Archbishop announces Mass for Peace and Justice, day of fasting and prayer on Sept. 9

By Natalie Hoefer

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will be the principal celebrant of a Mass for Peace and Justice at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on noon on Sept. 9. It will also be available via livestream at tinyurl.com/ctichpg.

The Mass is being celebrated in solidarity with the call for “a day of fasting and prayer” on Sept. 9 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism. Sept. 9 is the feast of St. Peter Claver, who devoted his life to the service of slaves in Colombia and is the patron saint of missions for Black people.

“Racism is an evil that continues to plague society as well as the hearts of many both within and outside the Church,” said Archbishop Thompson of the importance of this Mass. “It is a sin that erodes the dignity of individuals and the common good of community.

“Prayer is the most powerful weapon against evil, and Mass is the ultimate form of Catholic prayer.”

He noted that the special Mass “is an opportunity to seek reparation for sins of racism, as well as seek divine grace to bring about a greater respect for dignity, unity, equality, justice and peace.”

The call for the day of fasting and prayer came in an Aug. 27 statement issued by the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

“Considering the violence in Kenosha, Wis., and in other cities across the nation, we urge all people of faith to observe... the feast of St. Peter Claver on Sept. 9 as a day of fasting and prayer,” reads the statement.

When asked what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) means to his Bloomington community and to himself personally, Bob Zerr shares a story.

He and his wife were on an SVdP home visit to offer utility payment assistance to a homebound woman.

“The lady was disabled, in a wheelchair and had to have a personal care assistant live with her,” recalls the member of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington.

“At the end of the visit, we asked her if she’d like to pray. We said a prayer, and I could see she was crying. She said, ‘Nobody has said a prayer with me in years.’ It was so moving.”

To Zerr, the story exemplifies the heart of what the St. Vincent de Paul Society embodies: holiness through service.

“It gives parishioners the ability to continue Christ’s work in the community, and at the same time it strengthens one’s faith and creates fellowship and camaraderie with fellow parishioners,” says the president of the archdiocese’s South Central Indiana SVdP district.

There are currently 58 SVdP conferences within the archdiocese, some made up of more than one parish.

But with more than 120 parishes in the archdiocese, the SVdP Indianapolis Archdiocesan Council hopes to expand to more parishes throughout central and southern Indiana, bringing help to those in need and spiritual growth to parishes and SVdP members. (See related article.)

Past archdiocesan council president and 40-year SVdP member Pat Jerrell is leading the expansion effort.

“I think a St. Vincent de Paul parish conference provides a concrete way for pastors to care for and evangelize all souls in a parish’s boundaries,” he says. It does so “by employing the laity to fulfill the great command to love God and neighbor.”

‘Primary purpose is to grow in holiness’

The initiative to expand the number of SVdP conferences began earlier this year.

“We were challenged in an archdiocesan Catholic Charities board meeting as to our plan for providing assistance to struggling parishes in smaller communities of the archdiocese,” recalls Jerrell, a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

“That challenge became an opportunity to put a more

Two federal inmates are executed in Terre Haute, additional two executions set for September

By Natalie Hoefer

As the shadows lengthened on Aug. 25, more than 20 Sisters of St. Benedict processed solemnly outside Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

As they processed, they intoned the words of a Taizé chant: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

These words—said by the Good Thief during the crucifixion—served to open the religious sisters’ prayer vigil before two more federal executions took place at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute on Aug. 26 and 28—the fourth and fifth such executions in six weeks.

“We wanted to do something because this (carrying out of federal

More than 20 Sisters of St. Benedict hold a prayer vigil outside Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove on Aug. 25, prior to two federal executions that took place on Aug. 26 and 28 in Terre Haute. (Submitted photo)
Canon law, COVID-19, and our dispensation from attending Sunday Mass

By Very Rev. Joseph Newton, JCL, VJ

Special to The Criterion

Given the centrality of the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life” (Lumen Gentium, #11), and keeping in mind Jesus’ Third Commandment “remember the sabbath day, and to keep it holy,” the Catholic Church states that “on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass, as far as is possible.” (1983 Code of Canon Law, c. 1247).

However, the Catholic Church, in its wisdom recognizes that it cannot command the impossible, and for some people and in some circumstances, for a grave cause, it is not possible to observe their Sunday obligation (c. 1248, §2).

There are three types of ways in which a person would be released from their Sunday obligation: They are impossibility, dispensation, and excuse.

Impossibility means the person is unable to attend Mass because of circumstances beyond their control, a dispensation is a relaxation of law granted by a competent authority; and an excuse is the lawful finding of a dispensation and determined in a prudential way that would excuse one from attendance.

An example of an impossibility would be if your local parish Mass has been canceled, and it would be a burden to travel and attend another Mass at a different location.

In such a case, the norm states that “it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a Liturgy of the Word if such a liturgy is celebrated in a parish church or in another sacred place according to the prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone or in the privacy of their own home, the occasion permits, in groups of families” (c. 1248, §2). While this is commendable, it does not satisfy the obligation to attend Mass, but one is not bound to the Sunday obligation.

Thus, a person is excused from their Sunday obligation if they are too ill to attend Mass, or if their attendance at Mass poses a threat for others by way of serious infection.

Consideration for being excused from the Sunday obligation in time of a pandemic is a current concern that needs to be addressed. So what exactly does the nature of COVID-19 is that a person could be carrying and transmitting the disease without showing symptoms. Additionally, those with comorbidities—two or more diseases or medical conditions—are at far greater risk of serious illness and death if they contract COVID-19.

In such situations, a person would not be excused from their Sunday obligation if the person is afraid of attending Mass in a general way. By way of contrast, for example, because of COVID-19, the Archbishop of Indianapolis issued a universal dispensation for all Catholics of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis from their Sunday obligation.

Examples of reasons why a pastor may dispense from the Sunday obligation include an individual who must work on a weekend such that they would have no way to attend Mass, or a person is traveling by airplane and is not able to attend Mass, or if their attendance would cause a grave burden. It is up to the prudent discretion of the pastor to determine whether the reason for dispensing from the Sunday Mass is a just cause (c. 1245).

