This year’s Lent could be just what struggling Church needs

WASHINGTON (CNS)—When Lent begins on March 6, Catholics in the United States will likely be more than ready for it. This set-aside time for prayer and reflection—after all the Church has been through in recent months—could provide both a healing balm and a needed boost forward, some say.

Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, is typically a big Catholic draw, filling churches with nearly Easter- or Christmas-size Mass crowds even though it is not a holy day of obligation. Conventual Franciscan Father Jude DeAngelo, director of campus ministry at The Catholic University of America in Washington, hopes this year is no exception.

“We in the American Catholic Church have been through a year of tremendous suffering and tremendous upheaval and frustration,” he told Catholic News Service (CNS), referring to the past months of suffering and tremendous upheaval and frustration, “It’s always had its sins and cover-up by Church leaders. The priest said some Catholics stopped going to Church, 'scandalized by the actions of a few,’ but that he hopes and prays they come back on Ash Wednesday, a day he described as a strong ‘reminder that God is never finished with us.’

“Ash Wednesday is that moment, I believe, especially this year, when we can say: ‘This is my Church. It’s got its sins—it always has had its sins and sinners—but Christ calls me to convert my life to his image and likeness and that call is not for individuals only, it’s for the entire community.’”

By its very nature, Lent has an overall aspect of penance to it, but that shouldn’t override the whole season, said Paulist Father Larry Rice, director of the University Catholic Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

His recommendation for this year’s Lent is “to do what the Church has always asked us to do: prayer, fasting and almsgiving,” and that concentrating on those things will

See LENT, page 10

Summit stresses need to protect children first amid scandal of Church’s sexual abuse crisis

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The clerical sexual abuse crisis has caused “serious scandal” in the Catholic Church and in society “because of the dramatic suffering of the victims, as well as the unjustifiable lack of attention to them” and attempts by Church leaders to cover up the crimes of the guilty, Pope Francis said.

Speaking to the public, including dozens of abuse survivors, after his midday recitation of the Angelus on Feb. 24, the pope promised measures to ensure children would be safe in the Church and that the crime of abuse would stop.

The pope’s remarks came an hour after he concluded the Vatican’s Feb. 21-24 summit on child protection and the clerical abuse scandal.

In his talk concluding the summit, Pope Francis said the Catholic Church would focus on eight priorities: the protection of children; impeccable seriousness in dealing with clerical sexual abuse; genuine purification and acknowledgment of past failures; improved training for priests and religious; strengthening and continually reviewing the guidelines of national bishops’ conferences; assisting victims of clerical sexual abuse; working to end the abuse and exploitation of children and young people online; and working with civil authorities to end sex tourism.

The summit brought together Pope Francis and 190 Church leaders—presidents of bishops’ conferences, the heads of the Eastern Catholic Churches, superiors of men’s and women’s religious orders and Roman Curia officials.

See MINORS, page 9

Measures to help protect minors are imminent, according to Vatican summit moderator

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While the four-day Vatican summit on the protection of minors has ended, the work to ensure that laws and concrete actions are in place is just beginning, said Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi.

During a press briefing on Feb. 24, Father Lombardi, who served as moderator of the Feb. 21-24 summit, said Pope Francis will soon publish a new set of laws and guidelines concerning child protection for Vatican City State.

The measures, he said, will be issued “motu proprio,” on the pope’s own accord, and will be “presented and published in the near future.”

Another initiative that will be available in “a few weeks or a month or two” is a handbook, or vademecum, for bishops, prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Father Lombardi told journalists that the handbook will list a set of guidelines, and “will help bishops around the world clearly understand their duties and tasks” when handling cases of abuse. He said the pope also wants to amend the current law

See MINORS, page 9
Pro-life groups, lawmakers praise final ‘Protect Life Rule’ for Title X

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Trump administration on Feb. 22 finalized its “Protect Life Rule” preventing funds appropriated under the Title X Family Planning Program from being used in services that include abortion as a method of family planning or that make abortion referrals.

The bars Title X grant money from any clinic that performs abortion, which will especially impact Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider. According to the organization’s website, Planned Parenthood affiliates receive roughly $290 million in Title X funds and serve about 41 percent of those who benefit from Title X funding.

“The Title X Program can now finally return to its originally intended purpose—the provision of family planning services, not abortions,” said Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, who is chair of the Congressional Pro Life Caucus. “Title X funding was never intended to facilitate Planned Parenthood’s hideous dismemberment, chemical poisoning or deliberate starvation of a defenseless unborn baby,” he said in a statement. He applauded the Trump administration for affirming “human life and dignity with this pro-life rule.”

The Office of Population Affairs, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and oversees Title X, published the draft final rule the afternoon of Feb. 22. It was slated to go into effect 60 days after it was published in the Federal Register. In May 2018, President Donald J. Trump said his administration would reinstate Reagan-era regulations—which prevented funds appropriated under Title X from being used in programs that include abortion as a method of family planning or that make abortion referrals. The restrictions were put in place in 1983 by President Ronald Reagan. Planned Parenthood of New York City immediately challenged the rules, claiming the denial of public funding violated their constitutional rights of free speech and association because the rules included a prohibition on funding referrals. In 1991, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the government had the right to establish rules that fund only family planning programs that do not “encourage, promote or advocate abortion.” When President Bill Clinton took office in 1993, he reversed the regulations.

According to the Office of Population Affairs, what the Trump administration is calling the “Protect Life Rule” is based on the most accurate interpretation of the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act of 1970, which enacted Title X. Section 1008 of this act states that “none of the funds appropriated under this title shall be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning.”

Debra Winger, Planned Parenthood’s president, said in a statement that the organization would fight the rule “through every avenue.”

In reacting to the announcement on the Protect Life Rule being finalized, Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, called the “nondirective counseling on abortion.” It requires “clear financial and impermissible activities for Title X projects.”

The new rule specifically prohibits “referred” for abortion as a method of family planning, because it bars “nondirective counseling on abortion.” It also eliminates a “requirement that Title X providers offer abortion counseling and referral.”

“Americans United for Life [AUL] is pleased that HHS has taken steps to stop Title X funds from subsidizing abortion,” said Catherine Glenn Foster, president and CEO of Americans United for Life. “It is AUL’s long-time policy position that funds appropriated or controlled by the federal and state governments should be allocated away from the subsidization of elective abortion providers and toward comprehensive and preventive women’s health care.”

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Senate in an evening vote on Feb. 25 failed to pass a measure sponsored by Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Nebraska, to require that babies born alive after an abortion be given medical attention and “the same protection of law as any newborn.”

The Born-Alive Survivors Protection Act failed in a 53-44 vote. Sixty votes were needed for passage of the measure. “I want to ask each and every one of my colleagues whether we’re OK with infanticide,” Sasse said ahead of the vote. “This language is blunt. I recognize that, and it’s too blunt for many people in this body. But frankly, that is what we are talking about here today. Infanticide is what the Born-Alive Survivors Protection Act is actually about.”

Kristan Hawkins, president for Students for Life of America, called Sasse’s bill “the bare minimum standard for valuing infant life, as everyone should be able to look at a baby born during an abortion and understand that a humane response is required.”

Too many important votes are forgotten, but this one won’t be,” she said in a statement issued after the vote. “This vote is a basic principles vote in which a win is a loss for abortionists, but allowing infants to die after born will ably pro-life Americans when it counts.”

On Feb. 4, Sasse had called for unanimous consent on his Born-Alive Survivors Protection Act. “Everyone in the Senate ought to be able to say unequivocally that killing little baby is wrong. This does not “unanimously declare to the nation that infanticide is objectively wrong.”

To see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to www.archindy.org/popesintentions. 

Measure to protect babies who survive abortion fails in Senate by 53-44 vote

Pope Francis prayer intention for March

• Recognition of the Right of Christian Communities—That Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected.

(To see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to www.archindy.org/popesintentions.)

NEWS FROM YOU! Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion? E-mail us: criterion@archindy.org

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The Criterion

March 2 – 4 p.m.
Mass at Passatunjie Correctional Facility, Patna, India

March 3 – 2 p.m.
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

March 3 – 6 p.m.
Rite of Election, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

March 4 – 4 p.m.
Pastoral Planning Committee at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

March 4 – 5 p.m.
Catholic Legislator Dinner at Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, Indianapolis

March 5 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 5 – 3 p.m.
Finance Council at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 5 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation for youth at St. Christopher Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

March 6 – noon
Ash Wednesday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

March 6 – 3 p.m.
Ash Wednesday Mass at Marian University, Indianapolis

March 7 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team Meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 7 – 11 a.m.
Rite of Election at St. Augustine Church, Indianapolis

March 9 – 5 p.m.
Mass for the American Federation Puerto Cantores at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

March 10 – 2 p.m.
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

(Schedule subject to change.)

Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 2 – 10, 2019

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**Supreme Court to hear oral arguments on 2020 citizenship census question**

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear oral arguments in April about the Trump administration’s push to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census and its potential impact on the accuracy of the population counts, following its 5-4 decision in 2017 to uphold the question in the census.

The court agreed on Feb. 15 to take the case—Department of Commerce v. New York—without following the normal procedure and waiting for action from the federal appeals court.

In January, a federal trial judge blocked the Commerce Department from adding the citizenship question to the census saying the process that led to adding it was deeply flawed.

U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has maintained the citizenship question is in response to a request from the Justice Department, which said the information would help it enforce the Voting Rights Act.

In January, a federal trial judge blocked the Commerce Department from adding the citizenship question to the census saying the process that led to adding it was deeply flawed.

U.S. District Court Judge Jesse Furman in New York did not buy this reasoning, and criticized Ross for ignoring reports by both government statistician and demographers, who had warned that adding this type of question was a bad idea.

Ross, in an opinion, said the question was not a test of the census’ accuracy, but that of individuals’ reluctance to participate.

The lawsuit challenging the citizenship question was filed by New York and other states and localities and advocacy groups that called the question an attempt to discriminate against immigrants.

“Adding a question about citizenship to the census would incite widespread fear in immigrant communities and greatly impair the accuracy of population counts,” said Leltitia James, New York’s attorney general, in a Feb. 15 statement.

Civil rights groups and religious organizations have opposed the addition of a citizenship question that has not been used since 1950.

A Jan. 20 letter to Ross from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights called the citizenship question “unnecessarily intrusive,” and said it could “jeopardize the accuracy of the entire count, leaving public, private, and nonprofit decision-makers with bad information for all purposes, for the next 10 years.”

A few Catholic groups—Franciscan Action Network, the Catholic social justice lobby Network and the National Advocacy Center for Sisters of the Good Shepherd—were among the 170 organizations that added their signatures to the letter, which emphasized that “mixed-status and immigrant households will be especially fearful of providing information to the federal government in 2020, given the heightened climate of fear that anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies have created.”

This group joins other critics of the citizen question who have said it will undermine the survey’s accuracy, and that legal and unauthorized immigrants might refuse to fill it out. One government estimate notes that 6 million of these people might decide not to participate in the census.

The census is rooted in the text of the Constitution, which requires an “actual enumeration” of the population every 10 years, with the House of Representatives to be apportioned based on “the whole number of persons in each state.”

This district—that families directly vote where voucher funds go—is also at the core of the issue, according to Rep. Robert Behning (R-Indianapolis). Behning is the author of House Bill 1641 on charter schools, which was the target of Forestal’s first attempt at an amendment.

During the House debate, Behning referred to a unanimous decision by the Indiana Supreme Court in 2013 upholding school choice legislation. In its ruling, the court held that the voucher program was constitutional because parents are the direct beneficiaries rather than the schools they select for their children.

“What the Indiana Supreme Court clearly said is that the money goes to the students, it is not given to the schools,” Behning said in opposing Forestal’s proposed amendment.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.Indiana Bucc.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachi Parish in Brownburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)
Reflection
Fr. Joseph Moriarty

Despite brokenness in world, let us embrace our faith even more

For 25 years, I have been a priest of this archdiocese and have only written for The Criterion in my previous capacity as archdiocesan vocation director. But I was happy to respond to their invitation as rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis to offer a reflection on the current state of our Church.

Provisionally, the other night as I sat in adoration, I believe I truly felt the Lord convicting me to write and share my thoughts.

I do not believe I am an expert at anything. I like to sing, but I cannot read music well. I enjoy fishing, but I am not an avid fisherman. I enjoy making and sharing family recipes, but I am not a chef or master baker. I try to be a good Christian, and I take seriously my promise at ordination to conform my life to Christ as a Catholic priest, but I acknowledge I am a sinner.

My vocation to the priesthood was inspired by my parent’s marriage of 59 years. I observed in Mom and Dad’s marriage that when things got tough, they never fled but committed themselves more deeply to what they loved, namely God, their nine children, the Church and each other.

I love being a priest, and I believe the world needs priests because I know the world needs the Eucharist. Without the Eucharist (God’s presence in the world), I believe the world would be in a worse state than it is, and we all know it is in a pretty bad state.

Similarly, our Church struggles with sin. Failed leadership and broken trust among clergy has wreaked havoc in the lives of too many, and just when we think it cannot get worse, it does.

I do not have answers to all these issues, but I sense God most calling me in this time to embrace my call to the priesthood and pour myself ever more deeply into this vocation I love and believe in. Thus, I pray! For victims, I pray! For God’s people, “the Church,” I pray! For those things and for people, healthy and hurting, sinful and broken, I pray!

Of course, there are other things I can do in this difficult climate in our Church. I can seek to celebrate the sacraments more reverently and authentically, because as previously mentioned, our world needs God, and sacraments mediate God’s salvation. I can also share hope with others.

I see daily hope alive in so many I work with and encounter, but especially in our seminarians whom I am privileged to live with and minister to at Bishop Bruté. I am edified daily by the witness of faith in these men.

Be it in a formation conference or sitting quietly with them in adoration, I see men who love God, love the Church and desire to love God’s people who are the Church. I see men who are authentically seeking to grow in the true potential of who God calls them to be.

We live in a broken world, but amid this brokenness we are ever called Christians to fall more in love with God, and in Christian charity to help and love one another.

This year has not been an easy year for the seminarians of Bishop Bruté. Beyond the deplorable, heinous and reprehensible behavior of some bishops and priests, the seminary community has grieved the loss of its spiritual director, Father Thomas Widner, a Jesuit priest who served Bishop Bruté for close to eight years and passed away unexpectedly last summer. Our lives are not the same without him. In all this scandal and loss, the seminarians carry on.

Our archdiocesan evangelization office—a core group of Catholics are a focus of what’s often called the New Evangelization. This prayer initiative, held in the Feb. 22 issue of The Criterion, offered an opening prayer service, led by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, will be held at 9 a.m. on March 6. For more information about 40 Days for Life efforts in Bloomington, contact Monica Sierker at 812-330-1535, 812-345-7988, or monica.sierker@gmail.com.

The peaceful prayer vigil in Bloomington takes place on the public right-of-way outside the Planned Parenthood facility at 8500 Georgetown Road. A kickoff rally will be held at 2 p.m. on March 3 at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., in Indianapolis. Mark Tuttle, president of the Right to Life of Indianapolis, will be the speaker.

For more information on 40 Days for Life efforts in Indianapolis, contact Tim O’Donnell at 317-372-0040 or edupiusmagere@me.com.

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This prayer initiative, held in the spring and fall each year, does make a difference. Since the national 40 Days for Life campaign was launched in 2007, 15,256 lives have been spared from abortion, 194 abortion workers had conversions and quit their jobs, and 99 abortion centers where 40 Days for Life vigils have been held have closed their doors. Talk about the power of prayer!

When it comes to life issues, there is plenty of rhetoric being shared by countless voices. Many are shared with good intentions, others with an agenda designed to bring more chaos and divisiveness to these situations. It takes much work on our part to cut through the noise to get to the truth.

Our faith teaches us to respect all human life—from conception to natural death. The 40 Days for Life effort gives us a unique opportunity to do just that.

And during this upcoming Lenten season and beyond, that is a simple, unwavering truth we must always defend.

—Mike Krokos

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.

Signatures cannot be verified, “From the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

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

Letter to the Editor

Parish evangelization teams heighten outreach to alienated Catholics

Just a quick reply to a letter to the editor in the Feb. 22 issue of The Criterion. Fallen-away or alienated Catholics could definitely use more attention in many parishes. Along with the unchurched and Catholics who are showing up for Mass regularly, alienated Catholics are a focus of what’s often called the New Evangelization.

Our archdiocesan evangelization office has an evangelization contact person in each of our 126 parishes. We are helping each parish who so desires to have an evangelization team—a core group of parishioners who reaches out intentionally to the unchurched, alienated and practicing within the parish territory.

The Central Indiana (Indianapolis) 40 Days for Life campaign takes place on the public right-of-way outside the Planned Parenthood facility at 8500 Georgetown Road. A kickoff rally will be held at 2 p.m. on March 3 at St. Luke the Evangelist Church, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., in Indianapolis. Mark Tuttle, president of the Right to Life of Indianapolis, will be the speaker.

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And during this upcoming Lenten season and beyond, that is a simple, unwavering truth we must always defend.

—Mike Krokos

There is much room for improvement, by God’s grace, in our overall evangelization and discipleship effort! All Catholics who are passionate about evangelization might approach their pastors, offering to be that evangelization contact person and somehow serve on the parish evangelization team.

