Clericalism is ugly perversion, pope tells seminarians

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Priests must always keep in mind that their mission is to serve others and not claim superiority over the people entrusted to their care, Pope Francis said.

Meeting with seminarians from the North American University of Agnus Dei in Rome on Nov. 24, the pope told them that priests must never forget their roots and that God chose them from among the people to serve.

“Clericalism, my dear ones, is our ugliest perversion. The Lord wants you to be shepherds; shepherds of the people, not clerics of the state,” he said.

Choosing to set aside his prepared speech and speak off-the-cuff with the group, the pope said priests are urged by the Holy Spirit to go out in mission and spread the word of God. However, priests must avoid the danger of “going out, not to bring a message, but to ‘go for a walk’” on their own without any direction.

For this reason, he added, priests must be in communion and constant dialogue with their bishops who are there to help them discern the right path.

“The bishop doesn’t just assign a task—take care of this parish—as if he were the head of bank that assigns tasks to employees. No. It is a bishop, a master, but rather a ‘father who helps them to grow’ and prepare them for the mission, he said.

“The more the bishop knows the priest, the less danger there will be of making mistakes in the mission he will give him,” the pope said.

“Can’t you be a good priest without a filial dialogue with the bishop? This is a non-negotiable thing, as some like to say,” the pope said.

Bishops should also take the time to know their priests and not act like “the owner of a company.”

“Clericalism is ugly perversion. The Lord wants you to be servants of the people to serve,” the pope said.

Cardinal Cupich

Pope Francis named Organizing Committee for Worldwide Abuse Conference in February

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis named U.S. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago to be part of the organizing committee preparing for a meeting of the world’s bishops’ conferences and representatives of religious orders to address the abuse and protection of minors.

The Feb. 21-24 Vatican meeting is not only “about keeping children safe from harm worldwide,” said Greg Burke, head of the Vatican press office, in a written statement on Nov. 23.

“It is a critical moment for the universal Church in addressing the sexual abuse crisis,” Cardinal O’Malley said, and the February meeting “will be an important occasion for developing a clear path forward for dioceses around the world.”

“We must continue to embrace and practice a commitment to zero tolerance, work for greater transparency, including the release of names of clergy accused of abuse, and encourage all religious orders to adopt a similar policy and cooperate with civil and legal authorities. Above all else, we must place the support and pastoral care of survivors first,” he said in a written statement on Nov. 23.

Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley
Para todas las diócesis de Estados Unidos, en un comunicado, se pide que se implementen medidas para prevenir futuros casos de abuso sexual.

El Papa Francisco, durante una reunión con una delegación de la Comisión para la Protección de la Niñez, pidió que los obispos y demás autoridades eclesiásticas se comprometan a tomar medidas eficaces para prevenir futuros casos de abuso sexual.

En su discurso, el Papa Francisco se dirigió a los obispos y otros líderes eclesiásticos, diciéndoles que son responsables de proteger a los niños y adolescentes de la Iglesia.

"Somos responsables de proteger a los niños y adolescentes de la Iglesia, de nuestros propios santuarios y escuelas, y de nuestra propia vida sacerdotal", dijo el Papa Francisco.

El Papa Francisco pidió que se realicen cambios significativos en la forma en que se manejan los casos de abuso sexual en la Iglesia, y que se establezcan medidas más estrictas para prevenir futuros casos.

En el comunicado, se pide que se impulse la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas, y que se establezcan nuevas normas para la selección y formación de los sacerdotes.

"Tenemos que proteger a nuestros niños y adolescentes, y eso implica cambiar la forma en que nosotros mismos nos relacionamos", señaló el Papa Francisco.

El comunicado también expresa la preocupación del Papa Francisco por el abuso sexual que ha ocurrido en el pasado, y pide que se eviten futuros casos.

"Estamos trabajando para prevenir el abuso sexual, pero también estamos trabajando para ayudar a los menores de edad que han sido afectados por este tipo de maltrato", dijo el Papa Francisco.

El comunicado finaliza con una petición a todos los miembros de la Iglesia, incluidos los obispos, para que se comprometan a tomar medidas para prevenir futuros casos de abuso sexual.

"Tenemos que proteger a nuestros menores de edad, y eso implica un cambio importante en nuestra vida sacerdotal y en nuestra vida de líderes eclesiásticos", concluye el Papa Francisco.
Migrant advocates have mixed reaction to Tijuana border events

MEXICO CITY (CNS)—The chaotic scene in Tijuana on Nov. 25—when migrants, including women and children, were repelled from the U.S. border with tear gas—prompted the closure of one of the world’s busiest border crossings. It upended the increasing impatience and despair of thousands of caravan participants, who could spend months in an uncomfortable camp as they wait to present asylum claims to U.S. officials.

And while some Catholic migrant advocates criticized U.S. reaction as excessive, some who work with migrants through a network of shelters stretching the length of the country said they tried warning the caravan participants and a migrant advocacy group accompanying it, Pueblos Sin Fronteras, that—unlike past years, when smaller caravans would cross Mexico—times had changed. Resources for sustaining thousands of migrants in Tijuana are stretched thin, and the current U.S. government has shown few signs of speeding up the process for accepting asylum applications.

Press reports from Tijuana described a peaceful protest, in which the migrants planned to present their case: that they had come only to work and save their own lives. But the protest was halted by a wall of Mexican police officers, prompting the migrants to detour the barricade and head to a U.S. border crossing.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a tweet that some migrants “threw projectiles.” In response, “Border Patrol agents deployed tear gas to disperse the group because of the risk to agents’ safety.” Several agents were hit by the projectiles.

The caravan has crossed closed borders and pushed past police barricades since leaving Mexico City for Tijuana.

Father Solalinde has refused to accompany migrants farther north than Mexico City, saying the road poses risks such as kidnapping. He recounted how one group of migrants, who were evangelicals, told him God would take care of us, and “touch the heart” of President Donald J. Trump.

“They truly thought that God was going to move the heart of this person, but no! no! no! It wasn’t like that,” Father Solalinde said. He added that some in that group of 250 migrants had gone missing since setting out from Mexico City for Tijuana.

“They wouldn’t take into account the current political climate, the [Dec. 1 presidential] transition in Mexico, the bad organization that they had, because they didn’t see the opportunity for people to help them,” Father Solalinde said, speaking to the haste of many to rush to the border and not fully consider the opportunity to work in Mexico or apply for asylum there.

“These are difficult times [but] it’s as if they have this chip, ‘They have to go north,’ and they think that it was going to be the same as the previous times, but it’s not like that.”

The Mexican government said in a Nov. 25 statement it had detained 98 migrants who were involved in scuffles with police and tried to cross the border at Tijuana.

It added more than 7,400 migrants from various caravans were currently in the border state of Baja California, while 11,000 migrants had been repatriated or deported to Central America since Oct. 19.

The Washington Post reported on Nov. 24 the United States and Mexico’s incoming government had reached an agreement known as “Remain in Mexico,” in which asylum seekers would wait south of the border while their cases are processed in U.S. courts. Incoming Mexican Interior Minister Olga Sanchez Cordero later denied the story, but did not disavow her comments to the Post confirming a deal.

She also denied Mexico would become a “safe third” country, which would mean migrants in Mexico would be considered to have already found safety.

In effect, “Remain in Mexico is the configuration of Mexico as a safe third country,” said Andrade.
**Making Sense of Bioethics**/Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

**Abortion funding: Cutting off the blood supply**

Americans have long been disturbed by the fraud and waste that often surrounds the federal government’s use of their tax dollars. They now have further reason to be up in arms because of the way those tax dollars support the practice of abortion, even though such support, technically speaking, remains illegal.

The 1976 Hyde Amendment, a rider attached by Congress to federal spending bills each year, states that federal tax dollars—particularly for Medicaid—cannot be used to pay for abortions. Yet, approximately half a billion dollars of taxpayer money is recycled annually by Planned Parenthood, the largest provider of “pregnancy terminations” in the United States.

Although Planned Parenthood does not directly receive Medicaid reimbursements for the abortion procedures it performs, the inherent ability of its “outside” funds means that any money provided to Planned Parenthood ends up supporting and indirectly financing their primary business, which is elective abortion. Taxpayer funding prop up the nation’s largest abortion chain, with more than 300,000 abortions carried out under the auspices of Planned Parenthood each year.

Many Americans object to taxpayer subsidies for this organization, seeking to avoid any cooperation or involvement in the serious evils it promotes. This is why pro-life Americans and individuals of conscience are urging that the organization be defunded, to put a stop to the de facto circumventing of the Hyde Amendment that happens every time Planned Parenthood takes advantage of some form of government funding.

