Faith guides woman as she cares for people whose lives are threatened by two pandemics

By John Shaughnessy

It was a touch of humanity amid the heartbreak.

When Anne Maguire noticed the elderly man struggling with his oxygen mask, the former Indianapolis resident was in her first few days of volunteering at a COVID-19 unit in a New York City hospital while also working a full-time job caring for HIV-positive patients there.

Maguire approached the elderly man. Seeing that all the staff nurses were busy—caring for several patients at a time in a stressful, high-risk setting—Maguire approached the elderly man.

“The patients are all alone on the COVID unit, as no visitors are allowed,” she says. “He was restless and pulling at the mask. I saw he needed some extra comfort.”

So the 33-year-old nurse practitioner removed his mask for a moment, gently wiped his face with a warm cloth, soaked a sponge with water and placed it against his lips so he could draw the moisture into his parched mouth. His expression of appreciation showed her just how much her touches of caring meant.

“It really reminded me of the reason I was there,” says Maguire, who volunteers at Mount Sinai West hospital in Manhattan for about 25 hours a week, in addition to her regular 40-hour job in Manhattan.

Faithful in a time of fear

Faithful in a time of fear

By Natalie Hoefer

The numbers are unprecedented.

Between March 14 and April 18, the United States Department of Labor announced there were 515,000 new applications for unemployment insurance benefits in Indiana due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Just one week during that time frame saw nearly 75,500 new claims, whereas only 2,700 initial claims were submitted during the comparable week the year prior.

But there are faces behind those numbers.

Faces like a woman near Tell City who was furloughed for three weeks before admitting she could no longer afford food.

The number of people we’ve never seen before is way more than our regulars,” says Deacon John Cord, who serves on the board of faith-based Waymaker Ministries in Seymour.

“The number of people we’ve never seen before is way more than our regulars,” says Deacon John Cord, who serves on the board of faith-based Waymaker Ministries in Seymour.

“We told our [volunteers] to plan for 150 meals a night, and we thought we were exaggerating. We had 105 guests the first night, 178 the second and 188 the third.”

The same situation is occurring throughout the archdiocese.

A letter from Archbishop Thompson: Moving forward from pandemic

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Easter greetings in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ!

Despite the ongoing challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and staying in place, we continue to celebrate the Easter Season that culminates in the Solemnity of Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

For many, the peace and joy of this great season has been put to the test. Practically everyone is anxious to get back to some sense of “normalcy,” whenever that may be possible.

While I do not have many answers at this point, please be assured that I am engaged in ongoing conversations with the Indiana bishops, Council of Priests, College of Deans, Indiana Catholic Conference leaders, Archdiocesan Leadership Team and others on determining how best to move forward in the reopening of churches, celebration of sacraments and resuming public Masses.

While care of souls is always the pivotal focus, we must also act in a manner that is both safe and responsible. We do not want to be reckless about endangering lives, especially the elderly and vulnerable, nor do we want to have to start all over in the fight against the virus.

I am grateful for the many people, both clergy and laity, who are assisting in the discernment process rooted in prayer throughout this ordeal and looking toward the future.

Although we do not yet know the exact protocols for moving forward, as much
and the understanding of the Church as community, the Body of Christ, are key components that drive our discernment process and decision making.

Most, if not all, of us are growing a bit impatient. Let us not let fear or frustration get the best of us. Through the inspiration and intercession of St. Joseph, may we continue to remain open in mind and heart to the wise and will of God amid this time of chaos and hardship.

Let us look forward to the opportunity to gather again with the entire People of God—clergy, religious and laity—in our churches throughout central and southern Indiana. That time cannot come fast enough for my liking, but it will come. All in God’s time. In the meantime, I offer you my continued prayers and understanding.

With assurance of my prayers and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Letter of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

To: All Members of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

From: Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Date: May 8, 2020

Subject: Emergency multitasking: Vatican says keep all vulnerable in mind

Emergency multitasking: Vatican says keep all vulnerable in mind

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Internally displaced people—those forced to flee their homes, but who do not cross into another country—are still in desperate need of urgent and special assistance, including from the Church, said a new Vatican document.

The Vatican said in a situation in which displacement already displaced may be forced to live away from their homes for many years, or even decades, and lack access to education, property, employment and the support they need for sustainable livelihoods and hope, “there is a clear and present need for action.”

The Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development released “Pastoral Orientations of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development” (IDP) on May 5 with an online news conference.

“The changes to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, at the end of 2018 there were 41.3 million people internally displaced worldwide,” the highest number in recorded history,” the document noted.

Cardinal Michael Czerny and Scalabrinius Father Fabio Fagio, undersecretaries of the Migrants and Refugees Section, told reporters that while many people were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, long-standing emergencies like forced displacement still ignite the Church’s attention.

“In this time of pandemic, the virus does not distinguish between those who are important and those who are invisible, those who are settled and those who are displaced very soon, and each infection is a danger to everyone,” Cardinal Czerny said.

Fathers Fabio said he hoped people would not overlook problems that existed long before the virus and will exist long after it is over.

“Multitasking is not optional,” he said.

The virus has shown society that systemic weaknesses are real vulnerabilities and that the fragilities are real fragilities, and that sometimes living our secure and peaceful lives, we overlook those near us who are suffering or are not well or are generally overlooked,” the document said.

Cardinal Czerny also said he hoped the COVID-19 pandemic would stop the “hollow and shallow attacks of a xenophobic nature” and political positioning against “foreigners” now that people have discovered just how essential migrants and refugees are for “essential services,” including health care, agriculture and food production.

“Far from being intruders, they are very much needed,” and the pandemic has demonstrated, he said, that hope is that experience will help people become resistant to these cheap and most regrettable attacks,”

Because internally displaced people have been treated as second-class citizens in the document noted, they are not considered migrants or refugees and do not enjoy the rights people have not, “unnecessary tensions” often follow, the document said.

