Superintendent gives advice for students, families to make the most of their time at home as they deal with the impact of the coronavirus

By John Shaughnessy

With Catholic schools in the archdiocese being closed at least until April 6 as a precaution against the coronavirus, The Criterion asked the superintendent of archdiocesan schools to share her advice to students, parents and families on making the most of this time academically and spiritually.

Gina Fleming was also asked to offer her thoughts on traveling during spring break—and on allaying the fears children may have related to the coronavirus.

Fleming gives her thoughts and insights on all these areas in this conversation with The Criterion. As a mother of a Catholic school student, she also shares a chart that parents could use to provide structure to a child’s day to continue learning and growing while he or she is away from their school building. (See page 8 for the chart.)

Here is the text of the conversation with Fleming:

Q. What advice would you give to parents for handling the concerns of children who are worried and even fearful because of all the dismal news surrounding the coronavirus?

A. “As with all things, young people are consistently watching us as their role models. If we remain calm and ensure that conversations on this matter are based on factual information and logical reasoning, our children will be much better informed and will be able to use this as a true learning opportunity. Reinforce the importance of hand-washing and other hygiene practices as well as proper responses to coughing, sneezing and food preparation.

Q. As a parent of a student in a Catholic school, what overall advice would you give to parents in helping their students stay focused academically during this time?

A. “Setting time frames and expectations up front is important. I suggest that if you feel overwhelmed, take time for prayer … and then consider writing a thank you note to the awesome teachers who care for and help your child every day. Also, do what you can to make this time fun and memorable while honoring the priorities of enhancing your child’s faith formation and education.

“High school students, this is a great time to update resumes, explore career opportunities online, complete summer job applications, and apply for applicable scholarships.”

Q. E-learning will be one important avenue to try to keep students learning and focused in school in the coming weeks. Yet not every family in Catholic schools has access to a home computer for e-learning. What advice would you give to parents in this situation to help them keep their children engaged academically during this time?

A. “Our Catholic schools know their families very well. Those who have families for whom internet access is limited, work packets have been created and made available. Additionally, several of our schools are allowing students to check out Chromebooks or iPads for use at home, while still others are leaving a section of the school open for students to come in and use the technology with parent supervision. In this case, school leaders are spreading students/families out to honor the social distancing protocols that have been enacted.”

System launched to report sexual misconduct of U.S. bishops

Catholic diocese in the world to create procedures for such reporting by June 1, 2020.

The requirements put forth in “Vos estis lux mundi” do not replace systems already in place in every diocese and archdiocese in the United States for reporting abuse by clergy, religious and Church employees or volunteers. The

Bishops from across the U.S. pray during a June 14, 2017, Mass in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during that year’s spring meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops held in Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)
Pope prays for clergy, public service employees working during lockdown

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Standing in the window of the library of the Apostolic Palace overlooking an empty St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis blessed the city of Rome still under lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

After reciting the Angelus prayer, the pope said that while people find themselves “more or less isolated” during the pandemic, the lockdown can also be a time to “rediscover and deepen the value of the communion that unites all the members of the Church.”

“United to Christ we are never alone, but instead form one body, of which he is the head. It is a union that is nourished with prayer and also with spiritual communion in the Eucharist, a practice that is recommended when it isn’t possible to receive the sacrament. I say this to everyone, especially to people who live alone,” he said.

Earlier in the day, the pope celebrated a livestreamed Mass at the Domus Sanctorum Marthe, where he offered prayers for “all those who are working to guarantee public services: those working in pharmacies, supermarkets, transportation and police officers.”

“Let us pray for all those who are working so that in this time, social and civil life can continue,” the pope said.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. John, which recounted Jesus’ conversation with a Samaritan woman near Jacob’s well. The Samaritan woman’s conversion, he said, did not come from the theoretical debate about which mountain God should be worshipped, but by Jesus manifesting his divinity by speaking the truth about her life.

Italian priests, religious women are among victims of COVID-19 in Italy

ROME (CNS)—A number of priests and religious women have been among the more than 2,100 people who have died in Italy because of illness connected with COVID-19.

One member of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity died on March 15 at the age of 88 after she and 23 members of her community in Torton, near Milan, were evacuated by helicopter on March 13 and hospitalized for fever and trouble breathing. Another unidentified nun was said to be in critical condition, ANSA, the Italian news agency, reported on March 15.

In the hard-hit Diocese of Bergamo, Bishop Francesco Beschi said on March 16 that many of his priests have been exposed to the virus. Twenty have had symptoms serious enough to be hospitalized while six have died in the past week.

In another part of northern Italy, Father Guido Mortari, 83, died on March 13 of pneumonia; his test results for COVID-19 had not come back at the time of his death. He had served as a parish priest in his hometown of Reggio Emilia for more than 40 years.

In Cremona, Msgr. Vincenzo Rini, 75, died on March 14 after being hospitalized because of COVID-19. He was a journalist and directed the diocesan weekly, Catholic Life, for more than 30 years. He also served as president of SIR, the news agency of the Italian bishops’ conference.

WASHINGTON (CNS)—At a time when the fragility of human life because of the coronavirus, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), shared a prayer for people who are ill with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, and those responding to the pandemic.

“Again we are reminded of our common humanity—that the peoples of this world are our brothers and sisters, that we are all one family under God,” he said in a March 13 statement.

Reminding the faithful that God “does not abandon us,” even now in this time of trial and testing, the archbishop urged people to remember the importance of having hope in Jesus.

“Now is the time to intensify our prayers and sacrifices for the love of God and the love of our neighbor. Let us draw closer to one another in our love for him, and rediscover the things that truly matter in our lives,” he said.

In union with Pope Francis, “let us pray in solidarity for our brothers and sisters here and around the world who are sick,” Archbishop Gomez exhorted.

“Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace.”

He also urged prayers for doctors, nurses and caregivers and for public health officials and all civic leaders. “May God grant them courage and prudence as they seek to respond to this emergency with compassion and in service to the common good.”

The text of Archbishop Gomez’s prayer follows:

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas. We fly to you today as your beloved children. We ask you to intercede for us with your Son, as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother, and gain for our nation and world, and for all our families and loved ones, the protection of your holy angels, that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted, we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance. Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful, wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing, teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind. Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence, knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother, health of the sick and cause of our joy. Shelter us under the mantle of your protection, keep us in the embrace of your arms, help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Official Appointment

Effective Immediately

Rev. Bino Mathew, Archdiocese of Imphal, India, to parochial vicar of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis.

(Announcement is from the office of the Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis.)

USCCB president offers reflection, prayer in this time of coronavirus

USCBB president Archbishop Charles C. Thompson offers a reflection and a prayer for those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.'
Measure promoting respect for life among ICC’s 2020 successes

By Victoria Arthur

A major pro-life victory was among the highlights of the 2020 legislative session of the Indiana General Assembly, which saw successes as well as setbacks for the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC). Senate Bill 299, a measure that clarifies requirements for abortion providers to treat fetal remains with dignity, passed both chambers of the state legislature with bipartisan support and at press time was awaiting Gov. Eric Holcomb’s signature.

Author by Sen. Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne), the bill gives direction to the Indiana State Department of Health and augments a 2016 state law regarding the respectful disposition of fetal remains after abortion, which was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court after being challenged by the abortion industry.

If signed into law, Senate Bill 299 will mandate that abortion providers in Indiana have policies in place with a funeral home or licensed burial provider to dispose of fetal remains by burial or cremation. “This is a very positive outcome, and it needed to be signed,” said Glenn Tebbe, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. “The clarification and implementation of the law stating that fetal remains be treated with dignity as human remains and not as medical waste is a significant step forward. The ICC always puts respect for life at the top of its priorities, and we applaud lawmakers and legislators for taking this important stand.”

The 2020 legislative session, which concluded on March 11, marked the final session with Tebbe’s longtime presence at the Statehouse. Tebbe led the ICC for one with Tebbe’s longtime presence at the Statehouse. Tebbe led the ICC for 16 years before transitioning the executive director role to Angela Espada on Jan. 1. He continued to collaborate with Espada throughout the session and will remain involved in ICC business until his anticipated retirement in mid-May.

As at past years, the ICC promoted certain legislation in keeping with Catholic social teaching, while opposing other measures.

“We had many bills that would have been detrimental to the well-being of society that were fortunately not heard,” Tebbe said. “Those included bills concerning physician-assisted suicide and gestational surrogacy.”