In this time of COVID-19, perhaps the most relevant reason for a person being released from their Sunday obligation is by way of excuse. The main reason that one would be excused from attending Mass is due to illness, which would apply to both the person who is ill and to the caregiver of the ill person.

Since illness is individual, and symptoms can be felt differently, it is up to the person’s discretion to determine whether the illness prevents one from attending Mass. For example, a person with a headache may be able to take medication and attend Mass, while a person with a migraine headache needs complete bedrest. Simply put, if a person feels that they are too ill to attend Mass, then that person is excused from the obligation to attend Mass.

Another aspect of illness when considering a just excuse is the risk that is presented by the person with the illness. For example, a person with a chronic non-infectious condition would pose no threat to others by attending Mass, whereas a person with a highly contagious disease (COVID-19, flu, cold, etc.) would pose a grave threat to others. In such a case, that person is not only excused from their Sunday obligation, but as a matter of charity, would be morally obligated not to attend Mass.

For example, a person with a highly contagious disease (e.g., you were in recent contact with the Virgin Mary, and how these experiences transform their quiet lives and bring them the attention of a world yearning for peace). Father James Farrell will lead the film discussion on Sept. 10 and Sept. 24, and Father Jeffrey Godecker will lead the discussion for the Sept. 21 and Sept. 24.

Fatima tells the true story of Lucia, a 10-year-old girl, and her two younger cousins who witness multiple visitations of the Virgin Mary, and how these experiences transform their quiet lives and bring them the attention of a world yearning for peace.

Fatima is a special screening and discussion of the new feature film Fatima. It will take place at the Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 535 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, from 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 10 and Sept. 21, and from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. on Sept. 29 and Sept. 24. Fatima tells the true story of Lucia, a 10-year-old girl, and her two younger cousins who witness multiple visitations of the Virgin Mary, and how these experiences transform their quiet lives and bring them the attention of a world yearning for peace.

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Pope Francis called for the protection of indigenous communities from business practices which “shamefully exploit poorer countries and communities desperately seeking economic development.”

“We must use this decisive moment to end our superfluous and destructive goals and activities, and to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life-giving,” the pope said. "

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The exploitation and plundering of the Earth’s resources at the expense of the poor and vulnerable cry out for justice and the forgiveness of debts, Pope Francis said.

In his message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on Sept. 1 and the Season of Creation, which runs through Oct. 4, the pope said the observance is a time to renew, repair and restore humanity’s broken relationship with God and his creation.

“It is a time for restorative justice. In this context, I repeat my call for the cancellation of the debt of the most vulnerable countries, in recognition of the severe impacts of the medical, social and economic crises they face as a result of COVID-19,” he wrote.

Since 2020 included the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the eccumenical team organizing the Season of Creation chose “Jubilee for the Earth” as this year’s theme.

In the Bible, the pope noted, a jubilee was a “sacred time to remember, return, rest, restore and rejoice.”

As a time of remembrance, he said, the day of prayer and the Season of Creation should call to mind “creation’s original vocation to exist and flourish as a community of love.

“We exist only in relationships: with God the creator, with our brothers and sisters as members of a common family and with all of God’s creatures within our common home,” the pope wrote.

The call for a jubilee for the Earth, he said, is a call for repentance and for restoring harmony with God by taking care of “our fellow human beings, especially the poor and the most vulnerable.

“We have broken the bonds of our relationship with the Creator, with our fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation,” the pope wrote in his message.

He also said it was time to “heal the damaged relationships that are essential to supporting us and the entire fabric of life.

“A jubilee is a time for setting free the oppressed and all those shackled in the fetters of various forms of modern slavery, including trafficking in persons and child labor,” he said.

Creation itself, he said, must stop excessively consuming the Earth’s resources and “pushing the planet beyond its limits."

“Our constant demand for growth and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting the natural world,” the pope said. “Forests are leached, topsoil erodes, fields fail, deserts advance, seas acidify and storms intensify. Creation is groaning!”

The coronavirus pandemic, he added, “has given us a chance to develop new ways of living,” and “has led us to rediscover simpler and sustainable lifestyles.

Citing St. John Paul II’s assertion that corporate Catholic life teaching on dignity of the person and sacredness of life from the moment of conception to natural death.”

(All United Catholic Appeal gifts are used to settle abuse claims.

St. John Paul II’s assertion that corporate Catholic life teaching on dignity of the person and sacredness of life from the moment of conception to natural death."

The Mass for Peace and Justice and the day of prayer and fasting on Sept. 9 are powerful ways to combat racism, said Archbishop Thompson.

“Combating racism is consistent with Catholic profile teaching on dignity of the person and sacredness of life from the moment of conception to natural death.”

(8) Peter and Paul Cathedral is located at 1347 N. Meridian St. in Indianapolis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, seating in the cathedral is limited to 250, and masks available in the narthex—are required.)

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1. Provide nearly 900 veterans with food, shelter and clothing

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Now is a time to take up our crosses and follow Christ

“From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, ‘God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.’ Then he turned said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.’ Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wishes to come after me, must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me’” (Mt 16:21-24).

If ever there was a time we wondered about “taking up our crosses” and following Jesus, it seems now—more than ever before—could be that hour for many of us.

We are approaching six months into the coronavirus pandemic here in the United States where our death toll is moving toward 200,000, where we are more uncertain as we see civil unrest and violence continuing across our country, and where we are hoping and praying a sense of normalcy soon returns for all our children in school—be it at the elementary, high school or college level. And a list of other challenges we faced in 2020 could easily fill up this entire space.

Make no mistake: no matter your age, race or ethnicity, this is a challenging time for all. And carrying our crosses and growing in our faith will be important factors if we are to overcome whatever else awaits us.

In his Angelus address on Aug. 30 at the Vatican, Pope Francis reflected on Sunday’s Gospel (Mt 16:21-27) and how the Lord’s disciples—including St. Peter—were unable to grasp the mystery of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection because their faith was “still immature, and too closely tied to the mentality of the world.”

The pope said that for the disciples—and for us, too—the cross is seen as a “stumbling block,” whereas Jesus considers the “stumbling block [to be] escaping the cross, which would mean avoiding the Father’s will.”

