Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Blessed Easter! Let us rejoice in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ!

After a Lenten Season and Holy Week like none other in our lifetimes, and though it may not "feel" like it to many this year’s celebration of Easter should hold even more profound meaning for us. It is not with firm conviction of faith and hope, not mere “feeling,” that prompts us to rejoice in the Resurrection of the Lord and look forward to our own resurrection.

Given the suspension of public Mass and other liturgical celebrations these last several weeks, as well as various parish gatherings and activities, our desire to encounter the empty tomb of our Savior is greatly heightened beyond anything the world can match or satisfy. Hopefully, the measures taken to combat the spread of the coronavirus have intensified our Lenten prayer, fasting and almsgiving to further enrich our appreciation for all that Jesus endured in his passion and death for our salvation. Taking up our cross has perhaps taken on new meaning for many of us, for it is in times of crisis and challenge that we discover whether we are truly Christ-centered or self-centered. It is in Him, not ourselves, that we are saved.

Like those first Apostles to the empty tomb, we may be wondering what this particular Easter experience might mean for us. Unlike those first Apostles, we know the rest of the story. Jesus Christ is alive! Having conquered sin and death, He is Risen! He has won victory for us over all things of this world. He is with us, lifting the hearts and minds of all those who place their trust in Him. Nothing can separate us from the saving love and grace of God.

Indeed, amid whatever fears or concerns we may be experiencing at this or any given moment, we have cause to rejoice. Let us be bold in our witness to proclaim the Good News of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the time for all believers to embrace the call to holiness and mission, focusing on what is essential for salvation. We are Church, the Body of Jesus Christ, both crucified and risen. Alleluia!

Blessed Easter!

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 10, 2020
Vol. LX, No. 26
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings in Jesus Christ the Cornerstone! Though it may seem as if there is no light at the end of the tunnel during this time of sheltering and social distancing to combat the coronavirus, let us not forget that every Lenten season of penance and sacrifice gives way to the awesome joy of Easter. Beyond the cross is the wonder of the empty tomb and encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Given the drastic shutdown of so many businesses and various places of work, many are already experiencing great economic, emotional and personal hardship. The prospect of enduring another month or so before the economy can begin to reverse course weighs heavily on many households. The poor and vulnerable are often most impacted by the effects of any crisis.

For those who are blessed with economic security, if you have not already been doing so, please consider providing financial support to your parish in this critical time. The Church stands as a beacon of hope in many communities, hope that does not so much radiate in the brick and mortar of a building as through the ministries and services provided by your parish. Many in our communities, including fellow parishioners, are in need of various forms of medical care. Throughout this pandemic, the archdiocese and parishes are continuing to provide service to the poor and vulnerable, especially by way of food and shelter. This is a particularly lonely and confusing time for those who have never found themselves in a situation of needing to ask for assistance. On behalf of all those served by your generosity, thank you.

Catholics are not very good at advertising our great works and successes, and rarely do make the spotlight. The fact remains, however, that the Catholic Church is the single most charitable institution in the United States and the world. The Catholic Church daily provides ministries and services of outreach to thousands of individuals and families. We do because we are Catholic. Anchored in word and sacrament, especially the Eucharist, service is the hallmark of our baptismal call to holiness and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

Underlying the incredible charitable works of the Church is the commitment of its members being good stewards and faithful disciples. Please continue to support your parish in helping others who are less fortunate and in need. Pope Francis often points to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:31-46) as the measure for loving and serving our neighbor. Each of us makes a difference in the lives and spirits of many beyond what can be truly appreciated.

With assurance of my prayers and blessings for everyone throughout the archdiocese, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

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Let us continue to be good stewards in this time of crisis.

Further reading:

- **The Criterion**
  - Editor: Mike Krooks
  - Assistant Editor: John Shaughnessy
  - Reporter: Natalie Holger
  - Graphic Designer / Online Editor: Brandon A. Evans
  - Executive Assistant: Ann Lewis

- **The address is walkingwithmoms.com**
Father John Beitans served archdiocesan parishes and Latvian Catholics

By Sean Gallagher

Father John Beitans, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, died on April 3 at St. Vincent Hospice in Indianapolis. He was 72. At the time of his death, he was providing sacramental assistance at Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis.

Because of measures prohibiting large public gatherings due to the coronavirus pandemic, a private committal service was celebrated at the priests’ circle at Calvary Cemetery in Indianapolis. A memorial Mass for Father Beitans is expected to be celebrated at a later time.

Father Robert Robeson, pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove and administrator of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis, got to know Father Beitans well over the past few years while they served together at Good Shepherd.

“He was very conscious about how his relationship with individuals could impact their faith and was conscientious about treating others with dignity and respect, especially those who were isolated or lonely or alienated in some way,” Father Robeson said. “He had a very tender heart and great compassion for those who were on the margins. That was something I really respected about him.”

Father Beitans’ concern for people on the margins of society may have been rooted in his experience of isolation and alienation early on in his life. He was born in 1947 in a displaced persons camp in Greschat, Germany, to Latvian parents who fled their home country during World War II. They emigrated to the U.S. and arrived in Ellis Island before settling in Terre Haute.

“He was a huge figure within the Latvian community in Indiana and throughout the world,” Father Robeson said. “He was frequently called upon to travel all over the world to celebrate sacraments for Latvian families who were connected to him in some way and to celebrate Mass in the Latvian language.”

Retired Father Joseph Rautenberg said Father Beitans had an interest in various cultures around the world that may have been rooted in his own experience as an immigrant.

“He traveled widely,” said Father Rautenberg, an ordination classmate of Father Beitans. “He had an extensive collection of books on foreign sites and their history, art and culture.”

Father Beitans’ thirst for knowledge was wide and varied. He had an interest in music and astronomy, earned a pilot’s license and even did skydiving.

“He was not afraid to try new things,” Father Rautenberg said.

Through it all, though, Father Beitans was dedicated to parish ministry. Ordained an archdiocesan priest in 1973, Father Beitans spent 47 years of priestly life and ministry at two parishes across central and southern Indiana, while also at times leading archdiocesan ministries.

“He was kind, generous and a faithful pastor of his people,” Father Robeson said.

“He had a deep love for life, and a deep appreciation for the beauty of the world. He genuinely cared about his parishioners.

“He would often talk about his previous parishes of 1973-1983, his priesthood and became very close to quite a number of people over the years … who have often expressed their love for him.”

John Beitans was born on June 24, 1947, to the late August and Adele (Spila) Beitans in Greschat, Germany. After he and his parents emigrated to the U.S., Father Beitans was educated in Terre Haute before becoming an archdiocesan seminarian. He received priestly formation at the former Saint Meinrad College in Terre Haute, and at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, also in Saint Meinrad.

Archbishop Paul C. Schulte ordained Father Beitans a priest on June 10, 1973, at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Terre Haute. Father Beitans celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving the following day at the church.

His first pastoral assignment was as associate pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville, where he served from 1973-74. He then ministered as associate pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Terre Haute from 1974-77.

In 1977, Father Beitans became associate pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, continuing there until 1982.

During that time, Father Beitans also served as archdiocesan director of activities for the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, from 1982-83.

After serving at St. Michael, Father Beitans ministered as associate pastor of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis from 1982-83. He then became a pastor for the first time, leading St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis from 1982-88.


From 2000-10, Father Beitans served as pastor of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, while also ministering as chaplain of the Latvian Catholic Association from 2006-10.

His last assignment as a pastor was of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin, leading those two faith communities from 2010-14. During that time, he also served as director of the archdiocesan Office of Evangelism.

In 2014, Father Beitans was appointed sacramental minister of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis. He was granted retirement in 2017 while continuing to provide sacramental assistance at Good Shepherd.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 3001 E. 30th St., Indianapolis, IN 46218.

Amid COVID-19 pandemic, pope prays for homeless, cites newspaper photo

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—During his livestreamed daily morning Mass, Pope Francis prayed that the coronavirus pandemic may awaken people’s consciences to the plight of the homeless.

