Plan announced to reopen churches, resume public celebration of sacraments

For the first time in almost two months, churches in central and southern Indiana are beginning to open for the faithful for private prayer, devotions and the sacrament of penance.

In the coming days, a phased resumption of the public celebration of the Mass and other sacraments will begin in archdiocesan parishes.

The March 17 closure of churches and suspension of public worship across Indiana was implemented as part of the broader societal effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson announced the plan to reopen churches and resume public worship in a May 8 letter and plan sent to pastors and parish coordinators and posted on the archdiocesan website: “While we continue to take great care and utilize the recommended precautions,” he said in the letter, “we will soon begin the gradual process of reopening our churches and resuming the celebration of the sacraments publicly.”

The dates in the archdiocesan plan for the phased reopening churches and resuming the public celebration of the sacraments can vary locally depending on a parish’s ability to ensure a safe worship environment and specific county-level stay-at-home orders.

Here are the phases of the plan:

• Phase one—Starting on or after May 13, churches may reopen for private prayer, devotions and the sacrament of penance.

• Phase two—Starting on or after May 19, weekday Masses, weddings and funerals within Mass, postponed memorial Masses for those who have died and the anointing of the sick for those who are seriously ill but may not be in imminent danger of death may resume. (Presently, graveside services, funerals and weddings outside Mass with 10 people or less have been permitted.)

• Phase three—Starting on or after the weekend of May 23-24, Sunday Masses, the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults and first Communion may resume. All people 65 or older and those who are sick or who have medical conditions that make them especially vulnerable to the coronavirus should remain at home. Archbishop Thompson has extended the dispensation for the obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays to all the faithful until Aug. 15.

Worshippers take part in a Mass celebrated on July 20, 2017, for members of Legatus, an organization for Catholic business leaders, at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. On May 8, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson announced a plan to allow for the phased and safe reopening of churches and the celebration of the Mass and other sacraments across central and southern Indiana. When the celebration of Mass resumes in the archdiocese, seating will be limited in a continued effort to help slow the spread of the coronavirus. (Submitted file photo by Katie Rutter)

By Natalie Hoefer

John and Megan Dugan were looking forward to March 25, John’s 50th birthday. They and their 13-year-old son Charlie would be on a cruise with several other families to celebrate.

Then the coronavirus hit—not just the country, but the Dugans. Just 24 hours after the day marking his birth, John began a five-day fight for his life on a ventilator in an Indianapolis hospital.

“I felt like I was drowning,” he recalls. “I couldn’t breathe. It was the worst feeling in the world.”

Meanwhile, Megan suffered at home with the coronavirus’ telltale fever, body aches and exhaustion. The days blurred as she slept for as much as 20 hours at a time.

But the Dugans were not alone. Family, friends and even

‘An act of faith’

Faith, prayers help man in ICU, sick wife at home survive COVID-19

By Natalie Hoefer

John and Megan Dugan were looking forward to March 25, John’s 50th birthday. They and their 13-year-old son Charlie would be on a cruise with several other families to celebrate.

Then the coronavirus hit—not just the country, but the Dugans. Just 24 hours after the day marking his birth, John began a five-day fight for his life on a ventilator in an Indianapolis hospital.

“I felt like I was drowning,” he recalls. “I couldn’t breathe. It was the worst feeling in the world.”

Meanwhile, Megan suffered at home with the coronavirus’ telltale fever, body aches and exhaustion. The days blurred as she slept for as much as 20 hours at a time.

But the Dugans were not alone. Family, friends and even
This extension is motivated, in part by the continued need of social distancing, which will result in limiting the seating capacity of churches. The plan offers churches a variety of ways to spread out attendance at Masses. Social distancing will also affect the procedure of distributing Communion.

Father Patrick Beidelman, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization, helped develop the plan. Several pastoral leaders, theologians and health care experts, both from within and beyond the archdiocese, were consulted in the development process.

“It will be regularly monitored, enhanced, clarified and added to as we gain more knowledge and experience,” Father Beidelman said. “It’s a living plan, not set in stone. As we have the experience of our first time opening churches again, beginning to celebrate weekend Masses and then Masses for parishes a variety of ways to spread out attendance at Masses. Social distancing is continued until further notice unless it is given as Viaticum to one who is in imminent danger of death.

Parishes are encouraged to continue livestreaming their local celebration of the Mass. Videos of Sunday and weekday Masses celebrated at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis will continue to be posted daily on the archdiocesan website.

Father Beidelman said the aged Catholics across central and southern Indiana to keep in mind the continued sacrifice of those people who stay at home for the protection of themselves and others, to “surround them in their prayer” and “if they’re able to receive holy Communion at Mass, perhaps they can consider periodically offering their Communion for someone they know who cannot yet come to Mass and ask God to send them those graces.”

This time when Father Beidelman has not been able to lead the worship of the members of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, where he serves as rector, has taught him spiritual lessons.

“I’ve become acutely more at ease with not being in control, because so much of this—the timeline, the scope, the conditions we have to live under—are out of our control,” he said. “I believe that God is inviting us to place ourselves in the arms of the Lord, and for the grace to accept it and to thrive and flourish in the experience that we’re in at this moment.”

“That can be true whether we’re under a stay-at-home order, or whether we’re moving about freely and living life more normally.”

Father Beidelman is now looking forward to gathering with his parishioners for the celebration of the Eucharist.

“I can only imagine how emotional it will be for people to return to this gift of God,” he said. “It will be a great joy for me because the celebration of Mass and the reception of holy Communion, the Eucharist, is as high as it gets for us on this side of the grave. It is the source of our communion with God and one another and it is the summit, the apex, of our lives as Catholics.”

(Archbishop Charles C. Thompson’s letter and the archdiocesan plan to reopen churches and resume the public celebration of the Mass and other sacraments can be viewed at both English and Spanish at www.archindy.org.)

Carta del arzobispo Charles C. Thompson sobre la reapertura de las iglesias

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

Aunque estas semanas de confinamiento voluntario para luchar contra el coronavirus han sido cortas en términos generales de tiempo, muchas las han sentido como eternas. Si bien esto ha resultado difícil para prácticamente todo el mundo, la decisión de cerrar las iglesias surgió por excesiva precaución, como se expresó anteriormente. Ciertamente seguimos teniendo mucha cuidado y aplicaremos las precauciones recomendadas, pero pronto comenzaremos el proceso de reapertura gradual de nuestras iglesias y reanudar la celebración pública de los sacramentos.

Como parte de la primera fase está la reapertura de las iglesias para la oración y la devoción privada, y para celebrar el sacramento de la confirmación pospuesta. No se ha tomado ninguna decisión con respecto a la celebración del sacramento de la confirmación postpuesta. Por ahora, hasta el 31 de mayo todas las confirmaciones quedan pospuestas. Pronto ofreceremos más información.

Tengan en cuenta que estoy permitiendo que las iglesias abran este miércoles 13 de mayo, pero esto no es una obligación. De hecho, las directrices locales en algunos lugares quizá limiten el proceso de reapertura de algunas iglesias. Es comprensible que algunos requieran más tiempo. Es igualmente aceptable ofrecer el sacramento de la reconciliación al aire libre y no en el interior.

