



The

# Criterion

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**'Witness to love'**

Marriage Day Celebration recognizes 'goodness of God's love,' page 9.

CriterionOnline.com

February 24, 2017

Vol. LVII, No. 19 75¢



**'A gift to us'**

Father David Bu Nyar, right, celebrates Mass with the assistance of Deacon Thomas Horn, St. Mark the Evangelist Parish's pastoral associate, at St. Mark the Evangelist Church on Feb. 11. Father Bu Nyar was invited by then-Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin to come from Myanmar to serve the refugees of that country now worshipping at St. Mark and St. Pius X parishes in Indianapolis. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

## Priest's gentle nature helps to guide refugees whose lives have been touched by violence

By Natalie Hoefler

Father David Bu Nyar, 43, sits at the table with his arms crossed in the Myanmar manner of showing respect.

Also in the Myanmar manner, he gives soft-spoken answers. His gentle tone belies the violent nature of the topic.

When asked if refugees from his war-torn country of Myanmar (formerly Burma) have possibly seen fighting, violence, the destruction of villages or even killing, Father Bu Nyar answers a soft-spoken "yes" to each. He calmly admits that even he has witnessed fighting in his home town of Demoso in his younger days.

He estimates that about 1,000 Myanmar refugees now practice their Catholic faith at St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Pius X parishes, both in Indianapolis. He has come to minister to them.

"Cardinal [Joseph W.] Tobin saw the need of [the] Burmese Catholic Community in Indianapolis," he explains.

Last year, then-Archbishop Tobin contacted the bishop of Loikaw in Myanmar, asking if it would be possible to send a diocesan priest to serve the Catholic Myanmar refugees in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

"I was called by my bishop, who asked me if I can go to Indianapolis to minister and see to their spiritual needs," says Father Bu Nyar, who was ordained in

2004 in the Diocese of Loikaw. "I accept it as a call from God to [widen] my faith horizon and share my faith, and learn faith from others. It's good to experience new cultures and new people."

Father Bu Nyar arrived in Indianapolis in early December to temperatures far colder than the 90-degree weather typical for Myanmar at that time of year.

During his three to five years of ministering in the archdiocese, he will call St. Pius home. He is of the Kayah tribe and speaks Karenni, as do the majority of the refugees from Myanmar at St. Pius.

But Father Bu Nyar will celebrate Mass and other sacraments at St. Pius and **See MYANMAR, page 10**

## Saint Meinrad awarded \$1.38 million Lilly grant to help parishes reach out to young adults

By Sean Gallagher

Many studies over the past several years have shown that a growing number of young adults in American society have abandoned the faith with which they were raised, and now identify themselves with no organized religion.

This has been shown to be common among young adult Catholics, in particular. Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad is launching an initiative to help parishes reach out to young adult Catholics and help them rediscover and renew their Catholic identity.



Fr. Denis Robinson, O.S.B.

Late last year, Saint Meinrad received a \$1.38 million grant from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc., to support this initiative.

The grant is part of a broader \$19.4 million initiative focused on young adults and faith in which the Lilly Endowment is partnering with 13 Christian institutions across the country. Saint Meinrad is the only Catholic organization among them.

"It is a great honor to be selected to this distinction from the Lilly Endowment," said Benedictine Father Denis Robinson, Saint Meinrad's president-rector. "We are very pleased that our programs with Lilly have been so successful in the past that we are now looking to grow and develop in this new direction."

Tammy Becht will oversee Saint Meinrad's program to help parishes reach out to young adults. She is also director of Saint Meinrad's One Bread One Cup, a program of liturgical formation for youths and young adults.

"Young adults are leaving churches across denominational lines at an alarming rate," said Becht, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. "We're not in this alone. It's across Christianity. And my suspicion is that it's in other faiths as well. We would do well to take a good, long look at this. Obviously, what we're doing isn't working?"

**See GRANT, page 16**

## Ash Wednesday leaves defining mark on Catholics

WASHINGTON (CNS)—In more ways than one, Ash Wednesday—celebrated on March 1 this year—leaves a mark.

That's because not only are Catholics marked with a sign of penitence with ashes on their foreheads, but the rich symbolism of the rite itself draws Catholics to churches in droves even though it is not a holy day of obligation and ashes do not have to be distributed during a Mass.

Almost half of adult Catholics, 45 percent, typically receive ashes—made from the burned and blessed palms of the previous year's Palm Sunday—at Ash Wednesday services, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.

Parish priests say they get more people at church that day than almost any other—excluding Christmas and Easter—and the congregations are usually much bigger

than for Holy Thursday or Good Friday liturgies.

"Virtually every parish that I've worked with will have more people come to Ash Wednesday than almost any other celebration," said Thomas Humphries, assistant professor of philosophy, theology and religion at St. Leo University in St. Leo, Fla.

"We talk about Christmas and Easter as certainly being the most sacred and most attended events during the year, but Ash Wednesday is not even a day of obligation. In terms of liturgical significance, it's very minor, but people observe it as overwhelmingly important," he said.

Humphries said part of the Ash Wednesday draw is the "genuine human recognition of the need to repent and the need to be reminded of our own mortality. Having someone put ashes on your head and remind you 'we are dust and to dust we shall return' is an act of humility."

**See ASH, page 16**



Grace Hatley, a student at Lumen Christi Catholic School in Indianapolis, sings on Feb. 10, 2016, during an Ash Wednesday Mass at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

# Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following list of services was reported to *The Criterion*.

## Batesville Deanery

- March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5, 6 p.m. confession at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
- March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Maurice, Napoleon
- March 16, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- March 18, 6:30 p.m. confession at Holy Family, Oldenburg
- March 19, confession following 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses at Holy Family, Oldenburg
- March 22, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
- March 28, 7 p.m. for St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at St. John the Evangelist Church, Enochsburg
- March 30, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- April 12, 7 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County

## Bloomington Deanery

- March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- March 16, 7 p.m. at Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, Paoli
- March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- March 23, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Springs, French Lick
- March 28, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
- April 5, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
- April 6, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington
- April 12, 4-9 p.m. confession for St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

## Connersville Deanery

- March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary (Immaculate Conception), Rushville
- March 21, 7 p.m. confession for St. Anne, New Castle, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City, at St. Elizabeth of Hungary
- March 22, confession for St. Gabriel, Connersville, and St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty, at St. Bridget after 6 p.m. Mass
- April 4, confession for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton at St. Mary Church, Richmond, after 5:15 p.m. Mass

## Indianapolis East Deanery

- March 7-Apr. 11, 6:30-7:30 p.m. confession every Tuesday at St. Mary
- March 8, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- March 13, 7 p.m. for St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) and Our Lady of Lourdes, at Our Lady of Lourdes
- March 27, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita, at St. Rita
- March 31, 6-8 p.m. confession at St. Michael, Greenfield
- April 1, 10 a.m.-noon confession at St. Michael, Greenfield
- April 6, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville

## Indianapolis North Deanery

- March 19, 2-3:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence
- March 20, 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence
- March 21, 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence

## Indianapolis South Deanery

- March 4, 9 a.m. SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- March 8, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Joseph, at St. Joseph
- March 14, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- March 15, 7 p.m. at Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove
- March 19, 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd
- March 20, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- April 4, 7 p.m. for St. Barnabas, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch, at St. Barnabas
- April 10, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

## Indianapolis West Deanery

- March 8, 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph
- March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
- March 14, 7 p.m. at St. Monica
- March 22, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
- March 27, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita, at St. Rita
- March 29, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
- April 4, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
- April 5, 7 p.m. for St. Anthony and St. Christopher, at St. Christopher
- April 7, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville

## New Albany Deanery

- March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navilleton
- March 16, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
- March 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
- April 6, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany ("12 Hours of Grace")
- April 9, 1 p.m. at St. John, Starlight

The following additional confession times are part of the New Albany Deanery's "The Light is on for You:"

- 6-7 p.m. each Tuesday in Lent at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
- 5:45-7:30 p.m. with adoration each Wednesday in Lent at St. Michael, Charlestown
- 6:30-7:30 p.m. each Wednesday in Lent for St. John Paul II, Clark County at St. Paul Church, Sellersburg
- 6:30-7:30 p.m. each Wednesday in Lent (except Ash Wednesday) at St. Mary-of-the Knobs, Floyd County
- 7-8:30 p.m. each Wednesday in Lent at Holy Family, New Albany
- 5:45-7:30 p.m. with adoration each Thursday in Lent at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville
- 4-6 p.m. each Friday in Lent at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville

- 8-10 a.m. each Saturday in Lent at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville

## Seymour Deanery

- March 14, 7 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace
- March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour
- March 19, 2 p.m. for St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
- March 28, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County; St. Mary, North Vernon; and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Mary
- March 30, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus

## Tell City Deanery

- March 15, 6:30 p.m. for St. Boniface, Fulda, and St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad, at St. Meinrad

## Terre Haute Deanery

- March 16, 1:30 p.m. for St. Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods; Sacred Heart of Jesus; St. Benedict; St. Patrick; St. Joseph University; St. Margaret Mary, all of Terre Haute, at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
- April 3, 7 p.m. for St. Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods; Sacred Heart of Jesus; St. Benedict; St. Patrick; St. Joseph University; and St. Margaret Mary, all of Terre Haute, at St. Joseph University
- April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle
- April 11, 7 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil †



## Lenten disciplines include fasting, almsgiving, prayer

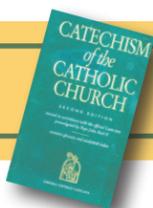
Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Ash Wednesday is on March 1.

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those who are bound by this may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one's needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

The special Paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday.

By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the Church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday, which is on April 13. †

## GATECHISM CORNER



### What the catechism says about Lent

The season of Lent is mentioned in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in various sections.

It is brought up in #540 in the section that explains Christ's public ministry.

In #1095, Lent is discussed in regards to the way in which the Church, especially in

its liturgy, sees Christ prefigured in various ways in the Old Testament.

Finally, in #1438, the penitential nature of Lent is discussed in the section on the sacrament of reconciliation.

#540 "Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah,

contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him (see Mt 16:21-23).

"This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: 'For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning' (Heb 4:15). By the solemn forty days of Lent, the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert."

#1095 "... the Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history

in the 'today' of her liturgy. But this also demands that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this spiritual understanding of the economy of salvation as the Church's liturgy reveals it and enables us to live it."

#1438 "The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice."

(To read the Catechism of the Catholic Church online, log on to [www.usccb.org/catechism/text/](http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/).) †



#### Phone Numbers:

Main office: 317-236-1570  
 Advertising: 317-236-1454  
 Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570  
 Circulation: 317-236-1454  
 Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1454

Price: \$22.00 per year, 75 cents per copy

#### Postmaster:

Send address changes to *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367

Web site: [www.CriterionOnline.com](http://www.CriterionOnline.com)

E-mail: [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org)

Published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January. Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2017 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

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*The Criterion* (ISSN 0574-4350) is published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.

1400 N. Meridian St.  
 Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367  
 317-236-1570  
 800-382-9836 ext. 1570  
[criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org)

Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.  
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Criterion Press Inc. 1400 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367



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# New Women's Care Center offers women 'option to choose life'

By Natalie Hoefer

Next to the Planned Parenthood abortion facility in Bloomington is a small, quaint building with red brick and white trim.

Monica Siefker and others who pray and offer sidewalk counseling in front of the abortion center "have eyed that building for a long time, and dreamt of it someday being a care center for pregnant women," she says, noting that the closest pregnancy care center was a few miles away.

On Feb. 1, that dream came to fruition when Women's Care Center opened for business in the building, providing free counseling, support and education to women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Choosing to locate immediately next to a Planned Parenthood facility is an intentional strategy, says Jenny Hunsberger, vice president of Women's Care Center, which is headquartered in South Bend, Ind.

"It's really important to be visible and accessible to the women who need us the most," she explains. "That's why we're there. We want to be as easy for them [to access] as we possibly can be."

The "women who need [them] the most" are the women who are seeking services just feet away at the Planned Parenthood facility, where both chemical and medical abortions are performed.

Not only does the Women's Care Center offer free medical-grade pregnancy

tests and ultrasounds, but also counseling and classes on the basics of caring for a baby, parenting, discipline, nutrition, budgeting, relationships, goal-setting and more—all for free.

Women who participate in a one-on-one parenting class earn coupons to "purchase" items for their babies—car seats, clothes, cribs, diapers and more.

"[Our services are] comprehensive, skilled, empathetic and non-judgmental," says Hunsberger. "We offer counseling and support so [the mother] has an individual pregnancy plan."

She says the goal is for an expecting mother to feel "that barrier she's facing, the challenges, are really met, that she is not alone, that she has someone who is both there to help and support her, and someone who is there to help her recognize her own value and dignity and goodness, and support her in making decisions about her pregnancy that are rooted in her own core belief in her goodness and value."

Siefker, a member of St. John the Apostle Parish in Bloomington, attributes the presence of the newly opened Women's Care Center to the "great many years of souls praying outside of the Bloomington Planned Parenthood [facility] in inclement weather, begging our Lord to send us help."

That help came recently when the building next to the abortion center went on the market.



A new Women's Care Center opened in Bloomington immediately next to a Planned Parenthood abortion facility on Feb. 1, seen in the background of this Feb. 15 photo. (Submitted photo by Lee Ann Zatkulak)

"Last February, a very generous donor purchased the building for us," says Hunsberger. "We started renovations in the spring. Now we're open and seeing clients."

Within the first hour of opening, she says, the center had two clients, and four by the end of the first day.

"We already have 12 babies expected to moms [who are clients] in Bloomington," she says with enthusiasm. "That's within just two weeks."

According to the Indiana Induced Termination of Pregnancy Reports found on [www.in.gov/isdh](http://www.in.gov/isdh), the number of abortions in Monroe County, where Bloomington is located, dropped from 811 to 718 between 2012 and 2014, then spiked to 822 in 2015, the last year for which the report is available.