Yet Planned Parenthood continues to expand like a cancer not only in the U.S., but also globally. As cancer tumors need blood and oxygen for their continued growth, Planned Parenthood requires a lifeline of government and taxpayer support to sustain its killing activities. As cancer tumors release special chemicals to make new blood vessels sprout nearby to nourish themselves, so Planned Parenthood continues to tap into a number of federal and state governmental funding sources, including Medicaid and grants from Title X of the Public Health Services Act.

Eliminating this financial lifeline would significantly decrease the availability of direct abortion and diminish its promotion, much as using selective pharmaceuticals to shut down the growth of new blood vessels in tumors can starve them of their lifestyle so they wither away.

In its March 2014 “Moving Forward: Family Planning in the Era of Health Reform” report, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which funds a research arm of Planned Parenthood, plainly acknowledged the importance of governmental subsidies: “Because Title X grants offer up-front funding to providers [rather than payment after-the-fact, as with Medicaid or private insurance], the program provides essential infrastructure support that allows health centers providing family planning services to keep their doors open for clients. Up-front funding also supply a cash-flow cushion for providers.”

Despite their “health care provider” veneer, Planned Parenthood is much more of a menace than a benefit to the health and well-being of Americans. The organization has faced a string of scandals, ranging from the sale of baby body parts to overbilling and unsanitary clinic conditions—of cover ups of sexual abuse of minors to botched abortions; from falsified medical information to LGBT activism; and the promotion of offensive forms of sex education to impressionable children.

As Representative Diane Black notes, “Planned Parenthood is both the largest abortion provider in America and the largest recipient of Title X dollars. While Title X grants are intended to fund critical women’s health services for low-income Americans, Planned Parenthood misuses taxpayer dollars to [subsidize] its abortion services. … Abortion is not health care. It destroys one life and damages another.”

The United States needs to eliminate the financial lifeline of Planned Parenthood by halting the taxation of abortion dollars. Planned Parenthood supporters, however, argue that if this were to happen, low-income women would not be able to get needed health care.

Yet federally qualified health centers (community health centers) could be encouraged to take up the slack. They receive broad government funding and offer care regardless of the patient’s ability to pay, making available an even broader array of primary care services than Planned Parenthood does, so women would actually have more health care choices and options.

Also, there are many more community health centers than Planned Parenthood clinics nationwide.

Jamie Hall and Roger Severino of the Department of Health and Human Services have further reason to take this step: “To ensure that taxpayers are not forced to subsidize America’s number one abortion provider, it would make sense for Planned Parenthood affiliates ineligible to receive either Medicaid reimbursements or Title X grants if they continue to perform abortions. Taxpayer money from these programs should instead be redirected to the nearly 9,000 federally qualified clinic health centers throughout the country that provide comprehensive primary health care for those in need without entanglement in abortion.”

(Edward Taddeo, Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience at Yale University and did post-doctoral work at Harvard University. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center at the University of Pennsylvania. See www.ncbcenter.org.)

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**Letter to the Editor**

**Reader is appreciative of retiring columnist’s wit, wisdom and humor**

I was so sorry to read of Cynthia Dewey retiring from writing her weekly column “Cornucopia” in The Criterion. I will miss her wit, wisdom and humor, but life has taught me to be grateful for the times you had, not ungrateful for the times you didn’t, so I wish her well!

Also Cynthia, just know here is another reader that will be praying for your situation:

St. Lucy, hear our prayers!

Sonny Shanks

Corydon
Esperamos jubilosos a aquel que nos trae la Buena Nueva

“Ya que todo el que invoca el nombre del Señor se salvará. Pero, ¿cómo invocaría sin creer en él? y, ¿cómo creer, sin haber oído hablar de él? y, ¿cómo oír hablar de él, si nadie lo predicara? y, ¿quién predicaría, si no os lo envía? Como dice la Escritura: ‘¿Quién hermosos son los pueblos que anuncian buenas noticias?’ (Rom 10:13-15)

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el 30 de noviembre, la festividad de San Andrés Apóstol. Andrés era hermano de Simón Pedro y, al igual que su hermano, Jesús lo llamó para que lo dejara todo y lo siguiera. Como todos los judíos devotos, Andrés y su hermano Simón esperaban a aquel que redimiría al pueblo de Israel del yugo de los romanos. Esperaban a un salvador, a alguien que traería la nueva buena de su liberación de la gravedad social, político y religioso impuesto en ellos por el régimen de su época. El hermano de Andrés, Simón, y Andrés eran judíos devotos. Como todos los judíos devotos en la época de los apóstoles, eran fervientes seguidores de las Sagradas Escrituras, y en este caso, deseaban ver cumplida la profecía que habían leído en las Escrituras de que el Mesías venía a libertar a su pueblo. Las expresiones como “la nueva buena de su liberación de la gravedad social, político y religioso” y “la nueva buena de su liberación de la gravedad social, político y religioso impuesto en ellos por el régimen de su época” son ejemplos de la forma en que los judíos consideraron su liberación como una nueva buena, una oportunidad para una vida mejor.

En la época de los apóstoles, la esperanza de un salvador que traería la nueva buena de su liberación de la gravedad social, político y religioso era un tema común. Los judíos devotos esperaban que este salvador traería la nueva buena de su liberación de la gravedad social, político y religioso impuesto en ellos por el régimen de su época. La profecía de que el Mesías venía a libertar a su pueblo era un tema común en las Sagradas Escrituras, y los judíos devotos esperaban verla cumplida.

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Events Calendar

December 4
Mission 27 Resale, 132 Leota St., Indianapolis. Senior Discount Day, every Tuesday, seniors get 30 percent off all purchases. 9 a.m.-6 p.m., ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry and Changing Lives forever program. Information: 317-687-8260.

December 5
St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 4625 N. Kenwood, Indianapolis. Advent Evening of Prayer and Teaching, featuring Benedictine Sister Mary Margaret Funk, author of Renouncing Violence, and cellist Adriana Continò. 7 p.m., reception to follow in the Bethany Room. Information: Karla Hudecek, 317-253-1461, ext. 229, kludecek@stmarysindy.org.

December 7
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 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available for $30. Information: 317-888-2861 or info@greenwoodcatholic.org.

December 9
St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. First Friday Charismatic Renewal Praise and Mass, 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Information: 317-408-5381.

December 10

December 13

December 14

December 22
22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Praying with the Seasons: Winter Blessings, Sisters of Charity Mary Demady presenting, 10 a.m.-noon, $15. Information and registration: 812-923-8817, montysisters.org/registration.

December 23
Benedictine Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Archdiocese of Indianapolis Daily Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis on Dec. 8. The day begins at 9 a.m. and concludes with Mass at 3:45 p.m.

December 9-13
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 280 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Parish Mission, presented by Fathers of Mercy Apostolate Louis Guadalupe, 7-9 p.m. each evening. Information: 317-636-4478, pray@holysrosariesforyou.net.

December 11
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Monthly Taizé Service, there that One Might Be, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 812-535-2952, psvatc@spu.edu.

December 12
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 1301 E. 12th St., Indianapolis. Class of ’63 monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6196.

December 13
Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., in Mt. St. Francis, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Dec. 15.

December 19
St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mckinley Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy; 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m. Information: 317- 244-9002.

December 20

December 22
St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus. 13th Annual Concert Series: Louis Morell, Passion, featuring Hot Horns, 7 p.m., freewill offering. Complete list of all concerts: www.sunbathランド.org (click on Music Ministry or lrmin@indy.net).

December 23
Annunciation Parish, 19 N. Alabama St., South Bend. Lessons and Carols service will be presented by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) SEEK 2019. Encounter Something New. More conference in Indianapolis on Jan. 3-7 have a special opportunity to join others from central and southern Indiana in small group discussions. When registering for the conference, which will be held at the Indiana Convention Center, 100 S. Capitol Ave., in Indianapolis, go to “Ambassador Group,” then select the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Lifelong Learners group from the drop-down menu.

Opportunity for SEEK2019 attendees to meet with others from archdiocese

The small group discussions will be facilitated by staff from the archdiocesan Office for Pastoral Ministries. A discount in the form of a small, partial refund is possible for SEEK2019 attendees who register to attend the conference as part of this group. The registration link, conference schedule, speaker list and lodging options can be found at seek2019.com. For additional information about the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Lifelong Learners group, contact Ken Ogorzek by calling 317-271-7264 or emailing kogorek@archindy.org.