Junto con esta carta se proporcionan algunas disposiciones para retomar las celebraciones litúrgicas de la misa pública y otros sacramentos. Para dejarlo muy en claro: La dispensa de la obligación de participar en la misa sigue vigente hasta el 15 de agosto. Se exhorta con vehemencia a las personas de 65 años en adelante, así como a las vulnerables y las enfermas, para permanezcan en sus casas durante este periodo. Con la certeza de mis oraciones y mis mejores deseos queda de ustedes en Cristo,

+ Charles. C. Thompson

Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson
Arzobispo de Indianápolis

The Criterion
Friday, May 15, 2020

Masses
continued from page 1

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

These few weeks of staying in place to fight the coronavirus, although a very short time frame in the grand scheme of things, has felt like ages for many. Though it has been difficult on practically everyone, as previously stated, the decision to close churches was made out of an abundance of caution.

While we continue to take great care and utilize the recommended precautions, we will soon begin the gradual process of reopening our churches and resuming the celebration of the Sacraments publicly.

Reopening our churches for private prayer and devotions and for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance will be a part of our first phase, and this will be possible beginning on Wednesday, May 13. In the following week, beginning on Monday, May 18, the offering of weekday Masses and some other smaller celebrations may begin. Finally, we will return to the celebration of Masses for Sunday and the remainder of the postponed celebrations of the Sacraments. A decision has not been made regarding the postponed celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation. As of now, all confirmation celebrations through May 31st are postponed. More information will be forthcoming.

Please understand that I am allowing, not mandating, that churches reopen on next Wednesday, May 13. In fact, local directives in some places may limit the reopening process of some churches. For those who need more time, that is understandable. For those who prefer to provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation outside rather than inside, that is acceptable as well.

Some provisions for resuming public liturgical celebrations of Mass and other Sacraments are provided with this letter. To be very clear: The dispensation from the obligation to participate at Mass remains in effect until August 15. Those who are 65 years of age or older as well as all vulnerable and sick persons are strongly encouraged to stay at home during this time. With assurance of my prayers and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson
Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis
Divided court re-examines insurance coverage of contraceptives

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The justices of the U.S. Supreme Court seemed divided on May 6 over Trump administration rules that give employers more ability to opt out of providing contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage in their employee health plans.

The argument, part of a handful that will take place by teleconference during the coronavirus restrictions, took another look at an issue that has come before the court already, and again, as in previous terms, it highlighted the Little Sisters of the Poor, the order of women religious who care for the elderly poor.

“There are very strong interests on both sides here, which is what makes the case difficult, obviously,” Justice Brett Kavanaugh said in the May 6 arguments, which lasted 40 minutes longer than the usual-allotted hour.

He said the interests include religious liberty for the Little Sisters of the Poor and others, and ensuring women’s access to health care and preventive services.

“So the question becomes: Who decides how to balance those interests?” he asked. The Little Sisters of the Poor, who have been down this road before, were represented by Becket, a religious liberty law firm.

To recap their journey: In 2013, religious groups and houses of worship were granted a religious exemption by the Supreme Court from the government mandate in the Affordable Care Act to include contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate.

HHS provided this exemption in 2018, but several states challenged it, including California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, saying HHS didn’t have the power to give this exemption.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey obtained a nationwide injunction against the rules protecting religious对象 from the mandate; that injunction was then upheld by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Philadelphia.

This is where the Little Sisters come back because they appealed the circuit court’s ruling and asked the Supreme Court to step in.

In one of the two consolidated cases, Trump v. Pennsylvania, the administration has argued that the exceptions to the contraceptive and sterilization mandate for religious groups were authorized by the health care law and required by the 1965 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, known as RFRA.

Lawyers for Pennsylvania and New Jersey said the administration lacked statutory authority to issue such regulations and said the government did not follow proper administrative procedures.

The second case examines whether the Little Sisters of the Poor had the standing to appeal the 3rd Circuit ruling since a separate court order had already allowed them to refuse to provide contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization coverage in their employee health plans.

In the May 6 oral arguments, Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor expressed concerns that if the Trump administration rules remained in place, many women would be left without access to contraceptives covered by insurance plans.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) filed a friend-of-the-court brief siding with the Little Sisters of the Poor, which stressed that the court needs to set the record straight, particularly with its interpretation of RFRA, which says “governments should not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification.”

The brief said there was a compelling need to review this case not only because the 3rd Circuit Court decision conflicts with other Supreme Court rulings on this topic in the Hobby Lobby and Zubik decisions, but also because it is中的“threatens to reduce one of America’s leading civil rights laws to virtual impotence,” referring to RFRA.

It emphasized that RFRA essentially hangs in the balance because the appeals court “adopted a grudging interpretation of the statute that will, unless reversed, too often deny protection for religious people and institutions.”

Weighing in again on the day of the oral arguments, a statement by USCCB committee chair said: “Religious organizations have a right, recognized by the Constitution, to select people who will perform ministry, and the government has no legitimate authority to second-guess those ministerial decisions.”

It also said the government cannot force a religious order to “violate the religious beliefs that animate its mission,” and called it “dismaying that after the federal government expanded religious exemptions to the HHS contraceptive mandate, Pennsylvania and other states chose to continue this attack on conscience.”

The oral arguments were the combined cases of Little Sisters of the Poor Saints Peter and Paul Home v. Pennsylvania and Trump v. Pennsylvania. A decision is expected by late June.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
still offering daily online Mass to archdiocesan faithful

While Church leaders throughout central and southern Indiana began working on plans to reopen parishes for the celebration of Masses, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis will continue to offer Mass online each day.

Official Appointment
Effective Immediately

Ms. Barbara Black, parish life coordinator at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Terre Haute, appointed parish life coordinator pro tem of St. Mary-of-the-Woods Parish in Terre Haute while remaining parish life coordinator at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish.

(This appointment is from the office of the Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis.)
St. Peter John Paul II
born 100 years ago

Next Monday, May 18, is the 100th anniversary of the birth of St. Peter John Paul II. The Catholic Church had some exceptional popes during the 20th century, perhaps more than in any other century, but JPII, as he came to be known, is considered by many as the greatest. His pontificate carried over into the 21st century; he died just 15 years ago and Pope Francis canonized him in 2014.

Born Karol Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland, he led a remarkable life before his election as pope in 1978. An athletic boy who played football (what we know as soccer), he became an actor and a playwright in his late teens. But then came World War II, and he had to go to work in a limestone quarry for the German occupation forces.

He studied for the priesthood in a clandestine underground seminary and was ordained in 1946. He was known as a kind priest, especially to the young with whom he would camp, but also as an intellectual. Named a bishop, he attended the Second Vatican Council where he first caught the attention of the rest of the Church’s hierarchy.

It was historic, to say the least, when he was elected pope because he was the first non-Italian pope in 455 years; the first since Adrian VI in 1522-23 and the first ever from Eastern Europe. Then his pontificate extended for more than 26 years, longer than any pope except Blessed Pius IX.

Pope John Paul II quickly became the most-traveled pope in history, journeying to 129 countries. More people saw him in person than saw all of his predecessors combined.

He also canonized and beatified many more people than all of his predecessors combined.