In response, the Migrants and Refugees Section asks local churches and Catholic relief and development agencies to work both with the displaced people and members of the host community to survey real needs, bring people together, educate newcomers about local customs and advocate for assistance that helps both groups live better.

“The Church, it said, is called to “work for reconciliation, mutual acceptance and respect between ethnic or tribal groups, promoting a healing of memory, relaunching communication and adopting a nonviolent lifestyle.”

Correction

Stephenie Jackson is not the author of the two tracks, as listed in the May 1 issue of The Criterion.
Catechetical leaders keep parishioners connected during pandemic

By Katie Rutter
Special to The Criterion

Anita Bardo’s world came screeching to a halt on March 17. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis announced that all public liturgies would be suspended as a response to the spread of the coronavirus. All group gatherings in parishes were also cancelled.

Bardo is the director of faith formation and youth director at St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis. She relied on in-person meetings to help the children and adults of her parish grow spiritually.

“It just made me feel like my hands were tied. I didn’t know what to do,” Bardo admitted.

With prayer and consultation, she began to navigate the new waters of long-distance catechesis. Like her, parish staff members across central and southern Indiana are going above and beyond to keep Catholics connected and growing in the faith during the crisis.

“Parish catechetical leaders (PCLs), they’re heroic on an average day. I think they’re going above and beyond the call of duty throughout these challenging times,” said Ken Ogorzelek, the archdiocesan director of catechesis.

“In a lot of our parishes, it’s the PCL who is the main point of contact between a lot of the families and the parish, whether it’s about catechesis in general, or sacramental preparation,” Ogorzelek described during a phone interview on April 24.

When the doors of the churches closed, these leaders had to keep the parishioners informed of cancellations to previously scheduled sacraments. They also had to navigate the more pressing need of continuing catechesis in spite of the closures. Bardo bridged the gap using technology.

Since the children could not come to religious education classes, she began sending out all Sunday school resources via e-mail. Every week, she also holds a video conference call with the teenagers of the parish and tries to re-create their youth group meetings digitally.

“It’s the face to face and the interaction that they miss. The activities, because our parish is pretty active with youth ministry. I keep them busy. They miss that action,” Bardo said.

On her phone interview on April 28, Ogorzelek said, parishioners are “missing the Eucharist as well.”

“Ways God Speaks” or suggestions on how to continue the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) at the parish level were also released.

Parish leaders also connected with the leaders of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to help parishioners grow spiritually.

“I’ve met with our first Eucharist children,” she said, “I just met with them and prayed with them and told them how they have to wait, and that it’s OK to wait, and how we anticipate our birthdays and Christmas and how it makes us hunger more the closer we get and they feel that for the Eucharist as well."

In addition to missing the sacraments, Gettelfinger said, parishioners are “missing community… especially our older people, our retired people of the parish.”

So she and a small group of parish members called every single household to check in and offer help should it be needed. As if by instinct, Bardo described that with each other every Sunday,” she told The Criterion in a phone interview on April 27. Bardo also started weekly conference calls with those preparing to enter into full communion with the Church through her parish’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program. That group was especially hard hit by the news that they would not be able to be receiving the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil Mass.

“They are waiting, but they have a great attitude. Their attitude is, you know, we’re in this together and we are staying connected and going to class every week just like we were still preparing,” Bardo said.

In the New Albany Deanery, Francine Gettelfinger also dove into technology for the sake of her community. Gettelfinger is the coordinator of religious education at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County.

“I’ve had to sit down and research what I can do,” she described in a phone interview on April 28.

“There’s so much information out there, and all the publishing companies are releasing their information for free, their videos and all-digital books and things, so it’s a blessing for Gettelfinger said.

St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish had recently begun using a digital communication platform, Flocknote, to send updates to members. Gettelfinger capitalized on that connection to send catechetical resources to parishioners and families. She also set up video conferencing for group meetings like RCIA, confirmation preparation for teens, and parishioner-led virtual studies.

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The couple was married in St. Rose of Lima Church in Layton, Utah (Diocese of Salt Lake City), on March 25, 1955.

They have three children: Earla Imel and the late Kimberly and Glenn Huffman. The couple also has three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. †

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Volunteers from the St. Rita Parish youth group were among those to call
No time for second-guessing

“Omnis virtus moralis debet esse prudens.” (“All virtue is necessarily prudent.”) St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Virtue, 12 ad 23.

On April 27, an article appeared in First Things by the publication’s editor, R. R. Reno, that is severely critical of the actions taken by religious and secular leaders in response to COVID-19. To summarize, and oversimplify, Reno’s argument, here is a quote from the opening paragraph:

“The coronavirus pandemic is not and never was a threat to society. COVID-19 poses a danger to the elderly and vulnerable. A majority of those infected do not suffer life-threatening disease. Coronavirus presents us with a moral challenge, not a crisis. The crisis has been of our own making.”

In a similar article in First Things, on April 17, concerning the decision of Las Cruces, New Mexico, Bishop Peter Baldacchino to authorize the resumption of public celebrations of Mass in his diocese—but with only five people in attendance—Reno suggests that Las Cruces has the only courageous bishop in the United States. You can agree with it. You can disagree. But you cannot agree with Bishop Baldacchino’s decision without agreeing with it. In fact, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, courage exercised without prudence is not a virtue.

Benedictine Father Mark O'Keefe, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana, has written an insightful book titled, Virtues Abounding: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Cardinal and Related Virtues. Father Mark writes, “A courageous choice must also be prudent. Some dangers are too great to be met head-on. Sometimes retreat is the right response. The virtue of courage not only moderates fear, it also moderates the urge to be daring and engage in impulsive efforts to confront threats.”