Education is also a key priority of the ICC, and Tebbe and Espada point to positive moves on that front this year. Among the numerous measures that sought to streamline bureaucracy in education was House Bill 1003, which reduces ever-growing requirements for teacher training. Tebbe emphasized that this legislation, which moved forward with broad support, will benefit all schools in Indiana, both public and nonpublic.

Another measure backed by the ICC was House Bill 1066, an omnibus education bill that included closing certain gaps in school voucher eligibility for siblings and foster children. Although that language was eventually stripped from the bill, Tebbe said he was heartened by the tone of the debate and the fact that many lawmakers indicated it was possible to make such provisions more successful in next year’s longer legislative session, which will include the creation and passage of the state’s biennial budget.

“The discussion was very positive, without the animosity that is sometimes there with regard to the school choice program,” Tebbe said. “Although in the end the law wasn’t what we hoped it would be in this being a non-budget year, we heard from many legislators that they intend to make that change next year.”

Another ICC-supported bill was signed into law by Holcomb on the final day of the legislative session House Bill 1009, authored by Rep. Chuck Goodrich (R-Noblesville), which will benefit poor families by exempting a student’s income earned through a paid internship or other work-based opportunity from their family’s eligibility for certain government-assistance programs. Those include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more commonly known as food stamps, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

At the same time, a long overdue modernization of TANF itself was passed over again, to the dismay of the ICC and other advocates for the poor. Other setbacks during the legislative session included the failure of Senate Bill 67, a measure that would have given more authority to township trustees to aid the homeless in their area who may not be from their township or cannot prove their legal residence.

“This session had some disappointing moments, when legislation that would have helped the poor or vulnerable did not move forward,” Espada said. “There were also many high points. For example, one of the highlights was having Glenn as a source of information and knowledge. It was an honor to have him accompany me through my first session, and it remains an honor for me to represent the Church.”

Tebbe said the ICC is in good hands moving forward under Espada’s leadership.

“She embraced this role, was a quick learner, and was very effective,” Tebbe said. “I look forward to her continuing what is now a more than 50-year tradition of the ICC at the Statehouse.

We are one of the few religious entities that have an ongoing and sustained presence there, and our conference is still relevant and effective, particularly when we work in harmony with other like-minded individuals and groups. We are even more effective when we have the Catholic—faithful echos Church teaching and reminding legislators that they’re watching and they’re interested.”

“Legislators—both Catholic and non-Catholic—do want to know where the Church stands on many issues,” Tebbe continued. “They recognize that we are a consistent moral voice, and we don’t have an ideological or party affiliation. I’ve been privileged to have this position, and whatever successes we have had have been a team effort.”

For more detailed information regarding these bills and other priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacatholic.org. This website offers access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on a wide range of issues and ways to contact elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachi Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

Pope Francis prays family relationships thrive while stuck at home

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis prayed family relationships thrive while stuck at home during a live broadcast of his daily morning Mass on March 16. Pope Francis again prayed for the many people who have fallen ill and for families who, like all citizens, have been required to isolate themselves in their homes to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

“Thinking of the families under lockdown, children who aren’t going to school, parents who cannot leave the house, some who are in quarantine,” he said at the beginning of Mass. “May the Lord help them discover new ways, new expressions of love, of living together in this new situation,” he said.

“It is a wonderful occasion for rediscovering true affection with creativity in the family. Let us pray for families so that relationships in the family at this time always thrive for the good,” he said.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the tendency of people to think that God only acts in big, impressive ways, leading them to dismiss or even scorn the ways he manifests himself—always in simple ways.

“Our God lets us understand that he always operates in simplicity, in the simplicity of the house of Nazareth, in the simplicity of everyday work, in the simplicity of prayer,” he said.

“Instead, the worldly spirit leads us to vanity, to appearances,” and when people start to become indignant, their scorn leads to violence, the pope added.

“Disdain is an attitude of the arrogant,” who are spiritually impoverished and live with “the illusion of being more than they are,” he said.

“Even we can have this happen to us,” becoming “scandalized” by God’s simplicity, “the simplicity of the poor.”

The temptation may be to look at these simple things and say, “But no, this is not God. No. Our God is more refined, wiser, more important. God does not operate in this simplicity,” the pope said.

“And this disdain always leads to violence, both physical violence and the violence of gossip,” he said, praying that people would reflect on what they do when they do not understand the simplicity of God.
The Church’s ‘both/and’ response to the coronavirus

IndianaPpolis Archibishop Charles C. Thompson has often reminded us that the Catholic Church’s position on important issues is rarely an “either/or.” Most often, our Church views things from a more inclusive “both/and” perspective. So, for example, we both love sinners and hate the sins they commit. And we believe we are both just and merciful, both holding us accountable for our actions and allowing us ample opportunities to repent and seek his forgiveness.

The Catholic Church’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic reflects this both/and perspective. On the one hand, we must act out of an abundance of caution in order to protect the health and well-being of everyone. On the other hand, in these challenging times we place our trust in the healing power of God and, in the final analysis, we turn to him alone. As a Church, the men and women of our Church and our local, state, and national agencies, including our bishops and pastors must guide us in both trusting God and in respecting the decisions of civil authorities and medical professionals.

As is always the case in these situations, translating moral principles into practical actions requires prudence and, in many cases, courage. Beneficient Faith Mark A. O’Keefe, professor of moral theology at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in Saint Meinrad, addresses this issue in his book Virtue Abounding. According to Father Mark in the introduction to his book, “The Catholic Church, of course, continues to believe in moral rules that can be applied generally. There are some things that are black or white, right or wrong. Still, even contemporary Catholic teaching reflects a greater sense that there is more ambiguity than we might once have thought, and there are more areas in which people really do have to decide for themselves about what’s right or wrong for them in a particular situation. There is black and white, but there are also areas of gray.”

The worldwide crisis (pandemic) we are experiencing now presents our Church with plenty of gray areas. On the one hand, the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is sacred. For people who are healthy enough to participate, the graces received through participation in the holy Eucharist are needed now more than ever as we confront this personal and global crisis. On the other hand, the common good of all requires that the virus be contained and that we eliminate the public health risks presented by large gatherings of people. As a result, bishops in various regions of the world, including throughout the state of Indiana, have suspended all public celebrations of the liturgy. In addition, in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and many other dioceses in the U.S. and throughout the world, schools have been closed and Church activities are being severely curtailed except when necessary to care for the pastoral needs of people, especially the poor and vulnerable. These unprecedented steps are being taken out of an abundance of caution, and with profound respect for the health and safety of all. But these decisions remain controversial—well within the gray areas of moral decision-making.

Some argue that it’s a mistake to restrict access to the grace of the Eucharist during this global crisis. Others, including Pope Francis, worry that efforts to contain the spread of this potentially deadly virus—while necessary in many cases—will cause us to turn inward and neglect those who are most in need of our care and assistance. That’s why the Vatican has repeatedly assured the world community of the Holy See’s continuing support for health care professionals and facilities in various parts of the world, especially in very remote areas in great difficulty, trusting in the active solidarity of all.

The fact is that the Church must make a prudent, courageous decision to both affirm the truth of God’s presence and healing power, and to participate in the very practical efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus by limiting public gatherings and social interactions. The both/and principle is vitally important here.

During this most difficult time in the life of our Church and our local, state, national and global communities, it’s more important than ever to observe the Lenten practices of prayer, self-denial and stewardship of all God’s gifts. Let’s take care of ourselves and, at the same time, care for the needs of others. Let’s also pray that the wisdom of “the Catholic both/and” will guide Church leaders through the gray areas to the light of Christ. —Daniel Conway
Eyes of faith can cure all forms of blindness

“Entonces le dijo: ‘Yo vine a este mundo para juicio; para que los que no ven, vean, y para que los que ven se vuelvan ciegos’” (Jn 9:39).

The Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Jn 9:1-41) offers us a sustained reflection on different forms of blindness. First, there is the physical blindness of “the man born blind” (Jn 9:1). The second form of blindness in this Gospel story is psychological. This is the refusal to believe what we have seen with our own eyes. A third form of blindness is spiritual, the inability to recognize God’s grace in our lives.

The disciples are looking for an explanation for the man’s blindness. They want to know if his parents’ sins were the cause. Jesus dismisses the idea that physical disability is a consequence of sin. “Neither he nor his parents sinned,” he says. He is blind “so that the works of God might be made visible through him” (Jn 9:3). God’s ways are not our ways.