At the start of the April 2 Mass in the chapel at his residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the pope said he was struck by a photo in a local newspaper of “homeless people lying in a parking lot under observation” that “highlight so many hidden problems” in the world.

The picture that Pope Francis apparently focused on the figure of Abraham and the covenant, which are “the three sacraments for Latvian families who were living in this way.”

The pope said that God’s promise to make Abraham the father of many nations highlights “the election, the promise and the covenant,” which are “the three dimensions of the life of faith, the three dimensions of Christian life.”

Easter Sunday Mass to be livestreamed on archdiocesan website and FOX59 in Indianapolis

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is livestreaming its April 12 Easter Sunday Mass at 11 a.m. on www.archindy.org from SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The Mass will also be broadcast simultaneously on TV station WXIN (FOX59) in Indianapolis.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the principal celebrant, and Father Patrick Beidelman, rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, will be the homilist.

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opinion

Archbishop: Closure of churches is necessary to keep all safe

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I bid you grace, peace and hope in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen! As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to take a great toll on our lives, especially the livelihood of so many, let us not allow our spirits to succumb to the virus or other any enemy visible or invisible. In addition to the great efforts of health care workers and first responders, there are many unsung heroes continuing to provide care, assistance and encouragement to others. Though there has been a great shift in the way in which we provide spiritual and pastoral care, necessity has spawned much creativity in reaching out to individuals and families particularly through the Internet. Many thanks to those who manage our archdiocesan and parish websites, and to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for providing so many wonderful resources.

Something strange is happening today. There’s a great silence and stillness on Earth today because the King is asleep. God has died in the flesh. He was crucified yesterday and today is Holy Saturday. He has freed Adam and Eve and their descendants from their slavery. He has not yet ascended to the Father. We’re living in the interlude between his death and his resurrection.

I am writing from my home in Indianapolis. I am a pastoral visitor to many small and large parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. I pray that my letting you know how I’m spending my time during this season may offer you some comfort, and the hope the Lord bestows on those who believe.

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Reflection John Shaugnessy

The unexpected invitation

The unexpected invitation came on a Good Friday, leading to an overwhelming response from teenagers and adults alike:

The invitation was tied into a high school’s touchline dramatization of the Stations of the Cross a few years ago. As each Station was shared, a student portrayed one of the people who helped, watched or harmed Christ on the path to his crucifixion—Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, the women of Jerusalem, a Roman soldier, John the Apostle, the Blessed Mother. Each shared how interacting with Christ in his journey to his death moved them, even changed them.

When the powerful presentation ended, the unexpected invitation followed. The high school students and adults who had been watching were invited to approach the full-size cross and attach their handwritten notes to Christ on it—to ask him for anything. The crowd, mostly teenagers, kept approaching the cross in awe.

Many asked God to protect their friends and families. Some asked for forgiveness of their sins. Others asked for blessings on the poor, the homeless, the suffering and people who have lost loved ones. Then there were the more individual requests. One asked for prayers “for those who struggle with who they are.” Another pleaded for “my dad’s health.” A college student who had been watching were invited to approach the full-size cross and ask Christ for anything. They did so. Then they shared their request with the crowd. One young woman asked, “For Mass is our greatest form of prayer and the sacrifice it represents.”

One of the great gifts of friendship comes when we reach a point where we realize we can’t do something by ourselves, when we know that our burdens are too much to bear alone—and then a friend comes along for us, sharing our burden, lifting it from us. The greatest symbol of that gift of friendship is the cross. This crucified Christ showed he would do anything to share our burdens, to lift them away for us. The burden of living in this time has given the coronavirus weigh constantly on us now. So do the fears associated with it, and the news that people know are getting it and dying from it. Focusing on these burdens, fears and tragedies, Pope Francis used his recent address to the world to offer a source of hope to people everywhere: that Christ is still with us, and still willing to take our burdens on his shoulders.

“We have a hope,” Pope Francis said. “By his cross, we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation, when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up—and we experience the loss of so many things—let us once again listen to the words of our Lord, who saved us: he is risen and living by our side.”

If you had the opportunity, what message would you leave for Christ on the cross? What fear would you ask him to help you overcome? During this unsettling time, let us accept Christ’s invitation to bring our burdens and our fears to him, knowing he understands and shares in our heartbreak.


Meditation for Holy Saturday

(The editorial was inspired by the Office of Readings, part of the Liturgy of the Hours, for Holy Saturday.)

A garden, I was betrayed in a garden, and I humbled himself and took the form of a servant, so that one who believed in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

—John F. Fink

The Resurrection is depicted in a 15th-century painting by Italian painter Andrea Mantegna, Easter, the chief feast in the liturgical calendars of all Christian churches, commemorates Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Easter is on April 13 this year.

The spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image. On my back, see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree."

Jesus tells Adam that he, Jesus, slept on the cross and a sword pierced his side for Adam, who slept in paradise while God brought forth Eve from his side. Now, he says, ‘My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell. The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.’

If you for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. The enemy will not restore you to that paradise, but I will bring you to the eternal dwelling places prepared, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager.

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Jesus shows his love in his sacrifice for us

"It was you, Lord, who cared for us, you who gave your life for us. You were killed, but you did not love yourself. You were crucified, but you did not hate yourself. You were crushed for our offenses, bruised for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed" (Is 53:4-5).

Good Friday is an unusual day in the Church year. It is a day of great sadness, commemorating the day when our Lord suffered and died for us. But it is also a day for rejoicing, the day when we recall how much Jesus loved us and how much he sacrificed to set us free.

Good Friday is a day of mourning and it is a day of silence, but it is also the day when the Light of the World shatters the darkness of sin and death.

On Good Friday, the sun breaks through, opening up our dark and dreary world to the joyful light of heaven. The silence of Good Friday prepares us for the joyful songs of the Easter Vigil—the Exultet and the Great Alleluia that proclaim Christ’s victory over sin and death.

Good Friday celebrates the triumph of humility over self-centered pride. As we read in the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9):

"In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Heb 5:7-9).

In the ultimate act of humility, Jesus freely accepted death on a cross—one of the cruelest forms of capital punishment ever invented—in order to sacrifice his life for us.

Good Friday is the day when we rejoice in the humility of God. It is the day when the Church reminds us that the freedom, the love and the happiness that every human being seeks is made possible only through the miracle of self-giving love.

The Son of God did not have to empty himself to accept the bitter pain and torture of Good Friday, or to die the death of a criminal.

What we recall today is Jesus’ free decision to save us from our sins—in spite of his very human desire to avoid this suffering and humiliation. It is a painful memory that should cause each of us to feel remorse for our part in this day of sadness—for our contributions to the burden of sin that our Lord carried on his shoulders as he made his way to his crucifixion.

But the paradox of Good Friday is that the Via Dolorosa is not a dead end. Instead, it is a road that opens the way to salvation and to joy. And so, without ever forgetting the bitter tears that were shed on this day by Mary, and by those few who knew enough to stand at the foot of the cross, we rejoice and thank God for the great gift of this day of remembrance and of joy.

Jesus’ humility, his sacrifice on the cross, has something profoundly important to teach us. The way to happiness is the Way of the Cross.

That means that we will never find true happiness by seeking wealth, power or success or fame. We will never discover the freedom and love we desire if we dedicate ourselves to our own comfort and satisfaction. Jesus’ humility teaches us that true love is found in sacrifice and that suffering comes not when we cling to life’s blessings and comforts but when we share them generously with others.

Good Friday gives us the opportunity to rejoice in spite of our sadness, and to praise God for his Son’s humility and for the great gift of his self-giving love, even as we mourn his cruel and utterly undeserving condemnation and death on a cross.

Good Friday celebrates the humility of God that paradoxically (by our earthly standards) has exalted the name of Jesus Christ above all other names—so that at this name every knee should bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father!

