled by austerity measures.

But Archbishop Ieronymos was not so appreciative of the European Union and the international community, which continue to pledge help in dealing with the massive influx of refugees, but also have given closed and more of their borders.

“Only those who made the eyes of that small children that we met at the refugee camps will be able to immediately recognize in its essence the ‘horror’ of humanity and solidarity that Europe has shown these last few years,” he said.

For Patriarch Bartholomew, the visit to the camp was summarized as solidarity in tears.

“We have wept as we watched the Mediterranean Sea becoming a burial ground for your loved ones,” he told the refugees. “We have wept as we witnessed the sympathy and sensitivity of the people of Lesbos and other islands. But we have also wept as we saw the hard-heartedness of our fellow brothers and sisters—your fellow brothers and sisters—close borders and turn away.

“The world will be judged by the way it has treated you,” said the patriarch, the spiritual leader of the world’s Orthodox Christians.

Pope Francis told those interned at the camp that he wanted to join the patriarch and archbishop on Lesbos first of all “simply to be with you and to hear your stories.”

However, he also said they wanted to “call the world’s attention to the refugee crisis in the hopes that the world will heed these tragic and indeed desperate need, and respond in a way worthy of our common humanity.”

God created all people to be brothers and sisters, the pope said. But it is so easy for many people “to ignore other people’s suffering and even to exploit their vulnerability.”

The pope urged the refugees, “Do not lose hope.”

“The greatest gift we can offer one another is love,” Pope Francis told the refugees. He asked them, even in the camp, to express that love, “a readiness to listen and understand, a word of encouragement, a prayer.”

He told the refugees, most of whom are Muslim, “We Christians love to tell the story of the good Samaritan, a foreigner who saw a man in need and immediately stopped to help. For us, it is a story about God’s mercy, which is meant for everyone, for God is the all-merciful,” he said, using a familiar Muslim description of God.

Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos signed a joint declaration at the refugee camp insisting the world “cannot ignore the colossal humanitarian crisis created by the spread of violence and armed conflict, the persecution and displacement of religious and ethnic minorities, and the uprooting of families from their homes.”

The three leaders insisted that dignified care must be given to those who felt forced to flee their homelands, but they also pleaded with world leaders to get serious about addressing the wars, human rights violations and extreme poverty that cause millions to leave their homelands each year.

The Churches’ concern for refugees, they said in the declaration, is not a political position but part of fulfilling the Christian mission of service to the world.

“We urge the international community to make the protection of human lives a priority, and, at every level, to support inclusive policies which extend to all religious communities,” they said.

With hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence in Syria and Iraq and fleeing extreme poverty and persecution elsewhere, Pope Francis acknowledged that Europeans and their governments naturally could feel overwhelmed. The fact that the newcomers speak different languages and have different religions and cultures adds to the challenge.

But the migrants “are living in trying conditions, in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear, at times even of despair, due to material hardship and uncertainty for the future,” the pope said.

While the concerns of governments are “understandable and legitimate,” he said, one must never forget that “migrants, rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all persons who have faces, names and individual stories.”

And, to a lesser extent Italy, are on the frontlines of the refugee influx and are forced to bear much of the burden for welcoming, housing and screening them as other European countries close their borders or make entry difficult.

Pope Francis, though, called on Europe to live up to its claim of being “the cradle of human rights.”

“Whoever sets foot on European soil ought to sense this, and thus become more aware of the duty to respect and defend those rights,” the pope said.

He praised the people of Lesbos for showing that “in these lands, the cradle of civilization, the heart of humanity continues to beat: a humanity that before all else recognizes others as brothers and sisters, a humanity that wants to build bridges and recovers from the idea of putting up walls to make us feel safer. In reality, barriers create divisions instead of promoting the true progress of peoples, and divisions sooner or later lead to confrontations.”

Pope Francis meets people at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece, on April 15. (CNS/Paul Haring)
Rachel's Vineyard retreats 'allow God's mercy to flow' for women and men in need of post-abortion healing

By Natalie Hoeter

Bernadette Roy, a member of St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis, sees a certain phenomenon in every Rachel's Vineyard post-abortion healing retreat she helps facilitate.

"There's a beauty in watching people come in with their head hung in shame, and leaving with hope and a renewed sense that God loves them," she says.

Roy can relate—she, too, once sought healing from hiding her pain over an abortion she had as a pregnant single mother of two boys in the 1980s. She silently ached for more than 20 years before seeking help.

"By that time, I had an announcement and was married," she says. "I went to confession, but I couldn't forgive myself."

Roy helped served the Gospel of Life Sister Diane Carollo, then-director of pro-life ministries in the archdiocese, implement the internationally offered Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreat for the first time in the archdiocese in 2006.