The man’s condition provides an occasion for God’s healing power to be demonstrated and for the works of the one who sent me while it is day,” Jesus says. “Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:4-5).

The light of Christ illumines our blindness. Unfortunately, the man’s neighbors could not accept this. They deny that the man whom Jesus has cured is the same man they are used to seeing as a blind beggar.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Hasn’t this is the one who used to sit and beg?” (Jn 9:8). Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am” (Jn 9:9). So they said to him, “So how were your eyes opened?” (Jn 9:10). He replied, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went there and washed and was able to see” (Jn 9:11).

The incredulous neighbors take the man to the Pharisees. These religious leaders display the third kind of blindness, a spiritual blindness. They question the man from trusting in God’s presence and healing power. “So then the Pharisees summoned the man who had been blind and said to him, ‘Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner’” (Jn 9:24).

He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” (Jn 9:25-26).

He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” They ridiculed him and said, “Are you that man’s disciple?” He said, “I am, and I am from the disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from” (Jn 9:27-29).

The man Jesus cured sees clearly now—on all three levels. He has physical sight, but he also sees through the others’ psychological denial and religious hypocrisy.

The man answered and said to them, “This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything” (Jn 9:30-33).

If Jesus were not from God, he would have no power. Seeing this truth is what frees us from darkness and brings us into the light.

When Jesus cures the man born blind, he challenges his disciples, the sightless man’s neighbors, the Pharisees—and all of us—to see with the eyes of faith.

Let’s pray for the grace to see and believe what only the light of Christ can reveal.

Los ojos de la fe son capaces de curar cualquier ceguera

“Y Jesús dijo: ‘Yo vine a este mundo para juicio; para que los que no ven, vean, y para que los que ven se vuelvan ciegos’” (Jn 9:39).

La lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Cuaresma (Jn 9:1-41) nos ofrece una reflexión sustancial sobre las distintas formas de ceguera. Primero está la ceguera física del “hombre ciego de nacimiento” (Jn 9:1). La segunda forma de ceguera que mencionan en este relato del Evangelio es la psicológica. Se trata del rechazo a creer lo que hemos visto con nuestros propios ojos. La tercera forma de ceguera es la espiritual, la incapacidad para reconocer la gracia de Dios en nuestras vidas.

Los discípulos buscan una explicación para la ceguera del hombre, desean saber si el pecado de sus padres fue la causa. Jesús desecha la idea de que la incapacidad física es una consecuencia del pecado. “Ni este pecó, ni sus padres” (Jn 9:3). Dice: Está ciego “para que las obras del hombre sean manifestadas en él” (Jn 9:3). Los caminos de Dios son distintos de los nuestros. El padecimiento del hombre representa una oportunidad para revelar el poder sanador de Dios. “ Debemos hacer las obras del que me envió mientras es de día,” dice Jesús. “La noche viene cuando nadie puede trabajar. Mientras estoy en el mundo, Yo soy la luz del mundo” (Jn 9:4-5).

La luz de Cristo ilumina nuestra ceguera, pero lamentablemente los vecinos del hombre no pueden aceptar esto y niegan que el hombre al cual Jesús curó es el mismo ciego al que veían mendigar.

¿No es este el que se sentaba al costado de Siloé y lavaba. Así que fui, me lavé y recibí la visita.” (Jn 9:11).

Los vecinos increíbles llevan a la falta de amistad de Dios a manifestarse en él” (Jn 9:3). Los caminos de Dios son distintos de los nuestros. El padecimiento del hombre representa una oportunidad para revelar el poder sanador de Dios. “Por eso los fariseos volvieron también a preguntarse cómo había recibido la visita. Y él les dijo: ‘Me pasó barro sobre los ojos, y me lavé y veo’ (Jn 9:15).”

Por eso algunos de los fariseos decían: “Este hombre no viene de Dios, porque no guarda el día de reposo.” Pero otros decían: “¿Cómo puede un hombre pecador hacer tales señales? Y había división entre ellos” (Jn 9:16).

La ceguera espiritual nos divide del príncipe de y desde Dios. A pesar de que los fariseos llaman a sus padres del hombre y estén asegurando que efectivamente su hijo nació ciego, no son capaces de ver más allá del hecho de que Jesús «no guarda el día de reposo».

Así que llamaron por segunda vez al hombre que estaba ciego y le dijeron: “Da gloria a Dios; nosotros sabemos que este hombre es un pecador” (Jn 9:24). “Entonces él les contestó: ‘Si es pecador, no lo sé; una cosa sé: que yo era ciego y ahora veo.’ Ellos volvieron a preguntarle: ‘¿Qué te hizo? ¿Cómo te abrió los ojos?’” (Jn 9:25-26).

Él les contestó: “Yas dije y no escucharon, ¿por qué quieren oír otra vez?” Él les dijo: “¿Qué es que tienen ustedes querien hacerse discípulos suyos?” Entonces lo insultaron, y le dijeron: “Tú eres discípulo de este hombre: pero nosotros somos discípulos de Moisés. Nosotros sabemos que Dios habló a Moisés, pero en cuanto a Éste, no sabemos de dónde es” (Jn 9:27,29).

El hombre que Jesús curó ahora ve claramente, en todos los sentidos; tiene visión física, pero también ve más allá de la negación psicológica y la hipocresía religiosa.

El hombre los respondió: “Pues en esto hay algo asombroso, que ustedes no sepan de dónde es, y sin embargo, a mí me abrió los ojos. Sabemos que Dios no oye a los pecadores; pero si alguno tiene a Dios y hace Su voluntad, este hace el caso de ustedes. Desde el principio jamás se ha oído decir que alguien abriera los ojos a un ciego de nacimiento. Si Este no viniera de Dios, no podría hacer nada” (Jn 9:30-33).

Si Jesús no fuera Dios, no tendría ningún poder. Ser capaces de ver esta verdad es lo que nos libera de las tinieblas y nos lleva a la luz. Al curar al hombre que nació ciego, Jesús desafía a sus discípulos, a los vecinos de los ciego, a los fariseos y a todos nosotros, a ver con los ojos de la fe.

Oremos por la gracia de ver y creer en aquello que sole la luz de Cristo puede revelar.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON
Events Calendar

In response to recommendations from public health and government officials to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, all parish and archdiocesan events have been canceled until further notice. At that time, The Criterion will resume running a list of events and retreats.

Indian Catholic Women’s Conference on March 27 is canceled

The annual Indiana Catholic Women’s Conference in Indianapolis, scheduled this year on March 21, has been canceled. It will occur again on March 20, 2021, featuring the same speakers as scheduled for this year’s conference.
For more information, e-mail mariancmrey@comcast.net

Archdiocese, other outliers offer Mass during coronavirus pandemic

For health purposes and to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, Catholic retreat houses in central and southern Indiana have canceled or rescheduled retreats, programs and events. Below is a list reported to The Criterion or gathered from websites:

• Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southaven Ave., in Beech Grove, has canceled the following programs and retreats: Yoga & Spirituality on March 23, and 30 and May 11; Triduum Retreat on April 9-12; and Good Friday Personal Day of Retreat on April 10. The fourth session of the Benedictine Spirituality series on March 31 will be rescheduled, with the date to be announced. Anyone who has registered for a program or event that has been canceled may call 317-788-7581 or email benedictinn@benedictinn.org to request a refund. For updates, go to www.benedictinn.org.
• Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 5335 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, has canceled its offices and canceled all programs through Easter. For updates, go to www.archindy.org/fatima/index.html.
• Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, has canceled the following retreats, programs and events: Springtime Scripture on March 19, 26 and April 2; Coffee with the Mystics on March 21 and 24; Retreat for Busy Moms on March 27-29; Art Guild events on April 1 and 2, and May 5 and 7; Way of the Cross for Justice on April 10; Easter Brunch on April 12; Taizé on April 14; Sundays at the Woods: Art at the Woods on April 19; Enneagram Workshop on May 1-3; Bikers, Brunch and Blessing on May 3; Women, Wine and Wisdom at the Woods on May 7; Mother’s Day Brunch on May 10; Earth Day and Craft Fair festival on April 25.
• Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., in Oldenburg, has canceled all retreats and programs through April 18. For updates, go to www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.
• Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, has closed its offices and canceled all programs through Easter. For updates, go to www.archindy.org/fatima/index.html.