Perhaps historians will remember him particularly for his role in the dramatic events leading to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, including his home country. His visits to Poland and his support of the Solidarity labor movement there strengthened resistance to communism. This led to nonviolent liberation movements and the collapse of communist regimes, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

His literary output—including 13 encyclicals—set another record. He was by far the most prolific writer as a pope. The encyclicals showed his concern for the protection of all human life, for social justice (three social encyclicals), for ecumenism and interreligious relations, his love for the Blessed Virgin and the relationship of faith and reason. He also wrote several books and others were produced with his cooperation.

He worked tirelessly to promote better relations with the Jews and with other Christians, as well as non-Christian, religions. He apologized frequently for errors committed by Church leaders in the past against Jews, Muslims and others.

There can be little doubt that he was admired by more people in the world than any other religious or political leader. Twice he called leaders of all religions together to pray for peace, the only religious leader who could have done so.

Throughout his pontificate, he was extremely popular with youth. This was understandable when he was a strong athletic man, but his attraction to young people continued into his old age and despite his infirmities. Our young people chanted “John Paul II, we love you!” during his visit to Denver for World Youth Day in 1993, and so many others through the years affectionately chanted that refrain.

He tried to put the ideas of collegiality with the bishops into practice by presiding over 15 synods of bishops, usually issuing apostolic exhortations following the gatherings. When the idea of a new catechism was suggested at a synod, he approved the project and then authorized the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992. He oversaw the revision of the Code of Canon Law and promulgated the new code in 1983.

He was sensitive to women’s issues while continuing to insist that the Church is unable to ordain women. His continued support for priestly celibacy also put him at odds with some in the Church.

As he aged, he suffered from Parkinson’s disease, the effects of an assassination attempt, a broken hip and an appendectomy. Through that, he taught us the value of suffering. He referred to his illnesses as “the mission Jesus entrusted to me.”

As we observe the centennial of his birth, we thank God for giving us this great man to lead our Church during our lifetime.

—John F. Fink

Reflection
Sr. Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, O.S.B.

Global Church to celebrate Laudato Si’ Week on May 16-24

On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis released his first encyclical, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.”

This year, the fifth anniversary of the release, and the world-wide Church is marking this occasion with virtual events and prayer ceremonies on the dates of May 16-24, called Laudato Si’ Week.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) is the primary site for Laudato Si’ Week (www.laudatosiweek.org), and includes a message from Pope Francis renewing his urgent call for all of us to care for our Earth.

The theme of Laudato Si’ Week is “everything is connected.” Taken from the encyclical: “Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems we face.” (#91)

This is visible in our care for all life, from conception to death. It is visible in the care for those most vulnerable, especially during this time of COVID-19 pandemic. May our prayers and actions reflect Christ’s love for our fellow human beings and for all of God’s creation.

The GCCM is calling on us to “come together as one people around the world to prayerfully discern the lessons of this moment. While the world experiences a history-defining event, the Church Prepares to build a better world.”

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccb.org/environment) and its supporting organization, the Catholic Climate Covenant (catholicclimatecovenant.org) are also promoting Laudato Si’ Week with resources and support to the dioceses across the United States.

Sight Unseen
Brandon A. Evans

The inscription on the inner wall

In a distant land, there is a fictional monastery and over its church is a stone tablet. Inscribed on the tablet are three words: monks read every time they gather to pray: “All Things Pass.”

It’s a phrase they keep in their hearts and use to stoke the fire of their fervor: a lock-solid rule set against a vain world.

For humanity, in its progress and regress, human. The place at the heart of the world is the fault at the heart of each person, and despite all attempts every generation forgets the things it promises it will not.

Original Sin wounds us. It makes us stumble the steady and lends darkness to memory. We repeat, from children to adults, the mistakes of the past because they are our mistakes and our issue that separates us from God cuts down all the way to the deepest part of our souls.

We are a paradox of beings who long for permanence and immortality in a universe of constant change and death—even our good works betrayed by our mistakes.

We tremble before death, and against the things it promises we are a paradox: beings who long for a good world against the very world that promises to be good.

But it is precisely there that we find our hope, for the light that shines through the hand of the One who made Easter out of Good Friday.

The monks of the imaginary abbey live the words they read each day by seeing in them not just a curse, but also a remedy. They live a life of detachment and austerity, dying to the things they want the most and giving their service to God.

Jesus Christ is the very model of this care. Over and over in Scripture, he says it: we must each take up our cross, give up our possessions, accept the tears that we leak at the feet of the One who sees the world.

He says it until, in the end and despite his fear, he embraced death willingly.

One day it will be each of us standing before that darkness. It will be us on the hospital bed, unable to move as the priest lays down cold on our lips.

Our own death will be—to each of us—the death of everyone and everything we know. After the darkness, all our hopes and dreams and memories, they will all pass in a single instant. We will cease to exist in the form of our own.

Our lives can be a preparation for such a moment, having placed our trust in Jesus a thousand other times and through a thousand other worries; we can steal from death the terror it wields.
Díganle a Dios: ‘¡Cuán imponentes ¡ríndanle gloriosas alabanzas!’

Dios perfectamente realizado en el ha sido neutralizado por el amor de y catástrofes producto del pecado seguimos experimentando los efectos de nuestro Señor, su triunfo sobre el

la tierra; digan: El Señor ha redimido gritos de alegría y háganlo saber.

The great mystery of our Lord’s resurrection, his triumph over sin and death, is that while we continue to experience the effects of evil (plagues, natural disasters and catastrophes resulting from human sinfulness), their power over us has been neutralized by the love of God perfectly realized in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

By his wounds, we have been healed. By his freely chosen gift-of-self, we have been released from the bondage of sin and death. Even when we can’t see or understand the reasons for the bad things that happen to us—and especially to those who are most vulnerable and underserving of the hardships that are imposed on them—we are invited to rejoice in the unconditional love and mercy of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He invites us to accompany him on his journey from death to new life. As close as he is to us now, the hope we have received through our participation in the joy of Easter is just a foretaste of much deeper joy to come.

This means, that even in the worst possible circumstances, the risen Lord is with us. He is close to us. He shares in our suffering and our hurt. He mourns with us. He comforts us and gives us hope.

Above all, we can rejoice because our Lord invites us to share in both his suffering (his passion and death) and his joy (his resurrection and ascension into heaven). Even in our own suffering and death, we are promised the joy of being united with Christ—both here and now and in a better life to come. As individuals and as a community of faith, we are invited to experience his joy in the resurrection of Christ, and so encounter his mercy and his hope.

Practically speaking, we Christians are not naive or foolish about the manifestations of sin and death that confront us in daily life. When someone we love dies, we mourn but we don’t lose hope. When we confront the realities of poverty, homelessness or injustice, we don’t react passively; we practice the virtues of charity, hospitality and justice. When a massive pandemic strikes our homes, our communities and the world, we don’t give up; we may sacrifice and endure hardships to slow the spread and protect the health and well-being of those who are most vulnerable.

We do these things in confidence and hope because we know that the Lord is risen. We endure hardships, provide comfort and support to others, and accept the things that we can’t change, because Jesus is close to us and assures us that no matter what happens, all will be well.

The great mystery of this liturgical season. Are we feeling deep sadness, we insist on the joyful proclamation that Christ our hope is risen. Even in times of tragedy and deep sadness, we insist on the joyful joy-filled themes of this holy season.

El sexto Domingo de Pascua, que celebramos este fin de semana, continúa con los temas lindos de alegría de esta temporada santa. Al comienzo de la liturgia, la antífona de entrada ((Is 48:20) proclama: “Anuncian esto con gritos de alegría y hágalo saber. Publicúenlo hasta en los confines de la tierra, digan. El Señor ha redimido a su pueblo, aleluya.”