"We allow God's grace to flow" during the retreats.

"We can't separate the two," she says. "The structure of the retreat is made so people address deep, deep things—loss, mental health issues, unhealthy relationships. All of those components are addressed from the spiritual aspect and from the psychological aspect, too."

According to the Rachel's Vineyard website, www.rachelsvineyard.org, the retreat "is an opportunity to examine your abortion experience, identify the ways that the loss has impacted you in the past and present, and to acknowledge any unresolved feelings that many individuals struggle with after abortion."

During the retreat, says Roy, the facilitators—who have all attended the retreat as participants in the past—help "connect you to why you made the decision [to have an abortion], where you are in your life spiritually, financially, emotionally, and walk slowly into reconnecting with the event and making it what it was—the death of a child. Then you connect with that child in your heart."

"On Sunday, there's a memorial service. It's about remembering your child and yourself—you life as it was—and reconnecting your head, your heart and your soul, and putting yourself back together."

It's a lifetime project."

Kattady, a member of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, first participated in the retreat in 2009 to overcome the pain of learning that a family member had an abortion. She admits that the weekend is "intense."

"The participants are called to address deep wounds," she says. "I always say you see them come in Friday evening, and you can see the pain in their faces and body language. Come Sunday, you can see the glow. I have never seen a person leave without the glow. That's God's doing."

At each retreat, a priest is available for the sacrament of reconciliation, sometimes those in need of healing would like to go to a priest they don't personally know, or not go [to confession] at their parish," says Niemerg.

"His love is transmitted in our works. The Holy Spirit really guides what you say. The facilitators and counselors involved are rooted in the faith to the point that we realize we're there, but it's not our doing. We allow God's grace to flow."

"It's inevitable that you leave being touched. Healing is not complete, but it has begun."

"I had not fulfilled my purpose as a man" before Slaughter and his first wife married, they conceived a child.

"She asked me to give her half the money for an abortion," he says. "I didn't understand what abortion actually was at the time. In my mind, it was a blob of tissue, not a baby."

After he was received into the full communion of the Church in 2004, the member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish near Terre Haute, holds a sign stating that women regret abortion, at Respect Life Sunday on Oct. 4. The archdiocese of Indianapolis offers many post-abortion healing ministries. (File photos submitted by Tim McCormick)

Project Rachel contact information for nearby dioceses:

Cincinnati Archdiocese:
Project Rachel: Phone: 513-784-0531
Email: projectrachel@catholiccincinnati.org
Website: www.projectrachelcincinnati.com

Evansville Diocese:
Project Rachel/Catholic Charities
Phone: 812-423-5456
Email: dfraeoste@evdio.org
Website: www.charitiesevv.org

Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese:
Project Rachel: Phone: 219-722-4354 (855-RACHEL HOPE)
Email: projectrachelhope@gmail.com

Lafayette Diocese:
Project Rachel-Emmanuel Ministry
Phone: 765-477-7706
Hispanic Phone: 765-477-7695
Email: rennezback@gmail.com

Louisville Archdiocese:
Catholic Charities / Project Rachel
Phone: 502-471-2155
Email: projectrachel@archlou.org

Upcoming post-abortion healing retreats:

For information on either contact:
Bernadette Roy or Rebecca Niemerg at 317-452-0054, or e-mail projectrachel@archindy.org

See Rachel, page 10

Post-abortion healing ministries: Extending God’s love and forgiveness

By Natalie Hoeter

"Rachel mourns her children. She refuses to be consoled because her children are no more" (Jer 31:15).

These words from Jeremiah ring true for many women and men who have been involved or affected by abortion. Their children—or grandchildren, or siblings, or nieces or nephews—are no more, and it is difficult to find consolation in a world that often does not understand the depth of their pain.

Those hurting from abortion are in great need of God’s love and forgiveness. For this reason, during the Holy Year of Mercy, the archdiocesan Office of Pro-Life and Family Life is increasing efforts to make its post-abortion healing ministries more widely known.

"Project Rachel extends God's unconditional love and forgiveness to women and men who experience the tragedy of abortion," whether they are the mother or father, or a relative or friend, says Rebecca Niemerg, director of the archdiocesan Office of Pro-Life and Family Life. "By offering a safe and non-judgmental environment in which to come to terms with God and his Church, Project Rachel helps those suffering after abortion experience mercy, forgiveness and peace."

