Local priests care for the dying during coronavirus pandemic

By Sean Gallagher

RICHMOND—Robert Muldoon was close to death, infected with the coronavirus, as he waited for a visit from Dominican Father Patrick Hyde.

When the priest greeted him as he came into his room at a nursing home in Bloomington, Muldoon was overjoyed.

“Father, I’m so glad you’re here,” he said. “Now I can go in peace.”

—as quoted by Sean Gallagher

Bishops of U.S., Canada will consecrate their nations to Mary on May 1

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As the world continues to face the ongoing effects of the global coronavirus pandemic, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has announced the U.S. bishops will join the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on May 1 in consecrating the two nations to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title “Mary, Mother of the Church.”

Archbishop Gomez will lead the prayer of consecration at 3 p.m. (EDT) on May 1, and has invited the bishops to join in from their respective dioceses, asking them to extend the invitation to the faithful in their dioceses for their participation.

Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is encouraging Catholics in central and southern Indiana to take part in the consecration.

The consecration can be viewed and prayed with at the USCCB’s website usccb.org and on the USCCB’s social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. EWTN will air the gathering from Our Lady of the Angels Church in Los Angeles. The event will also be aired live on EWTN’s Facebook page. www.facebook.com/ewtnonline

This year, we seek the assistance of Our Lady to pray for peace, for the end of the coronavirus pandemic, for all those who have died or are suffering from the effects of the disease, and for all those who have dedicated themselves to this ministry of comfort and support. May she continue to protect us and give us hope in these difficult times.

—Archbishop Gomez

Archdiocesan Catholics seek answers from God during ongoing crisis marked with questions

(Editor’s note: The Criterion invited five Catholics in the archdiocese to share their thoughts and experiences concerning the coronavirus crisis and how it has affected their faith and their relationship with God—whether it has made them question him, drawn closer to him or both. Here are their stories.)

By John Shaughnessy

Matthew Krach has suffered the pain of losing his grandfather to the coronavirus.

Katherine Shepard misses the personal interaction she usually has with the homeless pregnant women and their children whom she helps.

At times during this COVID-19 crisis, Jay Vennapusa has felt as lonely as he did six years ago when he left his family in India to come to the United States.

Allison Meyers sometimes worries about getting the deadly disease as she fills in as a nurse helping infected patients on a COVID unit in an Indianapolis hospital.

And Christa Hoyland has a list of fears and worries about the impact of the virus: “I see a desolate future where my parents don’t get to leave their home for another year, where my son’s September wedding won’t happen, where the Catholic school where I work will close or continue with online learning into the next school year, and where the restaurant my husband and I own may not survive and we lose everything.”

As the coronavirus crisis has touched each of their lives in challenging and meaningful ways, it has also had a powerful impact on their faith and their relationships with God.

“God is still near”

Christa Hoyland has experienced a wide-range of emotions and reactions as she struggles with the potential effects of the crisis on the people she loves.

“What I struggle with the most is...”

See CRISIS, page 10

See PRIESTS, page 11

See CONSECRATE, page 2
Pope composes prayers for end of pandemic to be recited after rosary

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis asked Catholics to make a special effort in May to pray the rosary, knowing that they will be unified with believers around the world asking for Mary’s intercession in stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

In contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary, our mother, will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial,” the pope said in a letter addressed to all Catholics and released by the Vatican on April 25.

The month of May is traditionally devoted to Mary, and many Catholics already are in the habit of praying the rosary at home during the month, he noted. “The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this ‘family’ aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.”

“You can decide according to your own situations” whether to pray individually or in groups, he said, noting “it is easy also on the Internet to find good models of prayers to follow.”

Pope Francis’ prayers also include specific intentions for those who are sick, for those who care for them, for those who have died and those who mourn for them, for scientists seeking treatments and vaccines and for government leaders who must find a way to protect their people.

FIRST PRAYER

“O Mary, You shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you. Health of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross, were united with Jesus’ suffering, and persevered in your faith. ‘Protectoress of the Roman people,’ you know our needs, and we know that you will provide, so that, as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after the newlyweds at Cana who had run out of wine for their wedding feast.

Pope Francis’ prayers also include specific intentions for those who are sick, for those who care for them, for those who have died and those who mourn for them, for scientists seeking treatments and vaccines and for government leaders who must find a way to protect their people.

SECOND PRAYER

“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

“In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

“Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes toward us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

“Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

“Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

“Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

“Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

“Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by foresight and solidarity.

“Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

“Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

“Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

“To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, to Our Lady of Guadalupe on Easter. Amen.”

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St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis to host virtual 5K, ‘Stuff a Truck’ in May

Citation staff report

The Indianapolis Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) is hosting a virtual, self-paced “Love Your Neighbor 5K Run/Walk” and four “Stuff a Truck” opportunities in May.

The self-paced 5K run/walk will raise funds to address the urgent needs of people in the Indianapolis area. Participants can run or walk the race anytime during May 29–June 12 using one of four courses in Indianapolis, or wherever desired. Sponsorships are also available.

Fatima launches ‘You Are Not Alone’ program for suicide loss survivors on May 17

Citation staff report

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis is launching a new program for suicide loss survivors called “You Are Not Alone: Hope and Healing for Survivors of Suicide Loss.” It includes a series of three free, online sessions from 4-6 p.m. on May 17, 31 and June 14, and a scheduled in-person retreat on July 11 and 12.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Indiana for those ages 15-34. The online series addresses the emotional, spiritual and healing journey after suicide loss.

The sessions, which will be offered online via the video conference software, Zoom, are as follows:


• Part 2, May 31: “The Spiritual Journey After Suicide Loss,” presented by Father James Farrell, pastor of St. Pius X Parish and administrator of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, both in Indianapolis.


The panel for the Part 1 discussion includes the above presenters and Judy Proctor, suicide loss survivor and founder of the Hope and Healing ministry in Indianapolis.

There is no cost to participate, but registration is required, and each session is limited to 100 participants. To register, go to www.archindy.org/fatima.