Longest Night Service to be held at Saint Meinrad on Dec. 15

Abby Caskets, a ministry of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, will host a Service of the Longest Night at the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Chapel, 200 Hill Dr., in St. Meinrad, at 6 p.m. CT on Dec. 15. Benedictine Father Adrian Burke will lead the service, which will include prayer, Scripture and music that acknowledge those who mourn and struggle with loss during the Christmas season.

Everyone is welcome.

Light refreshments will follow.

Reservations are required by e-mailing info@abbycaskets.com or by calling 800-498-4500.

Parking is available in the Guest House parking lot.

Advent Lessons and Carols services offered in St. Meinrad on Dec. 9 and Brazil on Dec. 14

Two opportunities to attend Advent Lessons and Carols services are available in the archdiocese in early and mid-December.

The first titled “From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation,” will occur in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Dr., from 7:30-8 p.m. CT on Dec. 9. A reception will follow in the Heritage Gallery on the first floor of St. Gregory Hall. The event is free and open to the public.

The second titled “Regroup, Renew and Refresh” is presented by Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality on Dec. 15. Re"group, Renew and Refresh" is the theme of an intergenerational gathering planned at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., in Mt. St. Francis, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Dec. 15.

This is a family friendly event with activities for adults and children, Mass and lunch.

The cost to attend is $25 per person or $50 for couples and families.

Registration is requested online at mountstfrancis.org/registration or by calling 812-923-8817.

Beverly Ann Stewart, and will include Holy Rosary, simple music, silence.

The Black Catholic Women’s Advent Day of Reflection scheduled for Dec. 8

The Black Catholic Women’s Advent Day of Reflection, sponsored by the Black Catholic Ministry of the archdiocesan Intercultural Office, will take place at Our Lady of Guadalupe Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis on Dec. 8. The day begins at 9 a.m. and concludes with Mass at 3:45 p.m.

The theme of this year’s day of reflection is “Unveiling the Power of Women.” The day will be led by Beverly Ann Stewart, who will lead the service, the prayer of the rosary and lunch. The day will be celebrated by Society of the Holy Child Jesus and Father Church of Truth.

The cost $25. Pre-registration is requested by Dec. 5 at hlv@2QHM1y. Information: 317-788-7581 or by calling 800-498-4500.

Parking is available in the Guest House parking lot.


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Advent gathering planned at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality on Dec. 15

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Glemkowski translated love into a concrete calling: our vocations are founded upon the discovery of freedom, hope and joy sourced from God’s truth. Equipped with powerful tools for Christian renewal, we introduce restoration into a world that desperately craves real love.

Glemkowski proposed a question: “Do we care more about avoiding the awkwardness of evangelization than we do about loving our neighbors?”

It was in that moment that I realized for the first time my selfishness in keeping Jesus to myself because of my own pride, manifested in avoiding the awkwardness of approaching the topic with others and in not wanting to “impose” on others by proclaiming the Gospel. He reminded the participants of the difference faith is supposed to make in our lives. I know that I am better off because of my relationship with Christ, why should I hide others from knowing Jesus like I do?

Father Riebe discussed a non-Catholic neighbor who simply desired an opportunity to hear about and be invited into the faith. In each of their shared experiences, there was expressed remorse and regret in not providing that opportunity sooner.

Father Riebe discussed a non-Catholic neighbor who simply desired an invitation to Mass—only an invitation! This neighbor had for years witnessed the Riebe family’s weekly departure for Sunday morning Mass, and she longed to be invited too. It was not until she approached her final days that she asked to be received into the Church, telling Father Riebe of her long-ago secret desire for a welcome.

I often struggle with the notion that people are simply turned off by the Gospel, but that is a lie on my own part. We can definitively pinpoint the desire to know and to love Christ in each of our hearts, despite the drive of the evil one to keep our witness confined inside.

We as the Catholic Church remember the souls of the faithful departed each November. Only weeks ago, I traveled home for the funeral of a close uncle. While I still needed to grieve over the loss, I did not despair because of my hope in the resurrection. I have hope that Christ will keep true to his promise, that if we live a life committed to faith in him, by his grace we will be counted among the saints.

While I am continuing to pray for my uncle, in the meantime I can assure you that he lived a life of discipleship to our Lord. He suffered immensely in the weeks before his death, but he radiated joy, knowing that he ran his race in faith. In his life on Earth, my uncle was better off because of his relationship with Christ. Because he lived a life committed to our Lord, I pray and hope that he is rejoicing among the saints in heaven.

Reflecting on his life, I saw that my uncle had heard and shared the Good News in word and in deed, followed the footsteps of Christ, and maintained joy in the Christian faith, despite his suffering.

And so we circle back to the question: Do we love enough? Do we love enough to challenge the fear of awkwardness to share the Good News? Do we love enough to share the hope and joy found in Christ? Do we love enough to invite our neighbors, family and friends into the life of the Blessed Trinity? Do we love enough to evangelize?

And if we when forget, let us remember the very call of Christ: to love God and our neighbor.

As we close this month of All Souls, let us continue to pray for those who have gone before us. But at the same time, let us proclaim the Good News to the living. Let us continue to foster a place of encounter with Christ Jesus, our Savior!

(Theresa Inoue is an Echo Apprentice in the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. She can be reached at this address: tinoue@archindy.org)
Christmas video and door-to-door outreach capture heart of parish evangelization efforts: We welcome you

By John Shaughnessy

With the Advent and Christmas seasons approaching, Jonathan Helt wanted to create a special message to entice non-Christians and fallen-away Catholics to come to his parish church at this time of year. So the 37-year-old father of four put together a one-minute video for his parish that features “O Come, All Ye Faithful” playing as the following message is heard:

“This Christmas Season
Come Home
To Jesus
And His Church.
We Welcome You
With Open Arms
And Open Hearts.
Come Home
To the Catholic Church.”

The video ends with an image of Helt’s home church in the Terre Haute Deanery—Sacred Heart in Clinton. The closing image also provides the parish’s address and phone number.

“It will be worth it if it brings even just one person into a relationship with Christ,” Helt says. “I want as many people in his Church—that he founded—to know the peace and love that he offers.”

Helt’s video is just one way that he and other individuals and groups in parishes across the archdiocese are making grassroots efforts of evangelization—hoping to bring more people into the Catholic faith.

Helt is also working to start a parish evangelization team at all times.

“Initially, what I’d like to have is for the existing parishioners to have more fellowship. Then I’d like to extend it to fallen-away Catholics. And as you see the love of our parish spreading outward, maybe it will draw new Christians and Protestants to that light and that love. I urge other parishes to do the same.”

“I want people to know Jesus”

If evangelizing sounds frightening to you or out of your comfort zone, then Gwen O’Connor understands that feeling. “It’s a little scary for me because I’m not good at making proselytizing statements,” O’Connor, a member of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis.

She and four other people from the parish have been going door-to-door in the neighborhood around the church, inviting people to Mass and different parish events.

“We’ve gone out about eight times on a Sunday afternoon within the past year,” she says. “We go in pairs when we can. We’ll knock on the door to introduce ourselves, tell them we’re from St. Philip’s down the street, and ask them if they have a church home.”

“People often say that they have a list of parish activities and the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization’s card ‘Catholic Faith, 10 Things We Want You to Know.’ Sometimes, they also offer small crucifixes.”

“People really like that,” O’Connor says. “It’s a symbol of who we are.

“People are mostly friendly. Sometimes, we get into a conversation. And we come across some sad situations at times. Sometimes, we ask if we could pray for them or something in the family. When we’re done, we pray for them in the church.”

As far as she knows, no one has come to the church because of their efforts, but that hasn’t stopped their group.

“Only God can get their hearts,” O’Connor says. “We just keep doing what we’re doing and letting them know we are there. I want people to know Jesus. That’s the most important thing in life.”

“I was hungry for more”

Edy Ballard’s invitations to help people discover the beauty of the Catholic faith came from an unusual perspective.

She had been away from the Church for more than 40 years, before choosing to return to her faith during the Shelbyville Chamber of Commerce’s “First Fridays on the Circle.”

The group also set up a “You’re Welcomed Back With Love” table inside St. Joseph Parish, where returning Catholics have been offered gift bags that include a rosary, the parish directory and an information card for contacting a priest.

“There’s a perception from people outside the Church that it’s hard to get into the Church,” Ballard says. “I don’t think we do a good job of letting people know they’re welcomed.”

“Evangelization is not just for a committee or a dozen people in the congregation. It’s every single person in the Church. We’ve all been given a responsibility. We’re the face of the Catholic Church. In a day and a time when there’s so much bad publicity about our Church, we need to let people know there’s a beautiful Church here for them.”