St. Vincent de Paul conferences modify ministries, call for volunteers

Due to the coronavirus, numerous Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) ministries throughout central and southern Indiana have been curtailed or canceled. Below is a list as reported to The Criterion or gathered from local SVdP websites:

Bedford:
The SVdP Thrift Store at 920 17th St., will be closed until April 6. Donations will not be accepted during this time. The plan for now is to re-open on April 6. For up-to-date information, go to the store’s Facebook page, listed as St Vincent de Paul Society Thrift Store Bedford, Indiana (no period after “St”).

Bloomington:
• Furniture assistance, donations and operations: Saturday distribution from the center at 1999 N. Packung House Road will be closed starting on March 21. Weekly updates can be accessed by phone at 812-961-1510 or by going to www.svdpbloomington.org. Furniture donations and pickups will continue. To donate furniture, go to the website listed above.
• Financial assistance programs will continue. Requests may be made by calling 812-961-1510, ext. 2, or by going to the website listed above.

Indianapolis:
• Food Pantry building at 3001 E. 30th St. will not be open, but pre-packaged boxes of food will be distributed from a tent via a drive-through line on Saturdays distribution from the center at 1999 N. Packung House Road will be closed starting on March 21.

Times and Thursdays-Saturdays from 8 a.m.-noon.
• The Distribution Center at 1201 E. Maryland St. will still send trucks to pick up donated furniture on Saturdays, as well as accept and sort donations, but the client intake desk will be closed until further notice.
• The Mission 27 Resale shop at 132 Leota St. will remain open with its regular business hours of Mon.-Fri. from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sat. from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The Mission 27 Resale shop at 1618 Shelby St. will be closed until further notice. Go to www.mission27resale.org for updates.

Despite the modified hours, the Indianapolis conference is still in great need of volunteers. “Our volunteers have been just wonderful,” says John Ryan, SVdP Indianapolis president. “The passion they show for wanting to help the poor is miraculous. I’ve never seen such a group of dedicated individuals who want to make sure the poor are being served.”

But because “a number of our volunteers are retired,” many are understandably refraining from volunteering for the time being, he says. Yet the coronavirus will not diminish the needs of those we help. “The need is combined with the temporary decrease in volunteers creates a greater need for people to give of their time to keep these vital services going.”

We need at least 30 volunteers a day at the Food Pantry and at least 10 people a day at the Distribution Center,” says Ryan.

With schools being closed, we welcome families and teens to come practice works of mercy with us, especially in this time of great need and also this time of Lent when we’re called to re-energize our Christian life of charity.

Just show up—we have plenty for everyone to do.” He also encourages those who have an SVdP collection bin at their parish to deposit clothes and shoes in the bins (in closed or sealed bags).

Volunteer hours and tasks for the SVdP Indianapolis Food Pantry and Distribution Center are as follows:

Food Pantry:
• Mon.-Sat., 8 a.m.-noon. Enter through the volunteer entry at the back (south side) of the building and ask for the day manager.
• Tasks include repackaging large donations into smaller portions; filling boxes with pre-packaged food in an assembly line; directing traffic through the drive-through line; distributing boxes of food at the tent-covered drive-through, and more.

Distribution Center:
• Mon.-Sat., 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Enter through the Mission 27 Resale entrance at 132 Leota St. on the east side of the building and ask for Ken Schutt.
• Tasks include sorting clothes and other donated items.
• Five trucks will still go out on Saturdays to pick up donated furniture and other items. Volunteer hours are typically 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Drivers must be 21 and have a valid driver’s license. It is recommended that truck helpers be 16 or older. For more information or to sign up to drive or help on a truck or to supervise dock workers, sign up in advance at www.svdpindy.org/i-want-to-help/#time.

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
Lent prepares us for the great mystery of Easter

The annual message for Lent is an opportunity to call our attention to aspects of Christian spirituality that may be overlooked in other seasons. Lent’s threefold emphasis—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—is certainly not inappropriate during the other seasons, but it is brought into sharp focus during this time that Pope Francis calls a “favorable time to prepare to celebrate with renewed hearts the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of our personal and communal Christian life.”

In his 2020 message, Pope Francis calls our attention to four aspects of the spiritual discipline of Lent: 1) the paschal mystery as the basis of conversion, 2) the urgency of conversion, 3) God’s spiritual discipline of Lent: prayer, and 4) the willingness to open our minds and hearts to receive God’s abundant graces and to convert us ever more fully to God and to his will. “Now is the time to let go of selfishness and sin. By opening ourselves to God in prayer, penance and self-giving, we can ‘chip away at our hardness of heart’ and discover how much God loves us.”

Prayer opens our minds and hearts to receive God’s merciful love and to enter into dialogue with him. As Pope Francis tells us, “The dialogue that God wishes to establish with each of us through the paschal mystery of his Son has nothing to do with empty chatter.” The recitation of formal prayers is valuable, but only to the extent that it disposes us to hear God’s word, “to reflect on it in our hearts, and, as St. James tells us, ‘to doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding ourselves.’” (Isa 1:29)

God’s desire to enter into dialogue with us is insatiable. As Pope Francis says, “Despite this sometimes tragic presence of evil in our lives, and in the life of the Church and the world, this opportunity for penitent amendment, but also for us to express God’s unswerving will not to interrupt his dialogue of salvation with us, Lent offers us a unique opportunity to let God speak to us ‘where we live’ as sinners who want, and need, the redeeming love of Christ crucified.”

Finally, Pope Francis tells us that God’s love and mercy, like all his gifts, are meant to be shared. “Today too, there is a need to appeal to men and women of good will to share, by almsgiving, their goods with those most in need, as a means of personally participating in the building of a better world. Charitable giving makes us more human, whereas hoarding risks making us less human, imprisoned by our own selfishness.”

The three traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are inseparable. If we keep our eyes on the goal—the ‘great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of our personal and communal Christian life’—Lent will be a positive, grace-giving preparation for Easter joy.

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

The Criterion’s editorial page is designed by Daniel Conway.

---

“Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”

—Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesus of Nazareth with his words, with his actions and with his entire persona reveals the merciful good of God.”

—Papa Francisco, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)
Superintendent says keep students on established routine

By John Shaughnessy

As a former teacher and as a parent of a Catholic school student, Gina Fleming believes that “young people do much more well with established routines.”

Now as the superintendent of the 68 Catholic schools in the archdiocese, Fleming recommends that parents keep their focus on maintaining established routines for their children during this time when archdiocesan schools are closed at least until April 6 as a precaution against the coronavirus.

To start, Fleming suggests that parents should “stick to your child’s typical bedtime routine, allowing for students to wake up within an hour of their general wake-up time. Then help your child when it is time to head back to the classroom.”

She also recommends limiting their “screen time,” whether it is watching television or playing video games. “Allow time for creative play, crafts, exploring hobbies, reading and even some ‘boredom,’” she says. “It is during these states that young people can be their most innovative, creative selves. You can build with Legos, popsicle sticks or other items around the house. You can play board games as a family, or even have your child create his/her own game for the family to play. Leave time to color together, paint together, exercise together … there are endless options that do not require a screen of any kind.

“To create a healthy family media plan, go to: bit.ly/33wKb5y. This is also available in Spanish.”

Fleming also provided a chart (to the right) that parents could use to provide structure to a child’s day to continue learning and growing while he or she is away from their school building.

Area Catholic colleges announce changes due to coronavirus pandemic

By John Shaughnessy

While the uncertainty and the fear surrounding the coronavirus continues to leave its impact on everyday life, the three Catholic colleges in the archdiocese have continued to monitor the ever-changing landscape and make adjustments for its students and its campus community.

On March 16, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods announced that all athletic events are canceled through April 3. The college also postponed its annual ring ceremony on March 21, moving it to a later date in line with Indiana’s new restrictions that gatherings in Indiana should be limited to 50 people or less.

Classes at the campus near Terre Haute were also canceled on March 16-17 so the college could transition to providing online only-instruction, said Dee Reed, the school’s executive director of strategic communications. The decision to provide online instruction is initially scheduled to be in place from March 18 through April 3.

Any advice for helping students, staff and parents to stay focused on their faith during this time?

A. “In some ways, this unique situation may be viewed as a gift; in others, a challenge. Accept the challenge through prayer intentions for those who are ill and/or suffering, as well as in gratitude for health care professionals.