A “You Are Not Alone” two-day retreat is scheduled at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, from 9 a.m. on July 11 and 9 a.m.–4 p.m. on July 12.

The speakers and panel participants from the online series will present the retreat, which provides a forum for faith believers—and Catholics in particular—to come together to grieve, share experiences and learn how God helps them on their journey of survival after a suicide tragedy.

The cost is $25 for individuals and $50 for married couples. It includes the program, meals, snacks and guest room use during the program. Optional overnight accommodations are available for an additional cost.

To register, go to www.archindy.org.

For questions or to register for the online series and/or the retreat, contact Jennifer Burger at 317-545-7681 or jburger@archindy.org.

St. Christopher, 5301 W. 166th St., Indy.

May 16: St. Christopher, 5301 W. 166th St., Indy.

May 30: St. Mary, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indy.

To adhere to social distancing guidelines, donors are asked to unload their items and place them in the truck. SVdP staff will load the donations into the truck.

Please deliver clothing and other soft goods in closed, plastic trash bags, and household items in boxes. SVdP reserves the right to reject any donations of furniture that are broken, badly soiled or severely damaged in any way.

For a list of items SVdP does not accept, go to sherman ardill t5.

For questions on either of these opportunities, contact Darlene Sweeney at dswenny@svdindy.org.

Online youth and young adult retreat centered on World Youth Day themes

A live online retreat for youths and young adults will be offered by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County from May 3-10. “Emmanuel: God Is with Us” will be a spiritual exploration of the biblical themes of World Youth Day over the past 20 years.

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish, will celebrate Mass at 7:30 a.m. each day of the retreat and will offer a homily related to World Youth Day themes during the liturgies.

At 7:30 p.m. each night, Father Meyer will have a conversation with Catholic perfor ming artists and leaders in youth and young adult ministry from around the world. They will include Catholic singer and songwriter Steve Angrisano; Malcolm Hart, who leads youth and young adult ministry for the Catholic bishops of Australia; Bob McCarty, the retired executive director of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry; and Brenda Noriega, an American Catholic youth who was chosen to have dinner with Pope Francis during World Youth Day in Panama in 2019.

The Masses and conversations can be viewed on All Saints Parish’s YouTube channel and on its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Links to these can be found at the homepage of the parish’s website, allsaintscatholic.net.

For more information, visit the parish’s website, allsaintscatholic.net.

ACTS OF KINDNESS | #archindycares

Share your stories on first Communion, the importance of the Eucharist

The Criterion is inviting our readers to share your stories of first holy Communion or how the Eucharist still is a meaningful part of your life.

Please send your stories to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †
**Mary was a tough woman**

Catholics have always had a special devotion to the Holy Mother of Jesus, especially during May, which is traditionally observed as Mary’s Month. Artists have portrayed Mary in countless paintings, most often in mother-and-child paintings, as sweet, patient and holy—as she was. But she was also tough when she needed to be. Let’s review some of her life’s experiences:

The first thing we know for sure about Mary is that the angel Gabriel appeared to her and asked her to become Jesus’ mother. She didn’t just say, “Sure!” She wanted to know how that would happen since she had “no relations with a man” (1:34). Gabriel told her that her relative Elizabeth was six months pregnant. So she immediately decided to help her relative. That didn’t entail just walking down the street though. Elizabeth lived in Ein Kerem, about 90 miles away. It is likely that Mary asked a caravan a ride and traveled about a week each way, probably on foot.

Back at Nazareth, she faced the problem that she was pregnant and Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, knew that the child wasn’t his. We can only guess at the discussions they had about that, but Joseph eventually accepted the situation after learning through an angel in a dream that it was through the Holy Spirit that the child was conceived.

Then, unexpectedly, they had to travel again, this time to Bethlehem, near Ein Kerem, to register in a census. This time she rode a donkey while Joseph walked. Nevertheless, it took a tough woman to do that while she was nine months pregnant. And she had her baby in a cave where animals were stalled. Tough woman.

After that, Mary, Joseph and Jesus became refugees as they had to flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s soldiers. They experienced all the hardships of refugees.

After their return to Nazareth after Herod’s death, Mary and Joseph had to put their lives together again after a long absence. Her life was probably not easy. Carpenters at the time were not rich. So Mary would have worked all day cooking, doing laundry and keeping a Jewish kosher home. There wasn’t a lot of help for her to just sit back and enjoy her family.

She and Joseph carefully followed all the Jewish devotions. That included traveling to Jerusalem for Passover. When Jesus was 12 years old, he decided to remain in Jerusalem at the end of Passover. Imagine Mary’s emotions when she learned that and had to return to the city to find him. Jesus remained home for another 30 years. When, at the wedding feast at Cana, Mary asked him to perform a miracle and he replied that his hour hadn’t yet come, she obviously thought otherwise. She apparently had authority at that wedding feast because she told the waiters to do what Jesus told them to do. She was well aware that, once he turned water into wine, there was no chance that he could return to Nazareth and resume life as before.

Finally, there was her Son’s passion and death. Imagine the anguish she felt when she met Jesus as he was carrying his cross with blood flowing down his face from his head crowned with thorns, knowing that he was soon to be crucified. It was always tragic for a mother to lose a child in death, but that’s what Mary experienced. Not just any death, but the torturous death of a criminal.

Mary’s later life, after Jesus’ resurrection, was spent with John. Their home has traditionally been considered the first Christian church.

From her experiences, she is able to understand all of our problems. We should go to her with them for help. She was also tough when she needed to be. It is through the Holy Spirit that the promise of Mary, mothers and godmothers make for all of us, it’s a legacy that is definitely embraced by mothers. That’s certainly true of the mothers who have blessed my life. I see the Blessed Mother’s strength, tenderness and true heart in the life of my own mother. Her mother died when she was 87 and she has no memory of the woman who gave her life. Still, she and her older sister had the influence of an aunts who loved their children, an aunt who lived on a farm and welcomed them every summer, giving the two sisters a real sense of belonging.