Together, we can keep moving the ball forward in welcoming back fallen-away Catholics (and disciple-making in general) as the letter writer points out should be a high priority.

Ken Ogorek
Director of Catechesis
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

This year has not been an easy year for the seminarians of Bishop Bruté. Beyond the deplorable, heinous and reprehensible behavior of some bishops and priests, the seminary community has grieved the loss of its spiritual director, Father Thomas Widner, a Jesuit priest who served Bishop Bruté for close to eight years and passed away unexpectedly last summer. Our lives are not the same without him. In all this scandal and loss, the seminarians carry on.

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Archdiocese of Indianapolis
El miércoles de ceniza nos recuerda que necesitamos el amor y la misericordia de Dios

El próximo miércoles de marzo celebramos uno de los días más populares del calendario eclesiástico, el Miércoles de Ceniza, en el cual recordamos una de las verdades más elementales sobre nosotros mismos: que somos polvo y en polvo nos convertiremos.

En la pasión, muerte y resurrección de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. El Miércoles de Ceniza está a 40 días de nuestra celebración del Triduo Pascual, pero la señal en la frente representa una declaración impactante de la traición desde la muerte hacia la nueva vida que es nuestra herencia como cristianos bautizados. Sí, somos polvo, pero este ha sido transformado por la gracia y un día se recombinará con nuestras almas inmortales cuando resuciten los muertos en el Día Final.

Mientras tanto, resulta oportuno recordar que Dios formó a la humanidad a partir del polvo de la tierra. El hecho de que seanamos polvo y que un día volveremos a la tierra de la que provinimos, debería ser una invitación a la humildad. No somos dioses ni seres autosuficientes, sino criaturas que dependen de la gracia de Dios para todo lo que tenemos y somos.

Al mismo tiempo, la cruz de ceniza colocada en la frente nos recuerda que tenemos un destino más excesivo. Somos hijos de Dios llamados a la vida eterna en la alegría celestial que augura el cielo. Pero también, como hijos del pecado, tenemos un espíritu llena de pecado que necesitamos borrar.

La liturgia del Miércoles de Ceniza hace énfasis en el arrepentimiento que constituye un elemento fundamental de este día y de toda la Cuaresma, y que debe ser genuino y no una demostración superficial de falsa humildad. “Aun ahora—declara el Señor—volvió a mí de todo corazón, con ayuno, llanto y lamentación. Rasgad vuestro corazón y no vuestros vestidos; volvió ahora al Señor vuestro Dios, porque Él es compasivo y clemente; lento para la ira, abundante en misericordia, y se arrepiente de infligir el mal” (Jl 2:12-13).

El Miércoles de Ceniza no es para los hipócritas sino para los hombres y mujeres que entienden que son pecadores llamados a arrepentirse y a confiar en la piadosa bondad de Dios. “Ten piedad de mí, oh Dios, conforme a tu misericordia; conforme a lo inmenso de tu compasión, borra mis transgresiones. Lávame por completo de mi maldad, y limpiame de mi pecado” (Sal 51:1-2).

En la lectura del Evangelio del Miércoles de Ceniza (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18), Jesús advierte a sus discípulos (y a todos nosotros): “Cuidad de no practicar vuestra justicia delante de los hombres para que seáis vistos por ellos; de otra manera no tendréis recompensa de vuestro Padre que está en los cielos. Para eso, cuando deséis limosnas, no toques trompeta delante de ti, como hacen los hipócritas en las sinagogas y en las calles, para ser alabados por los hombres” (Mt 6:1-2). La humildad, no la hipocresía, es el objetivo de nuestras prácticas de oración, ayuno y limosna de la Cuaresma. “Cuando ayunéis, no pongáis cara triste, como los hipócritas” (Mt 6:16), dice Jesús. “Nuestro Padre que ve que lo que se oculta en nuestros corazones nos bendecirá con su amor y su misericordia!”

Los monjes de la archiabidhia de Saint Meinrad en el sur de Indiana tienen una tradición llamada bona opera (buenas obras) que practican el Miércoles de Ceniza. En ella, cada monje escribe una lista de buenas obras que realizará durante la Cuaresma y se la entrega en privado al archibispo, sin compartirla con los demás monjes. Con la bendición del archibispo, cada monje realiza sus buenas obras calladamente, con la confianza de que la bendición de Dios lo sustentará en la oración, en su ayuno y las buenas obras que hace como parte de su práctica cuarensial.

Hay un motivo fundamental por el cual el Miércoles de Ceniza es tan popular: apela directamente a nuestra condición humana y nos recuerda que en verdad necesitamos el amor y la misericordia de Dios. ¡Que nuestra celebración del Miércoles de Ceniza la próxima semana nos recuerde en esperanza y alegría a iniciar nuevamente el camino hacia la Pascua!"
March 6
Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. College Ave., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6 p.m. Information: Jan Baele, janjr@archindy.org.
317-257-4297.

March 8
St. Matthew the Apostle Parish, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Fish fry or baked fish, fish tacos, quesadillas, rice and beans, live entertainment, $12 dance, kids meals and a cash bar available. Information: 317-872-5088. sherrymp@comcast.net or alumni.bishopchatard.org/person. Purchase tickets: by Great Speaks, $35 per person. Registration and is free, although donations will be accepted. The conference requires no silent retreat. The event requires no registration and is free, although donations will be accepted. The conference will take place from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will feature three speakers, Mass and personal reflection time.
Father Nicholas Gregoris will give the first talk, “The Secret to Turning Back to God—A Day of Reflection.”
Father James Farrell will present “Forgiveness: If You’re the One that Made a Mess.”
Kerry Woods. St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Information and registration: 812-933-6437, vlgmimi@aol.com. †

March 12
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Notre Dame, 1022 E. Washington St., Indianapolis. Lenten series, sponsorship by the Catholic Archdiocese for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Information: 317-223-3687, vlimen@archindy.org †

March 14
Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is the featured speaker at the Cardinal Ritter Ritter Birthplace Foundation’s seventh annual “Lecture and Irish Coffee” event in the Neighborhood Resource Center, located at the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, 10 E. Oak St., New Albany, at 6 p.m. on March 14. Archbishop Thompson will speak on the Church’s role and response to current societal issues and challenges. After the talk, participants can visit the Ritter Museum Room located in the Cardinal Ritter Home.
Irish coffee and refreshments will be provided during the event, for which donations will be accepted. Reservations are requested by March 11 to Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, 10 E. Oak St., New Albany, at 6 p.m. on March 14.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
Retreats and Programs
For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to our www.archindy.org/retreats

March 15-17
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House and Retreats Center, 200 Hill Dr., Saint Meinrad. Beyond First Impressions: A Couples Retreat. Beneficiaries Father Noel Mueller presenting, $425, married couples only. Information: 812-357-6585 or mccelfr@smarchabbey.org. †

March 19
Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Personal Day of Retreat, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., $35 includes lunch, spiritual direction available for those interested. Registration: 317-788-7581, www.benedictinn.com

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Praying with the Saints: St. Francis of Assisi, Patty Moore presenting. 7-8:30 p.m. Information: htt:pt1784dGJ9 (case sensitive).

March 10

March 11
St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave., Indianapolis. Irish Night, 12:30 p.m. Information: 317-272-7729 or aiding26044@comcast.net.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish Center (door enter), 4720 E. 17th St., Indianapolis. Contemplative Workout Session. Nourish body and soul with body work and a contemplative journey of the Holy Jesus through the Rosary, bring mat or towel and 1 or 2 weights, optional, free, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Information: Joan Bullock, 317-727-6023.

March 17
317-796-2670.

March 7
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When Mexico native Horacio Galvez Garcia was a refugee at the archdiocese to the United States, he spoke in an even tone. When he described his feelings of being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, he shed no tears.

“But … you seem to have a very special program. To bring about change. Immigrants, as Pope Francis has called us Catholics Center in Indianapolis on Jan. 29. They were attending the kick-off event for the CARE (Catholic Accompaniment and Reflection Experience) program.

CARE was developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Office of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS). The archdiocese was selected as the program’s second pilot site, where it will be managed as a joint project of the archdiocese, the archdiocese and Faith in Indiana.

Upholding ‘dignity of undocumented immigrants’

The CARE program connects undocumented immigrants with Catholic volunteers wanting to accompany them as they adjust to life in America or interact with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

“The accompanying model builds solidarity with affected communities,” said David Bethnur, executive director of the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities.

“When you work with a group of the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities. It builds bridges of understanding and mutual interest with other community stakeholders. It’s about building relationships to uphold the dignity of undocumented immigrants, as Pope Francis has called us to do.”

In addition to helping keep families together and building community relationships, Bethnur explained, the archdiocese will initiate advocacy efforts urging lawmakers to bring about change.