From this perspective, a strong case can be made that those religious and secular leaders—here in Indiana and throughout the world—who “retraced” in the face of the deadly coronavirus pandemic were exercising the virtue of courage. With the benefit of hindsight, it probably is true that our society, and our Church, has placed too much trust in one-size-fits-all strategies at the expense of targeted protection strategies for the elderly and vulnerable. If more had been done from the beginning to protect those who are at the greatest risk, we might have avoided the serious problems that many residents of nursing homes and retirement communities are experiencing. At the same time, as Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb and Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson have repeatedly stated, what was done was “out of an abundance of caution” considering all the unknowns and the dire predictions, which, thanks be to God, have for the most part, in most places, not come to pass. Would this still be true if the extreme social distancing and closures not been mandated? There’s no way to know this for certain.

Certainly, we should proceed—with all due caution—to reopen our churches and our economy while paying special attention to those at the greatest risk. The measures that show are most vulnerable. As Pope Francis has said, there is a virus that is infinitely worse than COVID-19. That is “selfish indifference” (sin). We need to treat this spiritual pandemic even more aggressively than in some of our responses to the outbreak. The current public health practices are not a substitute for repentance and conversion. How do we know whether our personal attitudes and/or public policies represent “selfish indifference”? Pope Francis has given us a clear measure. As our Holy Father explains, attitudes or policies that are selfishly indifferent can be characterized as: “A virus spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me, and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me.” This is the reality of sin which Pope Francis says “begins with selfishness and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor, and sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress.”

Responsible people should beware of extreme positions on any side of a controversial issue. Prudence, which is a cardinal virtue, requires that we consider carefully all points of view and then make decisions—especially risky ones—with a healthy mix of caution, courage and trust in the power of God’s grace. Let’s pray that our bishops and government leaders are blessed with the right mix.

Clearly mistakes have been made. Our leaders are not perfect. But they deserve our wholehearted gratitude and support, as they continue to lead us in this unprecedented time of economic, social and religious uncertainty.

—Daniel Conway

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

God’s grace, and the gift of helping to make someone’s dream come true

The story is one of my all-time favorites about a dream that comes true. So is the quote that sums up the story.

The story involves Jameer Nelson who had a long and successful career as a player in the National Basketball Association (NBA). An NBA all-star during his time, the talented Nelson was known even more for his hardworking, team-first, attention-to-detail approach to the game. Yet perhaps his most defining moment in sports came off the court, when he played for St. Joseph’s College in Philadelphia.

It happened before the beginning of a season when Nelson would become the national college player of the year. During pre-season practices, a few non-secular players tried out for the team. One of the players—Andrew Koerler—caught Nelson’s attention and admiration because of his hard work, hustle and unselfishness. Still, head coach Phil Martelli was planning to cut Koerler finding his way to the top.

That’s when Nelson quietly interceded, telling his coach that the freshman was just one kind of player who could help their team during practices. Martelli listened to Nelson’s plea and made Koerler one of the star player—and kept Koerler on the team.

Later, when a Sports Illustrated writer asked Nelson how he made the extra effort for Koerler, Nelson said: “A lot of dreams don’t come true in life. If you can make someone’s dream come true, you should.

In the journey of pursuing our dreams there’s a lot we have to believe that all we need to make them come true is a laser-like focus and a complete commitment of faith and energy. One person alone can will a dream to life—or so the myth suggests. Yet that is rarely the reality.

At different turning points and at potential roadblocks, other people often help and guide the dream. Then when there are the chances that can only be explained by God’s grace. That point led to another one of my favorite “dream stories.”

It involves the dream that Marc and Ksenosco shared. The couple took their three young children on an amazing adventure a few years ago—a 17 month ocean journey in their family’s boat. After planning and saving for their dream trip for years, it turned on becoming a nightmare one day.

In an interview with Marc, he told me, “We were at a remote island—a two-day trip from civilization. I couldn’t start the engine, and our watermaker stopped working. So here we are, in a remote place, with no engine and no water. I said a prayer, ‘Help me.’ Then I ended up getting on the radio, asking for help. The radio could reach up to 60 miles, but I didn’t think anyone around was. I really was anxious.”

Marc then shared that less than five minutes later, a small boat with two men aboard appeared around a curve of the island, heading toward the family’s boat. Marc said, “They were brothers. The one brother installed water-makers for a living, and the second brother owned a shop where they worked on engines. They were like two angels that came out of the air. After about four hours of working on the boat, we were ready to go.”

Marc paused before adding, “It shows you how God works.” I’ve been thinking of these stories of Nelson and the Konescos because we’re in that time of year when certain dreams are traditionally fulfilled and celebrated, especially in the lives of young people. College acceptance, High School and college graduations. New jobs and opportunities.

You are the people seeking celebrations of these achievements have been minimized and even lost amid the uncertainty and isolation surrounding the coronavirus. As schools and families try to find innovative ways to celebrate the accomplishments of their seniors, I also hope that another major part of their school experience—the disappointment of how their senior year has ended.

In the middle of where the seniors find the time and a way to say thank you to the people who have been there for them through it all—the people who love them, the people who support their dreams and try to help them come true, and the people who show them the power of God’s grace in their lives.

And considering the overriding uncertainty of life these days, maybe that’s an approach we could all embrace this spring—expressing our thanksgiving and appreciation to those who have made such a difference in our lives.

Who would be on your list? (John Shaughnessy is the assistant editor of The Criterion. This reflection has been adapted from his latest book, Then Something Wondrous Happened: Unlikely encounters and unexpected graces in search of a friendship with God.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinions among the People of God” (Communio et Progessio, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort is 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 availability, personal sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage letters from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concern or query letters (less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

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.
La piedra que desecharon los constructores, Esa, en piedra angular se ha convertido” (1 P 2:7).