From those roots of love and loss, my mom has blessed children, granddaughters and great-grandchildren, the example of how to love unconditionally, to give as generously and how to embrace—and never take for granted—the gifts of life, health and family.

Even in a year when she has suffered the devastating losses of her husband of nearly 67 years and her only sibling, she still gives light, hope and comfort—qualities that also reflect her beloved Mother.

I also find Mary’s faithfulness in my mother-in-law, a mother of nine whose love lives on, a legacy of all in her belief that the best day of our lives will be when we die—because then we will see and be with Jesus.

And it’s there in the grace, love and endless support of my wife for our grown children, whose household is a refuge.

I also see the legacy of the Blessed Mother in my sisters, my aunts, our daughter and our son Mary, in—long some of them mothers, some of them godmothers, and all of them bound by their faith and their love for a child.

And I have no doubt that you know women who live the legacy of the Blessed Mother every day, in nearly every breath.

They live the belief that love will always triumph.

They live the promise that made to her Son and to all of us, the promise that endures today: "I’m here. I’m here for you always."

(John Shaughnessy is the assistant editor of The Criterion and the author of Then Something Wondrous Happened: Unlikely Encounters and Unexpected Graces in search of a friendship with God.)

**Letter to the Editor**

A thanks to The Criterion staff for all its hard work

I wanted to thank you for all your work “from afar” with The Criterion. I think the last two issues have been especially wonderful, thoughtful and inspiring—just what everyone needs!

Please convey my thanks and appreciation to the writers and editors as well.

We, the readers, are so blessed to be the recipients of all your continued efforts, insights and encouragement during these challenging times.

Blessings to you all! And prayers for your continued safety and good health.

With gratitude,

Linda Ahner
Indianapolis

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**Letters Policy**

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the impartial exchange of freely-held and expression opinion among the People of God” (Comunio et Progressio, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content. Letters may be edited for space, style and grammar.

In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to no more than one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be published. Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
Ahora más que nunca necesitamos buenos pastores

“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará. En lugares de verdes pastos me hace descansar; junto a aguas de reposo me conduce. El restaura mi alma; me guía por senderos de justicia, y en la senda de su paz me conduce. Él restaura mi alma; me conduce a lugares de refugio; Él restaura mi alma; me conduce a lugares de refugio. Él renueva mi ánimo; me guía a lugares de refugio; Él renueva mi ánimo; me guía a lugares de refugio.” (Ps 23:1-3).

En la lectura del Evangelio del cuarto domingo de Pascua (Jn 10:1-10), que se conoce como el Domingo del Buen Pastor, Jesús habla sobre el ministerio pastoral. Más específicamente, habla sobre la importancia fundamental de reconocer la voz de nuestro Buen Pastor, el Señor Jesús.

“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará.”

“En verdad les digo, el que no entra por la puerta del rebaño, sino que sube por otra parte, ese es ladrón y saltador. Pero el que entra por la puerta, es el pastor de los rebaños. A él le conoce el rebaño, y él a ellos. Yo le conozco a ustedes, y ustedes me conocen.” (Jn 10:1-3).  

En este pasaje subraya la importancia del conocimiento personal: los discípulos deben conocer a su buen pastor y, por lo tanto, reconocer su voz. Así como el Buen Pastor conoce a su rebaño, así también los buenos pastores reconocen a sus miembros y los orientan.

“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará.”

“Aqui los que nos conoce a nosotros, sólo podremos ver su rostro en nuestros hermanos (especialmente los más pequeños de ellos), los pobres y los vulnerables.” (Jn 10:14-15).

En este contexto, el buen pastor es aquel que, a través de su obra y su ejemplo, inspira a los demás a seguir el camino del Buen Pastor. Es aquel que, a través de su compromiso y su entrega, fomenta el crecimiento espiritual de los demás.

“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará.”

“Y en verdad les digo, mientras tuve carne y huesos, de cuando yo era un nifio, venguéndolas con brazos abiertos y me curaba.” (Jn 10:16).

La pastoral es un ministerio que exige el amor y el cuidado personal. Los buenos pastores no sólo conocen a sus miembros, sino que también los aman y los cuidan, para guiarlos y acompañarlos en sus caminos.

“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará.”

“Y el Papa Francisco dice en One Prophet that he is working very hard to be a true shepherd of the Church.”

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“El Señor es mi pastor, nada me faltará.”

“Y el Papa Francisco dice en One Prophet that he is working very hard to be a true shepherd of the Church.”
Poets use their craft to cope with pandemic

Compiled by Natalie Hoeter

Shortly after Gov. Eric Holcomb issued stay-at-home orders for the citizens of Indiana on March 16, several Catholic poets in the central and southern portions of the state turned to their craft to help cope with, process, and find meaning in the coronavirus crisis. Below are the poems on the topic submitted to The Criterion.

**CHAO**

By Hilda Buck

In the beginning the Earth was a
formless wasteland with winking winds blowing
and an overall eerie darkness prevailing.

Nothing existed until the all powerful One
remained calm and methodically
brought order out of chaos.

Who can deny that we are now in the
midst of chaos, trying frantically to stem the course of the fearful affliction
that is rapidly overwhelming us?

Could the exhortation from the all
powerful One: "Be still and know that I am God",
inspire us to turn to him for guidance
in bringing order out of chaos? (Hilda Buck is a former member of
St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg who now resides in a retirement community in Anderson, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. Buck, 92, wrote the poem while missing visits from her family as her retirement community closed the facility to visitors
during the coronavirus pandemic.)

**Eucharist During These Times**

(A MESSAGE TO PRIESTS)

By Father Lamperski Dearing

When you celebrate the Mass
"Alone"
You and we know
You are not alone.

You unite all our souls
In your offering.

You are in the holy presence of Father, Son, and Spirit.
And the great cloud of witnesses
All watching and nodding
To your every word and action.

The Eucharistic miracle
Still happens.

"TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU,
AND EAT OF IT"

And we know that one day
We will again.

(Cathy Lamperski Dearing is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis and a Providence Associate of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. This poem is one of several she submitted in response to our call for readers to send in stories of how they’re staying connected with their faith during the coronavirus crisis.)

**TIME**

By Jená Hartman

The Coronavirus has given us TIME.

Time to: have more meaningful, genuine conversations with our family members.

Enjoy recalling happy memories. Have relaxing meals together that are not fast-food or rushed. Prepare a new recipe.

Time to: call a friend who is a shut-in. Or call someone with whom you have not spoken in a while. Or send a card with a happy note and surprise someone.

Time to: really see and appreciate the vivid bright yellow of the pretty daffodils. Enjoy the soft lavender color of the first blooms on the rhododendron bush. Smile at the day-to-day
greening of our lawns. Rejoice in the blooms on last month’s naked tree limbs which will bring forth their leaves to create summer’s shade.

Time to: start (or finish) that craft project which had been put aside during our busier days. What about those simple household repairs? What about that woodworking project that has been on your mind? What about reading that book which was a gift last year?

Time to: pray for the medical workers, EMT personnel, fire and police officers during this overwhelming pandemic.

Time to: not just read the daily Scripture selections, but to let them "soak" deep into our souls and nourish us for that day.

Time to: envision Jesus with us as we accomplish our daily household tasks and talk to Him as the Friend that He is.

Time to: take an inventory of our many blessings and be truly thankful for each one of them.

Time to: visualize and rejoice that Our God is still on His throne and will guide us through this new health crisis.

Time to: smile.

(Jená Hartman is a member of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis and is the former coordinator of the archdiocese’s Birthline ministry.)

**IN GOD CAN WE TRUST/ COVID-19**

By Stephanie Jackson

Just wanted you to know,
I was thinking about you.
This is a challenging time,
but this too we’ll get through.

We are missing our family
and our friends as well.
We are learning our distance during this COVID-19 hell.

People are sick and suffering.
Many are dying or passed.
Each of our hearts breaking;
wondering how long it’ll last.

When a crisis hits home,
the good in people shine.
Our heroes take many forms,
will to toe the line.

Reaching out to one another,
helping any way we can.
Some even taking selfless risks to assist their fellow man.

Our normal may be changed,
we’re resilient and we’ll adjust.
We’re all in this together.

In God, we can trust.

(Stephanie Jackson is a member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford. She is the author of two faith-based books.)

**Where IS God’s Love?**

By Paul Kreitl

Where is God’s Love?
Is it just in skies above?
Is it underground?
Is it underneath
Sheltering trees
And in others’ we’ve been thinking of?

Look for love, it doesn’t hide
It’s right in front and right beside
We’re all of me and all of you
Give thanks for love and love applied

Little things, they mean a lot
He created all the good we’ve got
Open your eyes
To see hearts alive
And there you’ll see all that He begot
(Paul Kreitl is a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis. This is his first poem to be published in The Criterion.)

**JESUS, MEET ME IN THIS PLACE**

By Gina Langferman

Jesus, meet me in this place,
I need Your love and grace,
I need to feel You near.

Jesus, meet me in this place,
I’m trying hard to pray
And not give in to fear.

Please be always right beside me,
Let Your Spirit guide me,
Help me walk this road.

You will carry all my burdens,
You have come to save us,
You’ll carry this load.

Jesus, be my gentle shepherd,
Lead me through this valley,
To Your light and truth.

Jesus, thank You for Your promise
You will never leave me,
Hold me close to You.

Help me praise You as my heart grows
Stronger in my faith
And strengthen those I love.

Help us always to stay near You,
Offering our heartfelt prayers to God above.

(Gina Langferman is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. She is a professional musician and teaches music for all grades at St. Rose of Lima School in Franklin. She wrote this poem as a song while "praying about this pandemic and praying for those I love").

**HOMEBOUND**

By Thomas J. Rillo

Just when you think your world is in balance and everything is placid and unruffled
Along comes something that is pandemic that shakes you from your roost
Because we live so close to others in the world and have freedom to travel
The larger and more confining is the living habitat, the greater the dissemination of disease.

Homebound
The more humans race ahead of their moral obligation and social responsibilities
The greater will be the physical disaster

that will result from these negative behaviors
The possibility of pandemic disaster will be fear and hoarding essential household items
The super-structures of communities, states, and nations will be forced to unprecedented action

Unprecedented actions will include a lock-out of many places where people interact.
To stop a pandemic virus is to stop all work, places of entertainment, even to be homebound.
The threat of possible death is a greater motivator and promotes acceptance of societal changes.
All nonessential workers are urged to stay at home in an effort to contain the virus

Homebound

Homebound

To stop all activities both at the local and national levels is not always a bad thing.
It brings families together while family activities become more interactive.
Best of the bonuses is: family members to take time to play together and pray together.
Knowing that with the Lord’s omnipotent love survival in a tough time is possible.

Homebound

(Thomas J. Rillo is a member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington and is an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. The retired Indiana University professor has published many books, including eight books of poetry.)

**JESUS WEPT**

By Sonny Shanks

I heard it started in Asia, I’m not sure where.
But there was suffering, and Jesus wept.
Soon it came to America, there was suffering, and Jesus wept.

People wept too, but some not because of the suffering of others.
Some wept because of their loss of dining out options, movie tickets, golf, and March Madness.

Soon the churches all closed, and Jesus wept.
Some people, however, smiled; church had always been kind of a hassle.

A $1,200 check came in the mail and although a lot of people were sick, most of them weren’t dying.

So some people had a ‘corona party’ and went on singing and dancing into the night, confident that the sun would come up the next morning.

They were unaware and uncaring that their ship was burning and sinking in the same time.

Jesus appeared on the waves and in the storm,
beckoning all to come to him for shelter.
Some did not listen.

Mary appeared too, midway between the storm,
and Jesus wept.

Some did not listen.

And Jesus wept.