Accompaniment is not a new concept for the archdiocese. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson cited his and others’ joining Erika Fierro, a former member of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis, to her DHS meetings as she faced deportation and separation from her two young children.

“So even though [CARE] wasn’t in place during her experience, it has those same components of accompaniment, solidarity, of lifting up her dignity, the component of keeping a family together,” he said. “I think that the CARE program is the archdiocese is only the second one in the United States to be asked to pilot this program.”

An engaged, diverse, self-starting community

The first pilot site chosen for rolling out the program was the Archdiocese of San Francisco. The choice makes sense—according to a Pew Research Center analysis of a 2016 Census Bureau survey, nearly 21 percent of America’s undocumented immigrants live in California. The same statistic is Indiana, however, is less than 1 percent. Given the figures, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis might also consider as the second pilot site for the CARE program.

Not to the USCCB team launching the program.

“We see a lot of attention on the coasts, but we want to have a very local community here in terms of engagement, a lot of different communities both Catholic and ecumenical,” explained Ashley Feasley, MRS director of policy.

“This is a great community because its self-starting. We appreciate the diversity of the community and know that the advocacy that’s begun there. You also have a great Catholic Charities framework,” she said, particularly commendable is the archdiocesan Catholic Charities’ Refugee and Immigrant Services.

“The fact that we’re not on a border and a lot of important things [related to immigration, migration and refugees] are happening here speaks volumes as to what’s needed for the program,” Archbishop Thompson said.

Feasley said one more pilot program will be initiated before CARE is rolled out nationwide.

Taking CARE from concept to action

Through a grant provided by the Sisters of the Holy Childhood of Jesus to the USCCB for the archdiocese, the archdiocese has hired Providence Sister Tracey Horan to spearhead CARE in central and southern Indiana.

Sister Tracey is a community organizer with Faith in Indiana and the archdiocese’s liaison for the USCCB’s Justice for Immigrants campaign. Her passion for justice earned her the 2017 Cardinal Bernardin New Leader Award from the USCCB’s Catholic Campaign for Human Development program.

According to the plan she outlined at the meeting, undocumented immigrants in need of CARE’s assistance will contact or be referred to her. She will pass the information on to a core team of bilingual “ambassadors” who will gather information from the individual in need.

From there, an ambassador will reach out to a parish CARE liaison about the possibility of accommodating the individual.

“Ideally, a parish would have 10 committed people who would go through a training, and two co-chairs who would interface with the person reaching out for accommodation,” Sister Tracey explained. “The hope is if you have a team of at least 10 people, including some that have some flexibility to their schedule, that you might be able to have a couple of people be [with the individual in need].”

To help form these teams, Sister Tracey is conducting training sessions that include what accommodation looks like, what your rights are, what your role is,” she said.

Trainings could be conducted at the parish, regional or archdiocesan level, and done on-site or remotely, depending on the number of people needed, she explained.

“One another option is to do a congregational forum … to foster conversation on the topic of accommodation, that can bring in broader participation,” Sister Tracey added.

Gatherings will be held periodically for volunteers to “share what we are learning, what our experience has been, what some of the issue opportunities are we could connect with the archdiocese,” she said.

Seven parishes have already been involved in companion work, Sister Tracey noted, and the archdiocese received letters from the Unitarian Universalist, Episcopalian, Methodist, Quaker, Jewish and Mennonite traditions that they would be active in accommodation, which brings a real richness to the work.”

“Not responding is not an answer”

During the meeting, participants had time to share their thoughts and experiences.

One woman from St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus noted the need for CARE based on the fear families live with. She shared how children in her parish’s school “talk openly about their emergency plan” if their parents are detained. “These kids are prepared with backpacks and know who to go to if mom and dad don’t come home,” she said.

As chaplain coordinator for Cardinal Ritter Jr./High School in Indianapolis, Father Jeffrey Dufrene has also witnessed youths living with fear.

“You can see the impact the fear has on the kids,” said Father Dufrene, associate pastor of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.

He also noted that “fear is a big part of the equation for those who oppose immigrants and refugees.” He expressed hope that CARE would provide a way for people to “be instruments of God’s grace and hope for this fear.”

Several Benedictine Sisters from Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove were present. Their process, Benedecte Sister Jennifer McChlild Horner, noted that the sisters are “called to respond to the needs of our time. We’re called to receive all as Christ, so we’re trying to discern how to respond to this situation and meet all of those [undocumented immigrants] as Christ.” Not responding is not an answer.”

Archbishop Thompson is hopeful of the impact of CARE in the archdiocese.

“I think it brings fuller and more exposure to our Catholic teachings on social justice to the community, and will bring to the community even more so the plight of immigrants and refugees,” he said.

He hopes the program will effect “transformation on all sides, for people to embrace the stranger as not an enemy but as a fellow human being, someone not to fear but to embrace.”

And I hope this effort will help the immigrant community see that there are people who do want to help them and embrace and walk with them.

“Hopefully it will touch people all the way around.”

(For the next parish CARE training will take place at St. Monica Parish, 611 N. Michigan Road, in Indianapolis, from 7:30-8:30 p.m. on March 13 and is open to the public. To register, contact Providence Sister Tracey Horan at 317-219-2540 or sistertracey@faithindiana.org. For more information on the archdiocesan CARE program, contact Sister Tracey as listed above. For more information on the national program, contact Catholic Accompaniment and Immigration reinforcement in the U.S. go to justiceforimmigrants.org or select “Program CARE.” To find undocumented immigrants in need of accommodation can call CARE’s emergency hotline at 317-759-9474. (Note: This number is not for rapid response needs, only accommodation.)”

But in a way that everyone could see, be open to it and share in it.”

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world, "The time has come, then, to work," the Pope told some 190 cardinals, bishops and other church leaders gathered in St. Peter's Square.

"We want every activity and every person in the Church to be responsible for the safety of minors," he said, which means taking every possible measure so that such abuse will not pass by.

Pope Francis, speaking at the closing Mass of a four-day summit on child protection in the Catholic Church, said he called leaders in the Church to "face it together in a co-responsible and collegial way," as he prayed and asked for forgiveness from God and the people hurt by abuse.

"We should not be surprised if they came up with a proposal that would combine a metropolitan-level system with a lay board to assist the metropolitan," Giussoni said. "In our proposals, the work of the laity will be to collaborate, which is something all the speakers at the summit emphasized," he added.

"We want to make sure the laity are involved in a way that would give them a level of independence and accountability against bishops while, at the same time, making it clear the board is acting on behalf of the Church," he said.

"They would have to be called to account for what they did and what they failed to do to stop the abuse and assist the victims," he said.

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After the Vatican’s summit on abuse, the stakes are clear

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The long-awaited “Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church,” nicknamed the abuse summit, wrapped up March 1 after four days of historic gathering that surpassed many expectations while perhaps disappointing others.

Historic in that it brought together the heads of 114 bishops’ conferences from the entire world, as well as the leaders of religious congregations, curial officials and even a few laypeople to discuss presentations by victims themselves. Extraordinary in that it featured a drumbeat of eloquent testimony, and at times blunt criticism by speakers regarding the way that the Church has handled abuse crises to date.

It also may have become a prototype for how synodal gatherings may come to look like in the future in terms of both a diversity of voices and an honesty of opinion.

From the start, Pope Francis had four audiences to meet with different stakeholders. The first was the broad leadership of the Church, the bishops of the world represented by the heads of their episcopal conferences as well as the leadership of religious congregations.

The second consisted of the victims of clerical sexual abuse who so often had been ignored, excused or even attacked for having the courage to tell what was done to them.

The third audience was both the heads of religious congregations and the heads of religious congregations and the heads of religious congregations.

The fourth audience was those members of the Roman Curia who have long been in the works, and it can appear that all in the Curia do not fully appreciate the scale and the scope of the emergency.

The assembled leaders heard from their own Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Philippines, launched the summit with a spiritual reflection on the necessity of touching the wounds of their people as Thomas touched the side of Christ.

Colombian Cardinal Ruben Salazar Gomez of Bogota dismissed those who say the problem is worse elsewhere. “The fact that abuses occur in other institutions and groups can never justify the occurrence of abuses in the Church,” he said. He exhorted his fellow bishops, “We have to recognize that the enemy is within.”

Other bishops addressed the needs for practical changes in administration, in Church law, and in how the bishops related to each other, both personally and in terms of their dioceses and conferences.

Two of the most powerful speeches of the four-day summit were delivered by women. Nigerian Sister Veronica Ofebrio, leader of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, shattered the myth that abuse was only a Western problem, recounting her experiences as a leader and as a woman religious regarding abuses in her own country.