Our faith teaches us—and it by no means is an easy task—that if we want to become Jesus’ followers, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.

Our Holy Father noted that Jesus is indicating “the way of the true disciple, showing two attitudes”: renouncing oneself, which means a real conversion, and taking up one’s cross, which “is not just a matter of patiently enduring daily tribulations, but of bearing with faith and responsibility that part of toil and suffering that the struggle against evils entails.”

We understand that 2020 has had its share of hardships, and we believe it is providing us with a wake-up call as we travel down a road most of us could have never imagined. And where this journey takes us may well depend on recalibrating our focus on what’s truly important in life, mainly our faith, family and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we move forward, we must remember, as Pope Francis said, the task of “taking up the cross” means we become participants “with Christ in the salvation of the world.”

Images of the cross, he added, should be a “sign of our desire to be united with Christ through lovingly serving our brothers and sisters, especially the least and the weakest.”

When we look at a crucifix, the pope said we should reflect on the fact that Jesus “has accomplished his mission, giving his life, spilling his blood for the forgiveness of sins.” In order to be his disciples, he continued, we must “imitate him, expending our life unreservedly for our families, for the forgiveness of sins.” In order to be his disciples, he continued, we must “imitate him, expending our life unreservedly for our families, for the forgiveness of sins.”

We must include the littlest and weakest. We must also remember those who are out of work through no fault of their own. And others who have lost loved ones because of COVID-19, which has led to a worldwide pandemic. The list could go on and on.

We wonder what these final four months of 2020 will bring as we try and live our vocations as missionary disciples to the best of our ability. As we anxiously wait what each new day brings, we must keep our faith at the heart of all we say and do.

If we are truly people of faith, then we recognize there are crosses for each of us to carry. No one is immune to life’s challenges. But we must not forget that Jesus is with us, every step of the way, carrying us when necessary.

—Mike Krooks

Be Our Guest/Katie Rahman

Upcoming novena reminds us Our Lady of Sorrows is also the ‘Cause of Our Joy’

When it was suggested to me to “submerse myself in the sorrows of Mary,” my reaction was, “Why would I want to do that? It sounds depressing. I dismissed the idea.”

A few weeks later, I mentioned to my sister during a phone call, “She said the reason why I was not interested in this devotion, ‘I’m not used to it.’ I said ‘I can meditate on Jesus’ Passion ’til the cows come home.’ Well, I don’t count the cows, but with Mary, I do.”

While I was talking, my sister had looked up the devotion to Our Lady’s Seven Sorrows. She began reading me to the graces Mary has promised to those who honor her through this devotion, as relayed by the Blessed Mother to St. Bridget of Sweden in the 14th century: “• I will grant peace over your families.” “They will be enlightened about the Divine Mysteries.” “I will console them in their pains, and I will accompany them in their work.”” “I will give them as much as they ask for, as far as it does not oppose the adorables will of my divine Son or the sanctification of their souls.” “I will defend them from spiritual battles with the infernal enemy, and I will protect them at every instant of their lives.” “I will visibly help them at the moment of their death. They will see the face of their Mother.” “I have obtained this grace from my divine Son, that those who propagate this devotion to my tears and [sorrows] will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness since all their sins will be forgiven, and my Son and I will be their eternal consolation and joy.”

I think it was somewhere around number five that I broke down. My sister had gotten off the ground, she could hear me sobbing and she said with compassion, “Are you hitting a wall?” I was barely into the novena.

It was God’s providence that we were having this conversation in August, since the novena for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, also known as the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Aug. 15, is dedicated to honoring our Lady of Sorrows. Leading up to this feast day, like three beautiful shrines dotting a pilgrimage, are the feasts of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sept. 8, the Most Holy Name of Mary on Sept. 12, and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Sept. 14.

My initial reluctance at accompanying Mary in her pain is a very human response. Who wouldn’t choose Christmas over Advent, or Easter over Lent? With so much pain and suffering around us, why would we go seeking more?

Because that’s where Our Blessed Mother is. When we meet her there, she helps us see her well. She meets us in our sorrow and in our pain in our humaness.” We must always remember that Our Lady of Sorrows is also Mary, Cause of Our Joy. Our story doesn’t end at the foot of the cross. That’s where it begins.

(Katie Rahman is a member of St. Patrick Parish. She can be reached at krahman65@gmail.com for information about the Seven Sorrows of Mary, the novena prayers, the devotion and the prayer sites in Sweden, go to tinyurl.com/v4757twu.)

Be Our Guest/Stephen Kappes

A thank-you to Lena Peoni and all who began a ministry at the Marion County Jail

Consider this a thank-you note, a challenge and a short history lesson.

The history lesson comes courtesy of Leonard Peoni, a member of Holy Name Parish in Beech Grove, who was part of a small group of Catholics who used their faith to make a difference in the lives of people who were imprisoned at the Marion County Jail in Indianapolis.

Starting in the late 1970s, the group accomplished a monumental task of bringing an “on-call” service to inmates, as well as coordinating every month two Masses, one for the men and one for the women. The two Masses were held on the same day and nearly back to back, permitting dedicated Catholics to have the privilege of going to confession and attending Mass.

According to Lena, the group was led by George Roilsen Sr., who was affectionately called “Pop” or the Patriarch. The group also included then-Marion County Sheriff James Bills, Franciscan Sister Philomena Weintraut, Helen Springer, Ella Moriarty, Lena and eventually myself.

Recalling the days of the Mass at the jail, Lena shared how she would stop by the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus to borrow for several hours a large quantity of missaltes for the attendees to better participate in the sacredness of the music. “Pop” was the music director at St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, and wow, did we have music at the jail Mass!

She also explained how “Pop” would call and arrange a volunteer priest to celebrate the holy Mass. We were very appreciative of the help and support. One volunteer was Msgr. Joseph Schaedel, who in the day was the associate pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis and a teacher at nearby Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School.

The county jail, at least at that time, was a place of horrors and despair. It was and, upon being found guilty, sentencing. Then, offenders would be moved to other jails, where they were expected to put their attention to their rehabilitation. Thus, we could not have a head count until the time of the liturgy for the day of the group of offenders that were consecrated to the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

Lena also recalled how each member of our group had to have a picture ID from the sheriff’s department to enter the jail, and how we would have to escort the volunteer priest into the jail because there was no way for him to have a photo ID.