Here's an overview of the post-abortion healing ministries the archdiocese offers:

• Help line and e-mail: Those seeking healing after an abortion can speak with someone or leave a message at 317-452-0054, or e-mail projectrachel@archindy.org. All calls and e-mails are kept confidential.
• Retreats: Rachel’s Vineyard retreats are offered in Indianapolis, with the next one scheduled on May 13-15, and a Project Rachel retreat is scheduled in Bloomington on Aug. 26-27.
• Literature: "We have brochures, but we also have business cards," says Niemerg. "Business cards are small, so they can go in restrooms, or easily be confidentially handed to somebody without it being a whole brochure. They’re available for free for parishes, groups or individuals upon request. They do no good sitting in my office!"
• Priest referral list for confession: "While of course every priest can offer absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation, sometimes those in need of healing would like to go to a priest they don’t personally know, or not go [to confession] at their parish," says Niemerg.

"We can offer contact information for priests outside of their parish. That way they not only can have anonymity, they could also call ahead for a private appointment so they don’t have to stand in the regular confession line. The priests on the referral list have agreed to be on it, and it covers the whole archdiocese."

• Referrals for counseling and other ministries: "We offer referrals to counselors [around the archdiocese] and to Healing Hidden Hurts," a Christ-centered, 10-step program offering confidential one-to-one care which is both spiritual and therapeutic, says Niemerg. "We also post Project Rachel information for the Lafayette, Evansville, Fort Wayne-South Bend and Gary dioceses, and for the Cincinnati and Louisville archdioceses on our website."

• Ongoing support: In the greater Indianapolis area, the archdiocese offers confidential monthly meetings called Rachel’s Network. The meetings are for those seeking to continue their healing process after having completed the archdiocese’s Rachel’s Vineyard post-abortion healing retreat or something similar.
• Training for counselors, priests and lay: The Office of Pro-Life and Family Life offers training for counselors, priests and lay people in how to help those hurting from post-abortion pain.

(For more information on the post-abortion healing ministries in the archdiocese, log onto www.archindy.org/projectrachel, call Bernadette Roy or Rebecca at 317-452-0054, or e-mail projectrachel@archindy.org.)†
What was in the news on April 22, 1966? Marian College expanding,

RACHEL

By Sean Gallagher

GREENFIELD—Pope Francis recently called on

dioceses throughout the world to establish a charitable

program during the Holy Year of Mercy that would be a

long-lasting legacy of this jubilee year focused on the

compassion of God.

He made this call during a vigil prayer service in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on April 2, the night before Divine Mercy Sunday, and suggested hospitals, homes for the elderly or homes for the recovery of addicts.

Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, was encouraged by the Holy Father’s last suggestion because his Indianapolis East Deanery faith community has been working with other Christian congregations in Hancock County to establish a home for women 18 and older who are recovering from addictions.

Father Jenkins, director of the ecumenical organization in Hancock County, hopes to open Talitha Koum Recovery House in Greenfield later this year.

The name for the house comes from the Aramaic words of Jesus that he spoke to a girl that he raised from the dead (Matt 5:41). The words mean, “Little girl, arise.”

“We’re trying to give people a chance to get out of the environments that don’t help them break free from addictions,” said Father Jenkins. “Unfortunately, we don’t have many of those in this county at the moment.”

Linda Ostewig, a member of Brandwine Community Church in Greenfield and a leader in Friends of Recovery, knows firsthand the importance and the help of people in recovery. Her daughter struggled with addiction for 11 years.

“I would look for help for her and could never really find many places that helped with providing a safe place to learn how to live sober,” she said. “Once you detox and or come out of rehabilitation, or jail, you still need somewhere to go that will help you learn how to live life. Otherwise, you go back to the same thing, and relapse happens.”

Ostewig also noted that there are much fewer recovery houses for women in Indiana, and that women in the state struggling with addiction coming out of rehabilitation or jail often have a three-month waiting period before they can be placed in a recovery house. That lag can often delay them back to the same habits and relationships that put them into addiction in the first place.

Talitha Koum, Ostewig said, will house women who have been detained and are either being released from jail, a work release or rehabilitation program.

“These women will all be in recovery, and we will offer them the tools they need to learn how to live life sober and address root issues of addictions,” Ostewig said. We know the underlying core issue of addiction is pain, and many women who struggle have some kind of trauma they have never dealt with.”

A dilapidated home in Greenfield has been donated to Friends of Recovery, but needs major renovation work in order to serve as a home for women in recovery.

A coffee and dessert fundraising event for this renovation work will take place at 7 p.m. on April 23 at Adagios Banquet Hall and Conference Centre, 5999 W. Memory Lane, in Greenfield. For more information about attending the event, contact Amy Kirked at aikerd@hancockco.gov or at 317-477-1135, ext. 2247.

Father Jenkins sees this ministry and the parish’s support of it as a real work of mercy.

“It’s a direct link to what we’re supposed to do—help the sick and those in need,” he said. “It’s also always good for us to serve people beyond our pews and who might not ever darken the doors of our church.”