May we always remember Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, which has won our salvation and shown us the way to happiness and peace. May his cruel, undeserved suffering, and our songs of mourning, lead us to joy and prepare us to sing once again: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Jesus nos demuestra su amor en su sacrificio por nosotros

“Ciertamente Él llevó nuestras enfermedades,y cargó con nuestros dolores con todo, nosotros lo recibimos por acostado,por herido y afligido. Pero Él fue herido por nuestras transgresiones,motado por nuestras iniquidades El castigo, por nuestra paz, cayó sobre Él por Sus heridas hemos sido sanados” (Is 53:4-5).

El Viernes Santo es un día insusual en el año eclesiástico, ya que está cargado de una enorme tristeza al recordar el día en el que nuestro Señor padeció y murió por nosotros. Pero también es un día de júbilo en el que conmemoramos cuánto nos amó Jesús y su gran sacrificio para liberarnos.

El Viernes Santo es un día de duelo y de silencio, pero también es el día en el que la Luz del Mundo destruye las tinieblas del pecado y de la muerte.

El Viernes Santo celebra el triunfo de la humildad sobre el orgullo egoísta. Tal como leemos en la Carta a los Hebreos (Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9):

“Cristo, en los días de Su carne, habiendo ofrecido oraciones y súplicas con gran clamor y lágrimas al que podía liberar de la muerte, fue oído a causa de Su temor reverente. Aunque era Hijo, aprendió obediencia por lo que padeció, y habiendo sido hecho perfecto, vino a ser fuente de eterna salvación para todos los que le obedecen” (Heb 5:7-9).

En un acto de humildad suprema, Jesús aceptó voluntariamente la muerte en la cruz, una de las formas de pena capital más crueles que se haya inventado, para sacrificar su vida por nosotros.

El Viernes Santo es cuando nos regocijamos en la humildad de Dios, el día en que la Iglesia nos recuerda que la libertad, el amor y la felicidad que busca cada ser humano solo es posible a través del milagro del amor desinteresado.

El Hijo de Dios no tenía que entregarse y aceptar el amargo dolor y la tortura del Viernes Santo, ni morir como un criminal.

Lo que conmemoramos hoy es la decisión libre de Jesús de sufrir y morir por nuestros pecados, a pesar de su deseo muy humano de evitar el sufrimiento y la humillación. Es un recuerdo doloroso que debería evocar remordimiento en nosotros en este día tan triste por nuestro aporte al pecado que cargó nuestro Señor en los hombros camino a su crucifixión.

Pero la paradoja del Viernes Santo es que el Vía Crucis no es un callejón sin salida sino un camino que se abre hacia la salvación y la alegría. Así pues, sin olvidar jamás las amargas lágrimas que derramaron hoy María y los pocos que lo amaban lo suficiente para quedarse con el al pie de la cruz, nos alegramos y le damos gracias a Dios por el inmenso regalo de este día de conmemoración y júbilo.

La humildad y el sacrificio de Jesús en la cruz nos enseñan algo muy importante: el camino a la felicidad es el camino de la cruz. Esto significa que jamás encontraremos la verdadera alegría al buscar la riqueza, el poder, el éxito o la fama. Jamás descubriremos la libertad y el amor que deseamos si nos dedicamos a nuestra propia comodidad y satisfacción. La humildad de Jesús nos enseña que el amor verdadero se encuentra en el sacrificio y que la alegría verdadera viene no cuando nos aferramos a las bendiciones y comodidades de la vida, sino cuando las compartimos generosamente con los demás.

El Viernes Santo nos ofrece la oportunidad de regocijarnos a pesar de nuestra tristeza y de alabar a Dios por la humildad de Su Hijo y el maravilloso regalo de su amor desinteresado, aunque lloremos su condena cruel y totalmente injusta de muerte en una cruz.

El Viernes Santo se celebra la humildad de Dios que, paradójicamente (según nuestros estándares terrenales), ha exaltado el nombre de Jesucristo por encima de todos los demás para que con solo nombrarlo toda rodilla se doble y toda lengua confiese que Jesús es el Señor para la gloria del Padre.

Que siempre recordemos el sacrificio de Cristo en la cruz que conquistó nuestra salvación y nos mostró el camino hacia la felicidad y la paz. Que su sufrimiento cruel e inmerecido y nuestros cálculos de amor dolor nos guíen a la alegría de la Pasión y nos preparen para cantar una vez más: ¡Aleluia! ¡Cristo ha resucitado!”
Several archdiocesan parishes to livestream Divine Mercy Sunday services on April 19

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**St. Joseph Parish, Shelbyville, 3 p.m. (bilingual)**  
- www.facebook.com/stjoesshelby

**St. Paul Parish, Tell City, and St. Mark Parish, Perry County, 10 a.m. CDT/11 a.m. EDT**  
- bit.ly/2ufb69 (YouTube)

**SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, Greenwood, 10 a.m.**  
- zoom.us/j/712954744
- Phone: 312-626-6799, enter meeting ID 712954744 (audio only) †

**Holy Family Parish, New Albany, 3 p.m.**  
- www.facebook.com/HolyFamilyCatholic

**Prince of Peace Parish, Madison, 3 p.m.**  
- shorturl.at/COX4 (Facebook)

**St. Ann Parish, Indianapolis, 2:15 p.m.**  
- www.facebook.com/stannindy
- www.w-st-ann-cindy.org

**VIPS**  
Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to bit.ly/2Y4HMOn or call 317-236-1585.

**The original Divine Mercy painting by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski. (Wikipedia Commons photo) **

**Announcement**

Mike and Donna (Etherington) Amherst, members of St. Louis, Batesville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 4. The couple was married in St. Jude, Indianapolis on April 4, 1970. They have four children: Christina Ashley, Sarah Foley, Andrew and David Amherst. They have eight grandchildren. †
Pope Francis reflects on storms caused by the coronavirus pandemic

“The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reach out and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and support. But hope is more than an emotion: everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens us so as to revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love” (Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi message, March 27, 2020).

On March 27, Pope Francis stood in the empty square outside St. Peter’s Basilica and proclaimed “to the city and the world” (“urbi et orbi”) that, even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, our hope is found in the calm, healing power of Jesus Christ. The pope’s message reflects on a reading from St. Mark’s Gospel ( Mk 4:35-41), which recalls the time that Jesus and his disciples were in a boat when a sudden, turbulent storm arose, threatening to overpower the boat and drown them all.

The Lord says to him, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” More than simply being afraid, which the pope says is natural under the circumstances, the disciples lash out at Jesus, saying, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” (Mk 4:38). In their self-centered terror, they accuse Jesus of not caring about them. “One of the things that hurts us and our families most,” the Holy Father points out, “is when we hear it said: ‘Do you not care about me?’ It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts.

Because Jesus cares so deeply about his disciples and all of us, the disciples childishly immature question, “Do you not care if we perish?” is not onlyhuman anxiety and frustration, it is a sign of the weakness of their faith. How many times before has Jesus demonstrated the depth of his love for us? How often has he performed miracles of healing and hope in the most seemingly hopeless situations? No worse than the disciples, Jesus wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”

The Holy Father draws the parallel between this situation in St. Mark’s Gospel and the sudden, tempestuous storm that threatens the world with the coronavirus pandemic. He says: “The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superficial certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lets us share all our urgent ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people’s souls; all those attempts that anesthetized us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly “save” us, but instead prove incapable of putting up with touch with our rough mouths and our memory of the ones who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the acknowledgments we need to confront fears. In this storm, the façade of those stereotypical images with which we camouflaged our ills, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

The “antibodies” that Pope Francis speaks about combat the spiritual maladies that confront us in this time of worldwide crisis. Just as we struggle to develop immune systems, vaccines and drugs that can cure the physical illnesses we are threatened by, we must also achieve a robust spiritual health that is sufficient to prevent anxiety and despair from overwhelming us.

The cure for what ails us spiritually is trust in the Lord’s healing power. We dare not doubt that he cares for us, lest we give up all hope. “Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith,” the Holy Father says. “Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you.”