Las lecturas de las Escrituras, las oraciones y las aclamaciones continúan la proclamación llena de alegría de que Cristo nuestra esperanza ha resucitado. Incluso en tiempos de tragedia y profunda tristeza, insistimos en el carácter alegre de esta temporada litúrgica: ¡Acaso nos estamos engañando? ¡O en verdad tenemos motivos para agraciarnos? El gran misterio de la resurrección de nuestro Señor, su triunfo sobre el pecado y la muerte, es que mientras seguimos experimentando los efectos del mal (plagas, desastres naturales y catástrofes producto del pecado humano), su poder sobre nosotros ha sido neutralizado por el amor de Dios perfectamente realizado en el sacrificio de Jesucristo en la cruce. Mediante sus heridas, hemos sido sanados; por su antoentrega elegida libremente, hemos sido liberados de la esclavitud del pecado y de la finalidad de la muerte.

Incluso cuando no podemos ver o entender las razones de lo malo que nos sucede, y especialmente cuando se trata de los que son más vulnerables y que no merecen las penurias que se les imponen, estamos invitados a regocijarnos en el amor incondicional y la misericordia de nuestro Redentor, Jesucristo, quien nos invita a acompañarlo en su viaje de la muerte a la nueva vida. A pesar de lo cerca que está de nosotros ahora, la esperanza que hemos recibido a través de nuestra participación en la alegría pasional es solo un anticipo de una alegría mucho más profunda que está por venir. Esto significa que, incluso en las peores circunstancias, el Señor resucitado está con nosotros. Está cerca de nosotros. Comparte nuestro sufrimiento y nuestra pena. Llora con nosotros. Nos consuela y nos da esperanza.

Sobre todo, podemos regocijarnos porque nuestro Señor nos invita a compartir tanto su sufrimiento (su pasión y muerte) como su alegría (su resurrección y ascensión al cielo).

Incluso en nuestro propio sufrimiento y muerte, se nos promete la alegría de estar unidos a Cristo, tanto aquí y ahora, como en una mejor vida por venir. Como individuos y como comunidad de fe, estamos invitados a acercarnos a Cristo, y así encontrar su misericordia y su esperanza.

En la práctica, los cristianos no somos ingenuos o tontos en cuanto a las manifestaciones del pecado y la muerte que se nos presentan en la vida diaria. Cuando muere un ser querido lloramos pero no perdemos la esperanza. Cuando nos enfrentamos a las realidades de la pobreza, la indigencia o la injusticia, no reaccionamos pasivamente; practicamos las virtudes de la caridad, la hospitalidad y la justicia. Cuando una pandemia de enormes proporciones azota nuestros hogares, nuestras comunidades y nuestro mundo, no nos damos por vencidos; hacemos sacrificios y soportamos dificultades para frenar la propagación y proteger la salud y el bienestar de los más vulnerables.

Hacemos esto con confianza y esperanza porque sabemos que el Señor ha resucitado. Soportamos las dificultades, damos consuelo y apoyo a los demás, y aceptamos las cosas que no podemos cambiar, porque Jesús está cerca de nosotros y nos asegura que pase lo que pase, todo estará bien.

Como cristianos, elevamos la mirada hacia María y los santos para que nos inspiren y nos señalen guías en los momentos difíciles. Estos son los hombres y mujeres que nos han precedido en el testimonio del poder de la Resurrección. Conocerán una gran pena, y soportarán intensos dolores y sufrimientos (incluso el martirio) con la confianza de que el Señor estaba cerca de ellos. No temían pues confiaban en el Señor.

La primera lectura de este domingo (He 8:5-8; 14-17) narra el testimonio de Felipe de la resurrección: “Felipe bajó a una ciudad de Samaria y les anunciaba al Mesías. A oír Felipe y ver las señales milagrosas que realizaba, mucha gente se reunía para escucharlos y recibir consejo; pero no les damos por vencidos; hacemos sacrificios y soportamos dificultades para frenar la propagación y proteger la salud y el bienestar de los más vulnerables. Hacemos esto con confianza y esperanza porque sabemos que el Señor ha resucitado. Soportamos las dificultades, damos consuelo y apoyo a los demás, y aceptamos las cosas que no podemos cambiar, porque Jesús está cerca de nosotros y nos asegura que pase lo que pase, todo estará bien. Como cristianos, elevamos la mirada hacia María y los santos para que nos inspiren y nos señalen guías en los momentos difíciles. Estos son los hombres y mujeres que nos han precedido en el testimonio del poder de la Resurrección. Conocerán una gran pena, y soportarán intensos dolores y sufrimientos (incluso el martirio) con la confianza de que el Señor estaba cerca de ellos. No temían pues confiaban en el Señor.

La primera lectura de este domingo (He 8:5-8; 14-17) narra el testimonio de Felipe de la resurrección: “Felipe bajó a una ciudad de Samaria y les anunciaba al Mesías. A oír Felipe y ver las señales milagrosas que realizaba, mucha gente se reunía para escucharlos y recibir consejo; pero no les damos por vencidos; hacemos sacrificios y soportamos dificultades para frenar la propagación y proteger la salud y el bienestar de los más vulnerables. Hacemos esto con confianza y esperanza porque sabemos que el Señor ha resucitado. Soportamos las dificultades, damos consuelo y apoyo a los demás, y aceptamos las cosas que no podemos cambiar, porque Jesús está cerca de nosotros y nos asegura que pase lo que pase, todo estará bien. Como cristianos, elevamos la mirada hacia María y los santos para que nos inspiren y nos señalen guías en los momentos difíciles. Estos son los hombres y mujeres que nos han precedido en el testimonio del poder de la Resurrección. Conocerán una gran pena, y soportarán intensos dolores y sufrimientos (incluso el martirio) con la confianza de que el Señor estaba cerca de ellos. No temían pues confiaban en el Señor.

La primera lectura de este domingo (He 8:5-8; 14-17) narra el testimonio de Felipe de la resurrección: “Felipe bajó a una ciudad de Samaria y les anunciaba al Mesías. A oír Felipe y ver las señales milagrosas que realizaba, mucha gente se reunía para escucharlos y recibir consejo; pero no les damos por vencidos; hacemos sacrificios y soportamos dificultades para frenar la propagación y proteger la salud y el bienestar de los más vulnerables. Hacemos esto con confianza y esperanza porque sabemos que el Señor ha resucitado. Soportamos las dificultades, damos consuelo y apoyo a los demás, y aceptamos las cosas que no podemos cambiar, porque Jesús está cerca de nosotros y nos asegura que...
Pope Francis offered prayers for unemployed women who have been unable to work. He also prayed for the men and women who have been unable to work due to the economic downturn during the pandemic.

Referring to Christ’s use of the Greek word “Paraclete,” which means “advocate,” the pope said the Holy Spirit is the one “who supports us, who accompanies us” so we won’t fall, who holds us firmly.

The Holy Spirit’s two main tasks, he explained, are to “teach” and “remind” Christians about faith. The Holy Spirit “teaches us the mystery of faith, he teaches us the mystery a bit better,” the pope said. “He will teach us the things that Jesus taught us, he will make the Lord’s doctrine grow within us, he will make the Lord’s doctrine grow.”