"What that means to us is that the number of women facing difficult

pregnancies is high and increasing," says Hunsberger. "We want to be there for them. We're thinking that within three years we will start to see some incredible shifts in Bloomington."

Based on statistics from Women's Care Centers in communities similar to Bloomington, she says they expect to serve around 900-1,000 women a year.

"We're going to see more and more women—significant, measurable numbers of women who feel for the first time they have the option to choose life," she says.

Hunsberger says that the members of Women's Care Center are "really grateful to the community and people of Bloomington, to the people who recognized the need and want a stronger presence of hope and care in Bloomington, who will be there to make this a local outreach.

"It's lifesaving work." †



*'It's really important to be visible and accessible to the women who need us the most. That's why we're there. We want to be as easy for them [to access] as we possibly can be.'*

—Jenny Hunsberger, vice president of Women's Care Center

# Special Olympians show world that 'every person is a gift,' pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The athletes of the Special Olympics witness to the world the beauty and value of every



Pope Francis

human life, and the joy that comes from reaching a goal with the encouragement and support of others, Pope Francis said.

"Together, athletes and helpers show us that there are no obstacles or barriers which cannot be overcome," the

pope told representatives of the Special Olympics World Winter Games, which will take place in Austria on March 14-25.

"You are a sign of hope for all who commit themselves to a more inclusive society," the pope told the group on Feb. 16. "Every life is precious, every person is a gift, and inclusion enriches every community and society. This is your message for the world, for a world without borders, which excludes no one."

Pope Francis praised the passion and dedication of the Special Olympians as they train for their events, and said sports are good for everyone, physically and mentally.

"The constant training, which also requires effort and sacrifice, helps you to grow in patience and perseverance, gives you strength and courage and lets you acquire and develop talents which would

otherwise remain hidden," the pope told the athletes.

"In a way," he said, "at the heart of all sporting activity is joy: the joy of exercising, of being together, of being alive and rejoicing in the gifts the Creator gives us each day. Seeing the smile on your faces and the great happiness in your eyes when you have done well in an event—for the sweetest victory is when we surpass ourselves—we realize what true and well-deserved joy feels like!"

Watching the Special Olympians, he said, everyone should learn "to enjoy small and simple pleasures, and to enjoy them together."

Sporting events, especially international events like the Special Olympics World Winter Games, help "spread a culture of encounter and solidarity," the pope said, wishing the athletes "joyful days together and time with friends from around the world." †



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# The Criterion

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## Editorial



Shawn Carney, founder of the 40 Days for Life campaign to end abortion, speaks to a crowd outside of the Planned Parenthood abortion facility in Indianapolis. Carney was the guest speaker for the Indianapolis campaign's mid-point rally on Oct. 10, 2014.

(Criterion file photo by Natalie Hoefer)

## Two pro-life stalwarts and the 40 Days for Life campaign

F. Thomas Pottratz and Norma McCorvey are two examples of how God can use people from different walks of life to spread his Gospel message of hope, healing, forgiveness and love.

And as we approach this Lent, which includes another 40 Days for Life spring campaign where people across the U.S. and around the world will peacefully gather and pray for an end to abortion, it seems fitting to remember Pottratz and McCorvey and their commitment to the pro-life movement.

We all now know McCorvey, who died on Feb. 18 at the age of 69, as the "Jane Roe" in *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the United States.

But what many may not know is that she was received into the full communion of the Church in 1998, and spent the better part of the past 20-plus years as an advocate for life. Although she never had an abortion—the child she was pregnant with during the court case was put up for adoption—she deeply regretted that millions of babies were killed because of a court decision with her name tied to it.

She later operated a small ministry called Roe No More, and endorsed 40 Days for Life.

"I hope and I pray that you will join us in 40 days of prayer and fasting and help overturn *Roe v. Wade*," McCorvey said, "because we didn't have a choice in the beginning with the Supreme Court justices—they decided it for us."

For decades, Pottratz, 81, who died on Feb. 11, was a stalwart in the archdiocesan pro-life community. He volunteered at the Pro-Life Office of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for many years. He was a sidewalk counselor and also served as a board member of the Indianapolis Right to Life and Catholic Radio Indy.

He received the archdiocese's Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Respect Life Award and the Charles Stimming Pro-Life Award from Right to Life of Indianapolis in recognition of his countless volunteer hours protecting the right to life. He also helped organize and chaperone several of the Indianapolis archdiocesan youth pilgrimages to Washington, D.C., for the annual March for Life.

"I've always known most kids are pro-life, but they're a little reluctant

to get up and stand in front because of what the popular media says," Pottratz told Catholic News Service in an interview before the 2010 march. "That's until they come out here one time and they see 150,000 other youths. They say 'Wow, it's kind of cool to be pro-life. OK, I can do it now.'"

As we prepare to begin Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 1, we know many people of faith are taking the time now to map out their continuing path of discipleship for the next six weeks.

One way to do that, we believe, is by participating in 40 Days for Life.

The mission of the campaign, according to the 40 Days website, [40daysforlife.com](http://40daysforlife.com), is "to bring together the body of Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused 40-day campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism, with the purpose of repentance, to seek God's favor to turn hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion."

Here in the Church of central and southern Indiana, there are two 40 Days for Life campaigns. The spring campaigns begin on Ash Wednesday and end on Palm Sunday, April 9.

In Bloomington, prayerful participants will gather outside the public right-of-way outside the Planned Parenthood abortion center at 421 South College Ave. For more information or to sign up to pray for an hour, call local coordinator Monica Siefker at 812-345-7988, or e-mail [monica.siefker@gmail.com](mailto:monica.siefker@gmail.com).

A kick-off rally for the 40 Days for Life campaign in Indianapolis is being held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 26, at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Drive East. Msgr. Joseph Schaedel, the parish's pastor, will be the keynote speaker.

40 Days for Life volunteers in Indianapolis pray for an hour in front of the Planned Parenthood abortion facility, 8590 Georgetown Road, during the campaign. For more information, call 317-709-1502, or visit [40daysforlife.org](http://40daysforlife.org).

Even if you cannot commit to taking part in 40 Days for Life, consider making time to pray for an end to abortion.

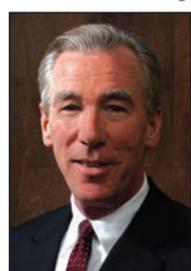
Our faith implores us to be voices for the voiceless. Pottratz and McCorvey did. May we have the courage to do the same.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/John Garvey

## The Johnson Amendment

At the National Prayer Breakfast this month, President Donald J. Trump promised to "totally destroy" the Johnson Amendment "and allow our representatives of faith to



speak freely and without fear of retribution." I must confess that, on the list of things I hope the new administration will accomplish this year, this one is fairly far down.

The Johnson Amendment is named for President Lyndon B. Johnson, who inserted the provision as a floor amendment to the 1954 tax code. Johnson was then a freshman senator, engaged in an unpleasant primary election fight with a young conservative Catholic state representative from Beeville, Texas.

This was at the peak of Joe McCarthy's anti-communist witch hunt, and several right-wing nonprofits had supported Johnson's opponent. Johnson worried that their charges of liberalism would hurt him.

So he proposed a prohibition on political activities by nonprofits: Organizations exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) should not "participate in, or intervene in ... any political campaign." It applies to all kinds of nonprofits (my university as well as the George Soros-founded Open Society Foundation), not just churches. What it means for churches, though, is that they can't make campaign contributions, and they can't endorse—or oppose—candidates from the pulpit.

They can still take positions on issues like abortion, family life, immigration and health care. The Catholic Church does this all the time. And the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of General Counsel offers elaborate guidelines for parishes and dioceses so they can observe the distinction between permitted and prohibited political interventions.

Though the Johnson Amendment was uncontroversial in 1954, there have been a lot of complaints about it lately. The Pew Research Center reported last year that one in four black Protestants heard their clergy endorse Hillary Clinton during the election campaign.

Alliance Defending Freedom, a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based religious liberty advocacy organization, has worked

### Letter to the Editor

## As Christians, we are called to be activists for the witness of truth

In the Feb. 17 issue of *The Criterion*, Editor Emeritus John Fink in his editorial on page 4 aptly described how we are living in a post-Christian world. He encouraged Catholics and other Christians to "hang in there," "don't be argumentative" and "be charitable."

This is good advice, but we need to be more proactive. It is our duty as Christians to be active witnesses for the truth and effect change where there is evil.

Society has become overwhelmingly secularized and morality has become relative. People seem to think that there is no objective truth and that whatever someone feels is right is OK. "Who am I to impose my beliefs on someone else?" is a common refrain whether this involves pornography, abortion, euthanasia, religious freedom or other crucial issues.

This moral relativism has caused Christians and our spiritual leaders to become more and more silent while secularism runs amok. We are afraid to speak up, in many cases, for fear of being labeled intolerant, bigoted or backward. Our silence needs to end, and we need to step up and speak the truth or others will fill the void with falsehoods.

William Wilberforce was an abolitionist in the British parliament who

for almost a decade to provoke a legal challenge to the rule. Its Pulpit Freedom Initiative asks pastors to preach about the moral qualifications of candidates seeking office.

The day before the National Prayer Breakfast, Sen. James Lankford and Rep. Jody Hice introduced a bill—the Free Speech Fairness Act—to amend the ban on endorsements, though not the one on contributions.

I'm not sure this is a good idea, though my reasons are probably different from the ones the secular left will advance. The Constitution does not require the Johnson Amendment. Separationists may say that giving churches a tax exemption and letting them participate in political campaigns is a forbidden mixture of church and state.

But repealing the Johnson Amendment would also free the Open Society Foundation to do the same thing. When the government is giving out subsidies, it should be allowed to treat churches the way it treats other, secular, institutions.

I might go even further. The idea that the government confers a benefit on churches when it declines to tax them (the "tax benefit" argument) rubs me the wrong way. It assumes that everything we have really belongs to the government and anything we're allowed to keep is a matter of a favor for it. This kind of omnivorous statism is what got Trump elected.

But looking at the matter from the Church's point of view—rather than the government's—I see a good deal of wisdom in the principle the Johnson Amendment expresses.

The Catholic Church does not align very well with either Republicans or Democrats, as events the week before the National Prayer Breakfast reminded us. Vice President Mike Pence spoke at the annual March for Life. That same day, President Trump issued an order banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries.

Political endorsements really aren't the mission of the Church—not of our Church, anyway. When it comes to voting, better she remind us at all times what the Gospel requires and leave it to us to figure out how to comply.

(John Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America in Washington. Catholic University's website is [www.cua.edu](http://www.cua.edu).) †

was the primary person responsible for ending the slave trade and slavery itself in Britain. He lived in a time when slavery was the norm, people were afraid to speak up if they were against it and those who did were marginalized. Meanwhile, the horror of slavery continued. Wilberforce stood up for what was right and persistently fought for over 20 years for the truth when few others would.

We need more William Wilberforces to profess the truth today.

Dr. Stephen O'Neil  
 Indianapolis

### Letters Policy

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

The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content.

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

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

Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to [critterion@archindy.org](mailto:critterion@archindy.org).

# Payday lending expansion is defeated by Indiana Senate panel

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) celebrated a legislative victory after a bill to expand payday lending practices in Indiana was defeated on Feb. 16 by



members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions

Committee by a 5-4 vote.

Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the ICC, who serves as the public policy spokesperson for the bishops in Indiana, joined 18 other organizations to testify before the panel in opposition to the proposal. He called the defeat of the bill “a victory.”

“There are better ways to help low-income persons cover needed expenses rather than expanding a payday loan product with a 216 percent annual percentage rate [APR],” Tebbe said.

The proposal, Senate Bill 245, authored by Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle,



Sen. Travis Holdman

was amended in committee to make it more palatable. Holdman said, “If we don’t get the bill to a place we are all comfortable with, it won’t move past second reading.”

“We are not going to push this over the goal line until everyone is comfortable with the language,” he added. Some of the key changes of the amendment include:

lowering the monthly interest rate from 20 percent to 18 percent; reducing the loan maximum amount from \$2,500 to \$1,750; removing late penalties; and reducing the payback time.

Tebbe told panel members during his testimony that even in its amended form,



Glenn Tebbe

the Church remained concerned about the bill because it would encourage lower-income persons to get trapped in debt and a process of recycling the loans. “We see this as a moral issue because it takes advantage of the distress that

these families are in,” said Tebbe. “The Catechism of the Catholic Church says the seventh commandment is violated when people do things such as taking or keeping the property of others. This also includes business fraud; paying unjust wages; or forcing up prices and taking advantage of ignorance or hardships of another.

“Taking advantage of someone and exploiting them is wrong,” continued Tebbe. “I know that is not your intent here, but in our view, it is realistically

the effect.”

Kathy Williams, who represents the Indiana Community Action Coalition, said while she appreciated efforts to reduce the interest rate of payday loans, the interest rate would still be 18 percent per month and a 216 percent APR, a rate that is far too high for lower-income borrowers to shoulder. Williams said research on low-income borrowers by the Pew Research Center, a non-partisan think tank based in Washington, indicates loans should not exceed 5 percent of a person’s monthly income, but this proposal would translate to about 20 percent.

Marcie Luhigo, who represents The Creek Christian Church, a 4,000-member church on the southeast side of Indianapolis, told the panel, “Every year, our church gives \$200,000 that I’m in charge of distributing to those in financial need in our community. I can tell you that, in my five-year tenure, hundreds have come to us with payday loans that they are unable and incapable of repaying. We would oppose any expansion of payday lending.”

Jim Bauerle, a retired brigadier general, said one of the biggest problems in the military is financial hardship experienced by young soldiers and those returning from deployment. He said that many of those individuals experience unemployment and homelessness, and some get themselves into debt through these types of high interest loans. Bauerle said his parish on the north side of Indianapolis takes in needy veterans, and they contribute 10 percent of their weekly collections to help those needing financial assistance or to pay for household repairs.