Through the years, many members of that group have been called home to heaven. Pop’s replacement expanded the ministry as it networked with the then-Indiana State Police Catholic Chaplain’s Father Richard Cooley, a priest of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind. And later, the ministry would include the Indiana Department of Correction until the day prison ministry was still in operation at this time.

So this is my thank-you to Lena and all the members who started the group. If it were not for the fortitude and hard work of these ladies and gentlemen, the prison ministry would never have gotten off the ground.

We encourage sharing this information it will encourage others to get involved and see our alumnis as children of God who deserve a hand-up the ladder of ascent.
We are responsible for the actions of others

One of the oldest stories in the Bible is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. "Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let us go out in the field.’ When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord asked Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ He answered, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ God then said: ‘What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!’’ (Gen 4:8-10).

The question that Cain asks when confronted by God is: ‘Am I responsible for my brother?’ It’s a good question, one that we all ask ourselves frequently. What responsibility do I have for the lives or behaviors of others—close family, friends and neighbors, fellow countrymen, even strangers? The answer is a paradox: We are responsible, but we cannot control the actions of others.

The readings for this weekend, the Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, explore this paradox. The first reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ez 33:7-9) tells us in no uncertain terms that we will hold us responsible for the death of someone whom we have failed to warn about his sinfulness.

In other words, we have a duty to be on guard against injustice being done by someone else. We may prefer not to get involved, to look the other way, but God wants us to care about others and to take a stand whenever we see injustice or immorality taking place.

Pope Francis frequently warns against "the sin of indifference." When we fail to get involved in the lives of others, we commit this serious sin of omission, and by our silence we compound the evil being done by others.

The Gospel reading for this Sunday (Mt 18:15-20) also urges us to accept responsibility for the sins of others: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother" (Mt 18:15). Once again, we are tempted to avoid confrontation, to nurse a grudge or, worse, to seek revenge. Jesus, however, instructs us to deal with the problem personally and to accept responsibility for helping our brother acknowledge his wrongs and change his behavior.

St. Paul makes this point in a brief but powerful way: "Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:8-10).

We can’t love our neighbor as ourselves unless we get involved—not by trying to control someone else’s behavior, but by speaking the truth with love. We can’t be good, generous, loving people unless we accept some responsibility for what is happening all around us—in our families, our neighborhoods, our country and our Church.

Are we responsible for the racist, homophobic or anti-immigrant attitudes and actions of others? Yes, if we remain silent and do nothing. Are we at fault when injustices are committed against people who are poor and vulnerable? Yes, if we remain indifferent. Are we observing the commandments and following God’s laws when we simply mind our own business? No. Love is the fulfillment of the law, and love requires that we accept our own personal and self-interest in order to accept responsibility for the sins of others.

When we celebrate Mass, we confess our sins, including our sins of omission, in the penitential rite. Together, as women and men who accept responsibility for each other, we pray: "I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.”

And we ask Mary, all the saints, and all who are present with us to pray for us to the Lord our God.

We have the perfect model of loving acceptance in Christ, who took responsibility for our sins even though he himself was sinless. God’s Son didn’t have to get involved in the lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve. Yet he did. He suffered and died for our sins, showing us that when we get involved in the lives of others—without trying to control anyone’s behavior—we fulfill God’s law and truly love God and our neighbor.

Somos responsables de las acciones de los demás

Una de las historias más antiguas de la Biblia es el asesinato de Abel a manos de su hermano Cain: "Cain dijo a su hermano Abel, ‘Vayamos al campo.’ Y aconteció que cuando estaban en el campo, Cain se enfrentó a su hermano: ‘Si tu hermano mata, entiende que yo también podría matar. Entonces el Señor dijo a Cain: ‘Vayamos al campo.’ Cuando se enfrentaron, Cain dijo a su hermano: ‘¿Dónde está tu hermano Abel?’ He answered, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ God then said: ‘What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!’’ (Gen 4:8-10).

La pregunta que Caín se hace cuando se enfrenta a Dios es: “¿Soy yo acaso responsable de la muerte de alguien que adopte una postura cuando vemos que alguien se comete un error?” La lectura del Evangelio de este domingo (Mt 18:15-20) también nos insta a aceptar la responsabilidad por lo que sucede a los demás. "Si tu hermano pecas, ve y reprendelo a solas; si te escucha, has ganado a tu hermano” (Mt 18:15). Una vez más, estamos tentados a evitar la confrontación, a alimentar el rencor y, peor aún, a buscar la venganza. Sin embargo, Jesús nos insta a tratar el problema personalmente y a aceptar la responsabilidad de ayudar a un hermano a reconocer sus errores y cambiar su comportamiento.

No el amor es el cumplimiento de la ley, y el amor requiere que sacrificemos nuestra propia comodidad e interés propio para aceptar la responsabilidad de los pecados de los demás.

Cuando celebramos la misa, confesamos nuestros pecados, incluyendo los de omisión, durante el rito penitencial. Junto, como mujeres y hombres que aceptamos la responsabilidad del otro, rezamos: “Yo confieso ante Dios todopoderoso y ante u s hermanos a los que he pecado mucho de pensamiento, palabra, obra y omisión.”

Y le pedimos a María, a todos los santos, y a todos los que están presentes con nosotros que intercedan por nosotros ante el Señor nuestro D eos. Tomemos el modelo perfecto de aceptación amorosa en Cristo, que tomó la responsabilidad de nuestros pecados, aunque él mismo estaba libre de pecado. El hijo de Dios no tenía que involucrarse en la vida de los descendientes de Adán y Eva, y sin embargo, lo hizo.

Sufrió y murió por nosotros, porque esas mismas cosas que nos involucraron en la vida de los demás, sin tratar de controlar el comportamiento de nadie, cumplió la ley de Dios y amamos verdaderamente a Dios a y nuestro prójimo.”

La lectura del evangelio del mes de octubre la encontrará en el número de abril de la revista "Cristo, la piedra angular".
Biking for Babies midday rally on Sept. 19 at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

A midday rally for the seventh annual Biking for Babies will take place at the grotto at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 5333 East Washington St., in Indianapolis at 1 p.m. on Sept. 19.