The Spirit’s second task, he continued, is to remind us of Jesus’ teachings and “is like a memory, it awakens us.” “He keeps us awake, he awakens us to the things of the Lord, he helps us remember our own lives,” including the times when one has chosen to follow or leave the Lord, the pope said.

Pope Francis encouraged Christians to trust in the Holy Spirit who guides all people to discern what is right and wrong and is “God’s gift” to all. “The Spirit is the gift,” he said. God “will not leave you alone, he will send you Paraclete who will sustain you and help you to go forward, to remember, to discern and to grow. God’s gift is the Holy Spirit.”

At morning Mass, Pope Francis offered prayers for unemployed workers, including those who were not rehired or worked off due to the economic downturn during the pandemic. He commended the dignity and perseverance of those who continue to reel from the economic situation, including those who have been unemployed.

```
VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The coronavirus pandemic has drawn well-deserved attention to nurses and midwives, who are among “the saints next door,” dedicated to helping people in some of the most joyful or painful moments of their lives, Pope Francis said.

“Every day, we witness the testimony of courage and sacrifice of health care workers, and nurses in particular, who, with professionalism, self-sacrifice and a sense of responsibility and love for neighbor, assist people affected by the virus, even to the point of putting their own health at risk,” the pope said in a message marking the May 12 celebration of International Nurses Day and the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

“Thank you for your service to humanity,” the pope wrote.

Pope Francis also paid tribute to the nurses who contracted the virus and died, assuring their families that “the Lord knows each of them by name.”

“In many countries,” he said, “the pandemic has also brought to light a number of deficiencies in the provision of health care,” including the need to invest in nurses and give them greater respect and recognition.

Pope Francis used his message to nurses to also “ask leaders of nations throughout the world to invest in health care as the primary common good, by strengthening its systems and employing greater numbers of nurses, so as to ensure adequate care to everyone with respect for the dignity of each person.”

Nurses and midwives, he said, have a “very special vocation” of being “guardians and preservers of life.”

“You are an image of the church as a ‘field hospital’ that continues to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ, who drew near to and healed people with all kinds of sickness and who stooped down to wash the feet of his disciples,” the pope said.

Nurses and midwives know that they need scientific and technical knowledge to help their patients, but that their vocation means also bringing “human and humanizing” qualities to their patient interactions.

“Taking care of women and men, of children and elderly, in every phase of their life from birth to death,” he said, “you are tasked with continuous listening aimed at understanding what the needs of that patient are in the phase that he or she is experiencing.”

“Before the uniqueness of each situation, indeed, it is never enough to follow a protocol, but a constant—and teneous—effort of discernment and attention to the individual person is required,” Pope Francis wrote.

“I would like to say a special word to midwives who assist women in their pregnancies and help them give birth to their children,” he wrote. “Your work is among the most noble of professions, for it is directly dedicated to the service of life and of motherhood.”
```
El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

El papa Francisco acude a María como fuente de inspiración, valentía y esperanza

“Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implora al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha dicho con frecuencia que su imagen favorita de la Iglesia es su maternidad. “La Iglesia es femenina,” dice el Papa. “Es madre.”

María es el modelo, la inspiración para la maternidad de la Iglesia y para todo lo que es santo, compasivo y amoroso en la vida y el ministerio de la Iglesia. Cuando la influencia de María falta o es débil, la Iglesia ya no actúa como una madre amorosa, según nos enseña el Papa.

Durante la pandemia de COVID-19, el papa Francisco ha recurrido repetidamente a María, Salud de los Enfermos, en busca de inspiración, valentía y esperanza. Como en Caná, intercederá por nosotros y nos guiará en este tiempo de prueba.

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consuele a las familias de los enfermos y de las víctimas, y que abra sus corazones a la esperanza.” (Papa Francisco)

El papa Francisco ha escrito: “Madre de Dios y Madre nuestra, implóra al Padre de misericordia que esta dura prueba termine y que volvamos a encontrar un horizonte de esperanza y de paz. Como en Caná, intercede ante tu Divino Hijo, pidiéndole que consule...
Church was not prepared for the coronavirus billions of people throughout the world, "the Church wasn't prepared, either, for pandemic, nuncio to U.S. says

The nuncio said he has heard from some Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers there have to worry about social distancing for them.

Deacon Cord can vouch for the impact on the pulse of those in need of food for some time.

Deacon John Cord at cord@stambroseseymour.org

Feeding central and southern Indiana -

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Peyton Levine, left, Michelle Neibert-Levine, and Andrew and Matt Levine, members of St. Andrew Parish in Seymour pose on April 23 beside the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.

The nuncio has become "a lot bigger than we thought," says Deacon Cord. "People in homeless shelters but with no seen a group we were helping we wouldn't—young, middle-class families."

Relief Services, and many others, there

Deacon Cord said, "Next, the volunteers have to wear masks and gloves. When you invite a priest just to bless your home, they're on their own."

We are using an increasing number of the members of middle-class people," says Deacon Cord. "The head of middle-class people say, I never thought I'd be in a situation to stand in line and ask for a meal. Now they're coming every day."

The youngest was probably 4', the oldest around 55, with an equal mix of women and men."

At the serving site—the parking lot of Waymaker Ministries' nearly-completed homeless shelter—volunteers for or donate to Waymaker Ministry's efforts to help feed the hungry during the time of increased need for food.

Waymaker Ministries is one of the other ministries told us that they had conversations with two individuals that had considered suicide and were finding hope and strength from these services," she says.
JERUSALEM (CNS)—Moving forward with an Israeli plan to unilaterally annex West Bank land could mean the end to the already languishing Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, said the heads of the Holy Land Churches.

“An array of plans for Israel to unilaterally annex West Bank land, backed mainly by right-wing factions, raises serious and catastrophic questions about the feasibility of any peaceful agreement to end the decades-long conflict, one that continues to cost many innocent lives as part of a vicious cycle of human tragedy and injustice,” the Church leaders said in their statement.

Among those who signed the May 7 statement were Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, apostolic administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and Franciscan Father Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land.

Also in early May, Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett initially approved a construction project that has been under discussion for 20 years and would see 7,000 new housing units built in the West Bank Israeli settlement of Efrat, expanding the settlement toward its border with Bethlehem.

A new government coalition agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz allows Netanyahu to present his long-discussed annexation proposal to the government as soon as July 1.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump has expressed support for the annexation plan, which would bring 30 percent of the West Bank under Israeli permanent control, contingent upon the offering of limited statehood to the Palestinians in the remaining territory—something the Palestinians have rejected.

The patriarchs and heads of the Holy Land churches said they viewed such unilateral annexation plans “with the utmost concern.” They called upon Israel “to refrain from such unilateral moves, which would bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of the peace process.”

The Church leaders called on the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations to respond to the plans with a time-defined and phased peace initiative of their own based on international law and U.N. resolutions to “to guarantee a comprehensive, just and long-lasting peace in this part of the world that is considered holy by the three Abrahamic faiths.”

They also urged the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which they called “the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” to resolve all internal and factional conflicts so it could present a united front “dedicated to achieving peace and the building of a viable state that is founded upon pluralism and democratic values.”