Mexican journalist Valentina Azaraki, speaking as a journalist and as a mother, gave a scathing challenge to the assembled leaders. “If you do not decide in a radical way to be on the side of the children, mothers, families, civil society, you are going to be, that’s it, the enemy of us, because we journalists, who seek the common good, will be your worst enemies.”

Pope Francis, who sat through all the sessions and heard all the presentations, told the bishops at the start of the meeting that he wanted “concrete and effective measures.” In the final news conference of the meeting, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi identified three “concrete initiatives”:

“Legislation from the pope that would ‘strengthen prevention and the fight against abuse on the part of the Roman Curia and the Vatican City State,’ a guide from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that would make clear the ‘duties and tasks’ of all bishops when confronting allegations of abuse; and the creation of task forces of ‘competent persons’ who could ‘help episcopal conferences and dioceses that find it difficult to confront the problems and produce initiatives for the protection of minors.’”

While none of these are new proposals, the impact of the summit, the explicit commitment of the pope, and the clear expectations of the larger world for a change in the status quo will put enormous pressure on the Vatican to deliver on those commitments while they in turn press all dioceses to do the same.

There are those in the Vatican bureaucracy, the faithful audience, who seem not to understand how devastating the scandals have been to the Catholic communities in North America, Australia, Ireland and Chile. The truth is that the proposed “concrete initiatives” have long been in the works, and it can appear that all in the Curia do not fully appreciate the scale and the scope of the emergency.

As Cardinal Oswald Gracias told impatient journalists at the final news conference, “It is not like the Holy Father snaps his fingers and everything is done all over the world.” For this reason, the summit was an opportunity also to bring pressure to bear on those in the bureaucracy who may, for a variety of reasons, be dragging their heels.

The pope’s final speech at the summit’s end disappointed some. He emphasized that the truth of the abuse in minors was a “universal problem, tragically present almost everywhere and affecting everyone,” a rationale often heard from some Churchmen angry or defensive about the criticism the Church has endured.

But the pope made clear that the Church is not just any institution. “The brutality of this worldwide phenomenon becomes all the more grave and scandalous in the Church, for it is utterly incompatible with her moral authority and ethical credibility.”

With this summit, Pope Francis has tossed down the gauntlet. The stakes are clear. In the words of Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane, “All of this will take time, but we do not have forever, and we dare not fail.”

MINORS continued from page 1

Concerning the crime of a clerical acquirer, possessing or distributing pornographic images of minors by extending the age from 14 years old to include young people under the age of 18.

Pope Francis has also expressed his intention to establish task forces “made up of competent persons” that will assist diocesan and episcopal conferences “that find it difficult to confront the problems and produce initiatives for the protection of minors,” especially when they lack the needed resources and skilled personnel.

Meanwhile, a number of survivors and advocacy groups were disappointed the pope did not go further with more direct mandates, especially in ordering bishops to implement what laws already exist.

Peter Isely, spokesman for the Ending Clergy Abuse coalition, said he wished the pope had told bishops to remove known abusers from public ministry immediately in order “to keep them from harming children. That’s pretty simple.”

Also, just as the pope had recently revised the catechism concerning the imminence of the death penalty, Isely said the pope could have changed canon law to include zero tolerance for abusers and those who protect them.

Miguel Hurtado, a survivor from Spain, told Catholic News Service (CNS) that the Church still needs a clear mechanism or process for bishop accountability and making public the dismissal of a leader for negligence.

“When changes the hearts and minds,” he said, “is seeing a colleague lose his job.”

“Why don’t we see bishops ordaining women? Because they know it is a red line, and they will be excommunicated if they cross it. Covering up child rape is not a red line” if there are no clear and serious consequences that go with it, he said.

Hurtado said if the Church fails to police itself, “what will prevent another crisis are the external checks and balances” of media outlets doing accurate investigative reporting, the trend of child victims speaking out sooner, and civil laws abolishing the statute of limitations on the abuse of minors.

Anne Barrett Doyle of BishopAccountability.org said in a press statement that the summit was only a failure in terms of needed internal reforms.

“Surprisingly, in a larger sense, it achieved a great deal” by increasing global awareness of clerical sex abuse and facilitating “connections between journalists and survivors from many countries,” she said.

“This was public education on a massive scale,” Doyle said.

In a statement provided to CNS, a group of women in the U.S. from Catholic Worker said they were in Rome for the summit supported “Pope Francis placing the spotlight on the global sexual abuse. This is good and crucial.”

“As Catholic Workers, people who have seen violence in so many forms, we resonate with his understanding that abuse of power is the root cause of the problem here,” it said.

“But where are the concrete processes to guide the bishops in assuming accountability, transparency and responsibility upon their return?”

As Pope Francis “recognized that the outrage on the street with regard to sex abuse reflected the ‘wrath of God,’ ” the Catholic Workers’ statement said, there is the continued mission for all people of God: “to be that ‘wrath’ until the violence of clergy sex abuse and cover-up is eradicated.”

Nigerian Sister Veronica Ofebrio, congregational leader of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, speaks at a briefing on the third day of the meeting on the protection of minors in the Church at the Vatican on Feb. 23. At left is Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich, (CNS/photo Paul Haring)
Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. Below is a list of services reported to The Criterion.

**Batesville Deany**
- March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
- March 24, 1 p.m. at St. Maurice, Napoleon; St. John the Baptist, Osgood; and Immaculate Conception, Milholenz, at St. Maurice, Napoleon
- March 26, 7 p.m. at St. Martin Campus, Yorkville
- April 1, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg
- April 1, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg

**Bloomington Deany**
- April 2, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- April 4, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
- April 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
- April 11, 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at St. John the Evangelist Campus, Enochsburg
- April 10, 5 a.m.-10 a.m., “12 Hours of Grace” for All at Nest Church, Martinsville
- April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
- April 11, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg

**Connersville Deany**
- March 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty
- March 25, 6 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge
- April 6, 4:30 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
- April 9, 6 p.m. for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton at St. Mary, Richmond

**Indianaapolis East Deanery**
- March 13, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- March 18, 7 p.m. for Holy Angels and St. Rita, at St. Rita
- March 25, 6:30 p.m. for Queen of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) and Our Lady of Lourdes, at Our Lady of Lourdes
- April 5, 6 p.m. at St. Michael, Greenwood
- April 6, 10 a.m.-noon at St. Michael, Greenwood
- April 9, 7 p.m. at St. Philip Neri
- April 11, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas, Fortville

**Indianaapolis North Deanery**
- April 7, 2 p.m. at St. Simon the Apostle
- April 8, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence
- April 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Mitchell

**Indianaapolis South Deanery**
- March 19, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- March 20, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ann and Joseph (Indianaapolis West Deanery) at St. Joseph
- April 4, 7 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, and Sacred Shepherd, Indianapolis, at Holy Name of Jesus
- April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Barnabas, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch, at St. Barnabas
- April 11, 7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesu Christ
- April 13, 9 a.m. St. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- April 15, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes.

bring people closer to God and one another.

“I think it’s important to make some distinctions that might rescue Lent for people this year,” he said, noting that it is a time “to get away from what is sorrowful, sadness or anger, which people are justifiably feeling,” in the current Church climate. “That is not what Lent is about,” he said, stressing that it should be a time not just for preparation for Easter. The 40 days, especially this year, should also be an effort of “muscular Christianity” or “pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps,” he added.

Father Larry said a lot of bishops have called for a year of reparation for the abuses committed by people responsible for them in the Church, which has caused some misunderstanding among Catholics who say: “Why do I have to do it? I didn’t do anything wrong?”

He also said that the purpose of penance is what people do to show sorrow for what they’ve done, while “reparation is what you do to show sorrow for what someone else has done which opens the community to God’s healing grace.”

This Lent, “We don’t put reparation on hold, we just get to work right away,” with planned repentance and reparation, he said.

Sister Teresa Maya, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word based in San Antonio, said she has been moved by the expressions of reparation by priests in her archdiocese taking “collective responsibility” for abuse and any cover-up in the Church.

The sister, former president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an umbrella group of 1,500 U.S. women’s religious communities, said it is important for the Church to begin with reparation, but it can’t end with that.

“Any form of repentance in this time has to be path away from personal and systemic sin” that led to this crisis, something she said she hasn’t seen yet.

Sister Teresa added that the moment of reconciliation, which is talked about a lot in Lent, centers on listening, and the Church still needs it to make a priority to listen to abuse survivors, but Catholics also need to listen to one another.

For the past eight months or more, this abuse crisis has become “particularly painful for everyone,” she told CNS, noting that many Catholics are still shell-shocked by it, and the question that remains is: “How do we move forward?”

The whole Church needs to play a role, she said, because it provided a time for people to examine where they are personally but also can raise the question, “Where are we?” as the Catholic Church in the United States.