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

“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”)

“Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”
–Papa Francisco, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)
Gina Fleming knew there would be mask-wearing in Catholic schools in the archdiocese, and concerns when Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb announced on April 2 that all Indiana schools would close for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

As the superintendent of the 68 Catholic schools in the archdiocese, Fleming knew there would be disappointment and even heartache among the high school seniors, who will miss out on such experiences as going to prom or participating in extracurricular activities ranging from spring theater productions to spring sports.

She also knew there would be questions from students and families about high school graduation ceremonies and efforts to feed children who rely on federal government food programs.

The mother of two children also prepared to answer questions from parents about how to continue to motivate their children about learning, how to help them make the most of family time together, and also how to help their children as Indiana heads into one of the worst coronavirus crisis in the state and country.

Fleming shared her thoughts and insights on all these areas in an interview with The Criterion. This is an edited version of that interview.

Q. What was your reaction to the governor’s announcement?

A. The governor’s announcement was not a surprise to us. We have worked closely with the Office of Catholic Schools. While we miss our students greatly and know that the best option is typically our Catholic school experience in full, the Archbishop of Indianapolis is committed to the safety of all those we serve.

“Hope is that this extended time period allows for Indiana residents to get past the highest transmission period for COVID-19 in the state and then effectively ‘flatten the curve.’ As Gov. Holcomb has said, all of us are ‘in this together.’”

Q. Among the impacts this has on students and staffs, there is the reality of how it’s particularly hard in some ways for Catholic school seniors. They will miss out on such traditions as graduation ceremonies and prom, plus a host of extracurricular activities ranging from spring theater productions to spring sports. Share your thoughts about the seniors.

A. “On behalf of Archbishop Joseph C. Thompson and all of us in the Office of Catholic Schools, I wish to share our disappointment and empathy. Recognizing that this pandemic has affected some significant milestones yet to be experienced such as going to prom, the same events and experiences have been valued for generations, there really are not words that can adequately express our empathy.

That being said, it is often in the unexpected situations and experiences that we learn a great deal about ourselves, about our relationship with God, and about the world around us.

“I pray that our seniors are open to create new and different milestones that possibly only they will experience—milestones that speak to their trust in God, their resilience, their desire for social justice and their gratitude for the many gifts and talents with which they have been blessed.”

Q. Have any decisions been made regarding how school would go and whether they will take place in any form at all?

A. “We have not made any decisions yet about what the school year will look like, if there will be large group gatherings for either, but school leaders are thinking creatively about ways to make these special experiences as personal and memorable as possible for the seniors, their families and loved ones. More details will be shared when they become solidified.”

Q. According to government and medical projections, Indiana is heading toward a period soon where the impact of the coronavirus will slow in the state. What advice would you give to parents for handling the concerns children have had the past few weeks and even fearful of that reality?

A. “As with all things, young people are consistently watching the adults in their lives as role models. By remaining calm and ensuring that conversations on this matter are grounded in fact, sharing information and logical reasoning, our children will be much better informed and will be well prepared to use this as a true learning opportunity.

“This is a good time to reinforce the importance of hand-washing and other hygiene practices as well as proper responses to coughing, sneezing, food preparation, etc. It is also important to point out that healthy individuals, particularly their age, who have contracted COVID-19 have been able to recover.

“Finally, I can think of no better way to find peace and comfort in the midst of a crisis than remembering the Eucharist, participating in eucharistic adoration, praying and vigilantly working to grow deeper in relationship with God. I believe it was St. Francis of Assisi who said, ‘Pray twice as often as you fret.’ That’s good, sound advice.”

Q. Many Catholic school students rely on the free-lunch program from the federal government for nutritious meals during their school day. When e-learning began in mid-March, there were plans in place to continue to provide these meals to children. How have those plans worked so far, and what is the future of those plans going forward?

A. “Students and children 18 years and younger have meal options in every corner of the archdiocese. Many of these options are provided in our very own schools, while others are provided through the local public school and/or community centers.

“There is a great need for continued support of local food pantries. However, in many cases, the majority of the volunteers are those who are most vulnerable to this virus. Therefore, members of our Church and community have stepped up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer.”

“The trials and tribulations faced at this time are very real and difficult, yet when we trust in God and put these sacrifices in his hands, he is sure to help us. This is an opportunity for each of us to offer up our own hardships as a Lenten sacrifice for all those afflicted with COVID-19 and for those who have been entrusted to care for them.”

“The most important message I would like to share is that our Lord and Savior loves each and every one of us so very much that he took up his cross so that we may each get to celebrate eternal life in heaven with our Father, his Son and the Holy Spirit. I can think of nothing more uplifting, inspiring and true.”

—Gina Fleming, archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic schools

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Cloistered religious in archdiocese offer wisdom for those ordered to stay at home

By Sean Gallagher

Stay at home, except for essential business and activities. That was the order that Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb gave to residents across the state on March 24. The purpose of the extraordinary executive order was to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, which as of April 7 had killed 177 people and infected more than 5,500 others across the state. But this radical change in daily living is the defining way of life for members of cloistered religious communities in the archdiocese.

At the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute and Benedictine monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad “stay at home” as part of their vocation. Members of these two communities—Carmelite Mother Mary Joseph Nguyen and Benedictine Father Guerric DeBona—recently spoke with The Criterion to offer advice for Catholics across central and southern Indiana, who are now living a much more cloistered life than they’ve lived before.

Father Guerric is Saint Meinrad’s subprior (third in leadership) and oversees the formation of its novices and monks in temporary vows. Mother Mary Joseph was elected the new prioress of the Monastery of St. Joseph on Feb. 11, about a month before major changes began to daily life in Indiana because of the coronavirus.

A native of Vietnam, she knows the human challenges that families may be facing now as they spend more time together. “What they use to do is lead a community of sisters of diverse personalities and interests from countries around the world,” she said. “The reason we’re able to live together, love one another and grow together is because we make an effort to love one another and accept one another,” Mother Mary Joseph said. “We’re different, but we have the same goal. We’re journeying together and accept one another.”

Seeing love as a choice and something requiring effort is part of Benedictine Father Guerric DeBona’s view on the trials and blessings of living with people who are different from him, people he might ordinarily choose to stay away from.

“One of the challenges of living together is that you just can’t wish the other person away,” he said. “The other maybe more difficult reality is that, after a certain point, when people get older, they are not going to change. They’re going to stay the way they are. Married couples know this.”

“The conversion movement, then, becomes how can I accept my limitations and their limitations and live in peace under the Gospel when it comes to the reality that I have chosen. There should be a certain freedom in living in a community. The task is to discover the freedom.”

Father Guerric sees approaching daily life with people very different from himself as a means of growing in holiness. He reflected that, in a religious community as in a family, people of different and even conflicting personalities have been brought together by God for this purpose.

“There is a certain kind of sanctification that goes on when it comes to living the Christian life with people that you didn’t choose to live with,” he said.

The daily challenge of living at home can become a blessing, both religious and secular. “If it is approached with faith and seen as an opportunity to grow in relationship with God and each other.”

“God is with us, no matter how difficult the situation may be,” Mother Mary Joseph said. “He is with us. He suffers in our suffering. And he hears our cries. . . . This is a time to be called to the Church to come together for prayer. This can be especially meaningful, he said, as the Church comes to the end of Lent and looks forward to Easter.

“Our liturgical year is what usually keeps us calibrated. It’s our liturgical compass,” Father Guerric said. “If that becomes compromised in a sense that we can’t even get to Mass, what do we do? We become small communities that are prayer-oriented, that create their own schedules. That’s something we can’t give up on. We’re going to find ways to create a relationship with one another and with God. What matters the most is that our relationship with Jesus continues.”

Saint Meinrad monk relies on faith and prayer while in Rome during pandemic

By Sean Gallagher

Benedictine Brother Lorenzo Penalosa, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, is living at present in Italy, the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in Europe. Although the country is under a tight lockdown to stem the spread of the virus that has taken the lives of more than 16,000 people there, Brother Lorenzo said in a recent interview with The Criterion that he relies on his faith in God and monastic vocation to get him through this trying time.