Regarding settlement expansion, Palestinian and Israeli opponents of the plan say it will prevent any potential expansion of Bethlehem, already being blocked on two sides by other building projects in Efrat and in Har Homa. Israel considers Har Homa a neighborhood of Jerusalem, but Palestinians call it a settlement built on land belonging to Palestinians from the city of Beit Sahour.

The nongovernmental organization Israeli Peace Now indicated it intends to file a court petition against the Efrat building plan.

“This is a cynical move by a caretaker defense minister at the end of his mandate, while the nation is still reeling from the corona crisis, to advance a dangerous plan aimed at entrenching permanent Israeli domination in the southern West Bank and harming the prospect of a two-state solution,” Israeli Peace Now said in a statement.

The Latin Patriarchate has spoken against settlement expansion and land appropriation, including in November 2018, when several acres of its own land in the northern Jordan Valley were taken by Israeli military authorities. In 2017 the patriarchate spoke against a quickly passed law that allowed the Israeli government to seize private Palestinian lands where unauthorized Israeli settlements had been built.
St. John Paul II led the Church into third millennium

By David Gibson

Do I remember St. John Paul II? Yes, I remember him well. I write of him as the centennial of his birth on May 18, 1920, approaches. It would be impossible to list all my lasting memories of him in one article. So that is not my goal.

The more than 26-year papacy that commenced with John Paul’s election on Oct. 16, 1978, meant he would become one compelling point of focus during more than two-thirds of my own long career as an editor in the Catholic press.

Do you have special memories of the Polish pope? If only we could speak together about them!

Is an image worth a thousand words? If so, I suspect that images of St. John Paul kneeling to kiss the Earth as he arrived in each new nation he visited as pope have created a memory shared by many. The gesture was intended to make respect for the peoples of the world visible.

I cannot proceed without recalling the assassination attempt on St. John Paul’s life on May 13, 1981. A young Turkish man named Mehmet Ali Agca shot and wounded him critically in St. Peter’s Square.

Many around the world apprehensively awaited progress reports during his three-week stay in Rome’s Gemelli Hospital. The tragic shooting shook people to the core.

Indeed, however, his recovery progressed. Some 24 more years as pope lay ahead.

If his shooting proved unforgettable, think back also to what followed. The pope suffered serious intestinal wounds after the gunman fired shots at him in St. Peter’s Square on May 13, 1981. Forgiving Agca was a dramatic personal expression of the central emphasis of the pope’s ministry as bishop of Rome.

For instance, in his 1994 apostolic letter “Tertio Millennio Adveniente” (”The Coming of the Third Millennium”) on the advent of the third millennium, he set forth a detailed, three-year plan of preparations for the coming of the year 2000.

“Everyone is asked to do as much as possible to ensure that the great challenge of the year 2000 is not overlooked,” he wrote (#55). When the year 2000 concluded, he acknowledged in the Jan. 6, 2001, apostolic letter “Novo Millennio Ineunte” (“At the Beginning of the New Millennium”), that “from the beginning of my pontificate, my thoughts had been on this holy year 2000” (#2).

Allow me to share one more memory of St. John Paul. It relates to his friendship with St. Teresa of Calcutta, commonly known as Mother Teresa. Some six years after her 1997 death, he declared her “blessed.”

The pope’s remarks during her Oct. 19, 2003, beatification seemed to highlight what he found so inspiring about this friend, whose dedication to the poor was recognized worldwide. He called her “an icon of the good Samaritan.”

She “went everywhere” serving “Christ in the poorest of the poor,” he noted. “Not even conflict and war could stand in her way.”

St. Teresa of Calcutta, canonized in 2016, “wanted to be a sign of God’s love, God’s presence and God’s compassion,” and so remind all of the value and dignity of each of God’s children,” the pope observed.

For me, the word “dignity” leaps off the page of his beatification text. I felt as his pontificate unfolded that dignity, human dignity, became an important theme for him.

Not that he introduced human dignity to the Church’s lexicon, for the call to respect others, even enemies, is basic for Christians. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council, in which he participated as a young Polish bishop, put the term “human dignity” to good use in its 1965 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (“Gaudium et Spes”).

“The human person makes up an essential task in the Catholic conversation not only about other Catholics, but about the human family.”

In his December 1988 apostolic exhortation “Christifideles Laici” (“On the Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful”), he said:

“To rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person makes up an essential task [and], in a certain sense, the central and unifying task of the service which the Church, and the lay faithful in her, are called to render to the human family” (#37).

(David Gibson served on Catholic News Service’s editorial staff for 37 years.)
Entrar en terreno sagrado mediante el arte de la escucha y el acompañamiento

Oscar Castellanos

¿Qué pudieran tener en común las siguientes historias? 

Desde hace 25 años ha terminado la universidad y al ver la realidad de la iglesia comienza a vivir con el pensamiento y la posibilidad de entrar, permanecer y entregar su vida como sacerdote. Al comenzar esa posibilidad, mucho se planta en su corazón, lo más importante es que Dios, Dios, es el que debe ser el que decida la dirección que él necesita seguir.

¿Cuáles son las señales que debe seguir? 

Todas estas historias, aunque difíciles, son un momento de encuentro con Dios. Se presenta a compartir la experiencia de encontrarse confundido, fallos de esperanza y deseos de preguntarse y buscar la dirección. Un sentimiento de cierta soledad, no necesariamente de abandonarse de Dios, sino una soledad que lo lleva a conversar con una muchacha más profunda con Dios. Experimentan sin darse cuenta, una necesidad de ser acompañados por Dios, que es un encuentro con una mujer en la que se confiesa sus experiencias de lo cual los escoge y guía hacia un lugar distinto del que están. La pregunta que se hacen es cuán cuestionarios de acompañamiento y confesión. Bastará con llamar a su amiga y expresar lo que hay en su interior a un Dios que lo escucha todo. En nuestra tradición cristiana, diríamos que la relación espiritual es una opción muy viable para este tipo de acompañamiento.

Hasta hace pocos días, la dirección espiritual se consideraba primordialmente una oportunidad para los religiosos o personas que estaban dentro del seminario o el sacerdocio, y no para los laicos. Aún más interesante, la dirección espiritual no era entregada por laicos, mucho menos por mujeres. Todavía recuerdo con tristeza hace un par de años, el momento en que dejé de ser una dirigida llamé y me dijeron: “Tenemos que cancelar nuestras sesiones porque no hay una profesora de clerecía”. Así que la directora espiritual solo puede darse por sacerdotes. “La dirigida, proveen de una cultura clerecía, un tipo de clerecía, clerecía cristiana, me confirmó falta hace escuchar sobre este ministerio. La dirección espiritual no debe confundirse con ayuda psiquiátrica o consejería, mucho menos debe igualarse a una sesión de “coaching” o autostop. La dirección espiritual se centra en la relación con Dios, se presenta a compartir la experiencia de encontrarse confundido, fallos de esperanza y deseos de preguntarse y buscar la dirección. Un sentimiento de cierta soledad, no necesariamente de abandonarse de Dios, sino una soledad que lo lleva a conversar con una mujer en la que se confiesa sus experiencias. Bastará con llamar a su amiga y expresar lo que hay en su interior a un Dios que lo escucha todo. En nuestra tradición cristiana, diríamos que la relación espiritual es una opción muy viable para este tipo de acompañamiento.