The midday rally will offer prayers and support for the riders participating in the Knights of Columbus’ Biking for Babies event, which spans the 175-mile width of Indiana.

The event raises funds for the Indiana Knights of Columbus Ultrasound initiative, which provides ultrasound machines for pro-life pregnancy centers. Rally speakers include Indianapolis 40 Days for Life lead coordinator Tim O’Donnell, Indianapolis Women's Care Center director Jenny Hubbard and Biking for Babies team captain Robert Newport. Prayers will be led by Father Rick Ginther, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

The Biking for Babies ride runs the entire weekend of Sept. 18-20 and welcomed new riders, prayers and sponsorships for their cause.

In case of rain, the rally will be moved to the church. Masks required. For more information, e-mail Robert Newport at rnewport@wci.org or Larry Kunkel at life@indianakids.org. To sponsor a rider or to donate: www.kofc4337.com.

Benedict Inn to offer four-part program for victims of sexual assault in October

Me Too: From Shame to Survivor, a four-part program for female victims of sexual assault, will take place at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., in Beech Grove from 7-9 p.m. on Oct. 1, 8, 15 and 22.

The program presenter is Dr. Rachel Waltz, a nurse practitioner and educator with 30 years of experience providing care for under-served and vulnerable populations, including victims of sexual abuse/assault.

While this program is not intended to take the place of individual counseling, it will proceed at a pace that meets the needs of the participants. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, participants should commit to all four sessions. Cost for the program is $60. For more information or to register, go to: www.benedictinn.org or contact benedictinn@benedictinn.org. 317-788-7581.

Season of Creation TREE & FLOWER EXTRAVAGANZA

All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation. (Laudato Si’ #14)

Join us this Season of Creation in our goal to plant 500 trees in central and southern Indiana! Various pick up locations throughout the Archdiocese in late September.

Trees from Woody Warehouse ($20 donation) Wildflower seed packets ($10 donation)

ORDERS DUE SEPT 8

www.OurCommonHome.org/soc

Annual Festival of Faiths to take place on YouTube, Facebook on Sept. 13

The annual Festival of Faiths, an effort of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation (CIC), will be held virtually this year on hosted on YouTube and Facebook from 1-2:30 p.m. on Sept. 13, followed by an online discussion based on the festival’s theme: “Celebrating Faithfully: Our Faith, Our Traditions, Our Cultures, Our Community.”

The archdiocese will be represented in the event by Father Rick Ginther, director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs and pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.

The festival highlights several inter-faith offerings, including an online drumming circle, a procession of faiths, testimonials from faith leaders, youth voices, spoken art words, sacred music performances and the world premiere of Anita Lerche’s new single, “Love is My Religion.”

WPYS’s Jill Ditmire and CIC executive director Charlie Wiles will serve as moderators for the event.

The festival can be accessed online at cutt.ly/CICYoutube or cutt.ly/CICFacebook.

For more information, visit www.festivaloffaiths.com.

Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
The memories flow from Father Welch’s 50 years as a priest

By John Shaughnessy

Father Michael Welch opens his front door with a smile, flanked by Izzy, the dachshund who is his faithful companion and fearless watchdog.

The 76-year-old priest brought Izzy into his life a year and a half ago, the first dog he’s had since his childhood and one of the two gifts to himself that are immediately noticeable in his home in Avon.

The other is the gleaming baby grand piano that the longtime former pastor of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis bought with his inheritance after the death of his mother—a gift that’s both a reminder of her and a challenge to himself to learn something new in his retirement.

On this day, he’s working on the latest song his instructor has given him to learn—“Memory” from the Broadway musical, Cats.

On this day, the memories are also flowing from his 50 years as a priest in the archdiocese.

Moments of laughter, joy, humility

Father Welch recalls the biblical passage that stuck him when he was studying to be a priest, a passage from Micah 6:8 that he was invited to follow in his priesthood: “And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

He laughs as he tells the story of his first Mass after his ordination on June 6, 1970, a Mass when he invited a mentor priest to speak on his behalf: “At a certain point, I’m sitting in the presider’s chair feeling kind of important, and he turns around and looks at me and says, ‘Mike, I want you to know the Church is made up of humans. And humans are sinful. And perhaps you will be one of the biggest sinners of all. If you want to feel important, have the person preaching at your first Mass tell you that!’

He talks fondly of his first assignment as a priest, as associate pastor of the former St. Catherine Parish in Indianapolis: “They didn’t know they were mentoring me, but they would. I learned how to relate to people, how not to be judgmental, how to have fun and what was important.”

He shows his love for teamwork and sports when he mentions that during his nine years as vocations director for the archdiocese he formed a basketball team of priests called “The Padres” that toured the archdiocese, playing against men from parishes, in gyms filled with fans.

There’s also a clear tone of love, pride and joy in his voice when he talks about his 31 years as the pastor of St. Christopher.

And his exhilaration shines through when he shares his thoughts about the annual ski trips he makes to New Mexico. He’s been going for eight years now—trips when he would roar down the demanding black-diamond slopes as high as 58 miles per hour in his younger days, trips when he savors the presence of God in the silence on the mountains.

Then there is the moment from his priesthood that is as haunting and beautiful as the song “Memory.”

A call from a friend

The memories flooded shortly after he retired from active ministry as a priest in 2014 at the age of 70. He received a phone call from Father Noah Casey, the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis who had been diagnosed with cancer. When Father Casey asked if he could cover a few Masses for him, Father Welch said yes.

“All of a sudden, I found myself in a situation of helping the people go through Father Noah’s dying process,” he recalls.

“For me, that was such a remarkable thing. People in parishes are remarkable, and Noah was such a tremendous priest. We wanted to pray a service when Noah was coming closer and closer to death. We thought Noah wanted to come over for it, but he couldn’t.”

Father Welch became overwhelmed with emotion as he tried to finish the story.