(Sonny Shanks is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. He is the author of nine books, three of which include poems and reflections.)
Faith Alive!

Five years after its release, more needs to done to implement ‘Laudato Si’

By Dan Misleh

As I write this in mid-March, the world is gripped by the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. Locally, nationally and globally, the world is mustering resources to slow the spread of COVID-19 to not overwhelm our health care systems and to buy time as researchers discover more effective treatments and a vaccine.

What strikes me is how quickly people have come together around a common purpose with a recognition that only through common effort can we get through this crisis. As someone working on climate change full time, I can’t help but imagine a world in which the climate crisis was met with the same urgency and resolve as this pandemic. In many ways, climate change is a slow-moving pandemic, but with the potential of far greater consequences even if they are spread out over a period of years or decades rather than several months.

In the five years since the release of Pope Francis’ encyclical, ‘Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home,’ I wish that more had been done in our faith community to take advantage of this remarkable document in which Pope Francis warns us of the environmental destruction caused by our own human actions, especially by those of us in wealthier nations.

He pleads with us to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, linking the fate of our Earth with the fate of humanity, especially the most vulnerable.

Catholic Climate Covenant, an organization I am pleased to pilot, has worked to take advantage of this new moment and encourage more Catholics to act. Many of its parishes and schools have instituted recycling programs, planted community gardens, and educated Catholics on the many ways they can show greater respect for God’s creation and those who are most vulnerable.

A community garden stands on the grounds of St. Pius X Parish in Conyers, Ga. Spurred by the teaching of Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical ‘Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home,’ parishes and schools have instituted recycling programs, planted community gardens and educated Catholics on the many ways they can show greater respect for God’s creation and those who are most vulnerable.

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In crisis of crisis, God's loving plan continues to unfold

My son was having trouble graphing an equation for his algebra class, so he had to ask me for help. Poor kid. As I struggled to remember my eighth-grade algebra, he would stand there watching me when I would even use this stuff in “real life.”

“Whenever I encounter detours in life—or circumstances that feel beyond my control—I ask God, ‘What are you teaching me, Lord?’” she said.

I think I’ll stop making statements like, “I have to go to church this week.”

When I was asked to share her story after receiving her diagnosis years ago. “The story is remniscent of today’s coronavirus pandemic. My son was having trouble graphing an equation for his algebra class, so he had to ask me for help. Poor kid. As I struggled to remember my eighth-grade algebra, he would stand there watching me when I would even use this stuff in “real life.”

“Whenever I encounter detours in life—or circumstances that feel beyond my control—I ask God, ‘What are you teaching me, Lord?’” she said.

I think I’ll stop making statements like, “I have to go to church this week.”
The Acts of the Apostles again furnishes the first biblical reading for Mass this weekend. As was the case last weekend, it is a passage recalling a time when St. Peter spoke in behalf of all the Apostles. This event occurred on Pentecost, an important Jewish feast. The sermon is in the literary style of kerygmatic, that is, it goes to the essence of the Christian message. It highlights the basics of Christian belief. Jesus is Lord, the Son of God. He is the Redeemer. In Jesus, and only in Jesus, is salvation. Jesus bears God’s mercy and eternal life. Divine mercy and eternal life are not thrust upon us. We ourselves must accept Jesus. We must turn to God. With the help of God, we must repent and reform. This was Peter’s plea. The reference to Pentecost is not just simply to provide a date. Mentioning Pentecost reminds us that the Apostles stood at the center in the current of God’s long process of salvation and protection, linking the salvation offered by Christ through the ministry of the Apostles in the Lord’s name to the long history of God’s constant loving care of his chosen people. The First Letter of St. Peter once again supplies the second reading. Some scholars dispute that the Apostle Peter—Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman—literally authored this epistle. Discussions in this regard in no way, however, demean or discount the assertion that this epistle is the authentic and revealed word of God. The tests of the authenticity of Scriptures is that they were believed to be divinely inspired by the early Christian and, most importantly, that the Church, divinely inspired by the early Christian Scriptures is that they were believed to be or discount the assertion that this epistle is in this regard in no way, however, demean their importance. Raising sheep was a common livelihood in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Contemporaries of Christ instantly linked the salvation offered by Christ with the vicarious death of the Good Shepherd. That Jesus bore the sins of the world, and the Jews hereinafter use the term “sheep and shepherds.” Jesus and the Evangelists employed these images to make clear and direct the message of salvation. Their very technique in teaching reveals the holy yearning of God to be united with us. This reading insists that Jesus is the only route to heaven. Without him, we search for heaven in vain. Also important in this reading is its reference to a thief who slyly and under the cover of darkness steals away the unsuspecting and helpless sheep, taking them to death and destruction. We need Jesus. Sheep are tame and unsuspecting in the face of danger. They are vulnerable. So are humans. Thieves lie in wait for us. Fear not. The Lord, the victor over death itself, is our Good Shepherd. Reflection The Church continues to proclaim its joy and faith in the risen Lord now several weeks after Easter. It repeats the message long ago spoken by Peter on Pentecost: Jesus is Lord! He lives! Repent, renounce sin, and turn to God! These readings present reality. We weak humans are prey before the devil and forces hostile to Jesus. We cannot withstand these threats without God’s help. We are like sheep. We are limited. We are short-sighted. Temptation and the human condition limit us. Nevertheless, if we are in and with Jesus, we are strong. No power can overwhelm us, because no power can overwhelm the Lord, the victor over death itself. The Church bids us to face the facts with faith and joy about ourselves—and about the power of the Lord. †

By Brother Macarius Bunch, O.P.

At the Conception of Our Lord it was the heart of Our Lady that filled with joy while her womb filled with the Son.

At the Epiphany of Our Lord it was in the heart of Our Lady that all these events were pondered and discoursed to be treasures.

In the citation of Our Lord it was the heart of Our Lady that was wounded by allowing her Son to leave.

At the death of Our Lord, it was the heart of Our Lady that felt when the Lord’s body was crushed for our sins.