“This is also a wonderful time for each of us to review our Church’s social justice teachings. What can we do in this time to care for this most vulnerable? To care for God’s creation? To participate in society while remaining cognizant of the health risks for many?”

“Take more time to answer some open-ended questions, go to bit.ly/3Bu3wex.

Q. Many Catholic school students rely on the free-lunch program from the federal government for nutritious meals during their school day. Are there easily to find places to help in that regard during this time?

A. “Several of our Catholic schools are providing meals or creating websites (again honoring the social distancing protocols) or providing ‘grab and go’ services. You can also create families to contact their school to know what options are available.

Q. The closing of schools occurs during the season of Lent, extending at least until the beginning of Holy Week.

Any advice for helping students and staff on parents to focus on their faith during this time?

A. “In some ways, this unique situation may be viewed as a gift; in others, a challenge. Accept the challenge through prayer intentions for those who are ill and/or suffering, as well as in gratitude for health care professionals.

“This is also a wonderful time for each of us to review our Church’s social justice teachings. What can we do in this time to care for this most vulnerable? To care for God’s creation? To participate in society while remaining cognizant of the health risks for many?”

“Take more time to answer some open-ended questions, go to bit.ly/3Bu3wex.

Q. Many families already have plans to travel for spring break during this time. Do you have any advice for families about minimizing their risks in relation to traveling during this time?

“Continue to follow the guidelines provided by your local board of health as well as those provided by Indiana and U.S. health professionals.”

Q. Any other questions that need to be addressed that would be helpful to share and parents?

A. “On behalf of Archbishop [Charles C.] Thompson, the Office of Catholic Schools and all of our school leaders, we thank all of our parents and guardians for their patience, their partnership and their flexibility during this unique situation. Rob Bridges, president at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, recently shared with his community the written commentary from Blessed Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, in response to the 1849 cholera epidemic in LeMans, France:

‘Prayer is like a health zone which we must set up around our homes and schools. Moreover, it can heal souls. It is this spirit of prayer which gives me confidence that the plague will spare Holy Cross and it is visibly under the protection of Divine Providence. Put your confidence in prayer, therefore, but at the same time, do not neglect the precautions recommended by doctors and other officials.

‘Let us continue to trust in the Lord always and do our part to aid in the health and safety of the common good.’

Page 8 The Criterion Friday, March 20, 2020
Seminarians make local pilgrimage in response to coronavirus

By Sean Gallagher

An outbreak of smallpox threatened the people of southern Indiana in 1871. In response, the seminarians at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad made a pilgrimage on foot to the nearby Shrine of Our Lady of Monte Cassino to invoke Mary’s prayers to keep them and the broader community safe from the disease.

The community was protected from the outbreak, and seminarians at Saint Meinrad have for many years commemorated that pilgrimage from nearly 150 years ago by making their own pilgrimages to the shrine in January.

But with the growing outbreak in the U.S. of the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, some 50 members of the seminary community made another pilgrimage to the shrine on March 13. It was quickly organized the day before when schools and large public events across the country began to be cancelled in response to the outbreak.

The effort at Saint Meinrad was led in part by Benedictine Father Christian Raab, a formation dean and assistant professor of theology in the seminary.

“It really was an act of faith in a scary time,” he said. “In this moment, we feel under threat, similar to the way people felt almost 150 years ago.”

The pilgrimage began with the singing of a Marian hymn on the hill on which Saint Meinrad is situated. As the pilgrims made their way down the hill, across an adjacent valley and then up a steep hill to the shrine, they prayed the sorrowful and glorious mysteries of the rosary.

The second rosary was completed as they reached the top of the hill and the shrine came into sight. The “Salve Regina” (“Hail, Holy Queen”) was chanted outside the shrine, which could not hold all of the pilgrims because of its small size. A Marian litany was prayed, a hymn was sung and a final blessing was given before the pilgrims made their way back to the seminary.

“It was very moving,” said Father Christian. “We prayed for all of our political leaders, that they be given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to make good decisions, because it’s hard to make decisions in a time like this. We prayed for all those who are sick and who had died, all around the world. And we prayed in a special way for the protection of our students, staff, co-workers and neighbors [from this virus].

“In addition to praying and petitioning, it was about demonstrating faith. We entrusted the situation to God so we could have courage and hope in a time where a lot of people might be despairing.”

Archdiocesan seminarians James “JJ” Huber and Tyler Huber—who are not related—took part in the pilgrimage.

“As a future parish priest, JJ knows that it will be his duty one day, God willing, to place the trials and challenges of the people he will serve at the heart of his prayer. He’s seen his pastor at St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, Father Dustin Boehm, do this in a public way through leading outdoor rosary processions in response to a drug abuse crisis in that southeastern Indiana town.

“The solidarity that comes from being in a public place praying for that place and those in it makes prayer more connected to those whom you’re praying for,” said JJ.

That connection, though, in a time marked by contagious diseases like COVID-19 can be more spiritual than physical when social distancing is emphasized. Seminarians at Saint Meinrad are experiencing this by having the off-campus ministry they usually take part in on Wednesdays be suspended for the rest of the semester, along with their classes, which were suspended on March 17. For Tyler, that means taking an

Religious sister, security guard among those killed in Nigerian gas explosion

LAGOS, Nigeria (CNS)—The principal of a Catholic girls’ school was among 15 people killed in the impact of an explosion at a gas processing plant in Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Sister Henrietta Alokha and a woman who worked as a security guard were rescuing students from a chapel that had caught fire. They “died in the process of ensuring that the students were safe,” Archbishop Alfred Adeolu Martins of Lagos said in a March 16 statement. He did not release the name of the security guard.

The roof of the chapel at Bethlehem Girls’ College in the Lagos suburb of Abule Ado caved in and fell on the two women, the statement said.

The March 16 explosion destroyed about 50 buildings after a fire broke out in Abule Ado. Nigeria’s state-owned oil company said the explosion was triggered after a truck hit some gas cylinders stacked in a gas processing plant near a pipeline.

The “devastating explosion, which very badly affected our Bethlehem Girls’ College … occurred while the students and staff were at Sunday Mass,” the archbishop said.

The priest who was celebrating the Mass helped in rescuing the students and is safe, the statement said. All of the students were taken to safety, and those who were injured were hospitalized, it said.

The school’s staff quarters, administrative building, refectory and hostel buildings were razed to the ground in the fire.

“No essential building is standing except the convent housing the nuns in charge of the school,” the archbishop said.

The archdiocese is making plans for the students to be accommodated in its other schools to ensure their education is not disrupted, he said.

Noting that official investigations into the explosion are yet to be done, the archbishop said, “All we know is that a truck accident was involved, the pipeline going through the community was involved, as well as a stack of gas cylinders.”

Nigeria is Africa’s biggest crude oil producer.
Inauguran servicio nacional para conducir denuncias sexuales indebidas relacionadas con obispos estadounidenses

**Criterio de selección report: BISHOPS**

**continued from page 1**

new third-party reporting system has been created to specifically address sexual abuse, sexual misconduct and cover-up complaints involving bishops and high-ranking church officials.

The Catholic Bishops Abuse Reporting Service allows anyone, including converts to Church authorities any reports of U.S. Catholic bishops who have:

- forced someone to perform or submit to sexual acts through violence, threat, or abuse of authority;
- engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor or a vulnerable person; or
- produced, exploited, tipped in, used, sold or distributed pornography fetal, infantil, significativa, con personas de la misma edad o una persona vulnerable a participar en exhibiciones pornográficas.

“Affirming our Episcopal Commitments,” “Directives for the Implementation of the Provisions of ‘Vos estis lux mundi’ Concerning Bishops and their Equivalents” and “Protocol Regarding Available Non-Penal Restrictions on Bishops”—may be found on the website of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

As part of a continuing effort to strengthen its commitment to the protection of the faithful, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has created three documents at its fall 2019 meeting affirming full commitment to the provisions in Pope Francis’ apostolic letter as well as directives and protocols for fulfilling the mandates in “Vos estis lux mundi”.

If a report is not manifestly unfounded, the metropolitan will begin an investigation into the report. A determination should also be made at the same time whether there is any personal bias or conflict of interest that would hinder the metropolitan who received the report from completing an impartial investigation. If so, the metropolitan should indicate in the report the proper person for any subsequent investigation.