Lo que hay en su interior a un Dios que lo escucha todo. En nuestra tradición cristiana, diríamos que la relación espiritual es una opción muy viable para este tipo de acompañamiento.
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, May 17, 2020

• Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8, 14-17
• 1 Peter 3:15-18
• John 14:15-21

The Acts of the Apostles once again this Easter season furnishes the first reading for Mass this weekend. In the readings of the weekends earlier in this season, the identity of the Apostles has clearly been given. The Apostles had exercised the authority of Jesus in naming a group, then pronounced, blessed, and sent them on their way. They were part of the community of Apostles, then centered in Jerusalem, gathered around and beside Peter.

The Apostles in Jerusalem sent Philip and John to Samaria. They performed miracles, as Jesus had done. They were the part of the community of Apostles, thus the Church begins to take a more African-shaped form.

For this reading, the central figures are Philip and John. They performed miracles, as Jesus had done. They were part of the community of Apostles, then centered in Jerusalem, gathered around and beside Peter.

The Church will reassure us. Our love for others is dispensed has varied considerably over the years, as detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1447). In the early centuries, reconciliation for particularly grave sins consisted of a one-time-only public profession of guilt and a course of manifest penance, sometimes for a number of years, before readmission into the eucharistic community of the Church.

During the seventh century, Irish missionaries brought to the European continent the practice of the private confession of sins to a priest, opening the way to the regular use of the sacrament for both mortal and venial sins—and this has continued as the basic structure of the sacrament up to the present day.

Reflection

The next major liturgical event for us will be the celebration of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Soon after this feast, we will celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. Within sight now is the close of the Easter season.

Already, for weeks, the Church has informed us of the resurrection of Jesus, gloriously occurring after the dreadful events of Good Friday. It has shared with us its joy, echoing the joy of the first Christians. It has reported again and again of the risen Lord’s appearances and admonitions.

Gently, gradually but emphatically, the Church has begun the process of leading us in our day to ask what the resurrection truly means for each of us individually. Is it an anniversary or, for each of us, a personal experience?

The Church will reassure us. Our communion with Jesus was not lost with his ascension when he returned to the Father. Communion remains clearly in the Church, standing with the Apostles and their successors. This link with Peter and the other Apostles also is God’s gift to us.

Through the Church, we hear again the words of Christ. In the Church’s sacraments, Christ’s eternal strength and life continue to flow to us.

These readings call us to peace, hope and goodness. They teach us about life and how to live.

My Journey to God

Enough

By Michael Barrett

I passed a beggar, gave him money from my pocket. Did I give enough? My co-worker yelled at me today, I absorbed her anger. Was my response enough? I hugged my crying child tightly, unable to say a word. Why can I never do enough?

Oh, my child. The beggar ate today from your generosity. Your co-worker calmed her soul after you gave her space to vent. Your child was being teased and felt unloved until you cared. You did pray today. I was the beggar, the co-worker, your son. My beloved child, YOU are enough.

Sacramental absolution of sins, based in Scripture, has developed over time.

Q When I was a Protestant, I never went to confession, and no such practice existed in any of the churches to which I belonged over the years. Now, as a Catholic, I’ve been told that confession is based on a passage in the Letter of St. James that says, “Confess your sins to one another” (Jas 5:16).

But that verse to me seems more like a general instruction to admit it when we’ve done a person some wrong and ask each other’s forgiveness than it does a mandate to have a confessional in every church. Can you explain?

A I have always learned that the Church’s authority to forgive sins was based primarily on a different scriptural text from the one you cite. This passage comes from the Gospel of St. John: “on the night of the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and the Apostles who were huddled in fear, he said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” (Jn 20:22-23).

The exact form in which that forgiveness is dispensed has varied considerably over the years, as detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1447). In the early centuries, reconciliation for particularly grave sins consisted of a one-time-only public profession of guilt and a course of manifest penance, sometimes for a number of years, before readmission into the eucharistic community of the Church.

During the seventh century, Irish missionaries brought to the European continent the practice of the private confession of sins to a priest, opening the way to the regular use of the sacrament for both mortal and venial sins—and this has continued as the basic structure of the sacrament up to the present day.

Q Due to COVID-19 and restrictions to prevent its spread, public Masses are currently suspended in our diocese. If I “attend” a livestreamed Mass on television during this time, have I fulfilled my Sunday obligation? By not participating at all, I feel as if I am falling away—and it is becoming much too easy to enjoy this “time off.”

A No, you have not fulfilled your Sunday obligation by watching Mass on television or through social media. But at the present time, all dioceses in the U.S. have dispensed with the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and all holy days of obligation in order to help slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Whenever circumstances make it impossible or unsafe to go to church—illness, caring for a sick child, a non-negotiable work assignment, etc.—your Sunday obligation is simply lifted. But what you should still do is to try to make Sunday special.

The bishop of the Diocese of Spokane, Wash., for example, wrote that during the pandemic, “Those members of the faithful who do not attend Sunday Mass should devote some time to prayer on the Lord’s Day, either alone or as a family.”

Many parishes and dioceses have offered suggestions as to how that might be done—watching a televised Mass, prayerfully meditating on the Sunday Mass readings, praying the Our Father and offering prayer intentions aloud as a family.

During a weekday televised Mass from his residence in March, Pope Francis suggested that viewers who find themselves unable to receive the Eucharist during the coronavirus make a “spiritual Communion,” and he offered the following text:

“My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most holy sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you.”

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

Daily Readings

Monday, May 18
St. John I, pope and martyr
Acts 16:1-12
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 15:26-16:4a

Tuesday, May 19
Acts 16:22-34
Psalm 18:1-3, 7-8
John 16:15-11

Wednesday, May 20
St. Bernardine of Siena, priest
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1
Psalm 148:1-3, 14-15
John 16:12-15

Thursday, May 21
St. Christopher Magallanes, priest, and companions, martyrs
Acts 18:1-8

Psalm 98:1-4
John 16:16-20

Friday, May 22
St. Rita of Cascia, religious
Acts 18:6-18
Psalm 47:2-7
John 16:20-23

Saturday, May 23
Acts 18:23-28
Psalm 72:5-8, 10
John 16:23-28

Sunday, May 24
The Ascension of the Lord
Acts 1:11
Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9
Ephesians 1:17-23
Matthew 28:16-20

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

The Criterion Friday, May 15, 2020

Page 13
COVID
continued from page 1

strangers stormed heaven with prayers. So did the members of their parish, St. Barnabas in Indianapolis.

What follows is a testament to faith.

“It’s not a story about me” or Megan, John insists, but “a story of how God held [our] hands.”

‘I prayed for someone to save me’

March 16 was a normal day for John. He’d been in Logansport, Ind., conducting business for JCD Realty Group LLC, the property management and real estate group he established in 2001. By the time he returned home, he wasn’t feeling well. He took his temperature. The thermometer read between 101-103 degrees.

But the next day he felt fine and returned to Logansport. “I came home and played some basketball with Charlie,” he says. “I finally just had to stop. I felt horrible.”

For the next seven days, John’s temperature ranged between 101-103 degrees. His body ached and he was tired, but there was no coughing, no trouble breathing. The situation changed on March 24.

“When I got home, his breathing changed suddenly,” says Megan. “It all progressed really quickly. That was terrifying.”

At 9 p.m., she drove him to the hospital, where he was placed under observation. Six hours later, John was admitted to the hospital and placed in the intensive care unit. It was March 25, his 50th birthday. Instead of celebrating with his family and friends on a cruise, he was isolated in a hospital, his coughing and shortness of breath worsening.