He particularly stresses the ecumenical approach being taken to this ministry in Hancock County.

“It’s always good to work as a unified Christian community to these things,” Father Jenkins said. “It helps us at least have a stronger witness to the larger community.”

Ostewig agrees, saying the ecumenical ministry will show the love of Christ.

“We need to be one voice, and I believe it pleases the Lord for us to stand united under a common cause, a great cause—restoring lives of broken women,” she said.

Father Jenkins has high hopes for the effect that Talitha Koum will have on the broader community in Hancock County.

“Hopefully the witness of the women at this house will spur other people in the community to better themselves,” she said. “It might even lead to just a better community in general.”

(For more information about Friends of Recovery, contact Linda Ostewig at felindia4stevens@gmail.com or at 317-525-7791.)

By Brandon A. Evans

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

Here are some of the items found in the April 22, 1966, issue of The Criterion:

- Marian maps $7 million expansion plan
- ‘Marian College this week unveiled a 10-year development plan for campus expansion and faculty improvement which will cost $7 million. The long-range priority list announced on Thursday will enable the liberal arts college to accommodate 1,500 full-time students by 1975. … Receiving top priority in the expansion program will be a new $1.375 million library, which was designed by Evans Woolen, Indianapolis architect. The modernistic, three-story structure will be constructed of precast concrete, with brick and stone features at a liberal use of glass. It will provide for 200,000 volumes, special collections and exhibits, seminar rooms and a 265-seat auditorium.

- Martindale Project gets $289,000 grant
- Target: Appalachia: Woods senior joins mission task force
- Christ the King opens fund drive
- Installation set for Bishop Leibold
- Annual Pope Day for Vocations set
- Confirms end of the Index
- Vatican City—In an interview in the Vatican City weekly newspaper, L’Osservatore della Domenica, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, pro-prefect of the

- Marathon men $7 million expansion plan
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- 205-seat auditorium.”
Comforting the afflicted often gives peace to those who suffer

By David Gibson

Bad news is hard to hear, like the very bad news that one’s long-held job is about to be downsized or outsourced. This news can strike a blow to a person’s sense of well-being and confidence, generating previously unknown fears and anxieties, and an unwarranted sense of failure. In the wake of a job loss, the care and support of family and friends undoubtedly prove comforting. Most of us, in times like this, do not want to be left entirely alone. We need others to lift our spirits, and remind us that we are not alone, that we may be seen as persons by any job we held. Each of us is someone’s much-loved child, or spouse, or parent or committed friend. It is comforting in times of loss to be reminded of this.

But comfort of another kind also is needed by many suffering a job loss. They may require the kind of competent support that can help them identify what they are doing correctly right now, and what they could do differently in attempting to re-enter the job market. This is what I find interesting about the Catholic parish ministries created at the time of the downturn in the economy that began in 2008 to provide job-counseling services.

One parish I know fairly well refers to this as a career-networking ministry. It invites volunteers who are local executives or business owners, for example, to serve as mentors for people hoping to locate new employment or better jobs. People seeking good jobs might require help with writing a resume. They might benefit, too, from the insights of someone able to point out new and different ways of putting their God-given talents to use—someone, perhaps, who encourages them to look for work in places they never looked before.

It seems fair to say that the Church-based ministries designed to serve as a resource for job seekers actually perform a spiritual work of mercy by giving comfort to the afflicted. In this case, however, comfort adds up to much more than a soothing pat on the back or heartfelt encouragement to stay strong in the face of an unwanted, unsought challenge.

The comfort these ministries offer is concrete and practical. This kind of comfort stands a chance of shoring up a job seeker’s courage as well. One of the goals is to clear the way to a rebirth of hope.

“Comfort” is a perplexing term in the vocabulary of Christianity. At one moment, Christians are warned away from too much comfort of a harmful sort, while the next Christianity. At one moment, Christians are warned away from too much comfort of a harmful sort, while the next they often pair it with another term that seems designed to explain comfort’s fuller meaning. Thus, some speak of “afflicting the comfortable.”

Jesus comforted the afflicted, while afflicting the comfortable. “Jesus told us that we will be judged by the love we show to those who most challenge our comfort and way of life: the homeless, the immigrant, the sick, the prisoner.” Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez noted in a January speech.

This suggests that the actual demands of comforting the afflicted will open our eyes to realities that are painful to see. When Christian leaders and educators speak of “comfort,” they often pair it with another term that seems designed to explain comfort’s fuller meaning. Thus, some speak of bringing comfort and “peace” to others, or of endeavoring to comfort and “strengthen” them.

People whose lives are unsettled by painful circumstances undoubtedly would benefit from a sense of peace, and the kind of strength needed to confront their difficulties. Thus, comforting the afflicted can mean doing whatever possible to revive the strengths currently hidden away inside them and helping to inject peacefulness—but not passivity—into their lives.