Once authorization is given by the Holy See to begin the investigation, the metropolitan is to send the findings to the Holy See through the apostolic nuncio, including the names and titles of the individuals from the expert list who were chosen to assist in the process, as well as any other pertinent documents. Once the Holy See receives the conclusions of the investigation, the Holy See will initiate the appropriate process that will lead to a final judgment.

In accordance with the presumption of innocence, all appropriate steps are to be taken to protect the reputation of the person under investigation, to assure the exercise of other rights afforded him under canon law, and to restore his good name if it has been illegally harmed.

These directives will be reviewed every three years by the USCCB.
Lent can be a special time of seeking and offering forgiveness

By Mike Nelson

Forgiveness—both seeking and offering it—is one of the great challenges of our Catholic faith. But it is also among its greatest treasures.

In some respects, forgiveness shouldn’t be that challenging, great though our need to seek or offer forgiveness may be. Look to the Old Testament reading for Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent from Exodus (Ex 32:7-14), where we find God’s patience being tested yet again by the Israelites whom he brought out of slavery in Egypt through the leadership of Moses.

By now, God has heard more than enough of the Israelites’ grumbling. Now these “depraved” people had built a golden calf to worship in place of God—and that, God told Moses, was the last straw; he is ready to give this “stiff-necked” people the ultimate heave-ho (Ex 32:7, 9).

But Moses implores God not to do away with the Israelites, but instead recall his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Israel: that he would “make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky,” that he would give those descendants all the land he promised as their perpetual heritage (Ex 32:13).

“So the Lord relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people” (Ex 32:14).

Other Scripture readings during the Fourth Week of Lent speak to our need and desire for forgiveness, and God’s promise of a better life.

On Monday, God—through the prophet Isaiah—says, “I am about to create new heavens and a new Earth. The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create” (Is 65:17-18).

And on Tuesday, the psalmist says, “A clean heart create for me, O God; give me back the joy of your salvation” (Ps 51:12,14).

If God, who has been offended countless times by our sins, can forgive, why can’t we? Our faith teaches us that everyone—even the depraved and the stiff-necked among us—can ask for and receive forgiveness through the sacrament of penance.

“There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive,” says the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§982).

“There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness.”

Provided, the catechism quickly adds, the person’s “repentance is honest.” We must be sincere in our desire not just to be forgiven but to change our ways for the better—“to go, and from now on do not sin any more,” as Jesus told the adulterous woman he saved from stoning by confronting the would-be stone-throwers with the realization that they had their own sins on which to reflect (Jn 8:11).

Looking into our own house, as it were, is another aspect of forgiveness worth exploring during this season of Lent, a season in which we hopefully seek to change our lives for the better. That aspect is addressed clearly in the Our Father that we pray at every Mass:

“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.”

Recall the story of the wicked servant, who pleaded with his master to forgive him when he owed him a great sum of money (Mt 18:23-35). The master did so.

But then the servant turned right around and imprisoned his own fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount.

Clearly, the importance of forgiveness was lost on the wicked servant, who quickly incurred the wrath of his master, as should any of us who similarly refuse to “do to others” as was done to us (Mt 7:12).

“Every celebration of the Mass on solemnities and Sundays, in fact, offers us several reminders on the importance of forgiveness:

—The optional Confiteor (“I confess”) prayer in the penitential rite, in which we confess “to almighty God” and one another our sins of commission and omission; we ask blessed Mary, the angels and saints, and the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

—And, as mentioned, the Our Father, praying—shortly before offering one another the sign of peace and receiving the Eucharist—that we may be forgiven, and that we may forgive others.

Forgiveness is love, as Pope Francis declared in his apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), when he refers to “the Christian ideal” as “a love that never gives up” (#119).

Such love embraces forgiveness, as God offers his people throughout the Scriptures. Recall the Easter Vigil’s seventh reading, in which God, speaking to the house of Israel that has profaned his holy name, promises them new hearts, a new spirit and a new beginning: “You shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ez 36:28).

And it is certainly what Jesus offers when, crucified on the cross at Calvary, he cries out, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). It’s this kind of unconditional and never-ending love that we seek—and which we are called to offer.

(Catholic journalist Mike Nelson writes from southern California.)
Luke's Gospel

“Prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart: ‘We must remember God more often than we draw breath.’ But we cannot pray at all times, not even pray at specific times, consciously willing it in (from the Catholic Church, #269).

If there is one thing that I have found in my time in formation for the Carmelites it is this: prayer is a truly, a discipline that we must learn and practice, a habit we build intentionally. Find a time that works for you and show up faithfully, as you would anything else on your calendar. This begins with our certainty and awareness of God’s presence, in the quiet of our soul, and active in our lives. A growing awareness of his presence helps us to recognize moments to turn to God to offer him our praise, our sorrow and contrition, our gratitude and our needs and desires, and intercede for the needs of others. Then prayer becomes a heart-to-heart conversation, expressing a relationship between you and the Holy Trinity, in which both listen, and speak, and sometimes just sit quietly with one another.

Prayer has become a time that I rely on, especially in the solitude of a life in which there is no daytime job. It is a time when I need to be alone with God, and to hear the voice of God. I have found that moments I spend in prayer and reflection while it is quiet in the morning, or during the evening, have been the most fruitful. I am able to open my heart to God and I am able to hear his voice. I find that there is a deep connection with God during this time.

Sometimes when you pray the Liturgy of the Hours you might be surprised to find a prayer of praise and joy through tears, or at times the only honest answer is “God, I’ve got nothing, but I’m here.” It is in those moments that the habit “keeps you,” and you know it is becoming habitual when you are beginning to prayer repetitively without having stopped even just for a few moments. I was once asked a surprising question by members of the Franciscan Convent where I was drawn to consider, and I offered you this same question today.

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of prayer. Scripture is always a source of spiritualities, various forms of contemplative, meditative prayer, music, and visual arts to explore. Whatever expression prayer takes, as St. Thérèse of Lisieux put so beautifully, “Prayer is a little way up to heaven, so the soul, looking toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both our joy and our sadness” (from the Constitution of the Catholic Church, #2558).

The following are two short prayers written by Fr. Patrick O'Gow, a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, who participates in the Shepherd’s FLOCK gathering led by St. Andrew the Apostle, and St. Matthew the Apostle parishes, all in Indianapolis:

“Fear not, just be happy.
Talk with your pastor at your church, or your doctors and nurses or family and friends.
Don’t feel down and blue, just talk with Jesus and He will be there for you.”

(If you want more love, give more love.)

(Erin Jeffries is the coordinator of Ministry to Persons with Special Needs in the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis. She can be reached at 317.236.1448 or ejeffries@archindy.org.)

All the life of the body is made up of small actions. A good example is writing a check. We often don’t see the action of our writing a check as having any real consequence. But if we look at the big picture, we can see that writing a check is an action that has consequences. For example, if we write a check to a charity that we want to support, we are committing to giving money to that charity. This action can have a big impact on the charity and on the people it supports. It is important to be aware of the consequences of our actions.

The human side of God's law of connectiveness that sustains us, and the gratitude we should possess for the connectedness we experience. The focus here is on the importance of gratitude and the role it plays in our lives.

On Care

Fr. Eugene Hemrick

In his book, The Human Side/

Fr. Rick Ginther

In his book, The Human Side/

The Toth family of Indianapolis.

The connections to our observance of Holy Week

When I was growing up, Art Linkletter had a delightful TV show, “Kids Say the Darndest Things.”

The sun has set on 14 Nisan. It is now 15 Nisan in the Jewish calendar. The days of Passover have passed. As often, the youngest, has spoken the question.

This meal is unique among Jewish holidays. The reason is that it involves the participation of the entire family.

The children join in an integral part. From an early age, eyes, ears and minds are filled with the uniqueness of the Passover feast. These words, spoken the psalms sung and the deep meanings of the entire ritual.

Altogether, four questions are asked by a child/children.

The children are rewarded with nuts and other sweets.

All listen to the sacred texts.

Comments and insights about meaning follow as do questions from the other children.

As has been well noted, our good works are rewarded not only by God, but by those who observe them.

In the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, what shortcomings and sins of commission and omission are we to recognize, own up to, and seek pardon for? Perhaps it’s a sense of clericalism which Pope Francis has condemned among some clerics. Perhaps it’s a rather lackluster, somewhat inattentive participation at what is supposed to be the “celebration” of the Eucharist. Or maybe it’s a mere token gestures toward the poor, the unemployed, war torn and the Earth. What else do you think the Church is called to repent of?