“We worked up a prayer service, the church was full, and the prayer service was broadcast over to Noah. We were hoping Noah could say something back to the people. But he couldn’t. Someone, I think it was a cousin, brought a tape that Noah had made. We listened to the tape. Then the whole community sang ‘An Irish Blessing’ for Noah. And that was probably among the last things he heard.”

Father Welch paused for a moment before adding, “For the next year, I was there at Lourdes, helping a parish work through the death of a beloved pastor as much as I could.”

“He is so loved by so many”

In his own right, Father Welch was a beloved pastor in his 31 years at St. Christopher.

“He is so loved by so many, and he’s impacted so many lives,” says Katie Patterson, a longtime friend of the parish where Father Welch served as a priest of Vatican II. The staff was big. We had a youth minister and a music and good homilies—good residence. He says there are many art works created during his leadership. The parish also became home to a treasure of stunning, faith-related artworks during his leadership—many of them a result of his connections with the nearby Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

He also led the effort to build a new church in 1999 to serve the parish’s dramatic growth—a church that had to be rebuilt twice in later years after it was struck first by lightning and then by a fire.

Still, through all the memories of those 31 years, Father Welch focuses on the one element that guided everything for him.

“I thought we celebrated Eucharist extremely well there,” he says. “My theology has told me that if we celebrate Eucharist well and you try to preach according to the Scripture and what’s happening in people’s lives, it’s all going to work.”

“It’s a gracious gift from God”

Between the occasional barks for attention from Izzy, the memories keep flooding back for Father Welch, who grew up in Holy Family Parish in New Albany, the second of four children of Vincent and Roberta Welch.

He recalls his first assignment at St. Catherine’s, where the parish didn’t have a gym, just two basketball goals outside: “So I’d get the guys out there playing basketball and did that at almost any place where I’ve been.”

He smiles when he remembers leading Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh through most of the 1970s and early 1980s. It’s the community where he gave tennis lessons one summer and where he was asked to give the commencement speech at the high school—an honor he also fulfilled twice at Speedway High School during his years at St. Christopher.

He laughs at his first attempts at skiing when he was 38: “I thought this can’t be hard. Well, I spent the week on my butt.”

And he becomes wistful when he thinks aloud of the friends who made that first trip with him, many of them fellow priests who have since died.

He also gets lost in his thoughts for a moment when he looks at the pictures and posters from the Tao Ski Valley in New Mexico that fill a wall of his home.

He lists that skiing among his three choices when he is asked where he most feels God’s presence in his life.

“I also feel God’s presence anytime I’m doing the sacraments. And then when I’m studying in the morning, just doing quiet prayer. For me, the silence in that is really, really important.”

Father Welch also shares his favorite part of being a priest, beyond celebrating the sacraments and the Eucharist.

“Being with people in the most intimate moments of their lives. You enter into that, and you start to understand their spirituality. And you find their spirituality might be a little bit better than yours. You learn to listen a little more, and then hopefully that listening makes you a better preacher.”

Nearly two hours later, the conversation ends, a conversation marked by memories of joy, humor and love.

On the way to the front door, he stops by a wall to show the artwork that the parishioners of St. Christopher gave him when he retired. It’s a framed picture of Jesus and the woman at the well, a picture that also includes the words of Micah 6:8.

Father Welch looks at the gift lovingly. He views his priesthood of 50 years in the same way.

“It’s a gracious gift from God. A gracious gift from the people who have put up with me and helped me become a better person, a better priest. You can’t
How to start a parish or multi-parish St. Vincent de Paul Society

By Natalie Hoefer

By Natalie Hoefer

Pat Jerrell, a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Indianapolis Archdiocesan Council coordinating the organization’s expansion efforts, offers the following tips for starting a parish or multi-parish SVP conference:

• Find three or four interested persons, then approach the parish’s (or parishes’) pastor or parish life coordinator (PLC). “It is more impactful to go as a group—it shows more interest.” Some priests or PLCs might also seek parish pastoral council support.

• To start a conference, “Ideally it takes four officers, a spiritual adviser and six to eight people willing to be active volunteers.”

• For smaller parishes, “It can be helpful to start multiple parishes for a conference to help with numbers in terms of members and volunteers. Pooling resources can really make a difference in their communities.”

• If the decision is made for a parish or parishes to create a conference, the priest, PLC or other appointed representative should contact Jerrell. (See below.) He and his extension committee will meet with them (virtually, until further notice) to explain the structure, scope and operation details for SVP parish conferences and support parish leaders in the discernment process.

• New members will participate in a 3-and-a-half-hour training session.

• St. Vincent de Paul Society will hold its conference meetings a month.

• “We recommend, with the pastor’s or pastor’s approval—having a St. Vincent de Paul collection on the fifth Sunday of the month to help fund the conference.”

Those with general questions on starting an SVP conference may contact Pat Jerrell at pat.jerrell@gmail.com or 317-457-1001.

The Church’s opposition to the death penalty is clear, and we have made many requests that the federal government should not resume these executions,” the statement reads.

“Yet, not only has the government done so, they have scheduled even more ‘executions’ to be carried out in Terre Haute—William Letroy on Sept. 22 and Christopher VanVaill on Sept. 30.”

The statement notes that, “God created each of us in his image. This gives each person an irreducible dignity, despite their sinfulness” (Gen. 1:26-27).

It also quotes the Gospel of John in the New Testament, the woman about whom Jesus said, “What do you say?” (Jn 8:5).

“We must not forget the Lord’s answer!” Remembering the Lord’s call for mercy, we renew our plea: stop these executions!”

Permanent infrastructure in place in parishes that would like to host St. Vincent de Paul conference.

The benefits in doing so are numerous, says Jim Kerbl, president of the archdiocese’s southern Indiana SVP network.

A SVP conference “helps all the people know a parish’s boundaries,” says the member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon. “It gives the ability to work with those in the community in the area to help those in need, and it really brings its members, the parish and the poor and the entirety of the community through prayerful union and personal service.”

The “prayerful union” comes from the society’s primary purpose.

If you asked 100 people what [the Society of] St. Vincent de Paul is all about, 99% would say it’s about helping the poor or less fortunate, says Deacon Thomas Horn, spiritual advisor for the archdiocesan council.

“If you look at our manual and rules, the primary purpose is to help our members grow in holiness.”