And no matter where you fit in the Church, as a leader, family member or parishioner, she said the question of what needs to be done is not the same as it was

When the Church went through the sexual abuse crisis nearly 20 years ago.

She likened the Church now to the time when the Apostles were scattered, lost, uncertain and did not know what to do next.

“We have to trust our faith in the resurrection, in the grace that God will provide,” she said. “Hold the loss and grief and honor each other in this.”

“This is a ‘critical moment’ to return to the core of what Catholics believe, she said.

“We need people to return to the Church. We need their criteria; we need their personal stories not just survivors of abuse, but all who are ‘unfortunately part of the collateral damage of this scandal, people who just want to feel safe again in the Church,’” she said.

“This moment—Ash Wednesday I think specifically this year—can be even more of a reminder that in spite of all the good the Church, called by Christ, is the greatest hope for our humanity.”

Although the Church has human failings, she said, it also has a divine call for everyone in it to “go forth” after facing criticism the Church deserves—and never lose sight of its main mission: to bring “the life of the world through Jesus Christ.”
Faith
Lent is a time to strive for holiness that will last

By Fr. Geoffrey Brooke Jr.

When I was in college, there was a group of students who didn’t always practice their faith, but when Ash Wednesday rolled around they decided to band together in giving up a few particular sins common among college students.

At first this seemed like a noble pursuit in holiness and accountability. However, once Easter rolled around there were “celebrations,” which were merely opportunities to commit these same sins all over again.

It occurred to me then, “Is this the way to celebrate the resurrection of Christ? By sinning?” Christ’s death on the cross on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday are meant to free us from our sins. To celebrate said freedom by sinning is a contradiction.

This story of the college students is not too uncommon, nor is it exclusive to university campuses, but this mentality misses the mark on what Lent is truly about. Regardless of where we may be on our faith journey, as Catholics we are always called to reject sin.

In this regard, every day is Ash Wednesday, for every day we are called to make our own in our daily lives, the words that are often said when ashes are placed on the foreheads of worshippers on the first day of Lent, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” One shouldn’t just give up a sin for Lent, we should give up sins for life.

Yes, we are all sinners, and we wrestle with our sinfulness our entire life, but the intent should never be to give up sin only for a certain amount of time, but rather always to be striving for holiness.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time set aside to help us with that goal of attaining holiness. Repenting from our sins goes beyond just not sinning any more. It is the expression of our sorrow to God for the sins we have already committed.

Believing in the Gospel requires not just an intellectual assent or a simple head nod, “yeah, sure I believe that stuff,” but it begs actions that demonstrate that “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:26).

Thankfully, the Church in her wisdom and tradition provides us with some guidance as to what kinds of actions we are to take in growing in a deeper relationship with Christ during Lent: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Take note: Nowhere in those three does one find “give up sinning.” That effort is needed every day, throughout the year, throughout our lives. So while we wage the battle with sin all the time, it is still important to take advantage of the season of Lent and the Church’s encouraged practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving as a way of moving beyond the mere removal of sin, entering into a more intimate relationship with God.

**Prayer:**

Ash Wednesday is a great time to take inventory of our life of prayer: what’s going well, what’s missing. Everyone is at a different stage on his or her journey with God, so the results of the inventory will look different for each of us.

Sometimes we begin Lent with lofty goals of adding quite a bit to our prayer regimen, only to find ourselves overwhelmed and give up. Perhaps we ought to consider adding just one small practice and doing it well and consistently.

Depending upon the current routine, a simple addition could be something as easy as spending a few minutes each morning with the Mass readings of the day. When Easter rolls around, the new practice will already be a part of our new prayer routine and be something we can carry forward beyond Lent.

**Fasting:**

This is the one that everyone seems to focus on. “What are you giving up for Lent?” everyone asks. Again, the response shouldn’t be, “Sin.” Fasting goes beyond; it’s the free choice to give up something good as a form of sacrifice, an expression of sorrow for our sins.

By giving up something good, it should be something that will then lead us further from God, but instead draw us closer to him. Perhaps we can think of worldly things to which we have an unhealthy attachment.

By getting rid of something that isn’t a sin, we are able to build up self-discipline (helpful for struggles with temptation and sin), as well as to grow closer to God by becoming more detached from worldly things that are ultimately superfluous and unnecessary.

**Almsgiving:**

Ash Wednesday begins the journey of Lent that ultimately leads us to the cross, to Jesus’ ultimate act of love, the sacrificial gift of his very self. We are called to imitate that same kind of love through sacrifice.

One of the ways we can imitate that sacrifice is through our financial offering to the Church, charitable organizations and those in need. The challenge is to see this giving not from a place of obligation, but rather because of the tax credit or from what’s leftover at the end.

Christ gave of himself so that we might have eternal life. We, too, must see our giving as a sacrifice for the benefit of others.

Lent provides us time to engage in an “audit” of our almsgiving, to ask ourselves about the motivations behind our giving and to see how we might be able to more fully imitate Christ by increasing our sacrificial gift, not for our own benefit, but for others.

(Father Geoffrey Brooke Jr. is a priest of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Mo. He earned a licentiate in fundamental theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. His website is frgeoffrey.com and his social media handle is @FrGeoffrey.)

Son’s actions help Mom realize what’s important in life

It’s All Good/Patti Lamb

Son’s actions help Mom realize what’s important in life

“Is that a new throw rug?” my husband asked a couple weeks ago, when he entered the laundry room.

“Yes,” I replied. “I’ve decided to decorate our home, which has been for sale for a while now.”

The next week, he commented on the pillows on the couch.

“Where are our regular pillows?” he asked.

I explained that I thought changing our toss pillows on the couch would make the room “pop” to prospective buyers.

When I bought yet another succulent to display by my kitchen window, it’s kind of been like an Easter egg hunt around here with all these little things you’re buying to make buyers think this place is move-in ready.

He followed up with, “But a throw rug isn’t going to be the deciding factor in selling this house.”

“We’ve done all we can do, and this in God’s hands,” he added.

And he’s right. My St. Joseph statue was buried in the yard. I had the house blessed for a second time by our deacon, even though our priest had already blessed it when we first moved in 14 years ago.

“I’m a little bit ‘Blessing hasn’t worn off,’” my husband kindly reminded me, “but if you feel better with ‘Blessing 2.0,’ then I support you.”

I even put holy water on the doorknobs before showings.

Before we wrote off a few tacos short of a combo platter, I’d like to say in my defense that I’ve just been trying to give my all. I frantically clean before showings and have given the sale of our home all my attention, which isn’t right.

In God’s Colossus, my mother wrote, my devotionals, I came across this passage on waiting:

“When there is no work in life so hard as waiting, and yet I say wait. Wait until your will. Proof is of my love and of my certainty of your true discipleship. … All motion is more easy than calm waiting. So many of my followers have marred their work and hindered the progress of my kingdom by activity. … I will not overtry your spiritual strength.”

Enough already, Patti. I’ve done my best, and I need to let God do the rest.

We had a showing the next day, and instead of going downtown to detail the baseboards, I walked in the kitchen and asked my son how his day was. And an incredibly thoughtful household. My 14-year-old boy talked to me. He told me about his day and his recent algebra concerns, and I was quite just amazed. When I thanked him for opening up to me, he commented that I’ve been so focused on the house that he didn’t want to add to my stress with his worries.

That moment was a wake-up call. I’d been giving all of my attention to the wrong cause. I need to give this house sale obsession to God and stop worrying. It is right in front of me.

The following morning, my son was leaving for school and I went in a huge, forehead-forward contraction with him, picked up the sides and simmered in my own anger.

Some suggest a gratitude journal sounds too simplistic, Pollyanna-ish. “There are some things you should be angry about.” Righteous anger is good, they say.

While it is tempting to think that gratitude can help you to sleep more peacefully if you record it for some time, some people like to write. OK, you can do an “examen,” or a gratitude review, mentally. It’s hard, though, to then focus on gratitude, you’ll tend to forget to write.

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The Book of Sirach is the source of the first reading for this weekend’s Mass. Sirach does not appear in most Bibles used by Protestant traditions. So people from these faith communities at times ask Catholics why Sirach was added to Catholic versions of the Old Testament? The better question would be, “Why was it eliminated from Protestant versions?”

The answer is that the translators of the King James Bible and other Protestant translations preferred to use an ancient Jewish list of inspired Scriptures instead of the affirmation of Church councils of Sirach being part of the inspired word of God.

The King James Bible included Sirach in a section known as the “deuterocanonical” (non-inspired books). It is known in that translation as the “Book of Ecclesiastics.”