What is true for us as individuals is also true for us collectively as the Church and nation to avoid evil and to do good.

And what are the many good things we are failing to nurture for ourself and others—both near and far?

As has been written so many times in our articles this month, we, as the Body of Christ, are called to be a Church and nation that is full of love, care, compassion, and concern for the needs of all people. This includes our government, corporate entities, and our nation.

What is true for us as individuals is also true for us collectively as the Church and nation to avoid evil and to do good.

And what are the many good things we are failing to nurture for ourself and others—both near and far?

As has been written so many times in our articles this month, we, as the Body of Christ, are called to be a Church and nation that is full of love, care, compassion, and concern for the needs of all people. This includes our government, corporate entities, and our nation.
The Thumb Sunday Readings
Sunday, March 22, 2020

• 1 Samuel 16:1-6, 7-10, 13a
• Ephesians 5:8-14
• John 9:1-41

Drawing from the first word of the original Latin text of the entrance antiphon for the Mass this weekend, this Sunday’s long has been called “Laetare Sunday.” Laetare means “to rejoice.” The Church rejoices that, even amid the drabness and penance of Lent (and indeed of life in general), the light of Christ shines forth—warm, enlightening and nourishing.

The first reading for this weekend is from the First Book of Samuel. An ancient prophet, and therefore God’s representative and spokesman, Samuel selected the young David to be king of Israel. To signify this appointment, Samuel anointed David with oil. Samuel anointed David with oil. The bond was much more than a successful political alliance. The bond between God and the people was governed and determined by God’s grace. In Samuel’s time, this grace was given to the people as a bond of obedience to his law confirmed this bond. The bond was in the people’s genuine acknowledgement of God. Their lives of obedience to his law confirmed this bond. St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians provides the second reading. In this passage, Paul admonishes the Christians of Ephesus, in the first century one of the major seaports, commercial centers and pagan shrines of the Roman Empire. Drawing heavily upon the imagery of light and darkness, Paul links light with righteousness and darkness with sin, calling upon the Christian Ephesians to live in the light. St. John’s Gospel furnishes the last reading. Central to the story is the Lord’s meeting with a man blind since birth. The Lord gives the man sight. To understand this entire story, it is necessary to realize how Jews at the time of Jesus looked upon physical difficulties. Unaware of the scientific explanations for blindness and other problems that people of this age have come to know, the ancient Jews believed such terrible hardships came as a result of sin. After all, original sin ushered death itself into the world, so physical illnesses such as blindness were a good order of nature itself, hence blindness. Thus, the question came. Was this man’s blindness the result of his own sin or a sin of his parents? Searching for an answer, the Pharisees questioned the man. They were obtuse and smug. By contrast, the blind man was humble and sincere. He had faith in God and in Jesus.

An added element, surely of special interest to the early generations of Christians who suffered persecution, was that the Pharisees expelled the man from their synagogue. The righteous often suffer from the ill will and short-sightedness of others.

Reflection

The Gospel story reveals a miracle. It also is a study in contrasts. On the one side is the man born blind whom Jesus healed. On the other side are the Pharisees, self-satisfied and confident in their high estimates of their own piety and knowledge. Apply these contrasts to ourselves. We may not be very evil or even pompous and boastful as were the Pharisees. Still, we have our limitations, among them an incorrect trust in our personal attributes. Our exaggerated judgments of ourselves trick us again and again and again. All this keeps us in the dark. Lent is the time to face facts. We must recognize our need for God. We must turn to God. He is light.

Life can be a dark night. Laetare Sunday represents the dawn, edging across the horizon. Easter is near. Christ, the light of the world, shines. Rejoice!"
Colorado lawmakers vote to create day honoring St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

DENVER (CNS)—The Colorado Senate on March 11 approved a measure to do away with the state’s observance of Columbus Day, in a similar effort to do away with Columbus Day in Colorado began in 2007. At least 11 states and dozens of U.S. cities have done away with observing Columbus Day and instead celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ Day in recognition of the indigenous populations displaced after Columbus and other European explorers reached this continent.

The bill passed 19-15 in the Senate. The House OK’d it with a 37-26 vote in February. The measure now goes to Gov. Jared Polis for his signature.

If signed into law by Polis, Cabrini Day will be observed the first Monday of October, Columbus Day, which commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492, is the second Monday of October.

Popularly known as Mother Cabrini, the saint is revered for her devotion to children, immigrants and the destitute. Born in Italy, she became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1909. She died at age 67 in Chicago on Dec. 22, 1917. She was beatified in 1938 by Pope Pius XII and canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII. She was the first American to be canonized.

Cabrini was named patron of immigrants in 1950. One of the sponsors of the House bill, Rep. Adrienne Bexon, a Democrat from Commerce City, said the effort to do away with Columbus Day in Colorado began in 2007.

During her 77 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Francis Cabrini served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.

Providence Sister Francis Edwards served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini was the foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Her dream was to go to China but at the insistence of Pope Leo XIII, who asked her to work among Italian immigrants in the United States, she stayed in the United States. She died at age 67 in Chicago on Dec. 22, 1917. She was beatified in 1938 by Pope Pius XI and canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII. She was the first American to be canonized.

Cabrini was named patron of immigrants in 1950. One of the sponsors of the House bill, Rep. Adrienne Bexon, a Democrat from Commerce City, said the effort to do away with Columbus Day in Colorado began in 2007.

During her 77 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Francis Cabrini served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.

Providence Sister Francis Edwards served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.

Popularly known as Mother Cabrini, the saint is revered for her devotion to children, immigrants and the destitute. Born in Italy, she became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1909. She died at age 67 in Chicago on Dec. 22, 1917. She was beatified in 1938 by Pope Pius XII and canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII. She was the first American to be canonized.

Cabrini was named patron of immigrants in 1950. One of the sponsors of the House bill, Rep. Adrienne Bexon, a Democrat from Commerce City, said the effort to do away with Columbus Day in Colorado began in 2007.

During her 77 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Francis Cabrini served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.

Providence Sister Francis Edwards served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.

Popularly known as Mother Cabrini, the saint is revered for her devotion to children, immigrants and the destitute. Born in Italy, she became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1909. She died at age 67 in Chicago on Dec. 22, 1917. She was beatified in 1938 by Pope Pius XII and canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII. She was the first American to be canonized.

Cabrini was named patron of immigrants in 1950. One of the sponsors of the House bill, Rep. Adrienne Bexon, a Democrat from Commerce City, said the effort to do away with Columbus Day in Colorado began in 2007.

During her 77 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Francis Cabrini served in Catholic schools as a math teacher, librarian for 32 years.
concerns that the political agenda uses to advance its cause. This agenda will also claim concerns that the political agenda uses to advance its cause. This agenda will also claim

true compassion, which means “suffering with” or “in solidarity,” is difficult and draining. It’s time consuming and, yes, involves suffering of our own. But that’s not all.

true compassion, which means “suffering with” or “in solidarity,” is difficult and draining. It’s time consuming and, yes, involves suffering of our own. But that’s not all.

Consider a story told to me by a colleague. Her cousin was diagnosed with a glioblastoma, the same brain cancer that affected Britanny Maynard, who, with national media attention, moved to Oregon to end her life under its law. Instead, my friend’s cousin chose the palliative care route. He spent his remaining days receiving treatment for pain and symptoms, but he chose to forgo any aggressive curative radiation or surgery—they wouldn’t work anyway.

Most importantly, he also spent his time with his dad fishing and watching baseball games, preparing well for death. His dad was his caregiver the whole way. At the end, the father said to his son: “Thank you, for letting me be a father.”

When I told this story to then-Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, when he was in Indianapolis, he paused and said reflectively, “What an opportunity for grace?” Indeed, grace for every one of them. And grace for us, to learn how to love. Love doesn’t eliminate the one who suffers or help them eliminate themselves. Love doesn’t run away or abandon the suffering one. Love descends and enters into the suffering of the beloved. Love makes the suffering of the beloved its own. Love places, as it were, the suffering on its shoulders—like a shepherd’s cloak—and carries the beloved home, to rest and be healed.

The political movement advocating assisted suicide will, indeed, continue. But the true antidote to this societal impulse toward assisted suicide is not to simply say “no.”