Each conference’s twice-monthly meeting “allows as much time for spiritual development as it does for business,” he says.

Members of the society, known as Vincentians, are called to live in imitation of Christ, “as we grow in that relationship with Christ, because we can’t give what we don’t have.”

That holiness is lived out not just through charity in action or prayer during meetings, but also through friendship with those in need, such as Zerr and his wife, Rose, and when helping the homeless woman.

Living out that call to holiness is often rewarded.

“It’s interesting how the Holy Spirit seems to show up,” says Kerbl. “When you think you’re at the end of your rope or desperate, good things just sort of happen.”

Homelessness, poverty ‘happen in rural areas, too’

For as charitable services, “It’s up to the actual members in each parish or multi-parish conference what works they want to do,” he says.

Conferences assess their local community to determine if a need-gap exists that they could fill, or if it would be more helpful to assist existing organizations such as food pantries or distribution centers.

All conferences must rent lost utilities, says Kerbl, using money raised by parish collections as allowed by the pastor. Some conferences also operate a thrift store with all proceeds going back to support the conference.

Others run a farm away or help in distributing household goods and furniture to those in need.

“Emphasizing our social justice side”

Conferences can also offer programs promoted by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, such as its Changing Faces Forever program for those seeking “to become able to sustain themselves independently,” says conference coordinator Domonique Rouse.

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“For instance, he shared how a residential facility in Corydon was suddenly closed by the state fire marshal in February. Between 25 to 30 people “were put out with no place to go,” he recalls.

The St. Joseph SVP conference, comprised of seven parishes in the New Albany Deanery, worked with other organizations and churches to find temporary housing and alternative living arrangements for the former residents.

Meanwhile, Kerbl adds, conference members “helped the fire marshal make improvements in the facility and helped furnish it” so it could be reopened.

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LEARN ABOUT THE FAITH AND SHARE IT, BECAUSE JESUS SAYS SO!

Why do you Catholics do that? What makes you think the Catholic vision of (fill-in-the-blank) is the truth?

We’re not always great at explaining our faith to others. What if, when asked why we believe a basic doctrinal or moral teaching of the Church, we simply reply “Because Jesus says so,” and see where the conversation goes from there?

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you” (1 Cor 11:23).

This statement by St. Paul is the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2020, which is on Sept. 20. And Paul meant it!

When we hear the teaching of our holy Catholic Church, we are listening to the teaching of Christ. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who keeps his Church free from error in her basic doctrinal and moral teaching. If a person isn’t familiar with the authentic Jesus of sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition (and hence might be puzzled by one or more Church teachings) we have a great opportunity to share a bit about our discipline relationship with Jesus—lived in full communion with his body, the Church. Once a person knows who Jesus is (based on our witness), it’s easier to understand why we embrace the teaching of the Church.

Also, even if a person struggles with a teaching, no one can argue with your witness. You’re simply sharing who Jesus is in your life and why you find Church teaching to be good, true, beautiful and helpful—a gift from a loving God who knows us well and wants us to be happy, on Earth and in heaven.

As an article in this supplement highlights, the Holy See recently issued a new edition of a document called the Directory for Catechesis. This document addresses both evangelization and catechesis, helping leaders at various levels facilitate these essential ministries.

Evangelization and catechesis are such essential areas of Church activity that each has its own office in the administrative structure of our archdiocese.

When you pray for Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and his ministry of leadership, when you participate in the United Catholic Appeal, when you help your parish catechetical and evangelization leaders with their collaborative efforts involving your pastor and the offices of evangelization and catechesis, you are helping to lead on what we’ve all received from the Lord. You are helping to fulfill the great commission of Jesus, who commands us not only to be his disciples, but also to make disciples and share all of his teaching, confident that he is with us until the end of the age.

I hope you enjoy this annual Evangelization and Catechesis Supplement to our archdiocesan newspaper. In this special feature, you’ll find encouraging accounts of how Catholics in central and southern Indiana are sharing the faith effectively and joyfully.

Please keep the ministries of evangelization and catechesis in your prayers. Please be supportive of your parish leaders in these areas of Church activity—even to the point of answering God’s call if you feel it is God’s will for you to be a catechist or evangelization team member. By God’s grace and mercy, may we all hand on what we receive from the Lord—because Jesus says so! (Ken Ogorek is the archdiocese’s catechetical director within the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. He can be reached at kogorek@archindy.org.)

THE EVIL OF RACISM IS ROOTED IN THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

By Sean Gallagher

The Church’s long tradition of moral teaching has recognized for more than 1,500 years fundamental sins that are traditionally called the seven “deadly” or “capital” sins.

They are the sins of pride, avarice, envy, wrath (or anger), lust, gluttony and sloth (see Catechism of the Catholic Church #1866). Catholic moral teachers over the centuries have seen these sins as lying at the root of more particular sins.

One such particular sin that has caught the attention of society in the U.S. in recent months is racism. How might it be rooted in one or more of the seven deadly sins? And how could virtues that correspond to these sins help promote racial harmony?

Kathleen M. Holm, who leads the The Criterion, a parish school in Portland, Ore., in 2002 and is a nationally-known Catholic speaker and writer.

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By Natalie Hofer

Much has changed since the Vatican last produced a new version of its Directory for Catechesis in 1997, an update of the original 1971 version.

The “World Wide Web” was just coming into more common use. “Hotmail” was only one year old, and sites like Google, Facebook and YouTube were yet to be created.

But technology is not the only way in which the world has changed.

“My sense is that after more than 20 years since the previous directory, it’s become even more apparent how desperate the world is for a basic proclamation of the Gospel,” says Ken Ogorek, director of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

So when the Vatican released a new Directory for Catechesis in June, he was quick to promote it to catechists in the archdiocese.

“It’s a great opportunity for disciples of Jesus to be reimagined in seeing the value of and need for effective evangelization and catechesis,” says Ogorek.
They also share a major caveat about the use of social media.

"Cold Brews and Catholic Truths" is a podcast produced by "Cold Brews and Catholic Truths" came from three years of his life—beer, coffee, and especially his Catholic faith.