Our marching orders from Jesus”

These efforts at the parish level to evangelize are just what the Church needs, and what more parishes need to do, says Ken Osgerek, the archdiocese’s director of catechesis.

Parish evangelization teams help reach the unclothed, the alienated and the practicing Catholics in a direct way that draws them to what he describes as teaching and stewardship ministries of the parish faith community.

“Without a specific plan to make disciples, a parish is essentially saying ‘We’re OK with staying at our current size,’ or worse yet, ‘Shrinking is OK with us,’”

Christ calls his followers to do more, Osgerek says. He cites “our marching orders from Jesus,”

“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:18-20).

Parish evangelization teams can have that power to make a difference in people’s lives, Osgerek says.

“There is an untapped potential—so many souls in need of Jesus—throughout our parish territories.”

(To view the video that Jonathan Helt created go to bit.ly/2PDYuIk. For more information visit the archdiocese’s website “Things We Want You to Know...” or download a copy, go to www.archindy.org/ourfaith/whitesea.html. Subscribe free copies in English or Spanish, call 800-382-9836, ext.1530, or 317-236-1530.)

Hirschfeld was angered by the actions of priest abusers, of Church leaders who mishandled abuse claims, and even how allegations of abuse are handled at times in the archdiocese.

Father Riebe met with Hirschfeld personally and had him participate in the holy hour at Christ the King. He did, and he offered a prayer.

“I expressed that I’m angry about the volume of the incidents, and how they’ve been handled,” Hirschfeld said. “But I first prayed for healing. I thought of the Healing the Church and the honorable priests who probably lack support right now given what’s going on.

Although Father Riebe has been in contact with people who are distancing themselves from the Church in response to the crisis, most of those he has spoken with continue to practice their faith, even in the face of the hopes and fears this feelings this challenging time has caused.

“The experience has taught me how resilient Catholics are,” Father Riebe said. “In spite of the failings of priests and...
Pastors speak on role of priests, parish teams in evangelization

By Natalie Hoefer

Those who know Scripture know there are 10 commandments in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, Jesus offers one final command, a command so crucial that he chose it as his final words on Earth: “Go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19).

Priests embrace these commands in a special way, both to evangelize their parish members, and then to encourage and equip their parishioners in evangelizing the local community and beyond. After all, Christ’s command was for all Christians, not just shepherds.

Recently, the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization conducted a survey of nine parish priests in central and southern Indiana regarding evangelization.

“Each of our pastors bears at least some responsibility for every soul in his parish territory,” said archdiocesan director of catechesis Ken Ogorek. But he also notes the importance of “parishioners being involved in evangelization efforts. It’s not just the pastor’s responsibility.”

To that end, the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis is creating a booklet designed to help parishes form evangelization teams.

Information about the booklet will be shared at the end of this article, after highlighting the priests’ response to two of the survey questions: what the priests surveyed are currently doing in terms of evangelization, and what traits they recommend members of a parish evangelization team have.

Priest’s role is “comparable to a conductor”

Among the nine priests, efforts to evangelize ranged from within their parish to the local community, and even as far as a radio station’s airwaves will allow.

Several of the priests made a comment similar to that of Father John McCaslin, pastor of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, that “as pastor, I am the first evangelizer of the parish.” That effort to evangelize internally is then extended to help parishioners evangelize as well. As Father Todd Riebe, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, put it, the priest’s role in evangelization is “comparable to the conductor of an orchestra by empowering parishioners to evangelize and equipping them with the proper tools to do so.”

One of these tools is knowledge. While evangelizers must have a fire for spreading the Good News of salvation that is lit by their relationship with Christ, knowledge of the faith is also key.

Father John Hollowell, pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, saw that need not being met among students in his parishes, because “not many students were participating in a class offered by a catchist,” he said in the survey.

So he decided to reach them in a territory they as students are familiar with: online.

“Another way to both catechize and evangelize is radio. Both Father Hollowell and Father Thomas Kovatch, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, noted that they use this medium to spread the Gospel.

Father Kovatch pointed out that his parish owns Bloomington’s WCYI 104.1 FM, which airs programming through the Relevant Radio Catholic network. And Father Hollowell hosts “Fr. Hollowell & Friends,” which airs on another Relevant Radio channel, W281BG 104.1 FM out of Knightville, on Tuesdays at 4 p.m., Fridays at 2:30 p.m. and Saturdays at noon.

While he is not evangelizing on the airwaves, Father Dustin Boehm, pastor of St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville and St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty, poses with altar servers, members of the parish’s Knights of Columbus and others prior to one of St. Gabriel’s “Novena of Sundays” rosary walk evenings. (Facebook photo)

Father John Hollowell, pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is shown teaching an online religious education class for students in grades 7-12 in his parishes. (Lucent photo)

“Those who know Scripture know there are 10 commandments in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, Jesus offers one final command, a command so crucial that he chose it as his final words on Earth: “Go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19).”

said Father Daniel Bedel, pastor of St. Margaret Mary and St. Patrick parishes in Terre Haute.

“‘No magic bullet’

Ogorek notes that parish evangelization efforts cannot rely on a fad or trend.

“There are resources and programs that can help,” he said.

“But there’s no magic bullet. Programs come and go. New resources come all time. No one program or kit is likely to help an evangelization and discipleship effort put down deep roots in a parish.

“You need a core group of people who are going to help shepherd an ongoing process.”

In addition to getting a group, said Ogorek, parishes also need “who people call ‘spiritual multiplicity’—the power of a small group of people spending a finite amount of time together helping each other grow in discipleship, with the understanding that at a certain point, each of them will gather a small group around them, help them grow in discipleship, and so on, and so on, and so on.”

Such ideas and tips will be put forth in a booklet the Office of Catechesis is developing to help parishes with evangelization. It is expected to be completed next spring, and will be sent to each pastor and to each person on an evangelization contact list the office maintains. (See below for how to be added to this list.)

“Our intent is to provide a brief, practical document that will help people hit the ground running with parish evangelization efforts.”

—Ken Ogorek, director of the archdiocesan Office of catechesis

In addition to being “joyful and inviting,” Father Eric Johnson said the messages people are proclaiming are “with a steady and firm conviction.”

The pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany went on to say that there can be no “ambiguity” for an evangelization team, but rather “practical efforts to move from vision to action.”

To maximize that action, there should be a “discernment and inventory of the charisms of the team [members],” said Father Sengole Thomas, administrator of St. Michael Parish in Cannelton and St. Pius V Parish in Troy.

“Recognizing the different gifts the Lord has provided will allow for a strong unity of the members and the ability to reach out with fuller potential,” he added.

Another helpful component for an evangelization team to accomplish is so that the highest potential is for it to have members of “a wide demographic with a variety of stages of life, including someone who can speak intelligently about youth culture, in addition to speaking to youths themselves,”

Father John Hollowell, pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is shown teaching an online religious education class for students in grades 7-12 in his parishes. (Lucent photo)
“When Christ gave his great commission, he didn’t say, ‘Somebody go and make disciples.’ You have to take the great commission personally. ‘Biff, go and make disciples. Ann, go and make disciples.’ The great commission is the prism through which we see our purpose as Christians.

And these weren’t just any words of Christ, but his last words, and “last words have weight,” Glemkowski said. Likewise, the last words of the Mass have weight, and they mirror the last words of Christ.

“At the end of Mass, the dispersal is so important to the Church,” he noted. “After being reminded of the love of God through the love of Jesus, we are sent to take that love into the world. The end of Mass is just the beginning.”

‘Baby giraffes with wobbly legs’

But how do we go about evangelizing, spreading the Good News memorialized in the Mass? Glemkowski answered the question on two fronts: parish evangelization, and personal evangelization.

At the parish level, evangelization should not be “silo-ed” into one commission because “it won’t bear fruit,” Glemkowski said. “When a parish’s real goal is to evangelize in all they do, that’s when they become successful. It shouldn’t be one of the things we do, but all we do. … All programs and ministries should have some strategic part in that.”

In practical terms, he likened the evangelization process to a baseball diamond that starts at home base, creates believers at first base, caters to those lost in second base, and offers opportunities to reinforce a personal relationship with Christ, which leads to becoming a disciple at second base. From there, people are equipped with more knowledge to help them reach third base — being a missionary disciple.

“We think someone is on fire after the feelings were explained. But it is only after they’ve healed, that someone from the Church says very lovingly, ‘I’m sorry, but that was me too,’ ” Father Riebe said simply offering a caring, listening presence is at the heart of sharing the Gospel with people in difficult personal circumstances, as well as during this challenging time in the Church.