Representatives of several other organizations testified in opposition to the bill, including the Indiana Institute of Working Families; United Methodist Church; Christian Legal Aid; the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; Indiana Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church of America; and several veterans groups.

Heather Willey, who represented payday loan providers, testified in support of the bill, saying the proposal has retained safety procedures which includes lending to the employed with bank accounts. She added that loans may not exceed 20 percent of the borrower’s gross monthly income.

Lawmakers on the panel were not convinced the bill was prudent or needed. Two lawmakers who supported the bill did so to give the author of the legislation an opportunity to work on the bill, but they were not convinced of the bill’s merits. Five members who voted against the bill recognized the negative effects of these loans on families.

Sen. Eddie Melton, D-Merrillville, said he felt the industry needed “more transparency” and voted “no.” Sen. Roderick Bray, R-Martinsville, said



The Indiana General Assembly on Feb. 13 unanimously passed a resolution congratulating the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) on the 50th anniversary of its founding. The ICC represents the Catholic Church in Indiana on national and state matters of public policy. Pictured at left reading the resolution is Rep. B. Patrick Bauer (D-South Bend), who authored the bill. To his right are Glenn Tebbe, ICC executive director; Bishop Charles C. Thompson of Evansville; and Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette. (Photo by Charles Schisla)

while he appreciated the efforts to make a good product, he has not detected a “human cry” for this product. Sen. John Ruckelshaus, R-Indianapolis, also voted “no,” saying he was “not comfortable going forward.”

Tebbe said even though this bill has been defeated, the topic could be resurrected and amended to another bill before the Indiana General Assembly

adjourns.

“The ICC and others plan to work toward stopping it if necessary,” he said.

For more information on the status of bills the ICC is following, join the Indiana Catholic Action Network at [www.indianacc.org](http://www.indianacc.org).

(Brigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS, INDIANA

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# Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

## March 1

Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: 317-243-0777.

## March 1-April 9

Planned Parenthood Facility, 8590 Georgetown Road, Indianapolis. **40 Days for Life Prayer Vigil**, 40 days of peaceful prayerful vigil outside Planned Parenthood facility, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Register for prayer time slot: [www.40daysindy.org](http://www.40daysindy.org). Information: 317-407-6881 or [Sheryl@goangels.org](mailto:Sheryl@goangels.org).

## March 3

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral chapel, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Lumen Dei Catholic Business Group**, 6:30 a.m. Mass, 7:15-8:30 a.m. breakfast at Lincoln Square Pancake House, 2330 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Information: 317-435-3447 or [lumen.dei@comcast.net](mailto:lumen.dei@comcast.net).

St. Lawrence Church, 6944

E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **Serra Club, Mass for Vocations**, 8 a.m., with St. Lawrence students, coffee and donuts to follow. Information: 317-748-1478 or [smclaughlin@holyspirit.cc](mailto:smclaughlin@holyspirit.cc).

St. Bede Theater, Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Hamlet**, performed by National Players, 7 p.m. CT, free; pasta buffet 5:30-6:15 p.m., \$10, dessert \$1.50. Meal reservation deadline is March 1. Meal reservation: 812-357-6578 or [kitchen@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:kitchen@saintmeinrad.edu).

Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **First Friday devotion**, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 5:30 p.m.; reconciliation, 5:45-6:45 p.m.; Mass, 7 p.m.; Litany of the Sacred Heart and prayers for the Holy 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 Mass until 9:30 p.m. Sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-888-2861 or [info@olgreenwood.org](mailto:info@olgreenwood.org).

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Charismatic Renewal Praise and Mass**, praise and worship 7 p.m., Mass 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-546-7328, [mkeyes@indy.rr.com](mailto:mkeyes@indy.rr.com).

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, 535 E. Edgewood Ave., Indianapolis. **Lenten Fish Fry**, fish, fries, slaw and drink, 5-7 p.m., adults \$8, seniors \$6, children \$4. Desserts available for \$1. Information: 317-771-5909, [a.coltman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:a.coltman@sbcglobal.net).

St. Matthew the Apostle Parish gymnasium, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Lenten Fish Fry**, all you can eat fish, shrimp, pizza, chowder, pasta, mac and cheese, prices vary, 5-8 p.m. Information: 317-257-4297 or [tjerger@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tjerger@sbcglobal.net).

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 316 N. Sherwood, Clarksville. **Men's Club Fish Fry**, baked or fried fish, oysters and shrimp, 5-7:30 p.m., adults

\$7.50-\$9.50, children \$3-\$5. Information: [b.morra@stanthony-clarksville.org](mailto:b.morra@stanthony-clarksville.org).

## March 4

East Central High School Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Rd, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men's Conference**, featured speakers Patrick Madrid, Dr. Ray Guarendi, Anthony Munoz and Father Jonathan Meyer, Mass, confession, adoration and benediction, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., doors open at 7:30 a.m., \$45 in advance, \$50 at the door, \$35 for groups of 10 or more, \$15 for high school and college students, free for clergy and religious, includes lunch. Information and registration: [www.e6catholicmensconference.com](http://www.e6catholicmensconference.com), [contact@e6catholicmensconference.com](mailto:contact@e6catholicmensconference.com) or 812-576-4302.

St. Bede Theater, Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **The Giver**, performed by National Players, 7 p.m. CT, free; pasta buffet 5:30-6:15 p.m., \$10, dessert \$1.50. Meal reservation deadline is March 1. Meal reservation: 812-357-6578 or

[kitchen@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:kitchen@saintmeinrad.edu).

Sample Gates, Indiana University, Bloomington. **Rally to raise awareness on the trafficking of aborted baby parts**, sponsored by IU Students for Life and Students for Life of America, protesting IU's efforts to stop legislation ending the selling of aborted baby parts, 1 p.m.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, prayers, rosary, confession, meditation, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

**Terre Haute Helpers of God's Precious Infants**, 7:30 a.m. Mass at the Carmelite Monastery, 59 Allendale, Terre Haute; 8:45 a.m. car pool from St. Patrick Parish, 1807 Poplar St., Terre Haute, to Bloomington Planned Parenthood, 421 S. College Ave., arriving 10:15 a.m.; return to St. Patrick Parish around noon. Information: Tom McBroom, 812-841-0060, [mcbroom.tom@gmail.com](mailto:mcbroom.tom@gmail.com).

Knights of Columbus, 2100 E. 71st St, Indianapolis. **Fund**

**Raiser**, helping finance Christ the King parishioner Eric Dessauer in representing the U.S. in the World Dwarf Games in Canada, 6 p.m., \$25 includes food and drink. Information: David Dessauer, 317-640-0585, [dessauer.david@gmail.com](mailto:dessauer.david@gmail.com).

## March 5

St. Louis Parish, 17 E. St. Louis Pl., Batesville. **Royal Ball and Pirate Cove Fundraiser**, activities, crafts, dancing, games and snacks, 12:30-2:30 p.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m., \$10. Tickets: [www.triforcemissionsteam.com](http://www.triforcemissionsteam.com). Information: 812-212-9477 or [cwesseler@st.louissschool.org](mailto:cwesseler@st.louissschool.org).

## March 5-9

**St. Maurice and Immaculate Conception parishes Lenten Mission**. Father Daniel Bedel presenting; Sun., St. Maurice Church, 8874 Harrison St., Napoleon: "Finding God Within Us," based on writings of St. Teresa of Avila, 7 p.m.; Mon., Immaculate Conception Church, 2081 E. County Road 820 S., Greensburg: "Finding God Outside of Us," based on writings of St. Therese of Lisieux. Information: Laurie Husted, 812-498-7512, [hustedlaurie@gmail.com](mailto:hustedlaurie@gmail.com). †

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

## March 10-12

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Going the Extra Mile—Embracing Sacrificial Love**, Fri. 7 p.m. thru noon Sun., Father Jim Farrell presenting. \$185 single, \$305 per married couple, includes meals, lodging and program. Information and registration: 317-545-7681, ext. 107 or [www.archindy.org/fatima](http://www.archindy.org/fatima).

## March 13

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St.,

Indianapolis. **Ignatian Spirituality Project, monthly evening of prayer and community**, 6-7:30 p.m. Information: 317-545-7681 or [www.archindy.org/fatima](http://www.archindy.org/fatima).

## March 14

Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Day of Reflection for Women Ministers**, Providence Sister Paula Damiano and Providence Associate Disciple of Christ Rev. Rebecca Zelensky

presenting, 2-8 p.m., \$25 includes dinner, register by March 7. Information and registration: 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org) or [spsmw.org/providence-center/events](http://spsmw.org/providence-center/events).

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Spend a Day with God: Personal Retreat Day**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$35 includes room and lunch; spiritual direction \$30 (optional). Information and registration: 317-788-7581, [www.benedictinn.org](http://www.benedictinn.org). †

## VIPs



**William F. and Frances S. (Sallinger) Rajk**, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Feb. 23.

The couple was married in St. James Church in Steelton, Pa., on Feb. 23, 1957.

They have two children, Chivonne Kelly and Michael Rajk.

The couple also has five grandchildren.

They will celebrate with a Mass and a family dinner. †

## St. Mark the Evangelist Parish Disability Awareness Mass and Reception set for March 11

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish's annual Disabilities Awareness Mass will be celebrated at St. Mark the Evangelist Church, 535 E. Edgewood Ave., in Indianapolis, at 5:30 p.m. on March 11.

The purpose of this Mass is to raise awareness of the importance and value that individuals with disabilities bring to both St. Mark and to the community.

Several of St. Mark's special needs parishioners will participate in the Mass. There will also be a reception in

the parish's Schafer Hall immediately following the Mass.

This Mass and reception are being organized by the St. Mark Inclusion Committee under the guidance of parish pastor Father Todd Riebe and pastoral associate Deacon Tom Horn.

All are invited to join in the Mass and reception to worship and to learn more about how St. Mark Parish encourages everyone, including parishioners with special needs, to take an active role in parish and community activities. †

## Have lunch or supper with Sisters of Providence on March 11 or 14

In honor of National Catholic Sisters Week, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, invite all to share a meal with them.

The first opportunity is on March 11. All are invited to celebrate Mass with the sisters at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, at 11:30 a.m., followed by lunch with the sisters.

The second opportunity is on March 14, when all are invited to join in supper with the sisters at 5 p.m.

Both meals will be served in Providence Hall Dining Room. Following both meals, guests can participate in an informal tour of the historic Providence Hall convent.

The meals are free, but seating is limited, so early registration is required. The registration deadline for the luncheon is March 5, and the deadline for the supper is March 6.

To register, log onto [LunchSisters.SistersofProvidence.org](http://LunchSisters.SistersofProvidence.org) or [SupperSistersSMW.SistersofProvidence.org](http://SupperSistersSMW.SistersofProvidence.org). †

## Fifth Lecture and Irish Coffee offered at Cardinal Ritter House on March 16

The Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation is sponsoring its fifth annual free lecture and Irish Coffee in the community room at the Cardinal Ritter House, 1218 E. Oak St., in New Albany, at 7 p.m. on March 16.

The featured speaker is Kyle Kramer, executive director of the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center in Louisville, Ky. He will discuss "Laudato si": On Care for

Our Common Home," Pope Francis' encyclical letter on the environment, and provide a framework for Christian ecological responsibility.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to view the Ritter museum room.

The event is free, but reservations are requested by March 13 by calling Indiana Landmarks at 812-284-4534. †

## Indiana Catholic Women's Conference is set for March 25

The Indiana Catholic Women's Conference will be on March 25. The event is from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., with registration at 8 a.m.

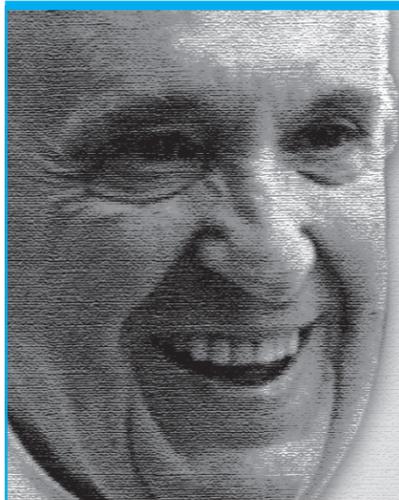
The conference will be at the Indianapolis Downtown Marriott, 305 W. Maryland St. Parking is available across the street in the Government Center Parking Garage, 401 W. Washington St.

The event features speakers Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Father James Blount, Father Ronan Murphy and Carrie Gress, with an adoration reflection by Father Michael Keucher, associate pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

Mass and confession will also be offered, as well as items by numerous vendors.

Tickets are \$50, or \$25 for students and religious. For groups of 10 or more, tickets are \$45. Members of the largest group will receive a prize and VIP seating in the front row.

To register for the conference, log onto [www.indianacatholicwomen.com](http://www.indianacatholicwomen.com), or mail a check and number of attendees to: Marian Center of Indianapolis, P.O. Box 47362, Indianapolis, IN 46247 [checks made out to St. Michael Foundation]. For questions, call 317-888-0873 or e-mail [mariancntr@aol.com](mailto:mariancntr@aol.com). †



# The Face of Mercy

(from Pope Francis' papal bull "Misericordiae Vultus")

By Daniel Conway

## No parking: Pope Francis tells 'lazy Christians' to keep moving

Last week, I wrote about Pope Francis's admonition to the young Church (quoting sacred Scripture): "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gn 12:1). This is a frequent theme of this pope's teaching. We are called to "go," to abandon the comfort and security of our lives in order to "venture forth" even to the margins of human society.

In a recent homily, Pope Francis took this teaching a step forward, saying that Christians who forge ahead with hope in God have the strength to endure life's dark moments. But the Holy Father also said that those of us who fail to move forward, or to fight for real change, are "stagnant." He even used the term "lazy Christians" and Christians who are "lukewarm" in their faith to describe in vivid terms the consequences of our failure to leave our comfort zones and "go forth" proclaiming the joy of the Gospel.