He lives at the Collegio Sant’Anselmo in Rome, a residence for Benedictine monks from around the world who are pursuing graduate studies or ministering in the Eternal City. Brother Lorenzo is studying liturgical theology.

Although no visitors are allowed to join them in prayer, the monks at Sant’Anselmo gather daily for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours and have periods for personal prayer and eucharistic adoration.

“As a monk who has a deep love for the Church’s life, Brother Lorenzo said, “it’s as if we’re saying, ‘Lord, we know that the world is hurting right now, but you are still in charge. We continue to sing hymns. We continue to pray for the world. We continue to sanctify our time with prayer, knowing that you are with us.’ ”

He’s also edified by the way that the people of Italy have responded to the trials of living under lockdown.

“Even in this dire situation, there are glimmers of hope,” Brother Lorenzo said. “The present image of Italians looking out from their balconies or windows, singing, playing music and applauding health care workers at certain times of the day. I can hear them even from my own window.”

Some who lived with Brother Lorenzo at the Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute pray before an outdoor shrine on the grounds of their monastery. The monks in the cloistered community do not ordinarily go beyond the grounds of its monastery. (Photo courtesy of the Monastery of St. Joseph)
Chalk it up to perseverance

Bailey Freese and other members of the eighth-grade class of St. Luke School in Indianapolis decorate the sidewalk around the parish church on April 5, Palm Sunday. The school’s eighth-grade class traditionally presents a Passion play for the parish and school during Holy Week. The event was not possible this year due to safe-distance guidelines during the coronavirus outbreak. So the classmates—remaining six or more feet apart—participated in a chalk art project on the sidewalks around the church on Palm Sunday morning, writing Scripture passages, encouraging messages and pictures. Parishioners and school families were invited on Palm Sunday afternoon to view the art as well as outdoor Stations of the Cross by car or by walking while maintaining safe distance. An e-mail about the project sent by the Eighth-Grade Room Parent Team to class parents stated, “This is a great way for the Class of 2020 to do our part to help our parish neighborhood to connect with St. Luke until we are able to worship together again.” (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Pope Francis establishes coronavirus emergency fund for mission territories

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis established an emergency fund to help communities in the Catholic Church’s mission territories affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The pope has given an initial contribution of $750,000 and asked Church organizations to contribute to the fund, which will be managed by the pontifical mission societies, according to a statement published on April 6 by Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

“In her task of evangelization, the Church is often on the front lines of major threats to human well-being,” said Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the congregation. “The Holy Father is calling upon the Church’s entire vast network to face the challenges ahead.”

The pontifical mission societies, which are under the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, include the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious, the Missionary Childhood Association, the Society of St. Peter Apostle and the Evangelization of Peoples, include the Pontifical Missionary Societies, according to a statement published on April 6 by Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

“People have been coming through walking, driving or biking,” said Rachel Miller, a member of St. Barnabas Parish. “For our family, this has already been the perfect lesson on the different Stations of the Cross. We are able to stop and reflect and ask each other questions.”

Neighborhood Catholics in Indy create outdoor Stations of the Cross

Members of the MOMS (Ministry of Mothers Sharing) ministry of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis launched an effort to create an outdoor Stations of the Cross path in Indianapolis’ Hill Valley neighborhood near the parish.

Catholic families from the Indianapolis parishes of St. Barnabas, St. John the Evangelist, St. Jude, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch who live in the neighborhood were recruited to either create, host, or both create and host the stations to form a 2.5-mile path.

“For people who have not already been doing so, please consider providing financial support to your parish in this critical time of need. The Church stands as a beacon of hope in many communities, hope that does not so much radiate in the brick and mortar of a building as through the ministries and services provided by your parish.

Make your gift online today at www.archindy.org/Giving

For those who are blessed with economic security, if you have not already been doing so, please consider providing financial support to your parish in this critical time of need.
Easter celebrates Christ’s resurrection by moving from darkness to light

By David Gibson

The night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me and full of gladness.”

Typically, the Easter Vigil begins in my corner of the world on Easter’s eve around 8 p.m. or a bit later, after darkness descends. But this will be no celebration of darkness! “Let all corners of the Earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.” That is the exhortation of the Exsultet.

So, darkness is not the true focus of the Easter Vigil’s first part. The focal point is light, which means that the risen Christ is the focal point. For fire, candlelight, sunlight and even the brightening dawn of each new day all have symbolized Christ in Christian history.

The Easter Vigil commonly begins outdoors, where a blazing fire is lit and a church’s new paschal candle awaits the arrival of a person to light it. In some places, the service is held in a church, which would in this case be a darkened church, their candlelight is lited into the church’s interior, ready to glow with new light.

The light of Easter is not reserved to them alone, however. If Christ’s light is the night of which it is written: “This is the night,” the Church sings out again and again in a poetic hymn without letting the risen One change us?”

Hopelessness is one difficult-to-overcome form of darkness that calls out for light. Pope Francis spoke of this during the 2019 Easter Vigil in St. Peter’s Basilica. Crushed hopes hardly are unusual. But the pope sought to guard against any temptation “to think that dashed hope is the bleak law of life.”

What blocks hope is discouragement, resignation or, for example, a sense of desolation. Pope Francis suggested. People may “lose heart and come to believe that death is stronger than life,” and “a kind of tomb psychology takes over.”

The pope asked, “How many times, once we have encountered the Lord, do we return to the dead, digging up regrets, reproaches, hurts and dissatisfaction, without letting the risen One change us?”

However, “in each of us [God] never ceases to see an irrepressible kernel of beauty,” the pope emphasized. He called Jesus “a specialist at turning our deaths into life.”

The Easter Vigil’s message is all about overcoming darkness with light. But Easter hope is not naive. It does not deny suffering and death will not have the last word,” Pope Francis has said.

The Easter Vigil’s first part, typically called the service of light, brings the paschal candle front and center to signify that Jesus Christ is true light for the world. The Exsultent sings of the paschal candle, praying that it “may persevere undimmed to overcome the darkness of this night.”

The service of light makes a basic statement about Christianity. The service reflects the faith of ancient Christians that Christ’s light indeed overcomes darkness. History shows that early Christians bore Christ’s light into their world against all odds and at great risk.

The Exsultent reflects such faith wonderfully when in a concluding petition it identifies the morning star with Christ. Today, of course, the morning star usually is identified with the light of the planet Venus rising in the east in early morning to announce compellingly that a new day is on the horizon.

That is what Easter meant to early Christians, the arrival of a new day, the arrival, in fact, of a new creation. The remarkable prayer of the Exsultent is that the paschal candle will be found “still burning by the Morning Star, the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Sun, who coming back from death’s domain has shed his peaceful light on humanity.”

Worshippers hold candles during a celebration of the Easter Vigil at St. Jude Church in Mastic Beach, N.Y. The celebration of Christ’s resurrection at Easter begins in darkness and moves toward light.

(CNS file photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)
The Theology of Technology/Brett Robinson

The spiritual benefits of today’s technology in a time of crisis

“Gather around the TV, kids, it’s time to pray.” Those are words I never thought I would utter as a Catholic media studies professor.

I spent the past 20 years studying the effects of mass media on individuals and families. And yet, for the past year, during the coronavirus quarantine, I have found myself saying those words every day at noon as we gather to “attend” Mass at a church that offers a live-streamed Mass. The experience has forced me to re-evaluate our relationship with media technology as Catholic family life.

As a kid, I can remember watching Mass on television during a particularly hectic week. My family grew up. It was a little unsettling, but it also sent a powerful message.

To this day, I look at my parents who watching Mass in that snowstorm left more of an impression on me than anything I learned in catechism class. It was a tangible way to know that God was all-powerful and that He was with me in the good and the hard—and other times when I wasn’t sure what to do.

The best response is honesty: to make others feel less alone and to “witness to a story of grace,” in the words of the late Catherine Marshall.

The best response is honesty: to make others feel less alone and to “witness to a story of grace,” in the words of the late Catherine Marshall.