“Give people the chance to vent, to express their disappointment, frustration and hurts,” Father Riebe said. “The fact that someone from the Church says very little but instead listens to their hurt is probably the most healing thing we can do.”

People pray on Sept. 15 in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during a “Holy Hour for Prayer, Penance and Healing” for victims of sexual abuse. Three parishes in the Indianapolis North Deanery held listening sessions or a similar holy hour in response to the current clergy sexual abuse crisis. (Photo by Nadalee Houde)

Not all trust that the Church is a good thing,” he noted. “Sometimes you won’t be the best person to bring someone back, but keep praying.”

The surest way to evangelize, Glemkowski said, is to “share your story. Share with them a time in your life when you felt like the sinful woman [who was about to be stoned], that you knew you needed a savior, and that you found there was one, and he is Christ, and he loves each of us more than we can possibly know.”

‘Just an invitation’

Father Todd Riebe, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, gave a reflection during the workshop. His personal story drove home the importance of the simplest of evangelizing: inviting someone to Mass.

He spoke of how, when growing up, his family would “pile into the car” and head off to Mass every Sunday morning. And every Sunday morning a neighbor was there on her porch. She would wave to them and they would wave back.

Decades later, Father Riebe visited her in the hospital shortly before she died. She shared the memory of waving to his family every Sunday morning, and how she had longed each time that they would stop and invite her to Mass. She was welcomed into full communion of the Church before she died.

“But bad said that she spent her whole life longing for Christ, when all she needed was for us to invite her.”

Father Riebe reflected. “Just an invitation.”

That message stuck with Deacon Russell Woodard, parish life coordinator of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh.

“It really made people aware of saying to a co-worker or other people around them that, ‘If you want to go to church with me, you’re more than welcome,’” he explained.

“IT’s in the little things we do in our daily lives. We need to be open to the Holy Spirit, and when an opportunity presents itself, speak to that neighbor or co-worker. Find out if they go to a church, and if not tell them that they’re always welcome to join you, and that Jesus came for us all.”

LISTENING

bishops, their faith and love for the Church is strong.”

Sharing the Gospel in difficult times can be challenging even for priests who have been ordained for decades. This was the case for Father Robert Sims, pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. He had mixed feelings in the time leading up to the listening session held in his faith community.

“Frankly, there was a part of me that didn’t want to do it,” Father Sims said. “But I felt that it really was important for people to have a venue in which they could validate their feelings. Before you can heal, you have to feel the feelings. Before you can validate their feelings. Before you can heal, you have to validate them.”

He offered an example he called “growth by multiplication.”

“Say you have three people meet for one year to help each other grow spiritually,” he said. “Then after a year, each person goes out and starts a new group of three, and so on. It becomes exponential.”

What is Glemkowski’s advice to personal evangelizers to begin this process? It’s simpler than one might think.

“Every day,” he said. “Frequent the sacraments. If people recognize the Holy Spirit in you, you’ll have an impact. Holiness is attractive.”

This is not to say evangelizers must be perfect.

“The best way to build trust with someone is to be relatable,” Glemkowski said. “Remain close to Christ and he will make you who you need to be.”

He also cautioned evangelizers to be aware of others’ spiritual wounds.

Like people who experience a tragedy in their lives who ask questions of a priest about what it all means, some of the people who attended the listening session at Immaculate Heart asked Father Sims about his thoughts regarding the abuse crisis.

Joe Klein, a member of the parish who attended the session, came away satisfied with his pastor’s honest responses.

“He didn’t try to sway us,” Klein said. “He was direct in answering questions to the best of his ability. I think we walked away thinking that our pastor has the same feelings we do, and that he doesn’t have the answers. I’m not sure who has the answers. It’s hurting him as badly as anyone who was in that room.”

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Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

• Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
• Complete 12 courses online with ND STEPM program
• CDU offers classes on Catechesis of the Catholic Church
• 10% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

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

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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.

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2 Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548 carlahill@archindy.org

— continued from page 7

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Father Todd Riebe, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, elevates the Eucharist and Lens the Mass to St. Bartholomew Church in Columbus on Oct. 27, while Deacon Juan Carlos Ramirez looks on. The Mass was part of an archdiocesan evangelization workshop at St. Bartholomew Parish. (Photo by Nadalee Houde)
Advent is a time for the faithful to look forward to the fulfillment of divine promises

By Fr. Herbert Weber

When the verses from Chapter 33 of the Book of Jeremiah are proclaimed as the first reading on the First Sunday of Advent this year, I will hear them in a new way. The prophet’s words, “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made” (Jer 33:14), will resonate with special meaning for me and the St. John XXIII Parish community. For us, a promise fulfilled is a reality. A new beginning has come upon us. This Advent, our parish will celebrate Mass in a new church that has been the dream for many years. Founded in 2005, our parish used a public high school, several Lutheran churches and a parish life center for Mass and all other liturgical celebrations like weddings, funerals, first Communions and baptisms until this fall. After years of planning and fundraising, we completed the building in time for St. John XXIII’s feast day on Oct. 11. That day, which marks the anniversary of the opening of the first session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, offered both promises fulfilled and promises of new beginnings. In our case, the promise fulfilled is not merely about a needed building. In fact, it is much closer to the promise proclaimed by Jeremiah. For us, we have the realization that we are called and formally established as a community of faith with a mission.

New building with tall, clear glass windows on all sides, but especially in the tower, allows our people to reflect on the image of a lighthouse. More significantly, we find ourselves reflecting on Matthew 5:14, that we as a community have to be light to the world.

Reaching this point is the fulfillment of what we long for. Yet, as we enter Advent, we discover that this is a beginning, not an end. Advent, with its theme of promises, is also the beginning of the Church’s liturgical year. It is a time when the Church starts all over again. And although the time for all promises to be fulfilled may only come with the final return of the Lord, we start over with anticipation, expectation and strong commitment.

Beginnings are both exciting and challenging. The Church often introduces new liturgical practices with the First Sunday of Advent. Seven years ago, with the First Sunday of Advent, the English-speaking Church introduced a new translation of Mass prayers. Many will remember the challenge of helping people adjust to new phrases right before Christmas.

With much less public awareness, we used Advent two years ago as the time to introduce a new rite for the sacrament of marriage. In that case, it was during “low wedding season,” and there was time to help couples prepare. And every year our Church begins a new year of the three-year cycle of readings from the Bible for Sunday Mass, this year with emphasis on the Gospel of St. Luke.

Advent should not be seen simply as a time for changes of rites or rubrics or Gospel readings. It truly is a time for the Church to declare a new beginning for ourselves as we trace the story of our salvation. Such beginnings are future-oriented even as they connect with the past.

The theme of promises fulfilled is both past and present. As people of faith, we have received the ultimate promise from God, namely, salvation and hope for the world. Jeremiah reminds us it will come to pass, and that is the future element.

The First Sunday of Advent provides the big picture with a look to the second coming of Jesus as Luke (chapter 21) declares signs that the Son of Man will come with redemption. The next three Sundays will look back at the first coming of Jesus. For us, in the middle, we build off the past to address the future. As we start over again, we realize we are not the same persons who started over last year or the previous year. Each new beginning is like the inward spiral that brings people closer to the center. Perhaps the promise is that as we near that core, we will find the message of hope more pronounced.

Meanwhile, however, St. John XXIII Parish has its own challenge. Having established ourselves in the long-awaited church building, we dare not assume we have reached the culmination of the Gospel. We cannot rest. Advent calls us to see beyond the building and look at the bigger picture, namely that Jesus is among us, bringing salvation.

A couple of weeks before the completion of the church construction, a large sculpture of Jesus, ready to be mounted on the wooden cross, was delivered to the church. As it lay there waiting for the workers to position it, some members of our parish approached and looked at the image of the crucified Lord.

There was complete silence as they stared. This was followed by spontaneous sobbing from each person. Later one of the women said her heart was overwhelmed and she was moved by this reminder of redemption. Salvation truly is at hand; promises are being fulfilled. With Advent, we move closer to the reality of this mystery.

(Father Herbert Weber is the founding pastor of St. John XXIII Parish in Perrysburg, Ohio)
Faith and Family/Greg Erlanson

Amid the Fray

Thanksgiving couldn’t have come at a better time this year.

My political life is inflamed with hostility and resentments. Our Church is riddled with scandal, division and distrust. The planet is warming up and we are on track to level.
The Boston Red Sox even beat my Los Angeles Dodgers.

No matter what, America identify with the American Dream. Fearful of those who look like us but who harbor terrible intentions.

Our political life is inflamed with hostility and resentments. Our Church is riddled with scandal, division and distrust. The planet is warming up and we are on track to level.