As for this reading itself, the meaning is obvious in the examples of shaking the sieve, molding the clay into a vessel, and tending the tree until it bears fruit. Many circumstances in life do not just happen. Human activity deliberately shapes them. We create the reality of our lives by who we are and by what we do.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians is the second reading. The pagan, greedy and licentious atmosphere of the great city of Corinth challenged Paul again and again. It was not easy, and no one who reads this passage today can say that St. Paul felt in dealing with the disappointment and exasperation that was not easy, and no one who reads this passage today can say that St. Paul felt in dealing with the atmosphere of the great city of Corinth.

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Winter in Washington

A statue of St. Francis of Assisi and a child is seen during a snowstorm on the grounds of the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington on Feb. 20. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

CHICAGO (CNS)—The canonization cause for Father Augustine Tolton is just one step away from going to Pope Francis for the priest to be declared “venerable.”

On Feb. 5, the feast of St. Agatha, a nine-member Vatican theological commission unanimously voted that Father Tolton’s cause be moved forward to the cardinals who serve as the Congregation for Saints for Causes for a final vote to send a decree of the priest’s “heroic virtues” to Pope Francis for his approval.

Upon the promulgation of that decree, Father Tolton would receive the title “venerable,” which indicates he lived the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance at a heroic level.

The next steps would be beatification and canonization. In general, one miracle attributed to the saint candidate’s intercession is needed for beatification, and a second such miracle is needed for canonization.

Father Tolton, the first African-American to be ordained a Catholic priest for the diocese of an American city, was born in slavery, ordained in 1856 in Rome because a seminary would not accept him, and died serving in Chicago in 1897.

Father James Healy (1830-1900) is considered by some to be the first black U.S. Catholic priest in the U.S. He was bracial, his father was Irish. Born in Georgia, he was raised by his mother in Paris for ministry in the U.S. He later became a bishop, heading the Diocese of Portland, Maine.

If canonized, Father Tolton would be the nation’s first African-American saint.

Father Tolton’s story represents the long and rich history of African-American Catholics, who have lived through troubling chapters and setbacks in American history,” said Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Joseph N. Perry, archdiocesan postulator for the cause.

“Lessons from his early life as a slave and the prejudice he endured in becoming a priest still apply today with our current problems of racial and social injustices and inequities that divide neighborhoods, churches and communities by race, class and ethnicity. His work isn’t done. We will continue to honor his life and legacy of goodness, inclusivity, empathy and resolve in how we treat one another,” Bishop Perry said.

During his time as a slave, he didn’t start off as a black man or an American, yet he had a vision of a different course for his life and what he would become.

Bishop Perry said unexplained physical healings have been reported to the cause and are under investigation.

The Archdiocese of Chicago formally opened Father Tolton’s cause for canonization in 2010.

Norbertine Father Gerard Jordan holds the canonical title “promoter of the cause” and travels the country sharing the message of Father Tolton and the canonization efforts on behalf of Bishop Perry.

He said Father Tolton’s story transcends the lines of race, gender and priesthood.

“If we start with the black part, then it’s just a nice Black History Month story. If we start from the priestly part you only include the ordained,” Father Gerold told the Chicago Catholic, the archdiocesan newspaper. “First off, he didn’t start off as a black man or an ordained priest. The first thing that Tolton was was a created child of God. You gotta start there.”

“The first experience Tolton would have recognized, and it would have had a physical and spiritual effect on him, was his baptism,” Father Gerold said. “If you connect with his baptism, then everybody is included and can relate to his story.”

All the appointed bishops are connected, he said.

“The baptism of Tolton tells the real story that we’re supposed to be paying attention to, and that’s the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Father Gerold said. “Everything that Tolton experienced in life is the Gospel story.”

Father Tolton had great love for the Church, the people of God.

“Hesaw himself connected to the Church who loved him. His mother, Martha Jane, was his physical mother, but his spiritual mother was very real to him,” Father Gerold said. “He said himself that the Catholic Church was the only thing that would help him to beat the double slavery of his mind and his body.”

In his lifetime, Father Tolton also talked about bow his mother the Church took him as a poor slave to become fully who he was in the eyes of God.

“Everybody has to realize that the greatest inheritance we will ever receive is our baptism,” Father Gerold said. “It is your decision whether or not you are going to keep that inheritance and invest in it, or whether you’re going to squander it or give it away and abandon it. Tolton never abandoned his inheritance.”

His story begins and ends there, the priest said.

“Once people relate to Tolton’s baptism, they will find pieces of their life that they can relate to, too,” he said.
Creative cuisine lessons help whip up self-reliant seminarians

By Katie Rutter

Catholic News Service

ST. MEINRAD, Ind. (CNS)—Familiar sounds of sizzling meat and clanging cutlery associated with food preparation offered a different kind of doctrine than one might expect in a third-floor room at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

Inside, several seminarians stood around a large U-shaped countertop, chopping, stirring, searing and boiling. Their instructor, Benedictine Father Julian Peters, watched the whole operation and occasionally stepped in to add an ingredient or test a consistency.

While most of the classes at this southern Indiana seminary focus on spiritual, pastoral and intellectual formation, a one-day cooking class on Jan. 13 aimed to help these future-priests develop a function as whole—and wholesome—human beings.

“It’s a matter of stewardship, of being able to take care of oneself,” said Father Julian, “so that we can be healthy and happy and take care of others.”

Saint Meinrad is currently forming 120 men for the priesthood, hailing from 30 dioceses—including the Archdiocese of Indianapolis—and nine religious communities.

During the two weeks between school semesters, known as the “January interterm,” instructors tackle a variety of topics not covered in the regular curriculum.

Along with cooking, studies include pastoral councils, art, suicide prevention, bereavement care, basic plumbing and mechanics.

“The basis of seminary formation, as Pope John Paul II reminded us, is human formation,” said Benedictine Father Tobias Colgan, vicar rector of the seminary.

“Not only in a person’s own personal development and self-understanding, but also in the human skills that that person will need in service of the Church and of the people that he will be ministering to,” he told Catholic News Service.

Saint Meinrad Seminary installed a large kitchen in one of the rooms for precisely this purpose. Eight burners, four ovens, two sinks and plenty of countertop space give the seminarians an opportunity to learn a skill that may have been overlooked.

A priest is frequently the sole occupant of a rectory, so he must be able to take care of himself, often while juggling many other obligations.

“They’ve got Mass and then they’ve got to go visit the hospital and then there’s a sick call at another rectory, but then they’ve got pastoral counsel, finance—they have all this stuff to do and it’s very easy for them to put themselves last on the list,” said seminarian Michael Bialorucki, who spent the semester serving at a parish in his home diocese of Toledo, Ohio.

“I’ve seen a lot of priests just themselves McDonald’s or Wendy’s. It will eventually hurt their health,” said Tae Sang Yun, a seminarian from Busan, South Korea.

The men in the cooking class are on track to be ordained as priests in 2020.

Father Julian said his goal, in the brief period of time set for the cooking class, is to give them tips on how to improvise in the kitchen, what ingredients to keep stocked and how to use tools, like a slow-cooker, to reduce the hands-on preparation time.

As the men together created a chicken soup, complete with dumplings, vegetables and a leftover rotisserie chicken, Father Julian also praised the “therapeutic value” of cooking in a priest’s life.

“In our ministry, we don’t see how things turn out,” he said. “We baptize a baby, but you don’t know how their life always pans out. You receive the vows of a couple at marriage, but then they transfer out of the parish or we get transferred.”

When cooking, however, Father Julian said that “you can see something through to completion, and there’s that human sense of satisfaction that comes with that.”

The seminarians eventually cooked two different types of soup, several seasoned roasts and bread smothered in a cheesy crab dip.

According to Father Tobias, the seminary has placed renewed emphasis on human formation in the wake of revelations related to the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Men must be prepared—spiritually, intellectually, mentally and physically—for the unique demands of the priesthood.

In addition to the classes offered during the interterm, the school hosts 30 conferences throughout the year about other human formation topics.

Father Tobias said that the seminary staff also tries to discern and fill the individual needs of each student.

“We have 11 priests who live full time in the seminary to model good human formation and to be able to gauge the human formation and the growth in human formation in the candidates,” he said.

“I can testify that [with] this generation of seminarians, they’re aware of the history, they’re aware of the crisis, but they’re not deterred by it,” Father Tobias said. “In effect, they’re probably even more on fire to become their best selves so that in their turn they can be a solution.”

While none claimed that a seminary class alone would resolve the clergy abuse crisis, both students and staff implied that a priest’s knowledge of self-care was an important ingredient in this mix.

“The fact that we were called at this time of crisis, and that we can be better, we can be healther,” Bialorucki said.

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, Ind.)