At the empty tomb of Our Lord it was the heart of Our Lady that filled with quiet joy when she knew her Son was risen.

(My Journey to God)

The Heart of Our Lady

Many theologians help the faithful understand the mystery of Christ’s death

Q This year during Holy Week, I was particularly troubled by the traditional teaching, promoted by St. Anselm in the 11th century, that Christ had to die that painful death to atone for our sins. This seems to me to contradict Jesus’ identity as a loving Savior. Upon Googling the topic, I came across a column you did several years ago that seemed to give a straightforward and common sense answer. Do you have any further thoughts which could help comfort me on this issue? (North Carolina)

A I couldn’t agree more with your discomfort at the view of St. Anselm. Anselm believed that the sacrificial death of Jesus was necessary to restore humanity’s communion with the Father, that the blood of Jesus was “payment” to God for human sin. This theory, though, has been challenged by others theologians over the centuries. In fact, one of Anselm’s contemporaries, the scholar Peter Abelard, insisted that Christ’s death on the cross had been an act of love, not payment.

And even 700 years before that, St. Augustine had indicated his reservations about such a theory. Augustine asked, in his “De Trinitate” (“On the Trinity”), “Is it necessary to think that being God, the Father was angry with us, saw his Son die for us and thus abated his anger against us?” St. Thomas Aquinas, too, questioned Anselm’s theory, saying that it took away God’s freedom to be merciful. Theologians in our own day have also found difficulty with Anselm’s view. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, wrote in his Introduction to Christianity that Anselm’s attempt to blend the divine and human legal systems can “make the image of God appear in a sinister light.” And so—thankfully—none of us is compelled to believe that God deliberately willed the suffering of his Son.

Q I am 28 years old, and over the past 10 years I have been in three serious romantic relationships, one of which reached the point where I became engaged. Although I did have a few reservations about the reason—for the inability to find common ground on issues of faith. But every move toward happiness, believing that I may never find anyone who will meet my standards (being Catholic, desiring active faith life and willing to accompany me on that faith journey), I do still believe that God hasn’t forgotten me. That I can put my trust in his timing and persevere in the midst of doubt. But can you offer any words of encouragement for someone in my position? (Iowa)

A Well, right off the bat here is one encouraging thing: I just looked up the current average age of people getting married in the U.S.—and it’s your age or above. So, you still have time! But seriously, I am impressed and edified by the values you prize in a marriage; if the ultimate goal of each of us is to, one day, be with God in heaven, then we want every major decision in our life to lead us in that direction.

And since you put such a premium on faith, I can’t believe that God does not have something good in store for you—and his timing is always better than ours. On a practical level, there are several dating services that invite users to comment on the role the Catholic faith plays in their life, and I have known couples who have found success in this way. Among such services are CatholicMatch, Catholic Singles, Catholic Chemistry and Ave Maria Singles.

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

Continued from page 1

the loss of hope, especially if I read or watch the news," says the director of communications for Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville. "But thank God, he pulls me back from the brink.

"I was weeping while taking a walk the other day, and I said, "God, help me." And I saw my favorite tree, a dogwood, in bloom. And I felt a hint of life in my spirits. I began thanking God for the sun, for the freedom to walk. And hope again blossomed."

A mother of two grown children, 54-year-old Helayne sometimes wonders if God "must feel like a parent on a road trip with a group of unruly teenagers," but there is Jesus—on the crucifix on my wall, in the image of Divine Mercy in my prayer space, and in my heart. He comforts me, reminds me of how loved and roved I am, and gently calls me back when I flounder. God is still near."

Finding Christ's comfort in the pain

Matthew Krach describes the death of his grandfather from COVID-19 as "heart-wrenching."

"He had to spend weeks in a hospital and was unable to have his loved ones near him as he was suffering greatly."

Amid that heartbreak, Krach and his family still saw how being together and praying for their loved one created a feeling of being close to him.

"While we couldn't be there for him, Christ was able to provide comfort in our place. Our extended family was able to offer not-for-credit online theology classes: The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

- Earn certification in Lay Ministry
- Complete Certificate online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catholic Theology
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

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

He will uplift us

When he looks back on the early days of the pandemic, Jay Vennapusa admits there were times when he thought God was ignoreing him.

"The one question in my mind was why the Lord is letting his people suffer," recalls Vennapusa, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus.

"But I reminded myself of how much love the Lord has for us and this suffering might be for the greater good. I feel that we are faithful to the Lord during the worst, he will uplift us and make us the best version of ourselves.

The 28-year-old Vennapusa embraces that belief because of a defining experience in his life six years ago—when he left his family in India to come to the United States to pursue a master's degree.

"I was at the rock bottom of my life, scared of new surroundings, continued, and had no friends. This is when the Lord drew me closer to him, and that is when I got back to my faith life. I constantly remind myself how the Lord helped me through my worst, and made me the person I am today. He made me stronger mentally and spiritually."

Vennapusa has been trying to deepen his faith—and the faith of others—through the lockdown by leading a weekly, virtual Bible study group organized by the archdiocese's young adult and college campus ministry.

"I've never lead a Bible study before, but this is providing me the opportunity to pray and talk about the Gospel with other young adults," he says.

"One of the group members is a nurse in an intensive care unit. She shared about her current situation in the hospital, and how she is turning to the Lord for the strength and grace to continue to help people who are suffering from the virus."

"He's relying upon the strength and grace of Christ, too. It's not easy to carry the cross without his grace, and that is what I need to continue my journey. I'll keep leading the Bible study so that I can be held accountable in my faith."

A time of sacrifices and joys

As the pandemic and the lockdown in Indiana continue, Katherine Shepard often feels the joy experienced by the sacrifices of Lent and the joys of Easter at the same time.

"This pandemic has led to so much suffering, solitude and sacrifice. It kind of feels like Lent has just continued on," says the 29-year-old Shepard. "But it also has allowed me to slow down and devote more time to prayer and my relationship with God."