The election results in the spring to take away constitutional protection for the unborn came as an unhappy surprise to many Catholics in the United States. It was a piece of news we didn’t want to see.

Far more Americans identify as Catholic than in any other country in the world. They have no idea how quickly the once Catholic nation they think of so fondly is losing its Catholic identity to not small part to clerical scandals there.

What many Americans may still not realize is that Ireland is the cradle of the culture of death with a zeal and gusto that few other countries—even traditionally secularized ones—have ever known.

During the campaign to repeal Ireland’s Eighth Amendment (its constitutional protection of the unborn) campaigners promised that it would be followed up with a moderate abortion law. That promise is not quite what we got.

We’ve got a lot on our minds, and most of it is bad. It feels like someone is jumping up and down under our skin.

Times like these try our souls, threatening to turn us into fuming hastiers who shape our day, hounding strangers on public streets and unfriend people digitally or otherwise.

We are discovering if some sort of unhappiness virus has been unleashed on our economy. Is on a sugar high from all the news of my wrong jaw. It is hard to discern if we always look like us but who harbor terrible intentions.

And all this happening in the richest, most powerful, most militarily blessed nation in the history of the world.

Thanksgiving couldn’t have come at a better time this year, because gratitude is the one ineluctable resource we seem to have a shortage of these days.

We start with gratitude for our country. We are certainly not perfect. It is easy to forget the rights we have been given, and the opportunities that are available to us.

And then there is Blessed Herman. So few years after a natural abortion, but not finding a book on saints with disabilities, Gannon began to look for the same thing. Finding several, the idea for a book formed.

“I never imagined that I would write a book. But I just had to get this off my head,” she said. “I figured if I hadn’t heard of them [saints with disabilities], others probably hadn’t either, and I began to think that these saints could both be an inspiration and role models for many others with various disabilities.”

In 2014, Gannon self-published Special Saints for Special People. Included with Blessed Herman are eight other saints who lived with disabilities ranging from blindness to diabetes. She gives programs on her book in schools, and finds it provides a way for adults to approach her, too.

“I’ve met lots of people who wouldn’t have spoken to me otherwise,” said Gannon, “just because they wouldn’t know what to say.

(Maureen Pratt’s website is www.mauraencomart.com)

(Handout) Greg Erlanson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gernardson@catholicnews.com

Living Well/Maureen Pratt

Author highlights special saints for special people

Like many of us, when Megan Gannon learns a concern in the family—most recently to Mary, the mother of Jesus, first.

“I am a big believer in the words of St. Louis de Monfort idea of ‘to Jesus through Mary,’” said Gannon, who says that all of God’s graces come to us through Mary. She has been attracted to this type of spirituality. But she has another, lesser known, go-to saint: Blessed Herman of Reichenau. The 11th-century German Benedictine monk was born with cerebral palsy and spina bifida, yet despite his disabilities made significant contributions to science, theology and philosophy.

He composed the hymn “Alma Redemptoris Mater,” or “Sweet Mother of the Redeemer.”

Gannon, who was also born with cerebral palsy. “I like how much she was able to accomplish in her life, even though he had multiple disabilities. People who know me will say that I’m a very determined person and have a wide range of interests. I’m glad to see that people also have a range of interests.

Cerebral palsy, a neurological disorder, affects everyone who has it differently. In Gannon’s case, she works with Gannon, a college graduate, but “[cerebral palsy] affects all my motor skills, my balance, my ability to type.”

In my case, my mind works fine,” Gannon said, “but my eyes as she looks at an onscreen keyboard to select the letters she wants.

Throughout her communication system, she engages actively with people in her parish. She participation in a Catholic women’s study group, providing written comments for the discussion, and serves as the parish webmaster.

Gannon’s eyes as she looks at an onscreen keyboard to select the letters she wants to type.

“Thanksgiving couldn’t have come at a better time this year, because gratitude is the one ineluctable resource we seem to have a shortage of these days. We start with gratitude for our country. We are certainly not perfect. It is easy to forget the rights we have been given, and the opportunities that are available to us.

And then there is Blessed Herman. So years after a natural abortion, but not finding a book on saints with disabilities, Gannon began to look for the same thing. Finding several, the idea for a book formed.

“I never imagined that I would write a book. But I just had to get this off my head,” she said. “I figured if I hadn’t heard of them [saints with disabilities], others probably hadn’t either, and I began to think that these saints could both be an inspiration and role models for many others with various disabilities.”

In 2014, Gannon self-published Special Saints for Special People. Included with Blessed Herman are eight other saints who lived with disabilities ranging from blindness to diabetes. She gives programs on her book in schools, and finds it provides a way for adults to approach her, too.

“I’ve met lots of people who wouldn’t have spoken to me otherwise,” said Gannon, “just because they wouldn’t know what to say.

(Maureen Pratt’s website is www.mauraencomart.com)

(Handout) Greg Erlanson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gernardson@catholicnews.com

Intelligent and Virtue/John Garvey

Say a prayer or two to drive out snakes, scorpions in Ireland

The vote in Ireland in the spring to take away constitutional protection for the unborn came as an unhappy surprise to many Catholics in the United States. It was a piece of news we didn’t want to see.

Far more Americans identify as Catholic than in any other country in the world. They have no idea how quickly the once Catholic nation they think of so fondly is losing its Catholic identity to not small part to clerical scandals there.

What many Americans may still not realize is that Ireland is the cradle of the culture of death with a zeal and gusto that few other countries—even traditionally secularized ones—have ever known.

During the campaign to repeal Ireland’s Eighth Amendment (its constitutional protection of the unborn) campaigners promised that it would be followed up with a moderate abortion law. That promise is not quite what we got.

The current Irish government is not content just to legalize abortion. It worries that abortions won’t become widely enough available for women or for doctors if they can’t simply provide them in the public health system

As in the United States, most medical practitioners do not perform abortions—only about one percent of doctors have had 10 years of training so they can do something so sordid. A poll of Irish general practitioners this year found only 68 percent of them either could not or would not perform abortions. Regardless of their political affiliations, they see themselves as lifesavers, not life-takers.

That’s why Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and his Cabinet are proposing to amend the law to allow doctors to refer for abortion, but that this would require a change in the Constitution, which contains no exceptions for pharmacists who don’t want to sell abortion drugs.

This would be a good time to spare a prayer or two for Ireland. It’s no longer the place you thought it was. It could use a lot of prayer. Our Catholic bishops are working hard to drive out the snakes and scorpions again.

John Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America. Catholic University’s website is www.cua.edu

Humility helps parents see their children as prophets of God

The life of parents is a mysterious paradox.

On the one hand, God has given parents authority over their children.

They’re in charge of their every thought and deed as part of their responsibility to place them on the road to becoming saints.

On the other hand, God has placed children in the lives of their parents to help them be drawn closer to God, to open their eyes to his presence in their everyday lives.

This paradox at the heart of parenthood reveals how God, who both infinities transcends us and is closer to us than we are to ourselves.

Advent is a good time for parents to reflect on the profound mystery bound up in their family life. As the liturgical season, the Church places a lot of attention on the role of St. John the Baptist, who is the protagonist of God’s people for the first coming of Christ.

Every day, faithful Catholics around the world pray in Mary, Queen of the Liturgy of the Hours the words of Zechariah at the time of the naming of his newborn son, John: “You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most Holy.” (Luke 1:76).

What Zechariah proclaimed about his son is true for all children. If we parents gaze upon these gifts of God to us with the eyes of faith, we will make our lives a perpetual Advent, opening our eyes to the coming of Christ in the most ordinary events of everyday life.

I reflected on this blessed reality suggested in the words of Zechariah more than 16 years ago in the first installment of this “Faith and Family” column, which I wrote shortly after the baptism of my first child.

He is now 16 and a junior in high school. God blessed me later, my wife, Cindy, and our three children, who now range in age from 13 down to 5.

No matter what age a child is, he or she is a prophet of God for his or her parents. As they grow and experience the blessings and crosses fitting for each stage of life, parents are in a privileged position to witness how God is present in their lives and cares for them in the mysterious ways of providence.

And even though parents have authority over their children, they must nurture a strong sense of humility in their relationship with them. This helps to them both to be open to the guidance of God in their children’s lives and seek to communicate it to them.

They may approach their relationship with their children solely from a position of authority, they will be devalued to the world. Parents must, through their young ones and blind to the face of Christ glimpsed in their lives in joy and humility, thankfulness for graces received. Even for a successful root canal.

(Handout) Sean Gallagher, president of The Catholic University of America. Catholic University’s website is www.cua.edu

The coming weeks of spiritual preparation for Christmas for their first coming are a reminder to us that we live in a continual Advent, a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord, either at our death or in his second coming.