Below, Peter Chineele, a seminarian from the Diocese of Springfield, Ill., flips a nap as the instructor of an annual cooking class, Benedictine Father Julian Peters, gives tips at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad on Jan. 13. Benedictine Brother Theodore Haggerty looks on. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

Seminarians Danny Taylor from the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., left, and Peter Grodi from the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, spread a freshly made crab dip on bread during a cooking class for seminarians, held at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad on Jan. 18. Benedictine Brother Theodore Haggerty looks on. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

To see a related video, go to: youtube.com/Nes1U2Pzd0

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Catholic newspaper. The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend contains 81 parishes, 43 Catholic school systems, 120 men for the priesthood, hailing from 30 dioceses—including the Archdiocese of Indianapolis—and nine religious communities.

Saint Meinrad is currently forming 120 men for the priesthood, hailing from 30 dioceses—including the Archdiocese of Indianapolis—and nine religious communities.

During the two weeks between school semesters, known as the “January interterm,” instructors tackle a variety of topics not covered in the regular curriculum.

Along with cooking, studies include pastoral councils, art, suicide prevention, bereavement care, basic plumbing and mechanics.

“The basis of seminary formation, as Pope John Paul II reminded us, is human formation,” said Benedictine Father Tobias Colgan, vicar rector of the seminary.

“Not only in a person’s own personal development and self-understanding, but also in the human skills that that person will need in service of the Church and of the people that he will be ministering to,” he told Catholic News Service.

Saint Meinrad Seminary installed a large kitchen in one of the rooms for precisely this purpose. Eight burners, four ovens, two sinks and plenty of countertop space give the seminarians an opportunity to learn a skill that may have been overlooked.

A priest is frequently the sole occupant of a rectory, so he must be able to take care of himself, often while juggling many other obligations.

“They’ve got Mass and then they’ve got to go visit the hospital and then there’s a sick call at another rectory, but then they’ve got pastoral counsel, finance—they have all this stuff to do and it’s very easy for them to put themselves last on the list,” said seminarian Michael Bialorucki, who spent the semester serving at a parish in his home diocese of Toledo, Ohio.

“I’ve seen a lot of priests just themselves McDonald’s or Wendy’s. It will eventually hurt their health,” said Tae Sang Yun, a seminarian from Busan, South Korea.

The men in the cooking class are on track to be ordained as priests in 2020.

Father Julian said his goal, in the brief period of time set for the cooking class, is to give them tips on how to improvise in the kitchen, what ingredients to keep stocked and how to use tools, like a slow-cooker, to reduce the hands-on preparation time.

As the men together created a chicken soup, complete with dumplings, vegetables and a leftover rotisserie chicken, Father Julian also praised the “therapeutic value” of cooking in a priest’s life.

“In our ministry, we don’t see how things turn out,” he said. “We baptize a baby, but you don’t know how their life always pans out. You receive the vows of a couple at marriage, but then they transfer out of the parish or we get transferred.”

When cooking, however, Father Julian said that “you can see something through to completion, and there’s that human sense of satisfaction that comes with that.”

The seminarians eventually cooked two different types of soup, several seasoned roasts and bread smothered in a cheesy crab dip.

According to Father Tobias, the seminary has placed renewed emphasis on human formation in the wake of revelations related to the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Men must be prepared—spiritually, intellectually, mentally and physically—for the unique demands of the priesthood.

In addition to the classes offered during the interterm, the school hosts 30 conferences throughout the year about other human formation topics.

Father Tobias said that the seminary staff also tries to discern and fill the individual needs of each student.

“We have 11 priests who live full time in the seminary to model good human formation and to be able to gauge the human formation and the growth in human formation in the candidates,” he said.

“I can testify that [with] this generation of seminarians, they’re aware of the history, they’re aware of the crisis, but they’re not deterred by it,” Father Tobias said. “In effect, they’re probably even more on fire to become their best selves so that in their turn they can be a solution.”

While none claimed that a seminary class alone would resolve the clergy abuse crisis, both students and staff implied that a priest’s knowledge of self-care was an important ingredient in this mix.

“The fact that we were called at this time of crisis, and that we can be better, we can be healther,” Bialorucki said.

(Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, Ind.)

Below, Peter Chineele, a seminarian from the Diocese of Springfield, Ill., flips a nap as the instructor of an annual cooking class, Benedictine Father Julian Peters, gives tips at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad on Jan. 13. Benedictine Brother Theodore Haggerty looks on. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)

Seminarians Danny Taylor from the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., left, and Peter Grodi from the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, spread a freshly made crab dip on bread during a cooking class for seminarians, held at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad on Jan. 18. Benedictine Brother Theodore Haggerty looks on. (CNS photo/Katie Rutter)
Cathedral's wrestling team earns second straight state title

By John Shaughnessy

The wrestling squad of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis knew it faced a tough challenge in trying to earn a second consecutive state championship as a team.

When Cathedral earned the team title in 2018, it did so with 10 wrestlers advancing to the finals of the Indiana High School Athletic Association state championship.

This year, the Cathedral team advanced only five wrestlers to the finals so head coach Sean McGinley understood there was “little wiggle room” if the team wanted to repeat as champs.

To anyone outside the Cathedral program, that margin of error seemed to be slipping away as senior Jordan Slivka entered the last period of his individual championship match, down by four points to his opponent in the 160-pound weight class.

Yet after coaching Jordan for four years, McGinley knew that the senior never gives up and usually finds a way to push through in the toughest of times.

So he wasn’t surprised when Jordan rallied to win. In becoming an individual state champion for the second year in a row, the senior helped Cathedral clinch the team title again on Feb. 16.

“Jordan has a history of grinding out close wins, and the other kids battled, too,” McGinley says. “It’s just about the mental toughness these kids have.”

Elliott Rodgers, a junior at Cathedral, also came from behind in his match to become the state champion in the 152-pound weight class.

Senior Alex Mosconi finished second in the 145-pound weight class while freshman Zeke Seltzer was runner-up in the 113-pound weight class.

And senior Lukasz Walendarz completed the scoring for Cathedral with an eighth-place finish in the 126-pound weight class.

“In 2018, we won a lot of close matches coming from behind,” so I didn’t think we could top that,” McGinley says. “But 2019 was even more exciting. With just five kids, it left us with little wiggle room. They had to compete at their highest level, and they did. It was relief and joy when we won because these kids work so hard.”

McGinley credits the leadership of the seniors for the team title.

“This group of seniors has probably had more success as a team than any that has gone through Cathedral,” says McGinley, who has coached at the Catholic private school for 19 years. “In their four years, they finished third, third, first and first in the state championships as a team. It’s been an incredible journey from Easter to Easter toward the fulfillment of the salvation” that all Christians have received through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Reflecting on the Lenten “journey of conversion,” the pope explained that when Christians live as children of God, all creation benefits from the grace of redemption.

However, he warned, “the harmony generated by redemption is constantly threatened by the negative power of sin and death.”

Lent is time to let go of ‘destructive’ selfishness, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Lenten season reminds Catholics that overindulgence repudiates communion with God, with others and with creation, Pope Francis said.

“A failure to live as children of God can give way to sin, which “takes the shape of greed and unbridled selfishness,” McGinley says.

The pope’s Lenten message, which was released at the Vatican on Feb. 26, centered on a verse from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans in which the Apostle proclaims creation’s “eager longing for the redemption of the children of God” (Rom 8:19).

This longing, the pope said, is “a journey from Easter to Easter toward the fulfillment of the salvation” that all Christians have received through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Additionally, almsgiving helps Christians “escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves, thus shielding the illusionary belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us.”

Cardinal Pell convicted on five counts; verdict will appeal, lawyers say

MELBOURNE, Australia (CNS)—An Australian court found Cardinal George Pell guilty on five charges related to the sexual abuse of two 13-year-old boys; sentencing is expected to be held in early March, but the cardinal’s legal team has announced plans to appeal the conviction.

While the appeal is in process, Pope Francis has confirmed the “precautionary measures” prohibiting Cardinal Pell from publicly exercising his ministry as a priest and bishop, and from having contact with minors.

Before the appeal, Cardinal Pell is expected to be sentenced to serve jail time for the five counts: one count of “sexual penetration,” in this case oral sex, and four counts of indecent acts with or in the presence of a minor under 16 years of age. Each count carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

“He is innocent,” the cardinal said, “and we commit ourselves anew to doing everything possible to ensure that the Church is a safe place for all, especially the young and the vulnerable.”

While the appeal process continues, the cardinal’s lawyers asked the Australian Court of Appeal to order Cardinal Pell to be released from prison pending the outcome of the appeal.

The bishop’s agreement that everyone should be equal under the law, and we respect our legal system,” the cardinal’s lawyer said.

“We ask God to help us set out on a path of redemptive suffering, of conversion, of truth and of service,” said the pope.

“Lent is a moment to see the darkness of our own sinfulness in the face of the Church’s sins,” the pope said.

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