"I have also drawn closer to God by holding onto the hope that he will bring light in this time of darkness. Pope Francis Easter homily resonated with me. He talked about how we need to respond to sorrow, fear and doubt with trust in the Lord rather than being paralyzed by it. He said that through prayer, love and small gestures of care we can sow seeds of hope and even make that hope begin to flower.

"She says she has seen those seeds of hope bloom in the dedication of teachers, health care workers and food bank volunteers during this time.

"She has also experienced it in the increased interaction of neighbors in the downtown Indianapolis area where she lives with her husband Eric and their cat Little Miss. She's even found some blessings in her work hours being significantly decreased at the faith-based organization that serves homeless pregnant women and their children."

"My schedule has become very flexible and has opened up so much more time for me to spend in prayer and reflection," says Shepard, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis. "Each day, I have been able to set aside time to do my daily devotions, read the Bible or listen to a favorite faith-based podcast."

"The downtime has also led to a deeper connection with the women in her weekly Bible study group, which has continued to meet virtually during the pandemic."

"Usually, there are at least a couple of women who cannot attend—myself included—due to work or other commitments. But now the quarantine has allowed us all to participate and have a sense of community. So many of us right now are feeling a bit of loneliness, so having just that one to two hours each week to check in with each other and play for one another has been so good for the soul."

"Still, there are times when she feels a lack of community and connection with others. She's really misses" the people she works with, and the women and children they serve together.

Through all the different feelings the pandemic has created, she has held on to one constant.

"I trust that God will walk with us through this time of uncertainty."

Allison Meyers stands in front of a personal prayer altar she created in her home, which includes her first Communion banner, as a way of keeping her focus on her relationship with God during the coronavirus pandemic. (Submitted photo)
Select priests ministering to the dying in pandemic use protective equipment

By Sean Gallagher

Early on after the coronavirus pandemic started to have significant effects on everyday life, archdiocesan vicar for clergy Father Eric Johnson and other archdiocesan leaders formulated protocols for the celebration of the sacraments for those close to death. Because of the contagiousness of the virus and the dangers of death, it posed a difficult problem, only priests who are young, free from complicating health conditions and live alone or could do so were asked to celebrate the sacraments for them.

Father Johnson spoke of the sacrifice this was for the priests who did not meet these conditions, including himself: “That’s been very painful for them,” he said. “It’s the right decision, but our clergy want to be there where people need it the most.”

Archdiocesan Church leaders have supplied them with a wide array of protective equipment: gloves, face masks, glasses and even full-length protective suits that has kept up for use during relief work following natural disasters.

“We have the equipment to make priests as safe as they can be when they go into those situations,” Father Johnson said. “In many cases, we’re choosing people to do that who are the least vulnerable.”

The designated priests are spread throughout the archdiocese’s 11 deaneries. Priests not on the list who receive a request for an anointing of a dying person pass it on to a priest who is.

“It’s a kind of privilege to be able to be there with these people as they’re dying and wanting the prayers of the Church and the sacrament of the sick,” said Father Sean Danda, pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, who is on the list. “I feel very blessed that I’m healthy enough to be able to go and do that for them.”

The list also provides updates on the sick and dying to members of their family who are not able to visit them in person.

“Many people have questions about how they looked,” said Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, who is on the list. “We try to show them through the priest who is caring for them.”

One of the things that families are always concerned about and are able to see and experience because they’re typically there in the room. I’ve kind of relaying that to them to some extent.”

Archdiocesan leaders and priests at the local level have been working with hospitals and nursing homes across the archdiocese to ensure that priests can have access to the dying to offer the sacraments and pastoral care.

At times, priests have been denied access, even when they have the proper protective equipment. But Father Johnson emphasized that this is an “evolving situation” in which administrators of facilities often need to balance their policies and find creative ways to work with priests so they can minister to the dying.

“I worked with Hancock Regional pretty early on to get me in,” said Father Jenkins of a hospital in Greenfield. “I really appreciate them doing that work with us.”

Making these arrangements is important, Father Johnson said, because “the ability to provide the sacraments and pastoral care to the dying is a very high priority for us.”

“As the Catholic Church in the community, we certainly recognize the very serious nature of the pandemic that we’re facing and the need to support those in the medical community who are putting themselves in a difficult position in order to care for others,” Father Johnson said. “At the same time, for Catholics, the sacraments are at the very center of our identity and experience of worship.

That becomes particularly acute at the time when a person is stepping from this life to the next. It’s at that point when the Church very particularly strives to be present to individuals as they are taking that transition.”

Father Johnson has been impressed by the willingness of priests to minister to families in situations where they put their own health at risk.

“Our priests, overwhelmingly, have been willing to do whatever needs to be done to provide the sacraments for those who are moving from this life to the next,” said Johnson. “Aside from celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist, standing with somebody as they move from life to the next ranks very high with regard to when priests feel that they are most authentically functioning as a priest.”

PIESTS

acts in the person of Christ when he acts sacramentally. So, being able to bring and to be Jesus for him in that moment was a powerful experience.”

“The priest is not his own”

Bill Snoddy, a dying parishioner who had been isolated from all visitors in a nursing home until he entered hospice care and was allowed to live out his final days in the home of his daughter, Stacey Snoddy.

“It meant a lot to me,” said Stacey tearfully. “I know my dad would have wanted this. I was very surprised that [Father Danda] came out in person. But it meant so much that he did. He really showed no fear or hesitation.”

Stacey said her father, who was in and out of consciousness at the time of the anointing, seemed to appreciate it as well.

“I could see him relax,” Stacey said.

“After that, he was very calm and at peace until he passed. The formality of it a little bit gave me some calm, too,” said Stacey.

Father Danda, like the other priests across central and southern Indiana who are ministering to the dying during the pandemic, finds happiness instead of fear when reaching out to them.

“Providing the grace of the sacraments and bringing God’s presence to them is an honor and a joy for the people who are dying or close to death,” he said. “It also eases the minds and hearts of their loved ones.”