According to Pope Francis, lazy Christians "have found in the Church a nice parking lot" for themselves. He

likened their situation to "living in a refrigerator" that keeps things just as they are. The pope said that it reminds him of an old saying in his native land that warns that stagnant water is the first to go bad.

Why is Pope Francis so concerned about Christians who are "parked," making no real progress in the pilgrim journey that is Christian life? Because he sees the opportunities that are lost—both in the lives of Christians themselves and in the works of mercy that are not carried out because of our self-centeredness.

Sacred Scripture condemns behavior that is stagnant: "I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, 'I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,' and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness

may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see" (Rev 3:15-18).

Too often, we fool ourselves thinking that we are good Christians who rightly enjoy the security of a decent life. We don't realize that our comfort and our indifference to the needs of others have made us lazy or lukewarm in our Christian life.

Jesus abhors this kind of indifference. He makes it very clear that his disciples are not to be insipid or tasteless: "You are the salt of the Earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Mt 5:15-18).

Pope Francis reminds us that a true Christian life is courageous, built on

hope. It is a commitment to move confidently forward in spite of the storms we encounter along the way.

The Church is not "a nice parking lot." It is a roadway designed to support us in the sometimes perilous journey to our heavenly home. As a pilgrim people, we are called to support, encourage and assist each other as we travel on the road to heaven.

No parking allowed. We must keep moving forward in hope, the pope says, "fighting, enduring the storm and looking ahead upon an open horizon."

When we stumble and fall, the grace of Christ will lift us up and sustain us on our way. When we are weary or discouraged, the joyful spirits of our sisters and brothers will revive us and help us to keep moving forward.

Let's not be lazy Christians. Let's be bold and energetic as we follow Jesus on the road to life!

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion's editorial committee.) †

### El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

## Prohibido estacionarse: El papa Francisco dice que los 'cristianos perezosos' deben moverse

La semana pasada escribí acerca de la admonición del papa Francisco a la Iglesia joven (citando las Sagradas Escrituras): "Vete de tu tierra, de tu patria y de la casa de tu padre a la tierra que yo te mostraré" (Gn 12:1). Esta es una constante en las enseñanzas de nuestro Sumo Pontífice. Estamos llamados a irnos, a abandonar la comodidad y la seguridad de nuestras vidas para aventurarnos inclusive en los márgenes de la sociedad humana.

En una homilía reciente, el papa Francisco profundizó todavía más en esta enseñanza al decir que los cristianos que avanzan con determinación en su fe en Dios tienen la fortaleza para soportar los momentos más oscuros de la vida. Pero el Santo padre también dice que quienes no logran avanzar o luchar por un cambio verdadero se quedan "estancados." Inclusive utilizó el término "cristianos perezosos" y cristianos que son como el "agua tibia" en su fe, para describir con palabras vívidas las consecuencias de no abandonar nuestra comodidad y avanzar proclamando la alegría del Evangelio.

Según el papa Francisco, los cristianos perezosos "han encontrado en la Iglesia un buen estacionamiento para aparcarse."

Comparó la situación de estos cristianos con la de "vivir en un refrigerador," que mantiene las cosas tal como están. El papa comentó que esto le recuerda un viejo dicho de su tierra natal que dice que el agua estancada es la primera en podrirse.

¿Por qué el papa Francisco está tan preocupado por los cristianos que están "estacionados" y no realizan ningún progreso en el camino de peregrinación que es la vida cristiana? Porque ve en ello las oportunidades perdidas, tanto en la vida de los propios cristianos como en las obras de misericordia que no se llevan a cabo a causa de nuestro egoísmo.

Las Sagradas Escrituras condenan este tipo de conducta estancada: "Yo conozco tus obras, que ni eres frío ni caliente. ¡Ojalá fueras frío o caliente! Así, puesto que eres tibio, y no frío ni caliente, te vomitaré de mi boca. Porque dices: 'Soy rico, me he enriquecido y de nada tengo necesidad'; y no sabes que eres un miserable y digno de lástima, y pobre, ciego y desnudo, te aconsejo que de mí compres oro refinado por fuego para que te hagas rico, y vestiduras blancas para que te vistas y no se manifieste la vergüenza de tu desnudez,

y colirio para ungir tus ojos para que puedas ver" (Rev 3:15-18).

Muy a menudo nos engañamos pensando que somos buenos cristianos que disfrutamos legítimamente de la seguridad de una vida decente. No nos damos cuenta de que nuestra comodidad y nuestra indiferencia ante las necesidades de los demás nos han convertido en cristianos perezosos o tibios.

Jesús aborrece este tipo de indiferencia y deja muy en claro que sus discípulos no deben ser insípidos: "Vosotros sois la sal de la tierra; pero si la sal se ha vuelto insípida, ¿con qué se hará salada otra vez? Ya para nada sirve, sino para ser echada fuera y pisoteada por los hombres. Vosotros sois la luz del mundo. Una ciudad situada sobre un monte no se puede ocultar; ni se enciende una lámpara y se pone debajo de un almud, sino sobre el candelero, y alumbra a todos los que están en la casa. Así brille vuestra luz delante de los hombres, para que vean vuestras buenas acciones y glorifiquen a vuestro Padre que está en los cielos" (Mt 5:15-18).

El papa Francisco nos recuerda que la verdadera vida cristiana es valiente,

erigida sobre la esperanza; es un compromiso de avanzar con confianza, pese a las tormentas que encontremos en el camino.

La Iglesia no es un "buen estacionamiento." Es el camino diseñado para brindarnos apoyo en el sendero, a veces peligroso, hacia nuestro hogar celestial. Como pueblo peregrino, estamos llamados a apoyarnos, alentarnos y ayudarnos mutuamente en este camino hacia el cielo.

Prohibido estacionarse. Debemos seguir avanzando con esperanza, tal como lo dice el papa, "luchando, soportando la tormenta y mirando hacia adelante al horizonte abierto."

Cuando nos tropezamos y caemos, la gracia de Cristo nos levanta y nos sustenta en el camino. Cuando sintamos recelo o desaliento, los espíritus alegres de todos nuestros hermanos nos revivirán y nos ayudarán a seguir avanzando.

No seamos cristianos perezosos. ¡Seamos valientes y energéticos mientras seguimos a Cristo en el camino de la vida!

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

## Pope Francis names envoy to study pastoral care of faithful in Medjugorje

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Without commenting on the authenticity of alleged Marian apparitions in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Pope Francis has appointed a Polish archbishop to study the pastoral needs of the townspeople and the thousands of pilgrims who flock to the town each year.

The pope chose Archbishop Henryk Hoser of Warsaw-Praga as his special envoy to Medjugorje, the Vatican announced on Feb. 11.

"The mission has the aim of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the pastoral situation there and, above all,

of the needs of the faithful who go there in pilgrimage, and on the basis of this, to suggest possible pastoral initiatives for the future," the Vatican announcement said.

Archbishop Hoser's assignment has "an exclusively pastoral character," the Vatican said, making it clear his task is separate from the work of a commission set up in 2010 by now-retired Pope Benedict XVI to investigate the claims of six young people who said Mary had appeared to them daily beginning in 1981. Some of the six say Mary still appears to them and gives them messages each day,

while others say they see her only once a year now.

Pope Benedict had named retired Italian Cardinal Camillo Ruini to chair the group studying the apparitions. In June 2015, Pope Francis told reporters that Cardinal Ruini had given him the group's report and that it would be studied by the cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. At the time, Pope Francis said, "We're close to making decisions," although nothing was announced until the appointment of Archbishop Hoser about 20 months later.

Thousands of pilgrims travel to the small town each month to meet the alleged seers and to pray. Because the apparitions have not been approved, the Vatican has said dioceses should not organize official pilgrimages to Medjugorje. However, it also has said Catholics are free to visit the town and pray there, and that the Diocese of Mostar-Duvno and the Franciscans who minister in the town should organize pastoral care for them.

The Vatican's February announcement said that Archbishop Hoser "is expected to finish his mandate as special envoy by summer of this year." †

# Wedding ANNOUNCEMENTS



**Bass-Cook**  
Brittany Ilene Bass and Joseph Matthew Cook will be married on May 6 at St. Jude Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Mike Bass and Tammy Young. The groom is the son of Kevin and Mary Cook.



**Case-Back**  
Valerie Kathleen Case and Philip James Back will be married on April 29 at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Morris. The bride is the daughter of Jon and Margarita Case. The groom is the son of Patrick and Mary Back.



**Mechem-Webster**  
Alexis Serena Mechem and Jonathan Wayne Webster II will be married on June 10 at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in West Lafayette, Ind. The bride is the daughter of Larry and Melanie Mechem. The groom is the son of Jon and Julie Webster.



**Brand-Ganter**  
Libby Brand and Eddie Ganter will be married on Feb. 25 at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Church in Bright. The bride is the daughter of Jeff and Lisa Brand. The groom is the son of Bob Ganter.



**Figg-Evers**  
Victoria Rachel Figg and Aaron Joseph Evers will be married on April 29 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Fairfield, Ohio. The bride is the daughter of Kevin and Francine Figg. The groom is the son of Tony and Monica Evers.



**Toll-Toepp**  
Lauryn Alyse Toll and Nicholas Joseph Toepp will be married on July 1 at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Donald Toll and Sandra Horan-Toll. The groom is the son of Brian and Sharon Toepp.



**Buckley-Minix**  
Melissa Joan Buckley and Brian Doyle Minix will be married on March 25 at St. Jude Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Jeffrey and Linda Buckley. The groom is the son of Doyle and Patricia Minix.



**Fleming-Owen**  
Cheryl Sue Torok Fleming and Stephen Owen Sr. were married on May 6, 2016, at St. Margaret Mary Church in Louisville, Ky. The bride is the daughter of the late Steve and Margaret Torok. The groom is the son of Mildred Owen.



**Vernia-Martinez**  
Jennifer Elaine Vernia and Ramiro Jose Garza Martinez will be married on June 3 at St. James Church in Louisville, Ky. The bride is the daughter of John and Phyllis Vernia. The groom is the son of Ramiro and Olga Garza.

## Annual Marriage Day Celebration recognizes 'goodness of God's love and gift of marriage'

By Natalie Hoefler

The numbers spoke volumes: 49 couples, 1,183 years of marriage, 124 children, 89 grandchildren and 47 great-grandchildren. These were the figures of those who registered for the second annual archdiocesan Marriage Day Celebration, a Mass and reception held for all married couples in the archdiocese at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Feb. 12. "Pope Francis often refers to marriage and family life as the salt and leaven of society," says Scott Seibert, archdiocesan coordinator of marriage and family enrichment, a branch of the archdiocesan Office of Pro-Life and Family Life that sponsored the event. "Marriage is what gives life freshness and flavor, and allows life to be more abundant." He notes that society tends to offer a negative narrative on marriage. "This celebration shines a light on the beauty of marriage," he says. "We're able to see firsthand what we know to be true—that marriages offer a glimpse into the beauty of the love God has for us. "Being able to celebrate World Marriage Day [set annually as the second Sunday of February] gives us the opportunity to both celebrate and proclaim the goodness of God's love and his gift of marriage."

**'Witness to love'**  
In his homily during the Mass, Msgr. William F. Stumpf, archdiocesan administrator, said he suspected "that most young couples don't have a clue how they will be asked to live out" the promises of their marriage vows, "promises to be true in good times and in bad, in sickness and health, to honor and to love all the days of one's life." He said he could relate, noting that when he was ordained 31 years ago, he was excited and fervent about his vocation, but "had little comprehension of what it would mean to promise obedience to an archbishop, to pray daily and faithfully for the people of God, and to be a herald of the Gospel." Just as he has a better understanding of the promises he made three decades ago, said Msgr. Stumpf, "so through the years you couples gathered here today have come to understand a little bit better the promises you made on your wedding day." That understanding came through good times and bad, he said: "... times when making the mortgage payment was a constant worry, and when the car wouldn't start and the kids were running late for school; ... when together you comforted a sick or hurting child, when you placed a cool washcloth on a feverish forehead, when you gave up a night out with your friends; ... through sacrifice and perhaps most powerfully through forgiveness, [which] calls us to not only put hurt aside but to move toward one another rather than away. "And clearly, that understanding came through joyful moments, those moments when you felt as though your heart couldn't hold all the love and joy you were experiencing: the birth of a child, Christmases and holidays spent together, first Communion, baptisms, anniversaries, family dinners." Msgr. Stumpf closed his homily by thanking the couples "for your witness to marriage, your witness to love and by being the embodiment of a wisdom that this age so desperately needs to hear." During the Mass, two couples received recognition and a papal blessing as the couples married the longest and shortest period of time among those who registered for the event. Frank and Joan Collier of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg were married the longest at almost 64 years, and Luis and Clare Gomez of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis were married the least amount of time at just more than one month. Their stories are below.

**'We are just in love'**  
While their 64th wedding anniversary is approaching on May 9, Frank and Joan Collier sound like a newlywed couple. Joan says she was attracted to Frank because "he was friendly, so kind and sweet. I loved him then, and I love him now." Frank feels the same. "There was just something about her that struck me," he says. The couple, now both 81, met at age 16—she was a "popcorn girl" at a theater in St. Louis, and he had been an usher there. "He came by and invited a co-worker out for a date," Joan recalls. "She said no, and he ended up driving me home that night." While Joan was grateful for being spared the two-buses-and-one-streetcar journey back to her home, Frank sees more to his chivalrous act. "God's plan was for me to take her home," he said.