Catholic News Service's Weekly Writing Style Guide

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Perspectives
First Sunday of Advent/ Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings
Sunday, December 2, 2018

- Jeremiah 33:14-16
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

This weekend begins the Church’s new liturgical year. Usually, Advent is seen simply as a time to prepare for the feast of Christmas, and in the current American culture, a tempered, penitential season is not in order. Actually, the season is for us a new beginning. Advent summons us to consider the coming of Jesus into our own hearts, and it calls us to prepare ourselves for the final coming of Jesus at the end of time.

Christmas symbolizes these additional occasions of the Lord’s arrival into our hearts. Advent is a penitential season. We must focus upon Jesus, uprooting the tendencies, and even vices, that separate us from God.

Jeremiah is the source of the first reading. His theme was the theme of all the prophets, that God’s people could expect no peace nor joy in their lives until they wholeheartedly returned to God. In this reading, the prophet notes the sad state of affairs for God’s people. Misery is their lot. Sin has produced this unhappy situation.

Always merciful, always good, and always protective, God will send into their midst a Savior, a descendant of David, to save his people from their enemies. Thus, the people can be free from their unhappiness.

Advent is a penitential season. It calls us to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. The message ends by begging the people to love each other. This love is to be shown in the city of Thessalonica, now the Greek city of Saloniki.

My Journey to God

Loss of a Loved One

By Dorothy Gettellinger

I’m thinking of you again this day
As I go about my chores,
For I saved so many memories
I don’t know what’s mine or yours.
I treasure all the time we spent
Together side by side.
I wish it could have been forever
And we’d never say Goodbye.
But when I hear a whisper
From the wind upon my face,
I know that you are with me.
To give me a warm embrace.
When the dew drops glisten
On the grass each bright new morn,
I see the twinkle in your eyes
From the day that you were born.
So I guess we really didn’t say Goodbye,
It’s very easy to see.
For we are always together
As God meant it to be.

(Andrew Doyle is a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knoths Parish in Floyd County. Photo: A woman lights a candle at the tombstone of a relative on All Saints’ Day on Nov. 1 at the Wola Cemetery in Warsaw, Poland.) (CNS photo/Marcin Obara, EPA)

Daily Readings

Monday, December 3
St. Francis Xavier, priest, principal patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
Psalm 117:1-2
Mark 16:15-20

Tuesday, December 4
St. John Damascene, priest and doctor of the Church
Is 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Wednesday, December 5
Is 25:6-10a
Psalm 23:1-6
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, December 6
St. Nicholas, bishop
Psalm 118:1-2, 8-9, 19-21,
25-27a
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Most, if not all, dioceses no longer charge fees for tribunal processes

Q: Is there a fee for a declaration on nullity, which is commonly known as an annulment? I was married in a Methodist church and now want to get remarried in a Catholic ceremony. (State of origin withheld)

A: In September 2015, Pope Francis, in his moto proprio “Mittis iudex Dominus Jesus,” expressed the strong preference that all tribunal processes should be free of charge.

Previous to this, diocesan marriage courts customarily charged a fairly nominal fee for processing an annulment—to cover the cost, for example, of having the testimony evaluated by a psychologist. (Fees were waived in cases of financial difficulty.) Since September of 2015, though, certainly most dioceses—if not all—have eliminated the fees entirely. (Editor’s note: archdiocesan Metropolitan Tribunal began waiving fees for the annulment process in July 2015.)

In your case, the issue of fees is irrelevant since you don’t need a full-fledged marriage annulment. I am not entirely sure, from your question, whether the person you now want to marry in a Catholic ceremony is the same person you married earlier in the Methodist church.

If it is—and assuming that you were a baptized Catholic at the time of marriage and had not received a dispensation from the Catholic Church to marry her in the Methodist ceremony—what you would need to do is to go to confession and tell the priest that you were married in a ceremony not approved by the Catholic Church. Then you would be clear to marry her in a Catholic ceremony.

If, however, your earlier (Methodist) marriage was to a different person, you do not need to have a full process for an annulment before being married in a Catholic ceremony.

What you would need instead is just a declaration that this earlier marriage was never recognized by the Catholic Church—a decree from a Catholic tribunal stating the “absence of canonical form.” This is far simpler than a marriage annulment—and much quicker. Your first step should be to talk to your parish priest—or any priest you know—and he will guide you through the process.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203) ±

Andrew Feast - November 30

In the synoptic Gospels, Andrew is a Galilean fisherman grouped with his brother, Peter, and with James and John in the inner circle of apostles. In John’s Gospel, he is the disciple of John the Baptist who is the first to follow Jesus and who brings his brother to the Lord. Many traditions about Andrew come from the apocryphal second-century Acts of Andrew, which depicts him as a zealous missionary in the Black Sea region who is crucified—tied to an x-shaped cross—by the Roman governor. Some early church historians also said he evangelized in Greece and Asia Minor. He is the patron saint of Scotland, Russia, Greece and those who fish for a living.

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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 this 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.


WALKE, Mary C., 90, St. Louis, Batesville, Nov. 15. Mother of Sue Back, Mary Beth and Larry Walke. Great-grandmother of three. Great-grandfather of 12.


Retroactively, the following Masses and special events for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe throughout central and southern Indiana were reported to The Criterion.

As part of the celebration, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will preside at a Mass at 11 a.m. on Dec. 11 at St. Anthony Church, 337 N. Warman Ave., in Indianapolis.

Holy Spirit Church, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. Dec. 10—7 p.m. rosary; 7:30 p.m. Mass, followed by apparition re-enactment.

Dec. 11—7 p.m. rosary, followed by dance and apparition re-enactment; 9:45 p.m. Mass.

Dec. 12—7 p.m. rosary; 7:30 p.m. Mass, followed by maruachi band, dance and reception.

Holy Trinity Church, 100 Keeley St., Edinburgh. Dec. 12—1 a.m. Mass.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. Dec. 12—6:30 p.m. Mass, followed by free firework.

St. Ambrose Church, 325 S. Chestnut St., Plainfield. Dec. 5—Dec. 11 rosary novena in church: • Dec. 3-6 and 9:11—6 p.m. re • Dec. 7 and 9:11—6 p.m. re • Dec. 11—11 p.m. rosary, prayers of petition and thanks.

Dec. 12—midnight 1 a.m. maruachis with maruachi band: 1-2 a.m. Nueva Creación choir; 2-4 a.m. San Sebastian choir; 4-6 a.m. Alma Misionera choir; 2:30-3 p.m. apparition re-enactment by St. Ambrose School students; 5:30-6:30 p.m. apparition re-enactment by St. Ambrose School students; 6:30-7:30 p.m. Mass, followed by fellowship and dinner in the gymnasium.


St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus. Dec. 11—10:30 p.m. procession; 10:45 p.m. rosary; 11:30 p.m. traditional dance; 12 midnight Juan Ant Jesus followed by reception with hot chocolate and sweet breads.

St. Gabriel the Archangel Church, 6000 W. 334th St., Indianapolis. Dec. 11—7 p.m. Mass, followed by fellowship in the Marian Center.

St. Holy Family Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Dec. 12—4:30 p.m. maruachis; 7 p.m. Mass in Spanish, followed by traditional dances in school gymnasium.

St. Margaret Mary Church, 2405 S. Seventh St., Terre Haute. Dec. 12—6 p.m. Mass.

St. Mary Church, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis. Dec. 11—8:30 p.m. meet at Monument Circle; 8:55 p.m. pilgrimage to church; 9:10 p.m. traditional dance; 9:30 p.m. rosary; 10 p.m. traditional dance; 10:15 p.m. apparition re-enactment; 11 p.m. maruachis. Dec. 12—midnight Mass in Spanish, followed by refreshments; noon Mass in English; 7 p.m. Mass, followed by fellowship in the Marian Center.

St. Mary Church, 415 E. Eighth St., New Albany. Dec. 11—11 p.m. maruachis.

Dec. 12—6 p.m. apparition re-enactment; 7 p.m. Mass.

St. Michael Church, 101 S. Michael Dr., Charlestown. Dec. 11—7 p.m. rosary, followed by señorita, maruachis and refreshments.

Dec. 12—7 p.m. Mass, followed by refreshments.

St. Monica Church, 6313 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis. Dec. 11—9 p.m. maruachis, rosary, apparition re-enactment.

St. Joseph Church, 125 E. Broadway St., Shelbyville.

Dec. 12—7 p.m. rosary, followed by Aztec dance, Mass, maruachi serenade and refreshments.