We need to lead with our “yes”: “yes” to palliative care, “yes” to the dignity of patients and clinicians, and “yes” to life—even amid its limitations and hardships.

We need to build our resources for palliative care—medical care that treats pain and symptoms in a holistic way to uphold the dignity of the patient no matter their condition or life. Advocate for it, support it, ask for it, receive it, recommend it to your loved ones. Now is the time. Don’t miss your opportunity for grace. (Elliott Bedford is the director of Ethics Integration for Ascension Indiana in Indianapolis and a member of the Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative, a collaborative initiative among the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan Health.)

**Director/Coordinator of Religious Education**

St. Margaret Mary and St. Patrick Churches of Terre Haute, Indiana are seeking a fulltime director/coordinator of religious education to implement and oversee parish faith formation programs at all levels beginning June 1, 2020.

Applicant should have a love for the Catholic faith, knowledge of and commitment to the Archdiocesan Faith Formation Curriculum and the ability to work together with catechists, youth ministers, RCA team, school personnel and pastoral staff. Experience in parish formation programs preferred. Masters in Theology or related field preferred.

Canon law requires that the person in this position be a baptized Catholic and, if married, be validly married according to the laws and teachings of the Catholic Church.

To apply, please e-mail a cover letter, resume, and list of references, in confidence, to:

Ed Isaksen
Director, Human Resources
1400 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
E-mail: eisaksen@archindy.org

**Equal Opportunity Employer**

**Coordinator of Stewardship and Membership**

St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, Carmel IN, is seeking a Coordinator of Stewardship and Membership who reports to the Director of Finance. The Coordinator provides leadership, strategic direction and coordination for all parish stewardship, fundraising efforts, and initiatives, including Diocesan appeals, offertory enhancement campaigns, and Parish Database Management. Coordinator develops and implements a stewardship program that increases parishioner’s awareness of stewardship, challenges them to integrate stewardship into their daily lives, to engage parishioners into active, full and mindful participation in the parish and, encourages generous sharing of financial resources.

**Core Responsibilities:**

- Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing.
- Strong strategic, leadership, and organizational skills. Cultivates best practices for engaging parishioners through gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
- Ability to build positive and enduring relationships with clergy, parish staff, and external partners, as well as Members of the community.
- Partners with parish Stewardship Council to cultivate a warm and hospitable culture of stewardship in the parish that is guided by the parish mission.
- Strong written communication skills, including the ability to write in a clear, concise, persuasive, and grammatically correct manner.
- Ability to respond well to shifting priorities and changing work situations; ability to work effectively in ambiguous situations; ability to develop new skills to remain effective; ability to adapt to changes; ability to adapt strategies and tactics to new information or changes to a situation.

**Education and Qualifications Preferred:**

- Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited college or university required.
- Demonstrates good judgment, decision-making and problem resolution skills independently.
- Ability to work well under pressure, be flexible and collaborate with others.
- Can effectively work under timelines and deadlines.

Please send cover letter, resume, and salary history, in confidence, to:

Kevin Sweeney, Director of Finance
St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church, Carmel IN
kevin.sweeney@setoncarmel.org

**PRINCIPAL**

Sacred Heart Academy, Louisville, Kentucky

Sacred Heart Academy, an all-girls Catholic high school in Louisville, Kentucky seeks a mission-driven, visionary, collaborative, student-focused and community-centered Principal beginning July 1, 2020. The Principal will promote the Catholic educational development of the school’s staff and students, with emphasis on the Ursuline core values. The ideal candidate will serve as a community leader, fostering a climate of well-being and engagement of students, faculty, and staff, in addition to the Academy and serve as a role model, reflecting the school’s Catholic and Ursuline identity while embodying the creative and forward-thinking direction of the school.

The Principal holds primary responsibility for providing personal and visible leadership for the faculty, staff, students and families on the mission of the school and will be involved with the development and implementation of a strategic long-term plan that is consistent with both that mission and the vision of Sacred Heart Schools. The Principal is responsible for personnel management including hiring, performance evaluation, and administrative qualified faculty and staff. This position ensures the ongoing development of rigorous academic standards, works collaboratively with the administrative team and is an integral part of the planning, managing and monitoring of the annual budget.

Sacred Heart Schools offers a comprehensive benefits package to employees working at least 30 hours per week, which includes a 50% tuition discount at all four campus schools. Sacred Heart Schools is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Doctorate in education or related field preferred. Current state certification in education specializing in administration. Experience as a teacher. Experience as a Catholic school principal. Supportive member of a Catholic parish.

Interested candidates should send a letter of interest and resume to

shsemployment@shslou.org
Coronavirus leads priest to think ‘outside the box’ to offer Mass

By Sean Gallagher

As a pastor, Father Shaun Whittington wanted to keep the Eucharist available to the people he ministers to at St. Anthony Parish in Morris and St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County in the midst of the growing national outbreak of the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

But as a volunteer emergency medical technician in the Sunman Area Life Squad and an enorman in the Sunman Rural Fire Department, two longtime interests of his, he was well aware of the potential danger of the illness and wanted to do what he could to limit it spreading.

A couple of days before Mass was to be celebrated at his Batesville Deanery faith communities on the weekend of March 14-15, Father Whittington and some college friends visiting him brainstormed to find a way to bring these two goals into harmony.

“A thought was to think outside the box,” Father Whittington said. “There had to be a way to leverage modern technology so we could do both.”

They eventually settled on the idea of a parking lot Mass at the parishes that would be broadcasted over a low-power FM transmitter, which worshippers could hear and pray with while sitting in the privacy of their cars with an appropriate distance from others attending the liturgy.

One of Father Whittington’s parishioners had an FM transmitter that could be used. Its signal only reaches to the edges of the parishes’ parking lots.

Others stepped up quickly to volunteer as parking lot attendants and others as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion that would be needed to distribute the Eucharist to people in their cars. A tent was set up in St. Anthony’s parking lot for an altar and ambo. A portable concession stand with large side windows was placed near St. Nicholas’ parking lot for the same purpose.

Parishioners learned of the new Mass arrangement through the online Flocknotes’ message system. And parking for attendants handed out bulletins and an instruction sheet as parishioners arrived in their cars.

“Everybody just stepped up and said, ‘OK, let’s figure out how to make it work,’” Father Whittington said. “Temperatures were in the lows 30s for the first Mass on Saturday evening at St. Anthony.

“It wasn’t exactly the best weather to start this the first time,” Father Whittington said. “But it was awesome to have Mass knowing that my parishioners who were there were practicing good hygiene, staying separated from each other and in the comfort and calm of their own cars, knowing that they were going to be safe from the elements and potentially safe from the virus.”

Members of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County receive Communion outside their vehicles in the parking lot of their faith community on March 15 during a Mass celebrated there that was broadcast over a low-power FM transmitter. (Submitted photo)

In a video message broadcast on March 11, the pope prayed before a portrait of Our Lady of Divine Love, beseeching her to “not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial,” but to “deliver us from every danger.”

“We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus’ pain, keeping your faith firm,” the pope prayed. “Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.”

The pope’s video message was aired before the original image of Our Lady of Divine Love, which has been under a government-mandated fasting for the city and for Italy, which capped a day of prayer and adoration for the Shrine of Divine Love that was aired live by the shrine from Rome, especially during troubling times.

It was before the original image of Mary and the child Jesus at the shrine where Pope Pius XII prayed in 1944, imploring the Mother of God to protect the Roman people during the final battle for the city’s liberation from Nazi occupation.

More than 75 years later, his successor once again implored Mary’s protection for the city of Rome, Italy and the whole world now threatened by the pandemic.

“Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection,” Pope Francis prayed.

In his homily during the Mass, Cardinal De Donatis echoed the pope’s prayer to Mary.

“We are here to cry out: ‘Save us, Lord, by your mercy,’” he said. “Mary is here with us, and we pray for her powerful intercession to be freed by the evil of the virus.”

The cardinal said the faces of many Christians today, despite their faith, reflect the same anguish experienced by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Nevertheless, Christians must trust in their heavenly father, Jesus, who “had the permanent awareness that no one had the power to tear him away from God’s hands.”

“It is an awareness that each one of us must guard in these difficult times,” Cardinal De Donatis said. “The antidote, the therapy for the anguish of the present moment is to entrust yourselves to God’s hands. We are in his hands, and no one can tear us away from him.”

We give to the United Catholic Appeal because... it helps so many different people in a variety of ways.