Pope Francis pairs “comfort” with “compassion” and “mercy.” His hope in proclaiming the Year of Mercy was that the Church never would “tire of extending mercy,” and would “be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort.”

Compassionate people try to envision themselves in others’ shoes and to view the world through their eyes. Lacking compassion, it becomes next to impossible truly to comfort another person. It stands to reason, however, that the form of comfort one person welcomes may differ considerably from the comfort that benefits someone else. So extending comfort to others requires listening attentively to their voices and learning their wishes.

To comfort the afflicted, then, it is essential to become familiar with the spiritual work of mercy of “comforting the afflicted.” In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, we are told: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction, with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.” (2 Cor 1:3-4).

In order to provide comfort, the Christian first needs to be moved with compassion. We are called not only to be there to help those in need, but we are also called to feel their pain and to journey with them. If we weep, then we, too, should weep.

More than doing good things for people, this work of mercy calls us to be the presence of God in their lives.

Showing kindness to the sorrowful mirrors the actions of God in the Bible

By Daniel S. Mulhall

We hear in the Book of Isaiah: “Comfort, give to my people,” says your God” (Is 40:1). A comment often said about Jesus was that he came to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. While the comment may be simplistic, there are certainly many examples in the Scriptures where Jesus comforts those who are sorrowful.

This message of Jesus echoes the statements about God the Father found throughout the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and the prophetic books. It is also found in numerous places throughout the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament epistles.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us: “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Mt 5:4).

In Mark, we hear that Jesus is moved to compassion because of the plight of a woman suffering for years from a hemorrage (Mt 5:21-34).

In Mark 9:14-29, Jesus heals a boy with convulsions. The boy’s father pleads with Jesus: “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (Mr 9:22).

To which Jesus responds: “Every thing is possible to one who has faith” (Mt 9:23).

The chapter ends with Jesus telling his disciples—who could not heal the boy—that such work can only be done through prayer.

The story that may best illustrate how Jesus gave comfort to those who were hurting can be found in John 11. Someone dear to Jesus—Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha—had taken ill. When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany (John said he waited two days to go), Lazarus was dead, and everyone was in tears, including Jesus. (John 11:35).

The Gospel of John reads: “And Jesus wept” (Jn 11:35). Jesus then proceeds to call Lazarus to arise out of the tomb and return to life.

A few consistent themes arise from Jesus’ words and actions in the Gospel accounts for those who seek to live out the spiritual work of mercy of “comforting the afflicted.”

First, when we comfort those who hurt, we are acting like God as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, we are told: “Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God” (2 Cor 1:3-4).

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By Daniel S. Mulhall (a catechist who lives in Laurel, Maryland.) †
We don’t seem to hear much about sin anymore. Unless we happen to tune in to one of those fiery TV preachers whose presence in our homes is the wherry out of his listeners, sin rarely comes to our attention.

We all know that sin exists. After all, we live in a capitalistic society as a result of our human struggle to reach heaven. We also know that we are often tempted to do things we know we shouldn’t, or to think bad thoughts. We’ve been given the sacrament of reconciliation to help us sort it all out.

From the time we’re born, we are taught to know the difference between right and wrong. We hear “No!” for the first of many times, and learn that sin has consequences we don’t like: Could it be the kamikaze bomber, the butcher, the baker, or the dentist? We take much of our peers whose behavior is acceptable in society.

Much of our culture includes allusions and references to sin, from saying “I’m sorry” for coughing in public, to the promise in the Boy Scout Oath, and listen or to dialogue, another favorite expression is self-disclosure and and humor, unspeakable losses and stubborn hope.

Sister Maura worries about the loss of our ability to act with the personal. We all start with the personal. Getting personal, as in engaging and knowing one another, underlies Pope Francis’ urging for a culture of encounter. He speaks against the tendencies to intellectualize, judge, dismiss and demonize the poor, the unemployed, the underemployed, the undervalued, the hidden, and listen or to dialogue, another favorite expression is self-disclosure and receptivity of the other. In an encounter, we seek to know and be known. The third element calls for assistance: We act for the well-being of another person.

Looking for opportunities to foster a culture of encounter.

Carolyn Woo
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services
**Sunday, April 24**

- Revelation 21:1-5a
- John 13:31-33a, 34-35

Once again in this Easter season, the Acts of the Apostles supplies the first reading for the Mass.

This weekend’s reading tells the story of some of the missionary activities of Paul and Barnabas, who visited several places in Asia Minor that were prominent cities in the Roman Empire of the first century.