The text accompanied a picture of Stephanie holding her infant Beckham, smiling over her shoulder with a cascade of blond curls.

A riveting 400-word message followed: “I hate being a burden, and it’s always felt easier to just say ‘I’m fine’ than to admit I’m struggling. Hard stuff. But the truth is, when we tell our mom, our sister, our pastor, our bestie or our barista that we’re feeling overwhelmed and rob ourselves of the chance to be blessed, we also rob ourselves of the chance to be a blessing.”

A host of happy encounters flashed in Stephanie’s mind, each one the result of giving into the drawing power of a generic inquiry of how she’s doing.

The lesson was clear, and Stephanie spelled it out online: “When I stopped saying ‘fine’ and started taking 10 intentional seconds to speak the truth, I found that people were useful to me, to those I love. And it’s been life changing.”

As our television culture gives way to a digital culture that has yet to come into the fullness of its power, the Church can help break this cycle.

If you know anyone who is in a domestic violent relationship, please encourage them to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or TYT 1-800-787-3242 or go on the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence website icadvinc.org to find domestic violence programs near you where you live in Indiana.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the Church of the Gesu in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Jesuit Communications. E-mail him at davidbethuram@archonyc.org)
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 12, 2020

- Colossians 3:1-4
- John 20:1-9

This weekend, the Church celebrates the greatest of its feasts, the Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord, or Easter.

It is the greatest of all the feasts because it rejoices in the fulfillment of human salvation, finalized and completed when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead to new and eternal life after having been crucified. On Holy Saturday, after dusk, the Church presents its splendid liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Quite vividly in the Vigil’s readings, the Church recalls the long history of God’s unfailing love for us.

For Easter itself, the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. Speaking on behalf of all the Apostles, Peter summarizes the life and mission of Jesus. More than a biography, it is a testament of God’s love for humanity, given in Jesus and in his sacrifice of himself. It invites people to follow the Lord, eagerly offering a reassurance that God is with us still alive in Jesus, the Risen One.

For the second reading, the Church offers a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. The Apostle tells us, as he told his first audience, that we have been raised with Christ. We usually offer a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. The Apostle tells us, as he told his first audience, that we have been raised with Christ. We usually offer a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. The Apostle tells us, as he told his first audience, that we have been raised with Christ. We usually offer a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. The Apostle tells us, as he told his first audience, that we have been raised with Christ.

Both Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple possessed the insight to realize what the empty tomb meant. Loving the Lord is all that mattered. It answers all questions. As humans, we cannot control or explain everything. We need Jesus. He lives. He awakes. He will guide and save us.

Reflection

The readings for this feast, as well as the feast of Easter itself, are overpowering in the richness and breadth of their messages. Jesus is the Savior! He loves us.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter and the Apostles were exercising a role given them earlier by Jesus, as documented in the Gospels. Salvation in Jesus did not end when Jesus ascended to heaven. It lived on in the Apostles, and it lives now in and through the Church.

The second reading, taken from Colossians, calls us to turn totally to Jesus. We must drown our sins in baptism. Dead to sin, we also rise in our lives here on Earth. Sin is death. If we do not repent, our sins are final, dooming us to death. Turning to God brings us life. Volumes have been written about these verses from the resurrection narrative from St. John’s Gospel. Two figures are very important. The first is Mary Magdalene. The second is the Beloved Disciple.

My Journey to God

The Palms of His Love

By Ron Lewis

From His hands and feet
Flowed cleansing blood
That drowned my sin
Beneath its flood.

Its crimson flow
Captured my soul
In the palms of His love!

The price was high,
It was costly shed.
It was freely poured out
In my selfish need.

The penalty was paid,
Now written above.
The proof? The scars
In the palms of His love!

(Ron Lewis is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville and is a Benedictine oblate of St. Meinrad Archabbey. Photo: The Risen Christ is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Aloysius Church in Great Neck, N.Y.)

Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
Matthew 28:8-15

John 20:1-18

Psalm 118:1-2, 4, 22-27a
John 21:1-14

John 23:36-41
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
Luke 20:11-18

Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9

Psalm 118:1-2, 4, 22-27a
Luke 24:35-48

Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9
Psalm 118:1-2, 4, 22-27a

Tuesday, April 14
Tuesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:36-41
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
John 20:11-18

Thursday, April 16
Thursday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:11-26
Psalm 8:2ab, 5-9
Luke 24:35-48

Q I am not surprised that you are finding varying guidance in your dilemma. It is basically a “strategy question” with no hard and fast “rule.” You are trying to strike a balance between fidelity to the Church’s teaching and your legitimate desire to maintain family harmony, and different people will have different ideas as to how to do that. Here would be my suggestion: Go to the wedding, but first sit down and talk with your nephew. Tell him that you feel a certain awkwardness in attending, since he is not married in a religious ceremony. Explain to him what the Catholic faith has meant to you, how it has sustained you over the years, offering comfort and guidance. Tell him how much he means to you and that your deepest hope and prayer is that, one day, he may return to the practice of the faith he grew up with and seek the Church’s blessing on his marriage. Do that, but don’t see your attendance as an “endorsement” by the Church, you will not risk a family relationship that could be permanent, and you keep open the possibility of his return to Catholic practice through your prayer and gentle example.

Q I have read that Joe Biden, when he was vice president, presided over a same-sex wedding. As you know, Mr. Biden professes to be a Roman Catholic. I would think that his officiating at this ceremony would have resulted in his excommunication. Has he been excommunicated? And if not, what is the reasoning behind that? (Little Rock, Arkansas)

A It is true that in 2016, Biden, then vice president, presided at a same-sex wedding for two men who were longtime White House aids. The ceremony took place at the vice-presidential residence at the Naval Observatory. Reaction from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was swift in coming. Within a matter of days, three officials of the conference—without mentioning Biden by name, clearly referencing his action—said this: “When a prominent Catholic politician publicly and voluntarily officiates at a ceremony to solemnize the relationship of people of the same sex, confusion arises regarding Catholic teaching on marriage and the corresponding moral obligations of Catholics.” Such an action, the bishops wrote, “is a counter witness, instead of a faithful one founded in the truth.” The three bishops who signed the statement were Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, then-president of the USCCB; Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, then-chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; and Bishop Richard J. Malone, then-chair of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

Their statement continued, “Pope Francis has been very clear in affirming the truth and constant teaching of the Church that same-sex relationships cannot be considered ‘in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and the family.’”

As to the question of excommunication, Edward Peters, professor of canon law at Detroit’s major seminary, explained at the time in his blog that there is no specific canon that excommunicates a Catholic for officiating at a same-sex wedding and that Biden would have to demonstrate a pattern of behavior that violates Church law in order to trigger formal disciplinary action.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, April 13
Monday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:4-22, 33
Psalm 16:1-2a, 5, 7-11
Matthew 28:8-15

Tuesday, April 14
Tuesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 2:36-41
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
John 20:11-18

Wednesday, April 15
Wednesday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:1-10
Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9

Thursday, April 16
Thursday within the Octave of Easter
Acts 3:11-26
Psalm 8:2ab, 5-9
Luke 24:35-48

Question Corner

Remind nephew getting married outside Church of the gift of faith

Q My family have been dedicated Catholics for generations. Recently, a nephew of mine announced that he is planning to get married in a civil ceremony. (I believe that neither he nor his fiancée is dedicated to a religion. He is a “fallen-away Catholic” millennial.)

As the eldest in the family, I am saddened by this turn of events and have researched the stand of my religion relative to my participation in such acts. To be honest, the guidance I’m finding is not very direct as to the Church’s stance. Can you provide me some clarity?

A It is true that in 2016, Biden, then vice president, presided at a same-sex wedding for two men who were longtime White House aids. The ceremony took place at the vice-presidential residence at the Naval Observatory. Reaction from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was swift in coming. Within a matter of days, three officials of the conference—without mentioning Biden by name, clearly referencing his action—said this: “When a prominent Catholic politician publicly and voluntarily officiates at a ceremony to solemnize the relationship of people of the same sex, confusion arises regarding Catholic teaching on marriage and the corresponding moral obligations of Catholics.” Such an action, the bishops wrote, “is a counter witness, instead of a faithful one founded in the truth.”