La lectura del Evangelio del quinto domingo de Pascua nos brinda un mensaje reconfortante durante esta época llena de incertidumbre: “No se turbe su corazón” (Jn 14:1). Jesús nos dice que “en la casa de Mi Padre hay muchas moradas” (Jn 14:2). Esta no es sencillamente un aliento a la esperanza y al misterio, sino que es una invitación a acercarnos a Cristo, a nuestra confianza en Jesucristo, la piedra angular, él se convertirá en la piedra angular, él se convertirá en la piedra fundacional para construir nuestra vida. 

Jesus calma los corazones turbados en tiempos de incertidumbre

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Amend increased need, St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry sees ‘display of community’

By Natalie Hofer

Amid the stress of continuing to meet the needs of an overwhelming number of clients at the Indianapolis Society of St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry (SVVP), executive director Peter Zublar bemoans in one incident.

“One lady walked up and was hoping for milk, but she really needed eggs,” he recalls. “This other [client] was packing up items to go on his bike. He said, ‘You can have the eggs, I’m OK, and I probably have too much on my bike. You have a kid and you need it more than me.’ ”

That kind of response, says Zublar. “It’s one example of generosity flowing both ways as the food pantry seeks to meet a nearly 25 percent increase in demand as businesses furloughed or fired workers after the state called for the closing of all but essential businesses in March to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

What had been a challenge to feed 3,000 households a week is now a struggle to feed nearly 4,000 households per week.

And with many of their volunteers falling into the high-risk category of contracting COVID-19, “every day is an adventure, because we don’t know who will show up each morning to volunteer,” says Zublar.

But he sees positive signs in the midst of the challenges. Like the man with the milk.

“The level of stress and anxiety everyone is under is just very great,” he says. “But there’s really a neat display of community that you see taking place on a daily basis.”

*Instability in their financial situation*

The majority of those who turn to the pantry are people who now live with income from a job, says Zublar. “Now there’s great instability in their financial situation.

The food pantry has also taken on providing food for other denominations: those transitioning from living on the streets.

“We still deliver to about 360 to 370 homebound or disabled and elderly [people] three days a week,” Zublar notes.

“We’ve heard that some of the smaller [food] pantries folks may have gone to near the apartments have closed down, and most of them can’t afford public transportation,” he says.

*Move more people faster and safer*

To meet the needs of the increased number arriving at the SVVP Food Pantry for help, the coordinators had to rethink the way the food pantry operates.

“We are a client service food pantry—we operate like a grocery store where people come in and choose items,” Zublar explains.

“Because of the need to move more people through in a faster and safer fashion,” he says, they developed two outdoor staging areas, one for those arriving by car and one for those coming by foot or on bike.

Under large tents, volunteers now place prepared boxes of perishable food items—plus milk and choices of produce—in car trunks and in baskets or luggage used by those walking or riding a bike.

Other safety measures are now in place as well. Volunteers must wear masks, and sanitation stations are set up inside and outside of pantry.

Safe-distance lines mark the bike/walk waiting line outside and work areas inside the pantry.

“It’s hard sometimes because of the hustle and bustle, but we make every effort to keep everyone 6 feet apart,” Zublar says.

*An uptick in non-traditional volunteers*

Whether it’s one of the food pantry’s three distribution days or not, the pantry still needs 40-50 volunteers every day, says Zublar.

“We have to fold and pre-package over 1,000 boxes every day we’re not open for distribution,” he says.

“To distribute food in a four-hour window requires people to bring food into pantry, stage outside, direct traffic, work at the tents to distribute the food, then bring all those items back in.”

Yet many of the those whom Zublar calls “traditional” volunteers, those in the high-risk category of contracting the coronavirus due to health conditions or age, “have had to scale back their volunteer time or not come at all until this passes,” he says.

But on a positive note, he says the food pantry has seen “a real uptick in non-traditional volunteers.

“We have seen volunteers who are working from home now take a couple hours, a day or week to help. Some bring their college-, high school- and middle school-age kids.

“Plus we’ve been very fortunate to have the [Indiana Army] National Guard consistently send out two teams of five to help with distributing, packing boxes—just whatever it takes,” Zublar notes. “They have been just fantastic.

*People are happy to see each other*

Still, there is the pressure on the SVVP staff and volunteers to meet the increased demand. And there is the concern of those not wanting to hear about feeding themselves or their families.

“We’re all under a lot of stress and anxiety,” says Zublar.

But rather than bring out the worst in people, he has seen the situation do the opposite.

“People are just happy to see each other and happy to receive or lend support,” he says. “In that sense, it’s a stress release. You see it from the volunteers’ point of view and from those in need, to get out and to interact with others.”

He notes how often clients thank the volunteers for their help, how grateful they are that the pantry has remained open.

*‘ Barely able to get us where we need to be’*

The need for volunteer support is “huge,” says Zublar. But it is matched by the need for new or continued donations to make this place ‘hugely’ sustainable, he says.

“We’ve been blessed to receive generous donations that come in daily. But it’s still barely able to get us where we need to be for the current need plus the new need. Food, tents, equipment—those are all costs.”

Every day, pandemic or no pandemic, “live or die on the generosity of neighbors and supporters, and that comes in the form of volunteers and donations,” Zublar says. “We literally won’t exist without that generosity.

“And we need it now more than ever.”

The other upcoming articles will look at the new or continued donations to the “front line” of those saving lives, sharing mercy and offering hope during the coronavirus crisis. 

Some of the programs feeding central and southern Indiana

Compiled by Natalie Hofer

Below is a partial list of parishes that shared information with The Criterion on new or continued programs to feed the hungry in this time of increased need during the COVID-19 outbreak. More listings will be in the May 15 and 22 issues.