 Ancient traditions see all the Apostles as missionaries. Most of them left for far and wide to proclaim the Gospel. Acts concentrates on many of Paul’s efforts in evangelizing. This reading from Acts is more than a travelogue. It shares lessons about the faith of Paul and Barnabas, and it reveals the conditions in which these two great figures in early Christianity lived and taught. As they spoke in Christ’s name in the cities that they visited, Paul and Barnabas warned these followers of Christ that hostility and difficulties, often fearful difficulties, faced those who love the Lord. Paul and Barnabas themselves met hostility and endured difficulties, so their warnings hardly came from paranoia or as a strategy to build regard for themselves by fabrication. The culture of the Roman Empire was absolutely hostile to the values of the Gospel. The political order was becoming absolutely hostile to the values of Christianity lived and taught.

Yet Paul and Barnabas were undaunted. They continued to move from city to city, forming Christian communities along the way and reassuring believers in their faith in Christ. Despite the risks and the more than occasional reactions, their faith inspired and impelled them.

As the second reading from Revelation says, eternal life with God in heaven will be our reward. Following Jesus is more than a verbal announcement, it is actual involvement in the Redeemer’s mission by living lives of justice, charity and service. Christianity is not about ivory towers. As Pope Francis so often insists, it is about living in our homes, on our jobs, and in our contacts with others.

Such was the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, who urged fortitude in living the Christian life, but who promised a marvelous reward in this life and in the hereafter.

**Reflection**

A month ago, the Church called us, with joy and the deepest faith, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus after the terrible event of the crucifixion.

Gradually, gently, but unrelentingly, the Church has called upon us personally to respond to Jesus, to bond ourselves with the salvation brought to us by Jesus.

This weekend’s readings proclaim the sacrificial death as well as the rising of Jesus from the dead, but they also call upon us to respond by following the Lord.

As the second reading from Revelation says, eternal life with God in heaven will be our reward.

**Masses to pray for deceased people can be celebrated years after their death**

You noted in a recent column that the Mass is “the most powerful prayer that can be offered on a deceased person’s behalf.” That comment brought back a wave of sorrow for my wife and me. Ten years ago, her father died after a lengthy and progressive illness. Due to the fact that we were living out of state at the time—and worsened by some unresolved hard feelings toward her father by other surviving family members—Dad was shuffled into a gravesite at a veterans’ cemetery before my wife and I could intervene.

Despite the fact that he was a lifelong practicing Catholic, he was buried without even a public wake, and worse still, without the Catholic funeral Mass he richly deserved. So my question is this: Can he still have a full funeral Mass, not just a memorial Mass, celebrated in his name even though he is already buried, even without the presence of his remains?

It would be an opportunity for Dad’s soul to enjoy a proper requiem, and it would also allow close family and longtime friends a chance to prayerfully ask God’s grace on Dad’s behalf, an opportunity they were deprived of (and shocked by) at the time of his passing. (City of origin withheld)

Yes, you could have a Mass celebrated a year or more after a death, but in most respects it would be similar to a funeral Mass, except that the body would not be present. (And these days, with cremations becoming more frequent, that is already the case at many funeral homes.)

I would suggest that you contact your priest about celebrating a Mass for the deceased for the first time even now, 10 years after his death. Technically, I suppose, it would be called a memorial Mass, but in most respects it would be similar to a funeral Mass, except that the body would not be present. (And these days, with cremations becoming more frequent, that is already the case at many funeral homes.)

For example, I would suggest that you contact your father’s pastor and see if he would be willing to celebrate a separate, special Mass for your father-in-law now even, 10 years after his death. Technically, I suppose, it would be called a memorial Mass, but in most respects it would be similar to a funeral Mass, except that the body would not be present. (And these days, with cremations becoming more frequent, that is already the case at many funeral homes.)

I would suggest that you contact your pastor’s family and see if he would be willing to celebrate a separate, special Mass for your father-in-law now, even 10 years after his death. Technically, I suppose, it would be called a memorial Mass, but in most respects it would be similar to a funeral Mass, except that the body would not be present. (And these days, with cremations becoming more frequent, that is already the case at many funeral homes.)

Perhaps you would want to call it an anniversary memorial Mass for your loved one. At the Mass, you might consider having a small table with your father-in-law’s picture and a bouquet of flowers. (That table could be a veterans’ cemetery before my wife and I could intervene.

As the second reading from Revelation says, eternal life with God in heaven will be our reward. Following Jesus is more than a verbal announcement, it is actual involvement in the Redeemer’s mission by living lives of justice, charity and service. Christianity is not about ivory towers. As Pope Francis so often insists, it is about living in our homes, on our jobs, and in our contacts with others. Such was the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, who urged fortitude in living the Christian life, but who promised a marvelous reward in this life and in the hereafter.