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St. John Paul showed how to face suffering by embracing God, Mary

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Remembering St. John Paul II and the 15th anniversary of his death, Pope Francis encouraged people to pray for his intercession and trust in Divine Mercy, especially during these “difficult days” of the coronavirus pandemic.

St. John Paul, who, after a long illness died on April 2, 2005, will always be an important figure for the Church, but is even more so now at a time when so many people are suffering worldwide, said Cardinal Angelo Comastri, archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica.

The last years of his pontificate reflected personal trial and suffering, and he showed the world through his witness a life filled with faith and a way of accepting pain as something redeemed by God’s love, he said in an interview with Vatican News on April 1.

“[This] is one of the reasons why the epiphanic vision of the Resurrection prolonged, because for so many people, faith has died. John Paul II was a believer, a convinced believer, a certain believer and faith illuminated the path of his life,” the cardinal said.

Just as the Church is marking Holy Week and the Easter Triduum in a radically different way this year because of restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the cardinal recalled how St. John Paul lived the same liturgical period in 2005 with serious illness and in isolation.

“We all remember John Paul II’s last ‘Good Friday.’ The image we saw on television was unforgettable—the pope, who had lost all his physical strength, holding the crucifix in his hands, gazing at it with pure love. One could sense he was saying, ‘Jesus, I too am on the cross like you. But together with you, I await the resurrection,’” he said.

“John Paul II knew that life is a race toward God’s banquet—the feast of God’s embrace, his infinite glory and happiness,” the cardinal said.

“But we must prepare ourselves for that, even during very difficult moments, like the 1981 assassination attempt, he said.

“He never lost his serenity. Why? Because he always had the purpose of life. Today, many people no longer believe in that purpose. That’s why they live through pain with despair, because they can’t see beyond the pain,” he said.

Before being named archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica in 2006, Cardinal Comastri served more than eight years as the papal delegate overseeing the Shrine of Our Lady of Loreto, officially marked as the Blessed Virgin Mary’s house from Nazareth.

St. John Paul, in fact, asked in the Guardian of the Marian shrine to lead what would be his last Lenten retreat that fell due during the Year of the Rosary. Cardinal Comastri has been reciting the rosary and praying the Angelus inside St. Peter’s Basilica every day at noon as it is livestreamed on Vatican media.

Marian devotion was a hallmark of this saint-pope, so much so that “Totus Tuus Maria” (“Mary, I am all yours”) was on his coat of arms.

When asked why Mary was so important to the late pope, Cardinal Comastri told Vatican News, “Because our Lady was close to Jesus at the moment of the crucifixion and she believed this was the moment of God’s victory over human wickedness” through love—God’s greatest strength.

The body of St. John Paul II was preserved in St. Peter’s Basilica every day at noon as it is livestreamed on Vatican media. The late pope lived his suffering with this spirit, even during very difficult moments, like the 1981 assassination attempt.

From the cross, when Jesus told Mary, “Belong to your son” (Jn 19:26), referring to his disciple, John, the cardinal said that Jesus was telling her, “Don’t think of me, but think of others, help them to transform pain into love, help them to believe that goodness is the strength that overcomes evil.

“From that moment on, Mary took concern for us upon herself, and when we let ourselves be guided by her, we are in safe hands. John Paul II believed this, he trusted Mary, and with Mary he transformed pain into love,” he said.

Archbishop Sheen’s niece recalls happy times with her uncle in new book

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As a child, Joan Sheen Cunningham got to travel with her parents from their Illinois home to visit her uncle, first in Washington, then later in New York City.

Her uncle was Archbishop—for Father—Fulton J. Sheen. Now 92 years old, Cunningham has written a book, recalling the times she spent with her relative, a candidate for sainthood, called My Uncle Fulton Sheen.

“My children knew I had done various things while I was growing up, and they thought I should write something about it,” Cunningham told Catholic News Service (CNS) in an April 3 phone interview from Long Beach Island, N.J., where she’s living with her son and daughter-in-law, but she had never gotten around to doing it.

Later, though, someone—she can’t remember who—approached her about writing a book. Cunningham saw a double benefit: “I would do something for my children, and I would do something to help my uncle,” she said.

In one sense, it’s returning a favor. “I pray for him every day,” Cunningham said, laughing. “For different things that I prayed to him and asked him to pray for, I would have gotten.”


“The book includes the Prayers of Our Lady. ‘It’s always very special to me. I’ll make it as long as the canonization.’”

If there’s any regret for Cunningham, it’s that “I would have liked to see his cause finished and done with. I pray to the good Lord every day that I would like to live long enough to see the beatification,” which was started that the [sainthood] cause. New York didn’t start it. Bishop Jenky did,” Cunningham said. The Peoria Diocese opened Archbishop Sheen’s cause for canonization in 2002.

“I got to thinking, ‘This is something that he [Bishop Jenky] wants. He’s earned it. I changed my mind. If the body could be moved—that’s when the trouble arose. It turned out the only way we could get it from the archdiocese was to sue them, take them to court. And we won every time. Four times. That’s how the body got moved.’

On June 27, 2019, the mortal remains of Archbishop Sheen were interred at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria, completing a transfer from St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York.

She added, “I hope someday there will be a good feeling between Bishop Jenky and Cardinal [Timothy M.] Dolan [of New York]. My uncle would be very upset if they couldn’t forget the past.”

Cunningham said she was “very upset” over the delay in her uncle’s beatification. “And it came a very short time before the [scheduled] beatification.” Her best guess is “there was something about the state [of New York] had opened up a big opportunity for everybody that maybe had a complaint [on clerical sex abuse], or they had to bring it within that time framework.”

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Call for help is sounded for shelter to homeless families during crisis

By John Shaughnessy

On a normal Easter weekend, the staff at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis, would be doing everything it could to make it a time of joy for the children and parents of the 22 families who live there—dying eggs and making cookies together, holding egg hunts and providing Easter baskets.

Yet in a time when there is no normalcy because of the coronavirus crisis, the Holy Family Shelter staff has focused all its efforts on one priority for the families who are homeless: “Absolute safety,” said William Bickel, director of emergency and support services for Catholic Charities Indianapolis.

“With the Father and the Holy Spirit, He and joy our children can experience to refine our skills in some way. I can’t something new, to take on a new hobby or the time and resources we have to learn would be shameful if we get on the other high school and the other in college—’It stay-at-home’ order, I recall saying to the table together near the beginning of the pandemic. The shelter only needs financial donations at this time. Checks can also be made payable to Holy Family Shelter and mailed directly to the shelter at: 907 N. Holmes Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46222-3714

CLOSURE

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nearly, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, He remains forever with the Church, His Body, carrying forth the mission for which He was sent.

The decision to close churches here in central and southern Indiana had nothing to do with fear or pressure from government. Despite being dispensable from the obligation of Mass and being encouraged to remain at home just prior to the suspension of public Masses, many elderly and vulnerable persons attended Mass in very risky ways. Crowds of people continued to gather closely together. This was the same for communal celebrations of the sacraments. A number of people told me that their elderly parents or grandparents would not have attended some of these if they was suspended and churches were closed. Maintaining our primary focus on salvation of souls does not mean turning a blind eye to reason and prevention of serious harm.

As the data has shown, people who are asymptomatic, that is, not showing signs of having been infected, have passed on the virus to others before being diagnosed with COVID-19.

SCHOOLS

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Q. Your family is back together during this time. From your experience so far, what advice would you give to families to help them to make the most of this time together? A. “As my family sat at the dinner table together near the beginning of the ‘stay-at-home’ order, I recall saying to my husband and our two sons—one in high school and the other in college—it would be unbearable if we get on the other side of this pandemic and we haven’t used the time and resources we have to learn something new, to take on a new hobby or to refine our skills in some way.” I can’t say we all embraced this concept with similar enthusiasm, but I still have a few weeks to work on it.