Late the next day, John was placed on a ventilator. “I didn’t realize it was a big deal,” he says. “I thought I’d be on it that night and maybe the next day so I could sleep. I didn’t realize it was life support.”

So began a five-day struggle that John recalls as one long sensation of drowning and fighting to breathe.

“It was like I could look up and see where the air was, but couldn’t reach it,” he says. “I felt like I was going to die. I thought, ‘How am I still breathing? I know I’m not supposed to be able to breathe underwater—I don’t have gills.’ ”

“I didn’t understand I was on a ventilator that was breathing for me, so I kept trying to breathe myself, trying to cough up whatever was in my lungs.”

“I’d think, ‘I can’t do this anymore,’ and drift off. But then I’d wake up and still be alive. I just prayed for someone to walk in the door and save me.”

‘It was in the hands of God’

Even though he felt like he was dying, says John, he never feared death.

“I felt God’s presence the whole time,” he recalls. “I felt scared of the pain, but not of dying, not of what would happen to me. I felt miserable, but peaceful. I knew it wasn’t in my hands. It was in the hands of God.”

The ventilator was removed on March 31, John learned how close he’d come to dying.

“I didn’t understand it until a nurse practitioner said, ‘You want to say congratulations. I’ve been a nurse practitioner a long time, and I never talked to anyone who was in my lungs.’ ”

“I didn’t realize I was on it that night,” he adds. “I thought I’d be on it that night and maybe the next day so I could sleep. I didn’t realize it was life support.”

So began a five-day struggle that John recalls as one long sensation of drowning and fighting to breathe.

“It was like I could look up and see where the air was, but couldn’t reach it,” he says. “I felt like I was going to die. I thought, ‘How am I still breathing? I know I’m not supposed to be able to breathe underwater—I don’t have gills.’ ”

“I didn’t understand I was on a ventilator that was breathing for me, so I kept trying to breathe myself, trying to cough up whatever was in my lungs.”

“I’d think, ‘I can’t do this anymore,’ and drift off. But then I’d wake up and still be alive. I just prayed for someone to walk in the door and save me.”

‘We’re stronger for it’

Recovered now, the couple is thankful that they survived and that Charlie remained healthy.

They are thankful for the support they received from family, friends, acquaintances and strangers.

And they are thankful for the gift of faith—both theirs and of all those who prayed for them.

“There’s no way something like this can’t affect your faith,” says John. “When I was thinking every breath was my last, every breath was an act of faith.”

He says the couple now looks back—and forward—and sees “God’s presence, how he works his grace through others, through what they say, what they do. You see life through the eyes of faith.”

Megan adds that she and John are “so humbled by the outpouring of support and prayers from everyone, and now we ask ourselves how we can we help others.”

For instance, she says, “John hates needles. I thought he’d never want to donate blood to help work for a cure or a vaccination [for COVID-19].” But when he was contacted about donating his blood for that purpose, “He didn’t hesitate,” she notes.

It was a “traumatic, terrifying three weeks,” Megan admits. But through God’s grace, the gift of faith and the prayers and support of so many others, she says, “we’re on the other side of the trial, and we’re stronger for it.”
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., and five other bishops have concluded that alleged apparitions of Our Lady of America—said to have taken place more than six decades ago—were not of supernatural origin.

While private devotion inspired by reports of the apparitions could continue without harm to the faith, Bishop Rhoades said, it would not be appropriate for any sort of public devotion.

“I must come to the conclusion that the visions and revelations themselves cannot be said to be of supernatural origin in the sense of objective occurrences,” Bishop Rhoades said in a final document known as a singular decree, adding that “he cannot approve or support public devotion or cult.”

The investigation concerned numerous apparitions reported by Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Dayton, Ohio, between 1956 and 1959. At the time, it was reported that Mary had appeared to Sister Mary Ephrem and had identified herself as Our Lady of America. Sister Mary Ephrem died in 2000. Both bishops and other communications or locations from Mary that took place in several dioceses.

Concurring with the conclusion reached by Bishop Rhoades were five other bishops from the dioceses where Sister Mary Ephrem had stayed during this period: Archbishops Dennis M. Schnurr of Cincinnati, and Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit along with Bishops Thomas J. Olmsted of Tucson, Ariz., Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette, Ind., and Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio.

In an interview with Catholic News Service (CNS), Bishop Rhoades said he had agreed to a request by the other five bishops to form a commission of six theologians and canonists to investigate the apparitions. He was chosen as the lead bishop of the commission because the alleged apparitions began in Rome City, Ind., which is in his diocese.

He described the commission as “a very balanced group that was open to the possibility that the apparitions were authentic.”

But after what he said was a year of study of the vast documentation of the case, all members of the commission concluded that the apparitions were not supernatural in origin.

In an explanatory document called “Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America” and signed by all six bishops, they said that Sister Mary Ephrem appeared to have been “honest, morally upright, psychologically balanced, devoted to religious life and without guile.” They also said there were spiritual fruits that came from the devotion, although none warranted certification as miraculous.

The bishops said there was not any doctrinal error in the revelations, though the report added that a claim regarding St. Joseph as a “co-redemer” with Christ “must be seen as an error.”

Regarding the experiences of Sister Mary Ephrem, the bishops said their study concluded that they should be described as “subjective inner religious experiences rather than objective external visions and revelations.”

While saying such experiences were “authentically graced moments,” the document added that they were “subjective ones in which her own imagination and intellect were constitutively engaged,” not “objective visions and revelations of the type seen at Guadalupe, Fatima and Lourdes.”

The report also noted that Sister Mary Ephrem’s spiritual director was a priest who later became archbishop of Cincinnati. Archbishop Paul F. Leibold had supported Sister Mary Ephrem in various ways over many years. “However, in a letter written two years before her death,” the document noted that the archbishop said “he was unable to make a judgment on the supernatural nature of the visions or apparitions.”

While he said he attested to the sister’s holiness, he wrote: “I have never taken any action to promote her devotion publicly.”

The bishops concluded that since many of the prayers and religious articles such as medals have been given approval by “competent ecclesiastical authority,” the use of such materials could continue “as a matter of private devotion.”

In explaining the origins of the commission, Bishop Rhoades said that after receiving requests from bishops for some sort of assessment regarding the purported apparitions, then-president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith if this was the appropriate competence of the conference.

The doctrinal congregation said it was more appropriately the responsibility of the local bishop where the apparitions and locations were said to have occurred. This case was unusual in that several dioceses were involved, and all the bishops were asked to review and approve the final report.

Sister Mary Ephrem, baptized Mildred, was born in 1916 and became a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus in 1933. In 1938, she said she started to experience mystical events, the report said.

Bishop Rhoades expressed appreciation for leaders of the devotion who provided the commission with literally thousands of pages of correspondence and other materials for review. “They are faith-filled, wonderful people,” he said.
The Pomp and Circumstance that you have so rightfully earned has been delayed. But in this moment, the Bishop Chatard community is praying for and celebrating the young men and women you have become. During your high school journey, you’ve challenged yourselves, made new friends, embraced your faith and readied yourselves to make your own unique impact in our world. You have learned to expect the unexpected, and meet it head on, knowing that you carry with you the love and respect of all Trojans.