- St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County joined with Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville to donate food to St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany, which is providing all meals to residents in its three shelter programs. Normally, the high school serves about five to eight meals per day.
- The Knights of Columbus of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin recently cooked enough fish, French fries and macaroni and cheese for 200 meals served at Rochel’s Brick Oven Pizza, also in Franklin. The restaurant is owned by St. Rose of Lima parishioner Richard Goss, who, with the help of other local groups and restaurants during this time of need, is serving more than 200 free meals from 6-7 p.m. every day to those in need.
- St. Monica School in Indianapolis is providing free breakfast and lunch to about 80 children ages 17 and younger Monday-Friday while its school is closed.
- St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood and St. Maurice Parish in Napoleon donate to the Batesville Area Ministerial Association, which operates the Batesville Food Pantry.
- The Our Lady of the Greenwood Food Pantry in Greenwood, run in partnership with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, continues to serve more than 200 families a week, and during the coronavirus is also partnering with Oak Street Health to serve 20 additional meals per week to local residents.
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Starting this week, The Criterion will run a three-part series of articles. They will tell the story of just three of the parishes and Catholic organizations in central and southern Indiana that are feeding Christ’s call to feed the hungry as the need reaches staggering proportions due to the pandemic.

This week’s article will focus on the Indianapolis Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s Food Pantry, which has seen a nearly 25 percent spike in clients. (See article above.)

The other upcoming articles will look at a new effort supported by Deacon Cord and St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour, and Martin’s Chapel, a ministry in Perry County supported by several parishes.

Along the way, we’ll list other parishes and organizations that have stepped up their efforts to feed the hungry in their communities.

Together they form another contingent of the “front line” of those saving lives, sharing mercy and offering hope during the coronavirus crisis. 

HUNGER

continued from page 1

Hunger
Mothers can lean on strength of God to love children unconditionally

By Anna Jones

"Lord, give me strength." This has been my mantra of late, every morning when I start to hear the first whines and cries from my 17-month-old around 5:20 a.m.

"Lord, give me strength." My swollen body aches, my hips annealed at the extra strain of a pregnant-again belly. Slowly, I find a way to roll over and push out of bed to start the day.

"Lord, give me strength." It's the prayer I pray at 2 a.m. when my teething toddler can't sleep and needs to snuggle on my shoulder. Not Daddy's — just mine.

I always said I admired the strength of mothers before I was blessed with my firstborn. I knew that motherhood was going to be hard work, that it must take a special kind of energy to run around after little humans and also manage to somehow take care of yourself.

And then, after the "rugrats" become self-sufficient, to be able to have the stability to stand by and let them grow into themselves and one day become adults.

The Book of Proverbs says, "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come" (Prv 31:25).

I have been blessed to witness this type of resilience in my own mother. While I don't remember much about those early years of chasing my siblings and me around, I do know what a heart swollen with pride looks like as a mom watches her child accept a diploma, walk down the aisle or hold her firstborn.

My mother—boxes of tissues in her hand—once drove overnight from Chicago to New York so she wouldn't miss either graduation of me or my brother who happened to be receiving degrees the same weekend.

To reference Proverbs above, it's been six years and while she's laughed about other memories, I'm not sure she's at the laughing stages yet for the graduation debacle.

It wasn't until after Brendan was born that I came to fully recognize how much that motherly strength came from God. Perhaps it's because, as mothers, we get to experience a God-like love for our children. God loves us, each and every one, for who we are.

He accepts our faults, celebrates our successes and is there to meet us when we fail. I know that the same goes for me and my two children, and any other children with whom I may be blessed. I will always love them unconditionally, as God has and always will love me.

Praying for strength each day may sound like a pathetic plea for help. But it's where I have found my spiritual life to be most days.

I admit at times in the last year and a half to God for more than just to simply ask for a little boost to help me survive the day.

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Before motherhood, my prayer life was 4 when the family fled Iraq because of war and persecution. Anthony was born in Jordan, where the family first sought refuge. God gives mothers strength to care for their children in all their challenges. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

Maureen Antwan is pictured with her sons, Anthony, left, and Kris, at Mar Abraham Chaldean Catholic Church in Scottsdale, Ariz., on March 26, 2017. Kris was 6 when the family fled Iraq because of fear and persecution. Anthony was born in Jordan, where the family first sought refuge. God gives mothers strength to care for their children in all their challenges. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)
Thank a teacher for making your future possible

I remember the moment my vision in life took shape. I was seated in Mrs. Dumont’s sixth-grade class, and she announced she would be reading a chapter from—at least to my eyes—a detective novel written by a local author. The reading seemed long, but I read each chapter eagerly. Unfortunately, it wasn’t a habit up to that point. Mrs. Dumont also instilled in me a passion for writing. I found that I had a gift for storytelling, and she heartily encouraged my efforts. These two endeavors went hand in hand. The more I read, the more my vocabulary increased and the better a writer I became.

In high school, I continued writing by serving for four years on the high school newspaper and yearbook staff. My writing skills and interest increased, and I was encouraged to apply for a journalism program at a nearby school. I was accepted into the program, and my journalism career began.

In college, I continued to hone my skills by serving as a reporter and editor for the school newspaper. I also began to write articles for various publications, and I found that I enjoyed writing about current events and social issues.

During my last year of college, I was given the opportunity to write for a local news outlet. I accepted the position and began to write articles about local events and issues. My writing skills continued to improve, and I began to receive positive feedback from my readers.

After college, I began to work as a staff writer for a local newspaper. I continued to write articles about local events and issues, and I also wrote features about local businesses and organizations.

My experience as a journalist has taught me the importance of listening to the people and understanding their perspectives. It has also taught me the value of critical thinking and the ability to analyze information objectively.

If you have a teacher who has had a positive impact on your life, I encourage you to take the time to thank them. A simple thank you note or a small gift can go a long way in showing your appreciation.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my journalism teacher, Mrs. Dumont, for instilling in me a love for writing and for helping me to develop my skills. She has been a mentor and guide throughout my career, and I am grateful for her influence.