Father Danda recently anointed Bill Snoddy, a dying parishioner who had been isolated from all visitors in a nursing home until he entered hospice care and was allowed to live out his final days in the home of his daughter, Stacey Snoddy.

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“Just like [Archbishop Fulton Sheen] said, it’s a commitment to be faithful to what the good Lord is asking of us in whatever world fears, and I am going to bring the healing hand of God to many people who are desperate to meet the Lord and his love.”

“Damien of Molokai said, ‘I am going to go into the heart of what the world fears, and I am going to bring the presence of God there.’ I feel very much that the priests who are responding to this call now are doing this, too.”

Father Gnanaraj said his ministry to people infected with the coronavirus is a way the Church reaches out to people on the margins of society, which Pope Francis has emphasized during his papacy.

“Who is on the periphery now? I would say it’s those people who are affected by this illness,” Father Gnanaraj said. “They are on the periphery. They’re quarantined. No one can go near them. The Church reaches out to them through the priests and the sacraments.

This even applies to those dying of other conditions during this time of quarantine and social distancing.

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“I could see him relax,” Stacey said.

“After that, he was very calm and at peace until he passed. The formality of it a little bit gave me some calm, too,” said Stacey.

Father Danda, like the other priests across central and southern Indiana who are ministering to the dying during the pandemic, finds happiness instead of fear when reaching out to them.

“Providing the grace of the sacraments and bringing God’s presence to them is an honor and a joy for the people who are dying or close to death,” he said. “It also eases the minds and hearts of their loved ones.”

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WASHINGTON (CNS)—The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and two other Catholic bishops criticized President Donald J. Trump’s April 22 executive order to temporarily restrict some forms of immigration during the coronavirus pandemic, saying it could “fuel polarization and animosity.”

“While we welcome efforts to ensure that all Americans are recognized for the dignity of their work, the global crisis caused by COVID-19 demands unity and the creativity of love, not more division and the indifference of a throwaway mentality,” the prelates said late on April 23. They also said they are “extremely concerned” about how the proclamation will impact immigrant families “looking to reunify” as well as religious workers.

Issuing the joint statement were Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB president; Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration; and Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, Calif., chairman of the board of directors of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., or CLINIC.

The executive order will be in effect for at least 60 days and will be reviewed 50 days from the effective date of April 23 to determine if it needs to be continued or modified. Trump issued it as part of his administration’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump said the restriction on immigration is necessary because of the pandemic’s pressures on health care and its widespread negative impact on the economy, and he cited “the impact of foreign workers on the United States labor market, particularly in an environment of high domestic unemployment and depressed demand for labor.”

“In order to protect our great American workers, I’ve just signed an executive order temporarily suspending immigration into the United States,” the president said during a White House coronavirus task force briefing. “This will ensure that unemployed Americans of all backgrounds will be first in line for jobs as our economy reopens.”

In their response, Archbishop Gomez and Bishops Dorsonville and Soto said: “There is little evidence that immigrants take away jobs from citizens. Immigrants and citizens together are partners in reviving the nation’s economy. We must always remember that we are all sons and daughters of God joined together as one human family.

“We are extremely concerned about how the proclamation will impact immigrant families looking to reunify, as well as religious workers,” they continued, noting the executive order prevents certain immigrant family members from reuniting with their loved ones living in the United States.

“Additionally, it bars religious workers seeking to come to the United States as lawful permanent residents from supporting the work of our Church, as well as many other religions, at this time,” they said. “This will undoubtedly hurt the Catholic Church and other denominations in the United States, diminishing their overall ability to minister to those in need.”

The prelates said the virus “is merciless in its preying upon human life; it knows no borders or nationality; and at a time when ‘our common humanity is apparent more now than ever,’ they added, Trump’s action ‘threatens instead to fuel polarization and animosity.”

“Pope Francis teaches us that to live through these times we need to employ and embody the ‘creativity of love,’” they added. There are several exceptions to the order, including: It does not apply to nonimmigrant temporary visas, current green card holders, those seeking to come in as a health care professional, medical researcher, or other work related to combating, recovering from or alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, a spouse or child of a U.S. citizen, and “any immigrant whose entry would seem to be ‘in the national interest.’”

It also does not limit “the ability of individuals to seek asylum, refugee status, withholding of removal or protection under various humanitarian agreements.” A number of other faith-based immigrant advocacy groups also have weighed in against Trump’s executive order, including Catholic Charities USA and its president and CEO, Dominican Sister Donna Markham.

While we understand the desire to protect people from further exposure to the COVID-19 virus, we should not sacrifice our humanity in our willingness to welcome others,” she said in an April 23 statement. “We are a nation of immigrants. Many families in our communities await the arrival of their loved ones,” she said. “The executive order unnecessarily disrupts migrant communities at a time when many immigration processes are already suspended and many families are sheltering in place to slow the spread of COVID-19. The order will do little to combat a global pandemic that is present within our borders.”

Sister Donna added: “Working with immigrant communities is a core part of our ministry and we take great pride in the programs and services we provide them. Our faith calls us to seek justice for newcomers, and we will continue to press Congress and the administration on their behalf to ensure they are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.”

Said Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: “The evils of racism and xenophobia do not stop during a pandemic. To suspend immigration is inhumane and will split up families seeking safety.”

“The facts are that immigrants are good for the economy, especially during this pandemic,” she said on April 23. “Some 25 percent of doctors and 70 percent of farm workers are immigrants, and we need more, not fewer, of these and other essential workers during the novel coronavirus pandemic.”

Gunn said this latest action by Trump is all part of his “zero-tolerance” immigration policies, and “illustrate the next steps the United States has taken down an already dark path—a path clouded by fear and distorted ideologies that violate our core values and further diminish the United States’ role as a world leader.”

But Thomas Homan, the administration’s former acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told the Reuters news agency that “it’s really not about immigration.”

“It’s about the pandemic and keeping our country safer while protecting opportunities for unemployed Americans,” he said.

By April 23, more than 26 million Americans had filed for unemployment.†