Frank and Joan Collier share a lighthearted moment in May 2016. Soon to celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary, the couple received recognition and a papal blessing during the second annual archdiocesan Marriage Day Celebration Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Feb. 12. (Submitted photo)

For six months of their courtship, Frank was in the Army, first for three months in California, and then three months in Mississippi. "I really missed her," he says. "All the other boys were going into town for a good time, but it wasn't what I wanted." Joan visited him over an Easter weekend. "Neither of us remembers an official proposal," Frank recalls. "We just figured we'd get married." When Joan returned to St. Louis, she set a wedding date, and Frank mailed her a ring. "I got my ring from the mailman," Joan says with a laugh. The couple married when Joan was 18 and Frank was 17. Joan was still a few weeks from graduating from high school when they married. The Colliers now have six children, 15 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren. Faith played a role in their relationship right from the start, says Joan. "We both believe that God brought us together and kept us together, and gave us this beautiful family," she says. Passing on the faith to one's children is important, says Frank, noting that "it's what you leave them with." Joan's advice to other couples is to "never say the words 'I'm leaving,' or 'I want a divorce.' If they go through your mind, don't say them—that's not a possibility. Take your wedding vows for what they are: vows." Frank agrees. "Marriage is not something you're going to try out for a year or two," he says. "Think about this as something that is going to last until you die, the way God intended it." Perhaps that's why Joan and Frank still sound like a young couple in love. "It's been a good 63 years," says Frank. "I just wrote her a little note in a [daily devotional] book we both read. It says, 'You are my every day Valentine.' "We are just in love. We have been 63 going on 64 years. God has certainly blessed us."

**'Honey, I want great-grandchildren!'**  
Opposites attract, so the saying goes. Clare Gomez says her husband of almost two months, Luis Gomez, "talked to everyone" at Amazon where they both worked when they met in August 2014. But "I was quiet and shy," she says of herself. Nevertheless, it was Clare who first asked Luis out—to go with her to Mass at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in December of 2014. "I was interested in her, but like most guys, I was afraid of rejection," Luis admits. Both are lifelong Latino Catholics, but Luis says Clare relit the fire of his faith. "I was going to [Mass] at St. Patrick's [Church in Indianapolis], but I stopped going for a while," he says. "But I met Clare, and she inspired me to go back to Mass again. I wasn't that spiritually mature until I met Clare." It was after Mass one cold day that Luis, now 27, sensed that Clare, now 23, was "the one." "It was when we started holding hands," he says. "It was really cold. I said, 'Oh! Your hands must be so cold! Let me warm them up for you!' It felt different than with other girls. It gave me a warm feeling inside." Clare sensed a future with Luis when the couple went to her cousin's wedding in New York. "That's where I got to know him more," she says. "That's when I felt he was the one." The couple was married on Jan. 7, 2017, at St. Mark the Evangelist Church. Luis says their pastor, Father Todd Riebe, who guided them through their engagement, "has helped us so much. He told us about [the Marriage Day Celebration Mass] and said we might be the newest married couple. We were really excited and registered." Clare says they also wanted to go to the celebration "to meet other married couples that have been married for a long time."

And they did, speaking with their fellow papal-blessing recipients, Frank and Joan Collier, married for nearly 64 years. "They told us how they have so many children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren," Luis recalls. "I said, 'Honey, I want great-grandchildren—that sounds cool!'" "We were really inspired by what they told us. Marriage is creating a family and making a foundation for your future and your children's children. Once you get married, you create a tree and you branch out, and you get bigger and bigger." The couple is on their way, already expecting their first child. From their first date at St. Mark in 2014, to the Marriage Day Celebration Mass this month, faith has been a constant for the parents-to-be. With Clare working days and Luis working nights, Clare says they "don't see each other much [on] Monday through Friday, so church is the place we can be together." Luis agrees. "It all started with going to church," he says. "I like that feeling of coming together. It's something we can always do together." †



Newlyweds Luis and Clare Gomez pose for a photo at the Marriage Day Celebration reception at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Feb. 12 after a Mass honoring all married couples at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The Gomezes received recognition and a papal blessing during the Mass for being the most recently married couple present. (Submitted photo)

## Pre Cana Conference, Tobit Weekend and One in Christ programs prepare engaged couples for marriage

Three marriage preparation programs offered in the archdiocese—the Pre Cana Conference, Tobit Weekend and One in Christ—help prepare engaged couples for the sacrament of marriage as well as the challenges of married life. Early registration is recommended for all programs, as each fills up quickly. Pre Cana Conference programs, offered at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, are scheduled in 2017 for March 31-April 1, May 5-6, June 2-3, Sept. 22-23, Oct. 13-14 and Dec. 1-2. The cost is \$255 per couple with overnight accommodations in separate rooms or \$185 per couple without overnight accommodations. The conferences are scheduled from 6:30-9:30 p.m. on the first day, and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on the second day. For more information about the program, contact Cheryl McSweeney at 317-545-7681, or [cmcsweeney@archindy.org](mailto:cmcsweeney@archindy.org). To register, log on to [www.archindy.org/fatima](http://www.archindy.org/fatima). Tobit Weekend retreats are scheduled at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House during 2017 on April 7-9, May 19-21, June 23-25, July 21-23, Sept. 15-17 and Oct. 20-22.

The registration fee of \$298 includes meals, snacks and overnight accommodations in separate rooms for the weekend. Registration is required. A \$150 non-refundable deposit is required at the time of registration. For more information about the program, contact Cheryl McSweeney at 317-545-7681, or [cmcsweeney@archindy.org](mailto:cmcsweeney@archindy.org). To register, log on to [www.archindy.org/fatima](http://www.archindy.org/fatima). One in Christ three-day marriage preparation programs are scheduled for April 1, 2 and 8 at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., in Greenwood; on June 10, 11 and 17 at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 7575 Holliday Drive E., in Indianapolis; and on Oct. 7, 8 and 14, also at St. Luke. The first day of the program is from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., the second day is from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the third day is from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. The cost is \$220 and covers meals and materials. For more information call 317-600-5629, e-mail [info@OICIndy.com](mailto:info@OICIndy.com), or log on to [www.OICIndy.com](http://www.OICIndy.com). †

# MYANMAR

continued from page 1

St. Mark in the official Burmese language spoken by all from Myanmar regardless of tribe. He will also celebrate Mass in English.

But celebrating the sacraments are far from his only duties.

"I will facilitate smooth interactions between the Church staff and the Burmese parishioners, visit them in homes and hospitals, and advocate for the Burmese community," he says. "And we will have community meetings, prayer meetings, faith formation courses and other spiritual and social activities."

In addition to those duties, Father Bu Nyar will serve as associate pastor of both parishes and as coordinator of the Myanmar Ministry for the archdiocesan Intercultural Ministry Office.

"He is a gift to us," says Father Todd Riebe, pastor of St. Mark Parish. "We are so grateful for his presence here."

"For me, it's so great to have a priest from [Myanmar] to be able to understand that culture. He knows the people, their popular piety, their spirituality. To have him teach me in addition to ministering is a very special gift."

Father James Farrell, pastor of St. Pius Parish, expresses similar sentiments.

"This has been a great gift as far as the Burmese community is concerned, and me too," he says. "Many of the elders don't speak English well, if at all. It's important to have him to celebrate the Mass. It's been a wonderful expression of the Church's care for them now that they're in a new country after years in refugee camp."

"We have this opportunity of integrating another whole culture and expression of the Catholic faith in the archdiocesan family and our parish family. We feel very strong about our desire to create something that's whole, not fragmented. ... We can keep building unity we have in our faith, and build bridges across cultural divides."

Both Burmese and English-speaking Catholics are grateful for Father Bu Nyar's presence as well.

Angela Dim, a Myanmar refugee of the Zomi Chin tribe and a member of St. Mark Parish, says she is "so excited" to have a priest from Myanmar.

"We consider this our home country now, and it is so nice to have him," she says. "He's a very nice man. Most of us don't speak English, so we really need him. We really thank God for bringing us a Burmese priest."

So do her fellow parishioners, Mary Ellen and John Magee. Mary Ellen serves as a realtor for the Myanmar refugees of the parish.

"They're very dear to my heart. I love the diversity they bring—it warms my heart. I think it's wonderful" that they have a priest who speaks their language, she says.

John, an officer of the local Knights of Columbus Msgr. Downey Council 3660, is excited about a new Burmese Knights' council that is developing.

"A lot of them wanted to join," he says, but because of the language barrier, "our district deputy decided it would be better for them to have their own council." Father Bu Nyar will serve as chaplain of the new council.

Lauren Jones worships at St. Mark Church with her boyfriend Peter Kim, a member of the parish and a Myanmar refugee of the Zomi Chin tribe.

"[The Burmese] come to Mass faithfully, even when they don't understand the language," she observes. "I think it's great for them to have someone to serve their community, go to their homes, talk to them and make them feel more a part of the community. Father Todd has been doing a great job, but he doesn't speak Burmese. It will help new refugees have a faith figure to give them guidance."

Kim notes that the refugees still learning English have come to Mass despite the language barrier "because of the Eucharist." Now, he says, that barrier is gone.

"We've been longing for this moment a long time," he says. "We never thought we'd have a Burmese priest. Now that he's here, we are so excited." †



Father David Bu Nyar, a priest from Myanmar serving in the archdiocese, chats with St. Mark the Evangelist parishioners John and Mary Ellen Magee after the Mass in the parish's church on the evening of Feb. 11. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)



Father David Bu Nyar greets Myanmar members of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish after a morning Mass on Feb 12.

## Tips help explain customs, dispell myths about refugees from Myanmar

By Natalie Hoefer

Catholics are one, whether from Myanmar or America.

Nevertheless, there are experiential impacts, cultural differences and myths about Myanmar refugees that can lead to misunderstanding and division.

Here are a few tips in understanding and interacting with refugees from Myanmar, as explained by natives Father David Bu Nyar and Rita Si Si Lwin, coordinator of the archdiocesan Burmese Catholic Community, and Heidi Smith, director of Indianapolis Catholic Charities' Refugee and Immigrant Services (RIS):

- While civil war in Myanmar (formerly Burma, officially becoming Myanmar in 1989) has played out in stages since 1948, the current refugees from Myanmar started arriving in Indianapolis in the late 1990s as victims of attacks carried out by the government and rebels opposing the government.

"If the government came into a village, you [had] to do whatever they say," says Lwin. "And when the rebellion came in, they say, 'You are

helping the Burmese government.' That's why they kill everyone."

While circumstances are better now, Father Bu Nyar says, he admits that previously "our political situation was very bad. There was always fighting, murder by the government troops. Some of them, their villages were burned down and they had to flee."

According to an explanatory article on [exodusrefugee.org](http://exodusrefugee.org), "Most [refugees from Myanmar] have survived significant human rights violations such as persecution, war, hunger, genocide, forced relocation, rape and many other unspeakable experiences."

The refugees fled to camps, mostly in Thailand, living there for more than a decade in many cases.

- Myanmar refugees, like refugees from many other nations, made their way to Indianapolis through RIS, which represents the archdiocese as a participant organization in a public-private partnership between the federal government and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Migration and Refugee Services.

- Contrary to what some believe, refugees from Myanmar who settle in

Indianapolis are not given federal money for homes and cars, says Smith.

"They receive very short-term financial aid that's meant to cover rent and utilities," she explains. "They're very family-oriented and hardworking, so they're able to save the money they earn very quickly. They start working in the first few months of when they arrive here."

"As refugees, they don't have much control over their lives, so the minute they can make a life of their own and be independent, they run for it. That's why people see them buying homes and cars so quickly. It's all with the money they earned themselves."

For more information on this and other myths about refugees in Indiana, log onto [www.in.gov/isdh/24670.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/24670.htm).

- Myanmar people associate more with their tribe than as "Burmese."

"At St. Pius [X Parish in Indianapolis] they are mostly of the Karenni tribe," Lwin explains. "At St. Mark [the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis], it is mixed, but mostly Chin and Kachin."

- Regardless of tribe, three particular Myanmar customs that show respect in their culture but can seem rude to

Americans, says Lwin, are the crossing of arms over the chest, the averting of eyes and social reserve.

"Eye contact is one of the big differences," she says. "In Burma, eye contact is very rude. But here you have to, or people think you don't pay attention or are not interested."

"Also, arms crossed [over the chest] is how we show respect. But in America if you do like that, they say that you're not paying attention, or not interested."

"And no hugging—handshakes. We have a lot of issues in our parishes: The parishioners want to hug, and most of our people are shy and run away from that. We are not used to it. It's not offensive to us, we are just shy."

- While hugs are perhaps uncomfortable for those from Myanmar, asking one's age is not.

"This is not a rude question in our culture," says Lwin. "This is something we are told here—don't ask age, don't ask salary. But in Burma we are really proud to say, 'Hey! I'm 25 already!' When we arrive here, we learn that this is not the culture here, this is very private. But we are very proud of our age!" †

### Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

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

For more information, please log on to [www.archindy.org/layministry](http://www.archindy.org/layministry)



### Report sexual misconduct now

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator:

Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis,  
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-1410  
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548  
[chill@archindy.org](mailto:chill@archindy.org)

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## Ancient symbols draw believers closer to Christ through Lent

By Paul Senz

Our society is not one that readily embraces the idea of sacrifice. There is little recognition of the profound benefits of self-denial and of giving completely of oneself to others—and to God.

All the more reason, then, for us as Catholics to actively live out the ideals of the penitential season of Lent. One way to prepare ourselves is to better understand the roots and symbolism of the season and the day that starts it all: Ash Wednesday.

The name of Lent comes from the Old English word for spring. In most other languages, the name of this season is derived from the Latin term “*quadragesima*,” or “40 days.”

The length of the season is one of its most symbolically important aspects, putting us in continuity with figures throughout salvation history who experienced penitential periods of 40 days. Biblically, the number 40 is associated with discipline, preparation and asceticism.

During the great flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Gn 7:12) and after the waters had been receding for some time, “at the end of 40 days” Noah sent out a raven and later a dove to test the waters (Gn 8:6-7).

Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days (Ex 24:18, Ex 34:28). Elijah traveled the cave where he had a vision of God (1 Kgs 19:8). Nineveh was given 40 days to repent of its sins (Jon 3:4).

And most directly related to our liturgical celebration of Lent, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying before beginning his public ministry (Mt 4:2).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sums up the meaning of the season of Lent: “By the solemn 40 days of Lent, the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (#540).