“Imagine the creativity, innovation and joy our children can experience during this time. Learn how to play a new instrument or a new card game. Learn a new craft. Go on nature walks and explore the various types of trees and plants that grow well in our climate. Learn how to cook. Learn how to use the oil on a car.”

Q. Any other thoughts you’d like to share? A. “My hope is that none of us—parents, teachers, school leaders and Church leaders—forget this time in our lives. Let it be a reminder of what a gift it is to live in a country where our liberties are upheld, a state where parental choice of schooling is honored, and communities where quality education and formation are provided to young people as a vital ministry of the Church.

“We cannot lose sight of the ways in which we have come together to support one another.”

Want to donate to Holy Family Shelter? Here’s how

To make an online financial donation to Holy Family Shelter, visit the website, www.holyfamilyshelter.net.

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907 N. Holmes Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46222-3714

The shelter only needs financial donations at this time.

‘Our most essential need is financial support. On our website, we normally place our ‘top 10 need items.’ There’s only one there now. We need to pay for the hotels, for food for them, and the support for them while they’re in there. Each of the hotel rooms has a kitchenette.

While most of the residents have been placed in alternative housing, some were able to move in with family and friends during this desperate time. Wherever they have ended up, they share the same emotions as everyone in the world during this crisis—and there is an added concern for people who are poor, Bickel said.

“They’re scared. Keep in mind that they’re also working as we speak. They work in grocery stores cleaning and stocking shelves, in the hospitals as certified nursing assistants, and two of the families work at gas stations—all jobs classified as ‘essential’, which means they cannot work remotely.

“Right now, we’re just trying to get through the health crisis to make sure the families are safe and supported. Once that settles down, I think the fallout and the ripple effect on them will be substantial. It will be really, really tough on the poor.”

During this extraordinary time, the staff at Holy Family Shelter have been tested in many ways—and has risen to the challenge, Bickel noted about the 12 full-time employees and the seven part-time workers.

“It really speaks to the tremendous passion and quality of the staff we have here—that they understand the poor, and they’re able to walk with them in the good times and in these extraordinary times.

“Still, there’s this incredible commitment and mindset that says, ‘We don’t abandon the poor.’ This is a hundred times more challenging than usual, and yet they show up every day to serve the least of us, often at great personal sacrifice.”

“If anyone is looking for the next greatest generation, they don’t need to look any farther than the staff I get to work with.”

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Catholic Review Classifieds

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SCHOOLS

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Cardinal Pell released from prison after court overturns conviction

VALLA BEACH, Australia (CNS) — Cardinal George Pell has been released from prison after 405 days behind bars after a Australian court overturned conviction of molestation of two 13-year-old choirboys in 1996 and 1997. One of the men has been sentenced to six years in prison—with a possibility of seven years—after being convicted of child sexual offenses, including committing the crime of pedophilia in the Melbourne cathedral.

The High Court ruled in favor of Cardinal Pell’s legal counsel who argued that the evidence was not sufficient to prove guilt and that the jury decision “was unreasonable and irrational.” The court held that, on the assumption that the jury had assessed the complainant’s evidence as thoroughly credible and reliable, the evidence of the opportunity witnesses nonetheless required the jury, acting rationally, to have entertained a reasonable doubt as to the applicant’s guilt in relation to the offenses involved in both alleged incidents,” the High Court said.

The Vatican said in a statement that it “welcomes the High Court’s unanimous decision concerning Cardinal George Pell, acquitting him of the accusations of abuse of minors and overturning his sentence.”

The statement said the Holy See “has always expressed confidence in the Australian judicial authority,” and noted that Cardinal Pell had maintained his innocence and had waited for the truth to be ascertained.

“I do not want my acquittal to add to the hurt and bitterness so many feel; there is certainly hurt and bitterness enough,” he said.

Many survivors’ groups, who had seen the cardinal’s conviction as vindication for their long-standing campaigns to get justice from the Church for decades of child sexual abuse, were devastated by the acquittal.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, said in a statement that the High Court’s ruling will be “welcomed by many, including those who have believed in the cardinal’s innocence throughout this lengthy process.”

“We also recognize that the High Court’s decision will be devastating for others,” he said. “Many have suffered greatly through the process, which has now reached its conclusion. The result today does not change the Church’s unwavering commitment to child safety and to a just and compassionate response to survivors and victims of child sexual abuse. Any person with allegations of sexual abuse by Church personnel should go to the police.”

Cardinal Pell’s legal problems might not be over. Prosecutors could potentially revive another set of potential charges for a second set of historical abuse allegations that were headed for court but dropped when he was originally convicted. He is also facing a string of civil suits—Australian news media have reported as many as 21 suits either filed or in preparation—and new allegations were made in recent weeks as part of a three-part documentary series on child sexual abuse in the Australian Church.

In addition, Australian Attorney General Christian Porter is now free to authorize the removal of lengthy redactions to two case studies from the country’s Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

One case concerned a timeframe when the cardinal was a priest in the Diocese of Ballarat and was supposedly advising the bishop at a time when serial sexual abuse by other priests occurred, as documented by the Royal Commission. The other covered a time frame when he was archbishop of Melbourne when other such offenses were committed by priests in the diocese.

Survivors groups are pressing Porter to release the information.

The Vatican had said Cardinal Pell faced an abuse investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, but that investigation was put on hold awaiting the conclusion of the Australian legal case.

The Vatican statement on April 7 did not say whether or not the Church investigation would continue.

Cardinal Pell is seen in a car after being released from Barwon prison in Geelong, Australia, on April 7. (CNS photo/James Ross, AAP Image via Reuters)

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The coronavirus pandemic is creating fear over limited resources for treating patients, especially the most seriously ill, but “this is not a time to sideline our ethical and moral principles,” said the chairmen of three committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

“At the same time,” the statement said, “the health care community is acting in prudent, just and unbiased way.”

The statement said the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Association of Catholic Nurses-USA and the National Catholic Bioethics Center have all published excellent reminders of these principles and guidelines.”


Bishops and archbishops have limited resources and therefore may be facing some difficult decisions ahead. At all times resources are limited—there are only so many beds and so many supplies—but this crisis has and will continue to challenge us greatly,” they said. “Every crisis produces fear, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception.”

Across the country, a critical shortage of personal protective equipment for medical personnel who are treating patients with the highly contagious virus and a lack of equipment such as ventilators has prompted some U.S. hospitals to consider instituting a blanket DNR, or “do not resuscitate” order, for COVID-19 patients despite their wishes or those of their family because of the high death rate. Bishops Naumann and Coakley praised hospitals and medical personnel for their courage and compassion in treating the nation’s COVID-19 patients.

“Hospitals and health care systems are the true epicenter of this pandemic and our health care professionals, nurses, technicians, administrators and support staff—have all demonstrated courageous, compassion, and truly work on behalf of the sick and care in a time of growing crisis,” the bishops said.

They acknowledged the difficult decisions about care confronting the medical community, and urged them to read a number of important statements from Catholic health care and medical ethical organizations reminding them—and the general public—of ethical and moral principles to be applied in these difficult circumstances.

“The Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHAA) and the National Association of Catholic Nurses-USA and the National Catholic Bioethics Center have all published excellent reminders of these principles and guidelines,” they said. “We ask people, especially medical professionals, to read these documents and apply them appropriately in their work.”


Bishops Rhoades and Archbishops Naumann and Coakley also commended the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for issuing a reminder that in a time of crisis we must not discriminate against persons solely on the basis of disability or age by denying them medical care.

“Good and just stewardship of resources cannot include ignoring those on the periphery of society, but must serve the common good of all, without categorically excluding people based on ability, financial resources, age, immigration status or race,” they said.

The prelates added: “With our Holy Father, Pope Francis, the entire Church continues to pray for, and offer support to, all those affected by this pandemic.”

The USCCB website has a special link to a page offering various resources for the nation’s Catholics as they weather the ongoing coronavirus pandemic: www.usccb.org/coronavirus.