Thank you for everything you do to make a difference in the lives of your students.
The Acts of the Apostles once more is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. The early Christians recognized their leadership and listened to them. Indeed, reverence for the Apostles was so deep that people placed their possessions at the Apostles’ feet, allowing them to control even the material assets of the Church’s faithful.

Peter was the leader whom the Apostles and the people acknowledged. In Acts, the early Church was situated in Jerusalem. Although the very heart of Jewish life and a city extraordinarily rich in unique for Jews, Jerusalem was not Corinth or Antioch. It most certainly was not Rome. In the total scheme of things in Roman culture, it was not a very important city.

Actually, the Romans maintained as their capital for Palestine the city of Caesarea, a seaport on the Mediterranean Sea. (The ruins of this city now are in the suburbs of modern Tel Aviv. It is interesting, incidentally, that the only relic of the administration of Pontius Pilate as governor, aside from mention in the Gospels, is a stone carved with his name, a stone discovered in the ruins of Caesarea.)

The vast Roman empire, under one system of laws, allowed for movement from place to place. Thus, nationalities mixed. So, Acts refers to Jews, but also to “Greeks” as Jews at the time called foreigners.

Care of the needy and widows was urgent. The Romans had no social safety net as modern societies have now. The Apostles responded to this fact by reminding Christians that their task was to both teach the Gospel and to care for the needy. Such was the example of Jesus.

The Apostles chose seven holy men to be deacons to help serve those in need. Their action revealed not just a move to organize the Christian community, but it showed that the Apostles had the right to innovate in the name of Jesus. First Peter provides the second reading, centering Jesus as essential in salvation. The reading urges Christians to be true to Jesus. St. John’s Gospel supplies the last lesson that recalls the Lord’s discourse with the Apostles, alerting them as to what they should expect in the future.

Trouble will come, but Jesus was with them, “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Reflection

Almost a month has passed since Easter. For weeks, the Church joyfully has told us of the resurrection. He lives! Alleluia! Before long, the season will end. We will return to life in 2020, with all its burdens and uncertainty, especially in economics and physical health.

The Church tells us not to lose heart. Jesus still is with us. He is our rock and our shield. He lives in the Church, the same as the community of the faithful described in Acts.

Applying Acts to the present is most interesting. Which Christian community truly resembles the gathering of Christians in Jerusalem long ago, precisely in their reliance upon the Apostles with St. Peter at their head? Bluntly speaking, it is the Catholic Church.

This modern community must profoundly be dedicated to the Lord by caring for the sick and the needy. Actively loving others is no charming optional item for Christians. It is at the essence of the Gospel.

The Church tells us, as the Easter season concludes, that Christ is with us. He lives. We must draw ourselves into this community that the Lord created by replicating the faith and compassion of the Lord, in fact, not just as an ideal. Being in the Church is infinitely more than joining a club.

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The ministry included a five-week Season of Creation program from Sept. 1 to Oct. 4. The program included a week-by-week guide with daily actions, reflections and background information from Archbishop Thompson, the planting of 200 trees by 12 parishes, the launch of a new website at www.OurCommonHome.org, parish bulletin information and joining a community organization to show environment-themed films.

The work is “part of the kind of Church we want to build,” Mundell said as awareness grew of pragmatic and faith-based environmentally friendly practices that can be taken in parish and personal life.

The novel coronavirus pandemic, however, has slowed the rising awareness of the encyclical and expanding parish environmental action. Even so, Mundell remains optimistic.

“What we’re getting now is people are getting this vision of understanding of what it means to live at home and live without things and change their lifestyle a bit,” he said.

Despite the stay-at-home orders and social-distancing guidelines the world has imposed, the pandemic has not halted plans to celebrate the encyclical’s anniversary.

Laudato Si’ Week is perhaps the highest-profile example of the Church-organized efforts,” Mundell said. “It’s a long journey of transformation, as we grow through the crisis of the current moment by praying, reflecting and changing our ways of living.”

The May 24 day of prayer will allow Catholics around the globe to join in prayer for the earth. Mundell said that the day can be a part of creating a more just future and creating more care for our common home coming out of Laudato Si’ Week. “Joining the effort is the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Catholic Climate Covenant,” he said.

Dan Misleh, the covenant’s executive director, told CNS the week offers people of faith a time to reflect on the gift of the earth “and realize it is under threat.” The world’s response to the pandemic also show the way forward on addressing climate change, he said.

“It is also a global crisis,” Misleh said of climate change. “The world is going to have to get its act together to address it.”

A U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) LNG, the fastest-growing, least contaminating energy source, will be the focus of the week. Despite challenges, others are committed to supporting the Earth. “We have to be mindful of that,” Misleh said.

The USCCB’s environmental justice program has developed a variety of resources, including a prayer, for ongoing engagement with the encyclical. Materials are available at https://USCCB/catholicclimate.org/care/catholicclimate.org/care (case sensitive).

Environmental ministry related to the pope’s encyclical has taken many forms. The environmental justice program in the Diocese of Stockton, Calif., has led a meeting of the region’s public policy, a component of the encyclical, has taken on an increasingly important role in the ministry.

Said Jonathan Pruitt, environmental justice program coordinator for the diocese: “We’re pretty much bringing the Catholic perspective to these policies and bringing Catholic parishioners to the table,” he explained. “We’re understanding we can get involved in this sort of thing. We’ve been able to see that Catholics are able to speak in this case, that environmental justice is not a partisan issue. It involves transparency for all. It involves inclusion of everyone.”

Pratt and Veronica Tovar, program manager for the diocesan ministry, also have involved students at schools in advocacy. Tovar said emphasis has been on making connections between simple practices such as recycling to setting policies that, for example, reduce the need to recycle in the first place through state laws and regulations that require wider availability of recyclable containers.