This union comes not simply from the length of the season; it is from the three pillars of Lent—praying, fasting and almsgiving—by which we live out the example set by Jesus and prepare ourselves to celebrate at Easter the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection.

Ash Wednesday is one day in particular in which we unite ourselves to the ascetic fasting of Jesus Christ. Appropriately, as it is the beginning of the season, Ash Wednesday is a sort of Lent-in-microcosm.

What significance do the ashes themselves hold? Why do we engage in this ritual each year in which ashes are placed on our foreheads in the shape of a cross? What does it have to do with Lent?

There are two primary symbols with which we often associate the ashes. First, in the Bible a mark on the forehead is something that signifies ownership. This tradition was retained in the early Church after the resurrection, as the early Christians would make the sign of the cross with their thumbs on their foreheads, indicating their complete gift of themselves to Jesus Christ.

Similarly, the forehead is marked with the sign of the cross at baptism, in confirmation and at every Mass prior to the proclamation of the Gospel. Signing the forehead with ashes is one more reiteration of this ownership.

Second, and perhaps more widely recognized, ashes are biblically a sign of mourning and penance, as well as death. There are countless scriptural examples wherein people express their penitence and seek forgiveness by covering themselves in sackcloth and ashes.

Eusebius of Caesarea (circa 260-339), in his *Ecclesiastical History*, tells of an apostate named Natalis who came clothed in sackcloth and ashes to Pope Zephyrinus seeking the pope’s forgiveness.

Ashes were also sprinkled on the forehead of people as they left confession



Ashes are distributed at St. Helen Church in Glendale, Ariz., in this 2016 file photo. On Ash Wednesday, we sign ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ, and we strive to live the following 40 days so that the world knows we are Christians. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

to do public penance. This outward sign of an inward reality increased in prominence as time went on.

Reflect for a moment on one of the two options for words used by the minister when the ashes are administered: “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The first part recalls what God said to Adam when he and Eve were being expelled from the garden (Gn 3:19), and Abraham’s declaration: “I am only dust and ashes” (Gn 18:27). It is a profound reminder of the reality of death. This phrase is a strong reminder of our mortality, a reminder that the things of this world are fleeting, and that we are ultimately meant for the kingdom of God.

According to Father William Saunders, former professor at Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College in

Alexandria, Va., this ritual is one that dates back at least to the eighth century, in the earliest extant editions of the *Gregorian Sacramentary*, a collection of prayers and other liturgical texts.

Later, Father Saunders notes, around 1000, an Anglo-Saxon priest wrote of repentance being displayed by sackcloth and ashes, “Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast.”

Lent is not merely a preparation for Easter. On Ash Wednesday, we sign ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ, and we strive to live the following 40 days so that the world knows we are Christians.

(Paul Senz is a freelance writer living in Oregon with his family.) †

## Scripture readings on Ash Wednesday a ‘rallying cry’ for complete conversion

By Father Herbert Weber

After more than four decades as a parish priest, I am still moved by the Scripture readings of Ash Wednesday. That is true even if there may seem to show a contrast of expectations.

For example, in the first reading from Joel, the prophet uses words like “Blow a trumpet ... call an assembly” (Jl 2:15). At the same time, in the Gospel passage from St. Matthew that is proclaimed at the same Mass, we hear Jesus say, “When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you” (Mt 6:2).

Likewise, when it comes to fasting, Jesus calls people to “anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting” (Mt 6:17-18). At the same time, we place dark ashes on the foreheads of adults and children alike as a sign of their repentance.

Finally, people gather in great numbers to begin a holy 40-day season of prayer and renewal. Yet we are reminded that “when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret” (Mt 6:6).

Are we ignoring Jesus’ challenges to attend to the inner life of the soul without being showy? A closer look at both readings will ease some of the apparent conflict.

It is very tempting for me to spend the entire Ash Wednesday homily preaching

on Matthew’s passage about almsgiving, prayer and fasting. After all, they summarize the traditional ways to seek a change of heart and a renewal of spirit through repentance.

Those three Lenten observances are means to an end, not the end itself. That is why it is necessary to remember the prophet Joel’s message. He presents the “what” of the message; Matthew’s words are the “how.”

What Joel calls people to is a complete renewal of heart and spirit. His words are really a rallying cry. Thus the blowing of the trumpet is to awaken people to the need to universally and collectively change their lives.

Many people implicitly understand that Ash Wednesday is a rally of sorts. What will follow in the remainder of Lent is equally important, but people need to be given encouragement and motivation at the start.

That also explains why gathering as a group and not just praying alone is important. We gather with fellow sinners admitting our sinfulness and looking to God’s mercy.

In recent years, I have begun washing off the ashes on my forehead shortly after each Mass. I do this in the spirit of Matthew’s Gospel reading. As I wash, I often pray that my heart will wear this sign of repentance for the next six weeks.



Worshippers pray during an Ash Wednesday Mass at the transitional cathedral in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The historic Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral was destroyed during the 2010 earthquake. The Scripture readings for Mass on Ash Wednesday are a kind of ‘rallying cry’ for conversion. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

At the same time, I know that people need visible and exterior signs, so if the ashes are worn for that day alone, the symbol can be seen, not unlike wearing a cross around one’s neck, as a sign of going beyond the immediate pleasures and gratification of this world.

Again this year we will rally for the beginning of Lent with the Scriptures reminding us of the call to true renewal.

(Father Herbert Weber is the founding pastor of St. John XXIII Parish in Perrysburg, Ohio.) †

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

## Learning about the plight of Christians in the Holy Land

(Second in a series)

Last week, I started to tell you about a trip I took back in 1982 when I led a group of 26 American Catholic journalists



on a fact-finding trip to Jordan, Israel and Egypt. Last week's column was about our meetings in Jordan.

From Jordan, we went to Israel. Our first meetings in Jerusalem were with Archimandrite Loftham, the Greek Catholic Melkite archbishop, and then Archbishop William Carew, the apostolic delegate to Israel, Jordan and Cyprus. Later, we met with Latin Rite Patriarch James Beltritti.

When we were introduced, both Archbishop Carew and Patriarch Beltritti said, "I saw you on Jordanian television." We would hear it again from Jewish officials. Amman and Jerusalem are only 45 miles apart, and it became obvious that both Jews and Arabs in Israel watched Jordanian TV.

All three prelates spoke about the real

ecumenism that exists in the Holy Land among the Christians. They agreed that the biggest task of the Church—then as well as now—is to try to halt the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land. Young people quite naturally want to go where they can have a better life—in the United States, Canada, Australia or South America.

The next day, our group met with Elias Freij, the Christian Palestinian mayor of Bethlehem at the time. Freij showed us on a map how the Israeli government was annexing land in the West Bank to build Jewish settlements. He said that he would be glad to have Israel annex the West Bank if the Arabs would then be given full citizenship, but Israel could not do that because the Arabs would then control the government.

He told us that Israel was not interested in peace, only in the land. He said that Israel was trying to drive out the Palestinians, but "Why should I leave Bethlehem to go to Jordan? I was born here and my family has lived here for 50 years."

While still in Bethlehem, we visited Bethlehem University, one of the results of Pope Paul VI's visit to the Holy Land in 1964. He asked the Christian Brothers to

found a university to train Palestinians so they would not have to leave the Holy Land in order to have a profession. Through the years since then, I learned more about the university and have written about it.

While we were there in 1982, we not only had a tour of the university, but an outstanding lunch prepared by the hotel management course students. In thanking them for the lunch, I said that apparently we were their final examination and, if so, they all deserved an A+.

From Bethlehem University, we went to Tantur. After Pope Paul VI's visit to the Holy Land in 1964, he asked Holy Cross Father Theodore Hesburgh to establish an ecumenical center in the Holy Land. He did, and the University of Notre Dame continues to operate it. This is where I studied for three months in 1997 after my retirement as editor of *The Criterion*.

Next week: Meetings with Jewish officials.

(John Fink's recent series of columns on Church history is now available in book form from Amazon. It is titled *How Could This Church Survive?* with the subtitle, *It must be more than a human institution.*) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

## Let God make your heart whole again this Lent

Over the years, my five sons have been given many toys, games and puzzles that are made up of many parts. Inevitably as



the boys have played with them, the parts have been thrown to the four winds, ending up separated in various parts of our house.

We have a box in our living room where we put the scattered parts when we find them. Look in the box

any time, and you'll see a strange mixture of action figures, puzzle pieces and cards.

Most of the time, they just sit there collecting dust. The boys aren't bothered by the fact that their games or toys have missing parts until they want to play with them as they were intended to. (They're really good at re-purposing toys to a hundred different purposes.)

But sometimes, they want to play "Monopoly Deal" or "Uno" and realize that they're missing several cards of those or other games. So they dig into the box, where there might be cards from half a dozen decks of cards and other card games and assorted toys.

Usually they can find the missing cards, and then the game commences.

Lent can be a time when we search for the scattered pieces of our broken hearts to take them to God. Maybe earlier in our lives, we had convinced ourselves that we were happy despite having a broken heart. But, in the end, we all desire to be whole again.

God can put our hearts together again so that, with a life renewed in his mercy, we can be happy playing all sorts of games with him as his beloved children.

At the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, we hear God telling us through the prophet Joel, "Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning" (Jl 2:12).

God created each one of us with a whole heart. It was filled with his life at the time of our baptism. But in the years that followed, we sinned and our hearts were broken into more and more pieces with each choice to go our own way instead of walking in the path that God had laid out for us.

As we wander on our own, the pieces of our hearts are scattered here and there. When later we want to bring those pieces back to God, we might have to spend time pondering our shortfalls and the causes and implications of them.

Lent can be a good time for that kind of prayerful self-examination.

It is also, in the words of St. Paul from the second reading on Ash Wednesday, "a very acceptable time" and the "day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

That salvation is experienced in a special way during Lent when we come before our merciful God in the sacrament of penance. There we come before him with the various pieces of our broken hearts and he, in his mercy, puts them back together again.

When we leave the confessional, our hearts are whole again and for that we should give thanks, showing our gratitude in part by seeking with the help of God's grace to live a life of greater virtue and avoid sin.

Though God may heal our hearts, they will still be marked by the scars caused by our past sins. Those sins have been forgiven, but their effects in our lives often persist.

If those effects make it easier for us to fall back into our old sinful habits, God will always be there to forgive us and put our hearts back together again, just like Cindy and I help our sons re-assemble parts of their toys and games that have been scattered, only to have them soon lose them again.

Just as we help them find those parts, even for the third or fourth time, God will always forgive us and make our hearts whole again. †

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

## Will we ever find the answer to the Eternal Question?

Sometimes we like to ponder the biggies, like why am I here? Or where did I come from? But I like to think that the biggest question of all for us is, who/what is God?



We tend to think of the biblical times' conception of God as Charlton Heston standing on a mountain, with his hair and robes

flowing in the wind, pointing to Truth. God was fearsome, judgmental and quick to punish humans. It was, after all, a more credulous time because people were largely uneducated and unsophisticated in their reasoning. They could believe what they saw or were told by an authority, and not much else.

Nowadays, we're aware of wind machines and more imaginative depictions of our Creator. Not that we don't fear God today. God is all-powerful and controls our lives, so how could we not? Still, we tend to dwell on God's forgiveness and downplay the wages of sin.

And speaking of that, remember sin? We don't hear much about it anymore,

and certainly not the word "sin" itself. One of my kids was actually offended when I referred to another's action as a sin in the eyes of the Church. Apparently, they call it something else, because it sure does continue to exist.

We can take the touchy-feely interpretation of God too far sometimes. In the current Church-of-What's-Happening-Now theologies, God may be pretty much whatever we'd like God to be. If we just can't bear to give up our favorite (gasp) sin, this God will let it go. Never mind that God gave us free will to choose the right thing which, of course, will always be God's will but not always ours.

Pagans believed in plural gods who were in charge of natural events as well as people's individual lives. Today we think of these folks as making God part of a mythological explanation of our existence. These gods were like the humans who invented them, being sometimes petty, jealous or confused. Luckily, sacrificing a lamb or something could take care of the problem.

No matter what name they give their deity, i.e. Allah, God or the Prime Mover, I think most people worldwide, including the non-religious, think of God as the

original Creator of everything, including all life forms and the natural world.

There is a natural desire within each of us to seek out God personally. It's hard to define, but if we are honest I believe we all have this inner craving. And for Christians, the answer is Jesus Christ. When God sent his own Son to help us journey to heaven, this need was fulfilled.

Others who've not received the Good News may find God in other pathways. Jews, Muslims, Hindus or whatever also long for God. Secular people who believe in and embody what we call Christian virtue do the same. That sneaky Hound of Heaven is always at work.

To me, God has many faces. First, God is the arbiter of my behavior. He is fearsome alright, because God knows my every thought and impulse. I can't get away with anything. But God is also my friend. When I talk, God listens and answers, although not always right away or as I expected.

Best of all, God is various and wonderful in presenting joyous sights, events and people, just for our pleasure should we be open to finding them. God is so many things, and we've only experienced a few! †

Emmaus Walk/Debra Tomaselli

## Oh, say, can you see the emerging beauty? God sees it

I didn't really want to make the little cardboard houses.

I just wanted the glorious end result.



I'm housebound, recovering from cancer treatments, and I need goals. Praying is great. Writing is good. Reading is wonderful, but I need to accomplish something with my hands ... something where I can see the

end result ... something tangible.

So, I remembered the little cardboard houses.

Years ago, when I was a Brownie troop leader, one of the moms made cardboard "gingerbread" houses for the girls to decorate. They were sturdy. They were big. The kids loved it, and so did I.

I'm not crafty, but as my children grew, we shared the idea with their soccer teams, cheerleading teams and neighbors. Someone else would make the cardboard houses, and we'd gather at my home to decorate them. They brought such joy to everyone.

As the kids moved on with their lives, we stopped making them.