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Dec. 12—4:30 p.m. maruachis; 7 p.m. Mass in Spanish, followed by traditional dances in school gymnasium.


SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Church, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood. Dec. 12—7:30 p.m. Taiz prayer service, followed by reception.
Pope: Cloistered religious provide guiding lights of prayer to Church, world

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis asked people to give thanks to God for the gift of so many men and women living a cloistered life of total dedication to prayer.

“May these communities not lack animation, closeness and support,” including material support, from the entire Church, he said, marking World Day of Cloistered Life, on Nov. 21, at the end of his general audience in St. Peter’s Square.

The pope also sent a written message the same day, which was also the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to those taking part in a world congress in Rome, organized by the Vatican’s Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

In his written message, the pope thanked contemplative men and women for their vocation.

“What would become of the Church, who find in you support for continuing their journey? What would become of the Church and the world without the lighthouses that signal the port for those who are lost at sea?” he asked.

Contemplative men and women are like “torches” in the darkness, “sentinels” who proclaim a new day is coming, even though it is still night, he said.

“Thank you, because you enrich us with so many fruits of holiness, mercy and grace,” he said.

The pope also called for careful, well-rounded and in-depth formation, for candidates, formators and leaders.

Formation and spiritual accompaniment are lifelong and permanent for everyone, he said. Instead of being worried about numbers or efficiency, communities should focus on formation that responds to real, current needs and that is “integral” and “personalized.”

“May the Virgin Mary, model of contemplation, teach you to constantly seek the face of God and stay faithful to your mission as the praying heart of the Church.”

Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to The Criterion.

Batesville Deanery
Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhouse
Dec. 7, 5 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg
Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greenburg
Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
Dec. 12, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at St. Martin Campus of All Saints, Dearborn County
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Campus of St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Bloomington Deanery
Dec. 5, 4:45 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center
Dec. 6, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude, the Apostle, Spencer
Dec. 20, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery
Dec. 5, after 5:30 p.m. Mass at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City
Dec. 13, after 6 p.m. Mass at St. Mary, Rushville
Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Mary Campus of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Ann Seton, Richmond
Dec. 19, after 6 p.m. Mass at St. Gabriel, Connersville

Indianapolis East Deanery
Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
Dec. 10, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)
Dec. 16, 7 p.m. for St. Rita and Holy Angels (Indianapolis West Deanery)
Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Greenfield
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Philip Neri

Indianapolis North Deanery
Dec. 9, 2 p.m. dekeny service at St. Luke the Evangelist
Dec. 10, 7 p.m. dekeny service at St. Luke the Evangelist
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. dekeny service at St. Luke the Evangelist

Indiana South Deanery
Dec. 6, 7 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, and Good Shepherd, at Holy Name of Jesus
Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Joseph (Indianapolis West Deanery)
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. for St. Barnabas, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch, at St. Roch
Dec. 15, 9 a.m. for SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery
Dec. 5, 7 p.m. for St. Anthony and St. Christopher, at St. Christopher
Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
Dec. 10, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita (Indianapolis East Deanery), at St. Rita
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for St. Joseph and St. Ann (Indianapolis South Deanery), at St. Ann
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Monica
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel

New Albany Deanery
Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navletton
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
Dec. 15, following 8 a.m. Mass at Holy Family, New Albany
Dec. 16, 1 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight
Dec. 16, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul Campus of St. John Paul II Bollensberg
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville

(Additionally, the following New Albany Deanery parishes offer recurring opportunities:)
Dec. 5, 12 and 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
Dec. 5, 12 and 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
Dec. 5, 12 and 19, 5-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
Dec. 6, 13 and 20, 5-7:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Seymour Deanery
Dec. 4, 7 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace
Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County, St. Mary, North Vernon; and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Mary
Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Patrick, Salem, Decatur County
Dec. 13, 6 p.m. at American Martyrs, Scottsburg
Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour
Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus, and Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, at St. Bartholomew

Tell City Deanery
Dec. 5, 6 p.m. at St. Meinrad, St. Meinrad
Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Pius V, Troy
Dec. 9, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery
Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton
Dec. 20, 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus, Terre Haute

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For information about rates for classified advertising, call (317) 236-1454.

Heritage Project

Students and staff of St. Nicholas School in Ripley County watch cement being poured on Oct. 30 for what will eventually be a new school building at the Batesville Deanery faith community. The $3 million initiative—which will also include the construction of a fellowship center for the parish—is funded through St. Nicholas’ “Heritage Project” capital campaign. The new school building is expected to be completed in July 2019 and ready for use for the 2019-20 academic year.

(Submitted photo)
Almost 94 percent of donations directly aid senior religious.

Almost 94 percent of donations directly aid senior religious.

To donate:
Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Mission Office
1400 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis IN 46202
Make check payable to Mission Office with Religious Retirement on the memo line.
Or give at your local parish December 8–9.

retriredreligious.org

**Retirement Fund for Religious**

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Sister Clare (top) is one of 3,100 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who benefits from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift helps religious communities care for aging members and plan for future needs. Please be generous.

**RECLAIM LIVES**

continued from page 1

He and Deb were intrigued by how the organization uses running to try to transform the lives of people who are homeless. They were soon coming to downtown Indianapolis four days a week at 5:45 in the morning, walking and running with homeless people who hadn’t been involved in physical activity for years.

“I’ll never forget the first day,” Tom says. “There’s this guy, Ron. He doesn’t like being around anybody. I asked him when the last time he ran. He said, ‘Thirty years ago, in boot camp.’ I started building a relationship with him. Three months later, Ron ran a half-marathon. He lost 35 pounds, and he was a completely different person.”

Deb adds, “It’s more than just the running. It’s about the relationships. You just jump in, and God will do the rest.”

At the time, Hamilton’s relationship with God and others was at a far more desperate point.

“I’ll be forever grateful for that!” says Sister Clare Vandecoevering, R.S.M. “Oh, they were just children the Gospel through ministry was to teach.”

Yet when Hamilton won a contest to go to Disney World in Florida to run a 5-kilometer race, Whitney Jr. let his father take Whitney III—Hamilton’s 5-year-old grandson at the time—with him.

“I’ll be forever grateful for that,” Hamilton says. “Medals are not as good as being connected with family.”

Hamilton’s definition of family now extends to the volunteers and staff members of Back On My Feet who have been there for him, including the Gardners.

“Seeing people treat you as an everyday person, an individual; saying ‘good morning’ to you or telling you a joke—it all helps,” he says. “And they stay connected. If they don’t see you, they come looking for you. That helps, too. These people are real. They’re concerned about your welfare. They want you to make it. It’s like a family.”

The Gardners have experienced that same sense of family so deeply that they used their cross-country bike trip this past summer to raise funds for Back On My Feet and another effort that helps people in vulnerable situations—the St. Vincent de Paul Society food pantry in Indianapolis. The couple volunteers there, too.

“God is using them.”

One of Hamilton’s favorite parts of participating in the Back On My Feet program is that each running session begins and ends with the group in a circle saying the “Serenity Prayer”:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

“I'll be forever grateful for that”

Hamilton when he talks about the transformation of his life.

“I’m amazed at what he’s done,” she says. “I love the way he truly relies on God for restoring his life.”

“God is using them.”

One of Hamilton’s favorite parts of participating in the Back On My Feet program is that each running session begins and ends with the group in a circle saying the “Serenity Prayer”:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

“I believe in prayer,” Hamilton says.

He believes it has helped him reconcile with his two sons.

He believes it has helped him turn around his life—to live in the house he rents, and to work with Whitney Jr. in their business of selling and repairing cars.

He believes it has motivated him to be there for others who are in the same situation as he once was.

“You know everybody you meet isn’t going to make it,” he says. “We’ve had members die. But if you help just one.”

He then shares the story of someone he has helped, Gary.

“He said, ‘I see what you’re doing and what you got.’ He made me tighten up my game. He grabbed ahold of it, and he’s doing great now.”

So is Hamilton. Still, he’s learned to not to take anything for granted, especially the presence of God in his life.

“I look at my life now and say, ‘How did this happen?’ It’s only been four years. I can’t say how God does things. It’s in his time.”

Hamilton looks at the Gardners and thinks of the other people who have touched his life in the past four years, even in small ways.

“God is using them. It doesn’t hurt you to help somebody. It doesn’t have to be monetary. A smile can go a long way. They’ve heeded the calling for their life. It’s made me do the same.”

The best thing I did in ministry was to teach children the Gospel through plays,” says Sister Clare Vandecoevering, R.S.M. “Oh, they were just delighted!” A member of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon, she spent over 50 years in the classroom.