Since October, Kayla Jacobs, director of programs for the Lauds 2 Ministry in the Diocese of Joliet, Ill., has expanded environmental ministry to more parishes. Previously she worked in the diocesan justice and peace ministry, but when funding became available specifically to address environmental concerns, she jumped at the opportunity.

Jacobs has visited parishes and schools to share the pope’s encyclical. She has helped expand recycling programs and introduced energy audits so entities can understand where to conserve on energy consumption. Her goal is to build parish-based environmental committees to carry on the work.

The response has been one of excitement,” Jacobs said. “People have been extremely enthusiastic.”

Such outreach, with the encyclical as a building block, is what the Church is called to in uplifting society and creating a more just and saving world. “We’re trying to show,” he said, “that this work is not a separate thing from our faith.”

(For more information about the Creation Care Commission of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit ourarchdiocesehome.org)
workweek of caring for people who are positive."

"This is someone alone and dying and suffering. And that is the tragedy of this crisis. Like all the other nurses, you’re trying to let them know that someone is there who cares.

The tragedy was at the man’s bedside a few nights later when he died, giving him morphine to calm him and adding heroin to a dose of the patient care technician who was also caring for him.

"He had such a peaceful death," says the longtime former member of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. "It was sad, but it was also so wonderful."

She spoke the same words when she attended the wake—wonderfully—also fit the story of Maguire’s experiences in the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis in the United States.

It’s also the story of why the 2007 graduate of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis and the 2011 graduate of Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame has chosen to help care for people whose lives are, and have been, threatened by two of the worst pandemics of modern times—the coronavirus and HIV/AIDS pandemics.

Living her Catholic values

Maguire starts with the short answer as to why she volunteers in the COVID unit every week. She also works five days a week helping and caring for people who are positive.

"My Catholic faith has instilled in me the value of service," she says. "I know the times and the struggles, and I wanted to be there to help support them." 

The longer answer takes her back to 2013-14 when she spent 10 months in the African country of Uganda, volunteering there as a nurse in a program run by the Sisters of Holy Cross.

"I did a lot of work in their HIV clinic," Maguire recalls about her time in that country that has been hit hard by the AIDS pandemic through the years. "That’s where my passion started for working with HIV patients."

"As a practicing nurse, that passion eventually led her to relocate last year to New York City—a city whose department of health is helping and caring for people who are HIV-positive, a city whose department of health is considered a leader in HIV care.

"It’s been great to be in a place that has the highest standard of HIV care," she says.

Working with HIV-positive patients in a clinic connected to Mount Sinai West, Maguire has found her 16 months there to be rewarding but challenging.

Another challenge has been added since the coronavirus began to overwhelm New York. During the lockdown there, she has been working to stay in touch with patients through videos or phone visits.

"It’s been difficult as many of our patients are older and/or of lower socioeconomic status. They may not own a phone or be able to use it.

“Our patients living with HIV have been here for years during this time as they have already lived through one deadly pandemic, and are immune-suppressed. Many of our patients have lost friends and family members to COVID-19.”

Maguire says the clinic’s mental health team has stepped up even more to provide "tremendous support" for patients during this time. She felt the need to do more during the coronavirus crisis. So she signed up to volunteer on the clinic’s COVID floor, which led to a haunting and humiliating first shift.

“You just try to ease their fears”

"I was assigned to a unit where many of my patients had died before COVID-19," she recalls. "The staff, which remarkably still showed up to work, had no context for the moment of silence in honor of him."

"A staff member pulled me aside and told me about how their manager had showed kindness and compassion to her. This was a humbling night for me.

"That first night, she distributed personal protective equipment to the staff. Now, she has an up-close view of the crisis on a COVID unit. She has witnessed the “remarkable resilience, dedication and teamwork of her fellow health care workers. She has also seen their fatigue. Mostly, she has noticed the fear the patients have.

"The patients are very sick and have shared how horrible the virus has left them feeling." she says. "The patients frequently express fear that they will die, and many of their family members have died from COVID. Many of the patients are now on life-or-death care, and their family members are unable to visit them.

Having COVID-19 patients during this time has been so wonderful—also fit the story of Maguire’s experiences in the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis in the United States.

"My faith has allowed me to see the goodness and beauty of humanity in the midst of such a highly politicized crisis. In every moment from the beginning, I’ve seen the kindness of people towards me—and the patients have been so thankful for our care.

"My patients have sent so many messages with kind words. And every visit I have with a patient, they have asked how I am doing, and thank me for working for them.

She has also received extra doses of hope and faith at just the right times.

"There are moments of hope when you see patients go home from the hospital," she says. "A doctor came to the unit to thank the nurses for caring for him. He had been hospitalized at the beginning of the crisis, and was back to work.

There was also the uplifting interaction between a patient of her HIV-positive patients who had been infected with the coronavirus.

"I have been very grateful and understood very saddened. I guided him through the illness with daily video or telephone visits. He is well now, and I saw him in clinic last week. He was so grateful to be alive, and appreciative of his care.

Another special moment came on Easter Sunday morning when she felt especially connected to her parents.

As Father Rick Nagel celebrated a livestream Mass from St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis, she watched from New York, knowing that her parents were watching from their home in Indianapolis.

"That was very comforting, especially as I had just finished a night shift at the hospital."

She says she has drawn closer to God during this crisis. She has also relied upon her faith.

"My faith has allowed me to see the goodness and beauty of humanity in the midst of such a highly politicized crisis," she says. "In every moment from the beginning, I’ve seen the kindness of people towards me—and the patients have been so thankful for our care.

"Every interaction I’ve had with patients has been so wonderful. It’s just been so wonderful.”