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Such was the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, who urged fortitude in living the Christian life, but who promised a marvelous reward in this life and in the hereafter.†
The archdiocese are listed by date of death. Obituaries of those are separate obituaries unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it. Those are: Aurora, April 10. Mother of Kay Smock. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of four. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of two.


The Catholic News Agency for Africa reported that relatives of the girls marched in the capital, Abjia, on the anniversary, calling for government action.

“We only know what our abductors have done to them, where they would be by now. It might be true that some might have been killed; some molested and married out by their abductors,” Bishop Audu said. “That we can still recover all those abducted … is not certain,” Bishop Audu said.

“Many do not have money to report to the government that the missing girls would be discovered. ‘I am not sure that we will be able to rescue all of them after two years of their abduction. … If we are fortunate, we may get some of them back, but not 100 percent,’ he said.

He also expressed concern for thousands of other internally displaced persons living in various refugee camps who cannot return to their homes.

“The federal government must also look into the plights of other Nigerian workers being owed several months of unpaid salaries by their state governments,” the said.

“There are about 300,000 workers who have not been paid in the last six months. This is affecting their families,” Audu said. “Many do not have money to report to the government that the missing girls would be discovered.”

Page 14 The Criterion Friday, April 22, 2016
PHILADELPHIA (CNS)—As debate continues in Europe and the United States about admitting immigrants and refugees from the Middle East when terrorists attack have occurred in the European countries, it’s worth remembering that most newcomers to the U.S. are not terrorists.

There are simply men and women looking for a better, safer life for themselves and their children. Many are Muslims, but others are Christians who were especially vulnerable because of their minority status in their homeland.

A common denominator among immigrants is the peril they have experienced firsthand, and perhaps a different perspective on the situation in the Middle East than that of non-native born Americans.

After Mass at St. Maron Church in South Philadelphia on April 3, some immigrants were willing to share their insights with CatholicPhilly.com, the news website of the Philadelphia Archdiocese. Many were hesitant to give their full names.

“John,” a Maronite Catholic, has been in America for 30 years. He left high school after a time at which the Lebanese Christians, Muslims and Druze were lighting.

“If I didn’t come here, most likely I would be dead,” he said. “He sees the Middle East conflicts as a struggle between the Sunnis and the Shia, with minorities such as Christians caught in the middle.

“Russia is supporting the Shia, and the U.S. is supporting the Sunnis,” he said. “The U.S. is also supporting Saudi Arabia and the Emirates; Russia is supporting Iran. As long as there is oil in the Middle East, there is going to be a push to control it on both sides.”

As long as there is oil in the Middle East, there is going to be a push to control it on both sides.

“The U.S. is also supporting Saudi Arabia,” he said. “As Christians, we were second-class citizens. Some people in society think Christians are pro-Western. We did not think that. We were living among Muslims who were our friends but in a civil war nothing is guaranteed.”

Philip, who is a Latin-Rite Catholic, was born and raised in Lebanon although his parents were Palestinians from Bethlehem in the West Bank who fled after the 1948 war between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

“If there was peace, nobody would leave their homeland,” he said. “Palestinians, including Christians, left for Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and the West.”

Now most of his family is in the United States, although one sister is in Dubai. “My grandmother has 52 grandchildren here,” he said. Like many of the immigrants, he believes the United States and Russia are at last partly to blame for what has been happening in the Middle East.

“We never had ISIS [Islamic State] or al-Qaida. You are supposed to support, not destabilize,” he said. “We would like to see the big powers play fair and strong, not support one against the other.”

Vivian, Philip’s wife, is a Syrian Catholic from Iraq, and her family is pro-Western. Her view of the situation in Iraq is based mostly on her perception of then-President Saddam Hussein and his treatment of Christians.

“In my opinion, when we had Saddam in Iraq, we were all at peace as Christians. Saddam was very kind to the Christians, and when he died everything got worse,” she said. “His main bodyguard was Christian, and the nanny for his kids was Christian. At Christmas and Easter, he would go congratulate the bishops. He was the only one of the ones to open the doors to Palestinian people when they had their war. We used to sleep with the doors unlocked, both Christians and Muslims. Now you can’t,” she said.

“Joe,” who also is from Iraq, came to America 20 years ago. “We did have family members killed,” he said. He came here as a high school graduate and is now a doctor, and most of his family is in the United States. He now considers the United States his country, but still, if there was peace he would love to visit his old neighborhood.

“We had limitations as Christians, but I had friends that I didn’t know what their religion was,” he said. “We had neighbors who treated each other as brothers no matter what their religion was. We celebrated each other’s holidays together.”

“Everybody who comes to it wants a piece of it, whether from the West or elsewhere.”