But now, with a need for a tangible goal and with lots of grandchildren as my audience, I decided to resurrect the tradition.

That meant I had to build the basic structures, and, oh, what a mess I am at that! Anyway, armed with good reason, I mentally committed to making one house a month. That seemed doable. That felt realistic. And we'd have plenty ready to decorate during the holidays.

I dawdled in January, dreading the actual work of it. Crunch time ... was I going to do this or not?

Finally, I dragged out the scissors, cardboard and tape. I eyeballed the cardboard, cut it, and tried to tape it together.

There were gaping holes. It was a little lopsided. The tape didn't stick very well.

But I persisted. I found better tape. I covered the gaps. I pushed the walls into place.

Finally, I held the finished craft at arm's length. Turning it slowly, I observed every angle. As I studied it, a smile formed on my lips.

I imagined one of my grandchildren selecting this particular house. I pictured her slathering icing over it and carefully choosing colorful candies to decorate it. I heard her laugh. I saw her smile.

I saw my grandson delivering a stunning creation to the residents at my mother-in-law's assisted living facility. I saw him walking through the doors, placing his masterpiece in the gathering room. I saw a slow smile spread across the face of a white-haired gentleman. I saw a woman pushing a walker stop and thank him for the beautiful gingerbread house.

Deep within, a sense of satisfaction arose.

As imperfect as the little cardboard house was, I found myself admiring it. I saw such beauty in it.

Suddenly I wondered: Is this how God sees us?

Sin destroyed his perfect creation. There's pride and self-centeredness. There's laziness and thoughtlessness. We're crooked, lopsided and unstable.

Maybe God holds us in the palm of his hand. He molds us and shapes us, providing direction here, pushing the walls in place there.

Maybe he sees beyond the mess. Maybe he envisions the ultimate beauty and unending joy we were designed to deliver.

And maybe, just maybe, he smiles.

(Debra Tomaselli writes from Altamonte Springs, Florida. She can be reached at [dtomaselli@cfl.rr.com](mailto:dtomaselli@cfl.rr.com).) †

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 26, 2017

- Isaiah 49:14-15
- 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
- Matthew 6:24-34

For its first reading for Mass this weekend, the Church presents a rather short selection from the final part of the Book of Isaiah.



By the time this passage was written, the Jews, long trapped in exile in Babylon, had returned home. The conquest of Babylonia by Persia, and the resulting collapse of the Babylonian empire,

enabled them to go home.

It was a bittersweet return, however, since few of the exiles, if any, were old enough to remember the homeland. Their parents and grandparents surely had told them about it. Everything was good, so they longed to leave Babylon and re-discover pride in their own identity. In a way, they thought that they were going to the Promised Land.

Then the bubble burst when they arrived. The homeland was desolate. Life was miserable.

The prophets had to cope with the people's great disappointment, bewilderment and anger with God.

The reading reasserts God's promise to protect and sustain the chosen people.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians is the source of the second reading. In the first century, Corinth was Sin City—Las Vegas and New York all rolled into one. Converts to Christianity lived in Corinth but, assuming from Paul's two letters to them, they apparently were constantly lured away from the Gospel.

There is evidence that pagans there, not surprisingly, mocked and tantalized the Christians, leading them to ask themselves if living chastely and keeping the quest for material gain in check made any sense at all.

Paul had to fortify faith and resolve.

The third reading, from St. Matthew's Gospel, is part of a rather long discourse given by the Lord to his disciples about life. It is not startling, but simple logic. He says that no one can serve two masters, and true followers must choose to serve God alone.

Probably no time in history, anywhere, for anyone, utterly is without material concern. If it is not the task of making a living, or of maintaining a constant and fulfilling relationship, it is a question of health.

For Jews at the time of Jesus, things extraordinarily were bad. The temptation was to enter a "dog eat dog" world, just to survive. Hanging over everything was the Roman occupation of their homeland, which brought the empire's hedonism, materialism and vicious injustice. The temptation here was to join them if you could not beat them, and no one beat the Romans.

Understandably, the Jews questioned their traditional beliefs. Where was God, their protector, in all this? Whatever did their status as "chosen people" mean?

Many were tempted to answer these questions by saying that God was not there, that being God's people meant nothing.

Jesus is frank in this reading. Not so much condemning the things of the world, certainly not necessities for life, Jesus instead reminds the audience that for genuine disciples only attention to God and to his will suffices.

God must be the only master. Jesus then reassures the disciples. Worry not about incidentals, but be concerned about what is truly important. Judge by God's standards, not by the world's.

## Reflection

In three days, the Church will call us to observe Ash Wednesday and to begin Lent. This ancient season of penance and renewal so identified with the Catholic faith is a liturgical opportunity for every believer to search his or her soul, to reform by rejecting sin, and finally to recommit to the Lord.

In this will be new life, so on Easter, if they have taken advantage of Lent, Christians will experience for themselves a revival of life.

Before any spiritual undertaking in Lent can succeed, we must look at the criteria by which we judge ourselves. Who is our master? If God is not our master, we are foolish. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, February 27

Sirach 17:20-24  
Psalm 32:1-2, 5-7  
Mark 10:17-27

### Tuesday, February 28

Sirach 35:1-12  
Psalm 50:5-8, 14, 23  
Mark 10:28-31

### Wednesday, March 1

Ash Wednesday  
Joel 2:12-18  
Psalm 51:3-6b, 12-14, 17  
2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

### Thursday, March 2

Deuteronomy 30:15-20  
Psalm 1:1-4, 6  
Luke 9:22-25

### Friday, March 3

St. Katharine Drexel, virgin  
Isaiah 58:1-9a  
Psalm 51:3-6a, 18-19  
Matthew 9:14-15

### Saturday, March 4

St. Casimir  
Isaiah 58:9b-14  
Psalm 86:1-6  
Luke 5:27-32

### Sunday, March 5

First Sunday of Lent  
Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7  
Psalm 51:3-6, 12-13, 17  
Romans 5:12-19  
or Romans 5:12, 17-19  
Matthew 4:1-11

## Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

### All believers, even great saints, experience distraction in prayer

**Q**I have heard that it is sinful to let oneself be distracted in prayer. This



makes sense to me as regards prayers that are obligatory: e.g., Sunday Mass, the Divine Office for priests and religious, or the penance assigned during confession.

But what if one is not required to say that prayer in the first place: the morning offering, for example, or weekday Mass? Would it be better not to say those prayers at all, because then there would be no sin?

And at what point do distractions become sinful—when they are intentional of course, but what about a quick thought regarding something I must remember to do when I get home from church?

Also, when I have a weighty decision to make or a stressful situation on my hands, I like to pray the rosary because it seems to help me to think clearly and be calm. But should I not be using that time (in the context of prayer) to think things through? (Nebraska)

**A**Relax, and don't be so tough on yourself. Distractions during prayer are not necessarily sinful—even during prayers that are obligatory. They come to everyone—even to the saints, who have written often about this.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recognizes the universality of the problem, calling distraction "the habitual difficulty in prayer" (#2729).

Purposely to allow one's mind to wander during prayer onto nonspiritual paths would be wrong, and the distracted thought itself might be sinful: dwelling deliberately on thoughts of adulterous pleasure, for example, or thinking vindictive thoughts.

But much more often, the distraction is a neutral one morally—such as in the example you offer of thinking of something you need to do as soon as you get home. When distractions do occur, the strategy is simply to pause, refocus and move forward.

St. Paul of the Cross said, "Concerning distractions and temptations that occur during holy prayer, you don't need to be the least bit disturbed. Withdraw completely into the upper part of your spirit to relate to God."

As for your practice of "thinking things through" while you pray the rosary, I have no problem with that: You are using the soothing backdrop of the repeated words of prayer to commune with the Lord in a meditative way and to seek his guidance.

**Q**I attend a very large Catholic parish that has some 4,000 families and 10,000 parishioners. Would it be appropriate for me to assign my contribution for our archbishop's annual appeal to a nearby smaller parish that I sometimes visit?

Our own parish always exceeds its obligation comfortably, while I suspect that the smaller one is challenged to do so. (Georgia)

**A**I heartily endorse your idea and can speak from my own experience—if that is an option for you in your archdiocese's stewardship appeal. In our diocese—and I suspect this is replicated widely—each parish is given a specific assessment for the annual diocesan appeal. If a parish does not make that figure during the campaign, it supplies the difference from its own parish funds.

But if it exceeds the assigned amount, 50 percent of the excess is rebated to the parish. In the parish from which I recently retired (after 24 years as pastor), parishioners were exceedingly generous and always pledged considerably more than the assessed figure.

More than once, a person who was enrolled in our parish but sometimes attended Mass elsewhere would ask if they could credit their bishops' appeal donation to that other parish, knowing that it was struggling to make its quota.

I always encouraged them to do exactly that; the Church is wider than one's own parish, and blessings should be shared.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at [askfatherdoyle@gmail.com](mailto:askfatherdoyle@gmail.com) and 30 Columbia Circle Dr. Albany, New York 12203.) †

## My Journey to God

### Please Hold My Hand

By Gayle Schrank

Help me Lord,  
to listen to You,  
and to carry out,  
what You desire.  
Strengthen me,  
and open my heart.  
Set my life,  
and soul, afire.  
Your words impart,  
wisdom and glory,  
and You ask us,  
to partake.  
I will drink,  
from This Love,  
so it dwells,  
in me.  
Please Hold My Hand,  
so I shall not forsake.



(Gayle Schrank is a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton. This artwork, the sculpted hands of St. John Paul II, was on display in Philadelphia when the "Vatican Splendors" exhibit was open during the World Meeting of Families and the visit of Pope Francis in September 2015. (CNS photo/Vatican press kit)

## Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The *Criterion* invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the "My Journey to God" column.

Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to "My Journey to God," *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367 or e-mail to [critterion@archindy.org](mailto:critterion@archindy.org). †

# Rest in peace

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

**DUNN, Kelly**, 39, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Jan. 30. Daughter of Robert Dunn. Sister of Angela Sagri. Aunt of several.

**ELBERT, Jean**, 90, St. Joseph, Corydon, Feb. 6. Wife of Lambert Elbert. Mother of Connie Lahue, Cathy McCarty, Mary Ann Wells, Jim, John, Randy, Richard and Steve Elbert. Sister of Isma Simler, Joe and Robert Hurst. Grandmother of 17. Great-grandmother of 27.

**GROVE, Thomas**, 63, Holy Family, New Albany, Feb. 5. Son of Trudy Grove. Brother of Susan Grove-Jennings, Jim, John, Steve and Tim Grove. Uncle of several.

**GUTZWILLER, Audrey A.**, 101, St. Louis, Batesville, Feb. 11. Mother of Roberta Lodi, Marla Vandevier and Mike Gutzwiller. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of nine.

**HALL, Robert**, 65, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Feb. 10. Husband of Barb Hall. Father of Elizabeth Dobrowski and Allison Witmeier. Brother of Mary, Rita, Sharon, Tracie, Bill and Gary. Grandfather of four.

**HEISE, David A.**, 68, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Feb. 8. Husband of Patricia Heise. Father of Shannon Stafford, David and Jonathan Heise. Brother of Linda Alcorn, Eileen Enterline, Mary Beth McQuary, Sherri Poppe, Bill and Scott Heise. Grandfather of six.

**HENDERSON, Lori M.**, 56, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Jan. 31. Mother of Chelsea and

Kaleigh Stachura and Patrick Henderson. Daughter of Martha Caldwell. Sister of Cyndi Kramer and Randall Caldwell.

**JONES, Stanley**, 67, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Feb. 6. Husband of Karen Jones. Father of Emily Hawthorne, Monica Jones and Stan Jones III. Step-father of Becky Schmalz and Chris Deery. Son of Lois Jones. Brother of Betsy Rice and Sara High. Grandfather of three.

**LINDSAY, Wanda M.**, 92, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Feb. 6. Mother of Brad and Gary Lyndsay. Grandmother of two.

**LYNETTE, Della E.**, 86, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Jan. 26. Mother of Larry and Mark Lynette. Sister of Connie Wright. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of nine.

**MAY, James J.**, 91, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 3. Father of Lisa Kolakowski and Charles May. Brother of Bob and Tom May. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of three.

**MARTIS, John G.**, 90, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Feb. 7. Husband of Judy Martis. Father of Linda Heironimus, Lorrie McFadden, Daryl and David Martis. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of several.

**MIKESELL, James**, 79, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Feb. 12. Husband of Janice Mikesell. Father of Douglas Mikesell. Brother of Karen Anderson and George Mikesell. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of four.

**MILLER, Ronald E.**, 80, Holy Family, New Albany, Feb. 6. Father of Shara Augsburg, Julie Killermann, Leslie Lowe, Ronda Stumler, Dawn Wilson and Chris Miller. Brother of Mitzi O'Leary, Diana Witt and Martin Rouck. Grandfather of 17. Great-grandfather of seven.

**NEISWINGER, James D.**, 40, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Jan. 30. Father of Simone Acheson and Patrick Shea. Son of Karen and James D. Neiswinger, Sr. Brother of Elizabeth Neiswinger. Grandson of Bonnie Neiswinger.



## Skiing priest

A priest wearing a cassock takes part in the annual Polish Priests and Clerics Alpine Skiing Championships for the Pope John Paul II Cup in Wisla, Poland. St. John Paul was an avid skier and even hit the slopes occasionally after becoming pope. (CNS photo/Andrzej Grygiel, EPA)

**ODER, Carol K. (Piotroski)**, 75, Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, Feb. 8. Mother of Cherie Schoonover, Michele Wuebbing and Douglas Oder. Sister of Donald Piotroski. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of 14.

**POTTRATZ, F. Thomas**, 81, formerly of St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Feb. 11. Father of Bill, Bryan, David, John, Michael and Scott Pottratz. Brother of Becky Andersen, Angela Lager, Christy Lampert, Dennis, Lloyd and Robert Pottratz. Grandfather of 19. Great-grandfather of four.