Bishops urge closer look at COVID deaths in black communities


“Our hearts are wounded for the many souls mourned as African-American communities across the nation are being disproportionately infected with and dying from the virus that causes COVID-19. We raise our voices to urge state and national leaders to examine the generational and structural conditions that make this the new coronavirus especially deadly to African-American communities," said the statement issued on May 4.

The statement, on behalf of four U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Commissions, was issued by Bishop Shelton J. Fabe of Houma-Thibodaux, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism; Bishop S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Archbishop Nelson J. Perez of Philadelphia, chairman of the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church; and Bishop Joseph N. Perry, auxiliary bishop of Chicago, chairman of Subcommittee on African-American Affairs.

Though an accurate rate of infections and deaths among African-Americans at the national level is not yet clear, some communities are reporting alarmingly high rates of positive patients who have been infected with COVID-19 cases even though blacks make up 45 percent of the population. At around the same time in New York, African-Americans were 28 percent of deaths, although they’re 22 percent of the population, and in the District of Columbia, African-Americans account for almost half of the COVID-19 cases and 79 percent of deaths, according to The New York Times.

Bishops urge a closer look at COVID deaths in black communities

“A patient the other night had survived lung cancer, a limb amputation and sepsis. He shared with me, ‘Now I have this virus. I’ve never felt so miserable.’

"An elderly Hispanic woman was admitted. When I finally got to meet a staff member to translate for me, she was saying, ‘I’m dying.’

"Fear is what you see across the board. They’re scared. You just try to ease their fears and provide some empathy and compassion.

"She strives to be that source of care and comfort on days that start with an 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. work shift. She does this by a volunteer stint that extends from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m."

"Once I get there, it’s great,” she says about arriving on the COVID unit. "When I get home, it’s hard to wind down. It’s hard to get to sleep.

"In such moments, her thoughts often turn to her large extended family in Indianapolis.

“It’s been very difficult being away from my family during this time,” says the daughter of Joe and Rita Maguire of Indianapolis, who are also members of St. John the Evangelist Parish. “I live alone, so the isolation has been difficult.

"I’m exhausted mentally and physically. I’m not scared of having COVID, as likely I’ve already been exposed. My biggest concern is that my family stays safe. What I think about most often is how long it will be until I can come home to Indianapolis to see my friends and family.

“Right now, she doesn’t anticipate that return until late summer at the earliest. In the meantime, she draws strength from the love she receives from her family and friends in Indianapolis and the support of the family she is building in New York.

There are moments of hope

“Co-workers have been extremely supportive, which has been a piece of goodness and beauty of humanity in the midst of such a highly politicized crisis," she says. "In every moment from the beginning, I’ve seen the kindness of people towards me—and the patients have been so thankful for our care.

"Every interaction I’ve had with patients has been so wonderful. It’s just been wonderful.”

Anne Maguire
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Bishops throughout the United States reconsecrated the country to Mary as the nation continues to struggle in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Bishops in Canada also used May 1 to rededicate their country to the Blessed Mother.

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), led a “Renewal of the Consecration of the United States of America to the Blessed Virgin Mary” on May 1. The sparse, 37-minute ceremony at Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles was livestreamed on Facebook, YouTube and the websites of the Los Angeles Archdiocese and the USCCB.

Alternating between English and Spanish, Archbishop Gomez said: “In this difficult time, we turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of the Church. She intercedes with her Son for all are affected in this way by the pandemic. … We implore her maternal care for her children.”

Archbishop Gomez noted Mary’s history in the United States. “The first missionaries came to this country under the mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Later, the bishops consecrated her as patroness of the United States of America,” he said. “The Virgin Mary has accompanied this nation throughout the United States. ‘The first person to consecrate herself to Jesus, the first to offer her whole heart to do his will, to set his beautiful plan of redemption,’ Archbishop Gomez said. ‘We ask God to give us that same faith, that same courage … the strength to follow Jesus, to seek his holiness and his kingdom.’

The ceremony featured Marian hymns, including “Regina Coeli,” “Hail, Holy Queen” and a contemporary English-Latin setting of the Magnificat. It also featured the recitation of two decades of the rosary: the fifth Sorrowful Mystery, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, followed by the fifth Glorious Mystery, the coronation of Mary as queen of heaven.

At its conclusion, Archbishop Gomez said, “Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is encouraging us to rediscover the beauty of praying the rosary at home in the month of May. We are still in quarantine in our homes.” He noted that “one of the many saints in Los Angeles was the venerable [Father] Patrick Peyton, who coined the ‘family rosary’ and the phrase ‘The family that prays together stays together.’

‘Maybe we can dedicate ourselves,’ Archbishop Gomez said, “to find time to come together as a family to pray the rosary in our homes.”

A similar liturgy of consecration took place at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on May 1, led by Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Washington, who prayed: “In this time of pandemic, we come to you, our sign of sure hope and comfort. Today we renew the act of consecration and entrustment carried out by those who have gone before us.”

Archbishop Gregory said, “Because of local and federal social distancing and self-isolation mandates in an effort to halt the spread of COVID-19, the rededication liturgy at the basilica was not open to the public, but livestreamed on social media platforms.

This consecration renews the bishops’ previous consecrations of the United States to Mary. In 1792, the first bishop of the United States, Bishop John Carroll, consecrated the nation to Mary under that title as the patrones of the nation. In 1959, Cardinal Patrick O’Boyle of Washington again consecrated the United States to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was the year when construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington was completed. The national shrine was elevated to minor basilica status by St. John Paul II on Oct. 12, 1996. This was renewed by the U.S. bishops on Nov. 11, 2006. Archbishop Gregory prayed for Mary’s “intercession for the needs of our country, that every desire for good may be blessed and strengthened, that faith may be revived and nourished, hope sustained and enlightened, charity awakened and animated.”

WASHINGTON Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory leads a special liturgy in renewing the consecration of the United States to the care of our Blessed Mother at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on May 1 during the coronavirus pandemic. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

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