Today, “everyone goes after their own interests.” He should be for the common good and following the teachings of Christ, but it’s hard to tell how to do that,” he said. “We all hope for peace, and the way to peace is through prayers to make people see peace as the ultimate goal.”

Immigrants who have found safe refuge long for peace in homeland

People pray during Mass on April 3 at St. Maron Maronite Church in Philadelphia. The church is a place of worship for many immigrants who come from various countries in the Middle East.

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Religious groups say ‘yes’ to court’s idea on health care coverage

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The religious nonprofits challenging their participation in the contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) agreed with a U.S. Supreme Court proposal that such coverage be provided through an alternative health care plan without involving the religious employers in a legal brief filed with the court.

The brief, filed on April 12 in the case of Zubik v. Burwell, said that as long as any alternative plan offering contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization health coverage is “truly independent” of the petitioners and their health insurance plans, then they would no longer object to the ACA’s goal of providing access to free birth control to women.

Any such arrangement would require a separate insurance policy, a separate enrollment process, a separate insurance card and a separate payment source and be offered to employees through a separate communication, thus protecting the petitioners’ objections under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to the contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate, the brief said.

“We said yes to the court. There certainly are ways that people can get contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage without using the religious organization providing health plans to do it,” Mark Rienzi, senior counsel with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said during a press call on April 13.

“The point of the case is not to say the government cannot get people to have contraceptives. … The claim has always been ‘I just can’t be involved. You can do whatever you want, just leave me out of it,’” he added.

“Our argument is if the government is willing to do something separate, that would be fine with us,” he told reporters.

Health insurance programs already exist in states across the country that offer separate contraceptive and abortion coverage under the ACA to meet employer concerns, Rienzi said.

Zubik v. Burwell is a consolidated case involving the Little Sisters of the Poor, Priests for Life, the Pennsylvania dioceses of Pittsburgh and Erie, the Archdiocese of Washington, and other Catholic and faith-based entities.

The groups are challenging the ACA’s mandate that most religious and other employers must cover contraceptives, sterilization and abortifacients through employer-provided health insurance even if they are morally opposed to such coverage.

Briefs from the religious groups and the federal government were filed in response to a March 29 order from the Eighth Supreme Court justices outlining the procedures objections religious employers must follow if they do not want to provide insurance coverage of contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization. It suggested that the groups could contract a third party to provide health insurance for their employees, but they would need to inform the insurance company that they did not want the plan to include contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage that they find objectionable.

The government’s brief argued that it wanted to keep the contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate intact, but offered that it would go along with the court’s suggestion despite the possibility that it might not close the door on future legal challenges.

The court’s alternative, the government said, would work only in cases in which a religious employer uses an outside insurance company for health care coverage. The government also said that the religious groups had never indicated throughout years of litigation that they would accept what the justices ultimately suggested.

New video looks at meaning of religious freedom, court fight on health mandate

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Religious freedom “is foundational to our Church and American society,” said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori in announcing a new video that explores the foundations of Church teaching on religious liberty, including the Second Vatican Council document “Dignitatis Humanae.”

The archbishop made the comments on April 12 as chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, which released the video.

Vatican II’s 1965 Declaration on Religious Freedom affirmed that the “right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person, as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.”

The video also highlights the Little Sisters of the Poor, who serve the elderly poor in nursing homes across the United States, including at St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis. The Little Sisters, along with other Catholic entities and other faith-based groups, awaited a decision from the U.S. Supreme Court in Zubik v. Burwell, a lawsuit that challenges the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ mandate that employers, including most religious employers, cover contraception, sterilization and abortifacients in employee health plans.


“The video makes clear that the Little Sisters’ case must be viewed within the context of the Church’s lifelong deep commitment to the right of every person to have the ability to practice their faith and choose what is right, free of government interference,” Archbishop Lori said.

Oral arguments in Zubik v. Burwell were heard by the high court on March 23. On March 29, the court issued an unusual order seeking additional briefs from the plaintiffs and the federal government about how and if contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization insurance coverage could be obtained by employees through their insurance companies without directly involving religious employers who object to this coverage.

On April 12, the plaintiffs filed a brief with the court in which they agreed with the proposal that such coverage be provided through an alternative health care plan, without involving the religious employers. The government also filed a brief, arguing that it wanted to keep the contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate intact, but offered that it would go along with the court’s suggestion despite the possibility that it might not close the door on future legal challenges.

The announcement on the new video also included information on the U.S. bishops’ 2016 Fortnight for Freedom, a two-week period of prayer, education and advocacy focused on the role of faith in public life and the preservation of religious liberty rights.

The fifth annual observance will take place on June 21-July 4. This year’s theme is “Witnesses to Freedom,” and will include a nationwide tour of relics of St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, martyrs of the English Reformation.