**ROSEMAN, Sr., James**, 75, Our Lady of Lourdes, Indianapolis, Jan. 4. Husband of Irene Roseman. Father of Melanie Malone, Marcia Robb, James Jr. and Russell Roseman. Grandfather and

great-grandfather of several.

**SANDERS, Joyce A. (Kunkel)**, 80, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Feb. 8. Mother of Mary Rebrukh, Julie Thomas, Joann Yensel, John, Robert and Stephen Sanders. Grandmother of eight.

**SCHUMACHER, Arvilla M.**, 94, St. Louis, Batesville, Feb. 14. Mother of Victoria Creeger, Sherry Ertel, Amy Gallo, Kris Lindemann, Mary Jon McCaig and Kim Oblinger. Sister of Rita Halman, Betty Lamping, Vera Michalowicz and Eugene Andrews. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of nine.

**SCHUNK, Arthur**, 94, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Feb. 5. Father of Mary Loudon, Arthur, David, Michael and Pete Schunk. Brother of Edward and Millard Schunk. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of six.

**SKILES, Joan E.**, 55, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Feb. 4. Wife of Robbie Skiles. Mother of Theresa King, Bridget and Emily Skiles. Sister of Kathy Abney, Marlene Buntin, Cindy Ortiz, Mary Jo Turner, Janie, Margaret, Charles and John McElfresh. Grandmother of seven.

**SNYDER, Genevieve**, 97, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 6. Sister of Dorothy King, Charlotte Raby, Ruth Ross, James, John and Norman Snyder. Aunt of several.

**SPECK, Floyd L.**, 57, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Feb. 3. Husband of Belinda Speck. Father of Caitlin Speck. Brother of Mary Bishop and Marcia Catterton.

**TROY, Nancy**, 77, Holy Family, New Albany, Feb. 4. Mother of Michelle Koetter. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of three. †

## Franciscan Sister Mary Catherine Eschenbach was a missionary, educator in Indiana

Franciscan Sister Mary Catherine Eschenbach died on Feb. 12 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 93. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 15 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Mary Catherine Eschenbach was born on Feb. 15, 1923, in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of the former St. Catherine of Siena Parish.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1939, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1945.

During 77 years as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Mary Catherine ministered as an educator for 40 years in Catholic schools in Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Ohio. In the archdiocese, she served at St. Louis School in Batesville

from 1941-47, the former St. Francis de Sales School in Indianapolis from 1947-50, St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg from 1961-68, St. Michael the Archangel School (now St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School) in Indianapolis from 1968-81 and at her community's motherhouse in Oldenburg from 1998-2017.

Sister Mary Catherine served from 1983-98 as a missionary to Papua New Guinea. While there, she helped a new native community of Franciscan women religious, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, taught at a parish grade school and a teacher's college, and ministered at two seminaries.

She is survived by two sisters, Leanore Cox and Angela Kriese, both of Indianapolis.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

## Josephine Gottemoeller, mother of Father Mark Gottemoeller, died on Feb. 14

Josephine (Hansing) Gottemoeller, the mother of retired Father Mark Gottemoeller, died on Feb. 14. She was 90.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 21 at St. Roch Church in Indianapolis. Burial followed at Calvary Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Gottemoeller was born on July 9, 1926, in Indianapolis. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and education at Marian University in Indianapolis, and a master's degree in education at Butler University in Indianapolis.

She served as an elementary school teacher for 34 years in schools in Indianapolis,

including at St. Jude School, St. Roch School and various Indianapolis Public Schools.

A member of St. Jude Parish, Gottemoeller served in the past as a lector and extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

She was preceded in death by her husband Walter Gottemoeller, and her sister, Florence Kuntz, and is survived by her daughter Christine Dittman, her son Father Mark Gottemoeller, and three grandchildren.

Memorial gifts may be sent to Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577, or to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation at [give.bcrf.org](http://give.bcrf.org). †

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# Rallies held nationwide call on Congress to defund Planned Parenthood

CHICAGO (CNS)—The organizers of rallies held across the country on Feb. 11 to call for the federal defunding of Planned Parenthood said their message to Congress is to redirect taxpayer's money to facilities that "do a better job meeting the real health care needs of women and families without specializing in abortion."

More than 15,000 people attended 229 rallies held in 45 states. Average attendance was around 75, but in some cities, crowds numbered as high as 600, according to a new release issued after the rallies. Approximately 250

people attended a Feb. 11 rally outside the Planned Parenthood abortion center in Indianapolis.

Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago, was the national organizer of the rallies, or #ProtestPP. Other groups coordinating the events included Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, Created Equal, 40 Days for Life and the Susan B. Anthony List.

"This is a nationwide event, but at the same time, it is a local community concern," Schiedler said in a statement. In rallying to tell "Congress to quit sending money to an organization that specializes in killing children," participants also declared "that they do not want Planned Parenthood to continue operating in their neighborhoods."

According to its 2014-15 annual

report, Planned Parenthood receives \$553.7 million annually in government health service grants and reimbursements, which is 43 percent of its overall revenue. Federal money is allocated to the organization through Medicaid and public family planning services. Planned Parenthood performs 34 percent of U.S. abortions.

"Not a single cent of American tax dollars should go to an organization that kills innocent human life," said Monica Migliorino Miller, director of Citizens for a Pro-Life Society.

During this year's March for Life, held on Jan. 27, Vice President Mike Pence told the crowd that the Trump administration would work with Congress to stop taxpayer funding of abortion "and devote those resources to health care

services for women across America."

On Jan. 24, the House passed the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act, making the 41-year-old Hyde Amendment permanent. The amendment, which has had to be approved each year as part of the budget for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, prohibits tax dollars from paying for abortion except in cases of rape, incest or threat to the woman's life. The Senate has yet to act on a companion bill, but President Donald Trump has said he will sign it into law when the measure reaches his desk.

On Jan. 23, Trump took executive action to reinstate what's called the Mexico City Policy, which bans tax dollars from funding groups that promote or perform abortion in other countries. †

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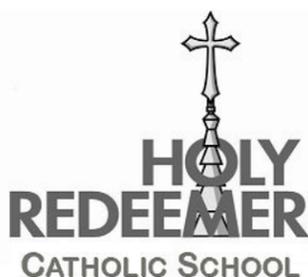
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Application deadline: March 10, 2017



#### Announcement of Vacancy Principal of Saint Boniface Catholic Grade School

Edwardsville, IL

Saint Boniface Catholic Grade School, located in Edwardsville, Illinois, is seeking applicants for the position of Principal. Interested religious or lay applicants should possess a Master's Degree in Educational Administration, teaching experience and preferably administrative experience.

Candidates can find more information and application instructions by visiting [www.st-boniface.com](http://www.st-boniface.com). The application deadline is March 15, 2017. The duties of this position begin July 1, 2017.



#### Announcement of Vacancy Principal of Father McGivney Catholic High School

Glen Carbon, IL

Father McGivney Catholic High School, located in Glen Carbon, Illinois, is seeking applicants for the position of Principal. Interested applicants should possess a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and five years of classroom teaching experience.

Candidates can find more information and application instructions by visiting [www.McGivneyGriffins.com/principal-search](http://www.McGivneyGriffins.com/principal-search). The application deadline is March 1, 2017. The duties of this position begin July 1, 2017.

#### Full-Time Associate Coordinator of Youth Ministry Position Available

The Terre Haute Catholic Community is seeking a full-time Associate Coordinator of Youth Ministry to work collaboratively with the Coordinator of Youth Ministry to facilitate a Total Youth Ministry program for the five city parishes of Terre Haute, Indiana for Grades 9-12. This includes, but is not limited to: religious education and Confirmation programs, retreats and prayer services, mission trips, service projects, leadership development of students and volunteers, and fundraising.

Applicant should be a practicing Catholic and possess a love for and knowledge of the Catholic faith, as well as a strong commitment to the faith development of young people. The applicant must have the ability to organize, collaborate with coordinator, work well with volunteers, exhibit good leadership skills, creativity and initiative. Professional work ethic and excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, are essential. Bachelor's Degree and Youth Ministry programming experience preferred. Possession of a Youth Ministry Certificate or the willingness to obtain one is essential. Some overnight travel, frequent evening and weekend work is required.

Direct Inquiries by March 17, 2017 to:

Barbara Black  
Youth Ministry Supervisor  
2322 N 13 1/2 St., Terre Haute, IN 47804  
812-466-1231 • barb@shjth.org

# GRANT

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Becht said the key to renewing the Church's ministry to and with young adults is to go out to where they are instead of "waiting for them to come where we are."



Tammy Becht

"Our idea is to go ... to be with them in their world and ask what their needs are," she said. "How do they meet their need for belonging? How do they meet their need to come together as a Christian community? If they're not coming to church, how are they meeting that need?"

Saint Meinrad plans on working over the next five years with 12 to 15 parishes within a 250-300 mile-wide radius of the southern Indiana seminary.

Each parish participating in the program will assess itself in regard to young adults, and seek to learn about this population group that is already within it and those who live in its vicinity but are not connected to the parish.

The parish would then build up a core group of volunteer ministry leaders who would receive training from Saint Meinrad to effectively reach out to young adult Catholics in the broader community and help them build up their faith.

A key way that the Saint Meinrad program will promote this is through the encouragement of an intentional life of faith and prayer in the young adults' life at home.

Becht says Saint Meinrad is well positioned to take this approach to young adult ministry because its monastic and seminary communities do this themselves every day on "the hill" on which they live in southern Indiana.

"It's the rhythm that takes place every day on the hill—prayer, work, common meals," she said. "The living out of the Christian life that takes place on the hill is a model for the rest of the Church."

One way that Saint Meinrad will foster a life of prayer and rituals at home for young adults is through the development of a prayer book for them.

"We hope to use it as a resource book for young people in creating their Catholic Christian home," Becht said. "We hope to help them consider how, when, and whom to invite into their domestic church as they discern [their] vocation. In turn, the domestic Church supports the parish via interaction, connection, support and engagement."

Father Denis said helping young adults build up faith rituals in their daily life can be a way to connect them to parishes.

"The parish is an essential place for the program to gain life," he said. "And so our hope is that the domestic rituals being practiced through the program lead our participants to a more fruitful, deeper appreciation of the liturgical life of the parish."

St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus may be one of the faith communities that Saint Meinrad will work with through this program.

Father Andrew Syberg, St. Bartholomew's associate pastor, said his parish has young adults among its members, but also



Fr. Andrew Syberg

acknowledges that the broader Columbus community has many Catholics in their 20s and 30s who are not practicing their faith.

"There are tons of young families, tons of kids here," he said. "But then there are a lot of young adults who are single

and still doing their discernment. We have to do something. I don't want to lose these people."

St. Bartholomew, Father Syberg said, offers young adults service opportunities, times of prayer and eucharistic adoration, and the chance to help with its youth group.

"At this point, you're throwing whatever you can out there and seeing what sticks to the wall," he said.

Although it can be challenging to reach out to young adult Catholics in the broader community, Father Syberg said that they can play a vital role in the Church once they become engaged with their faith.

"When you can convince them and they get on board, there are few groups

and of our longing to do better."

"This practice is particularly attractive to us today because it is an embodied way to live out faith, to witness to Christian identity in the world," said Timothy O'Malley, director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame, where he also is a professor of New Testament and early Christianity.



Luke Messmer leads a procession of youths into the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad for a reconciliation service on June 17, 2015. The procession and service were part of One Bread One Cup, a youth liturgical leadership conference of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. The seminary recently received a \$1.38 million grant from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment, Inc., to help parishes minister more effectively to young adult Catholics. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

of people who will become more on fire for the faith than young adults will," he said. "The idea is to reclaim that identity that, for a young adult, can very easily get lost in the discordant battling of the world."

Becht said that a main purpose of Saint Meinrad's program will be to help parishes regularly re-examine and adjust their outreach to young adults to make it more effective.

"They have to constantly have a finger on the pulse [of young adults], know what is happening in the young adult community, and respond to their needs," she said. "It's not about expecting people

to come to the Church and do what the Church does. The Church needs to respond to the needs of the people."

"Helping our young adults navigate this world through the lens of faith is becoming more important with each passing week," Father Syberg said. "It is a most worthy conversation to have."

(Faith communities interested in learning more about Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology's program to help parishes reach out to young adult Catholics can contact Tammy Becht at 812-357-6349 or at [tbecht@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:tbecht@saintmeinrad.edu).) †

# ASH

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He also said the day—which is the start of Lent in the Latin Church—reminds people that they are not always who they should be, and it is a chance to "stand together with people and be reminded of our frailty and brokenness

of identity" as Catholics. He said that's the only way to explain why millions of people identify themselves "as mortal sinners for an entire day."

Jesuit Father Bruce Morrill, the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tenn., thinks the appeal of Ash Wednesday is partly because participants receive a "marker

The day also has rich symbolism, he said, of both flawed humanity and mortality. He pointed out that even though a large percentage of Catholics do not go to confession, they will attend this very penitential service because they "get a sense of repentance and a kind of solidarity in it."

"Clearly it touches on a deep sense of Catholic tradition in a way few other symbols do," he said.

For many, it also links them to the childhood tradition of getting ashes and, even if they are unaware of its origins, to an ancient Church tradition.

The priest said the use of ashes goes back to Old Testament times when sackcloth and ashes were worn as signs of penance. The Church incorporated this practice in the eighth century when those who committed grave sins known to the public had to do public penitence by being sprinkled with ashes. But later in the Middle Ages, the practice of penance and marking of ashes became something for the whole Church.

Ash Wednesday also is one of two days, along with Good Friday, that are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholic adults—meaning no eating meat and eating only one full meal and two smaller meals.

The other key aspect of the day is that it is the start of the 40 days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving of Lent.

"Ash Wednesday can be a little bit like New Year's Day," noted Father Mike Schmitz, chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministries at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He said the day gives Catholics "a place to clearly begin something new that we know we need to do." †

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