Father Jonathan Meyer, a director of mission and discipleship for the archdiocese, says people often confuse convenient connections and relationships with people who are genuinely looking for Christ. Thus, they can even be a distraction for some young people who use social media to deflect from the authentic wisdom to nourish, inspire, and guide those at the four walls.

In his role as director of mission and discipleship, Father Meyer knows the power and the potential that different forms of social media can offer. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, podcasts—have power and the potential that different forms of social media can offer for reaching an audience that includes at least one follower from YouTube.

"We wanted to help people keep their faith alive while our doors were closed." Father Meyer says. "People responded so well to what we were doing." He said that the people who are attracted to the page are not only those who are actually using social media and interested in the content, but also those who are curious about the content.

"It's all about making disciples," the parishioner said, "It's all about showing people how to live their faith in today's world. It's about investing your life with these people at this place. The ultimate goal is that the groups formed, "Hussey said. "Over time, we'll see an increase in the number of people sharing their faith and leading others to Christ."
Pride is traditionally understood to be at the root of the original sin of Adam and Eve, which led to their expulsion from the garden. It's prideful when people give in to the temptation of the devil to see themselves as wisest than they truly were, even wiser than God who created them.

Deacon Burke-Sivers spoke about this tendency to see another person's race is clearly not the teaching from our Lord or revealed in the Old Testament. It's prideful, he said. "To think that your belief is better or more true than anything that God has revealed—that's definitely pride and arrogance."

Father Hollowell said there is a prideful understanding of which "racism is evil outside of ourselves." But such a view, he said, is "rooted in pride."

Father Hollowell noted, "where he says that the line between good and evil does not exist," and that is unfair and damaging.

"Racism fits hand in glove with the temptation to man in to locate the essence of evil in another group, persons, in colors."

Humbility, on the other hand, when truly embraced and a daily life, can promote racial harmony, Deacon Burke-Sivers said.

This virtue, he noted, is rooted in a "covenant relationship" which involves "a complete gift of yourself to someone else.

"It's moving from self-centeredness where I am the center of being and existence," he said, "to recognizing that Jesus Christ, who is God, is the center of all being and existence." Through the virtue of humility, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, certain attitudes can give way and help people "recognize that it's better to see what good in and for the other person."

Anger, forgiveness and mercy

Ogorek said that racism can be an expression of an inordinate anger toward a race of people because of an injustice committed by a person of a particular race against an individual from another race or against a friend or relative of that person.

"One thing anger sometimes goes us toward is uncomfortable. Hatefulness," Deacon Burke-Sivers said, "I had a bad experience with a person in a certain demographic, so I'm going to deny and demonize that whole group."

Father Hollowell said that anger misused is the "making of mercy attractive to weak, fallen human beings to believe a lie, and not see a deeper truth that "we share responsibility in our own heart for the evil that goes on in the world."

Deacon Burke-Sivers knows from personal experience that "a wrong kind of anger is deliberately unkind and small against another person."

For 18 years, he was estranged from his father who had, among other things, struggled with alcohol abuse, and expressed through racism, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, learning about and reflecting on racism is seen both in individual actions and in broader social movements regarding race.

Fr. Anthony Hollowell

Deacon Burke-Sivers says that sloth can take hold in people when "they get very uncomfortable in their sin."

"When we get comfortable, we get stuck," he said. "Look at Jesus on the cross. He was uncomfortable."

"If we want to take our spiritual lives to the next level, we've got to get uncomfortable. Have the fortitude to recognize that within yourself and ask God for spiritual courage and strength to pick up your cross and follow Jesus. It will mean working hard to defeat the power of sin in your life."

No matter what deadly sin might be expressed through racism, Deacon Burke-Sivers said, learning about and reflecting on racism in light of the Church's teachings and traditions can be helpful because it can lead to conversion.

"In order for things to change, there has to be conversion, a deep acceptance of the spirit of God's love in our hearts that spurs us on to real change in culture and society," he said. "It has to start with change in yourself. In order for that kind of change to happen, we have to connect the sins of racism and prejudice with the tenets of our faith."
Document reminds us Gospel can’t be parsed in partisan terms

CLEVELAND (CNS)—The U.S. bishops’ quadrennial document on political responsibility is rooted in the Catholic Church’s long-standing moral tradition that upholds human dignity and the common good of all, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City said.

“The document is meant to give Catholic voters an opportunity to reflect upon how their faith intersects with their political and civic responsibilities,” said the archbishop, who chairs the bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

Titled “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility From the Catholic Bishops of the United States,” the document has been offered as a guide to Catholic voters every presidential election year since 1976.

It has been updated and revised at four-year intervals to reflect changes in the issues confronting the country since it first appeared.

One thing “Faithful Citizenship” is not a mandate on which candidate for public office to vote for, Archbishop Coakley said.

Voting, he added, is a responsibility to be taken seriously and that requires prudential judgment in determining who can best serve the common good.

“No candidate will likely reflect all of our values,” he told Catholic News Service (CNS). “But I think we need to begin in prayer. We need to know our faith. We need to study our faith. We need to have recourse to the catechism and what it might teach about certain questions.”

“This document is intended to be that, an official guide for the formation of consciences that Catholics can utilize as they weigh these questions,” the archbishop said.

Furthermore, he continued, “the Gospel cannot be parsed in partisan terms.”

The document went through no major revisions for this year’s election, but it is being supplemented by an introductory letter from each bishop outlining new developments and issues since its adoption by the full body of bishops during their fall general assembly in November.

This time around, the document also is accompanied by a series of five videos that highlight vital public policy issues.

The document has three parts.

The first part outlines the responsibility of Catholics to incorporate Catholic teaching as they consider their vote as well as their support for myriad public policy issues that confront society.

The text explores a series of questions related to why the Church teaches about public policy issues, who in the Church should participate in political life, how the Church helps Catholics to speak about political and social questions, and what the Church says about social teaching in the public square.

Part two outlines policy positions of the bishops on numerous issues. Topics addressed include human life and dignity, promoting peace, marriage and family, religious freedom, economic justice, health care, migration, Catholic education, promoting justice and countering violence, combating unjust discrimination, care for the environment, communications, media and culture and global solidarity.

The bishops said they wanted to “call attention to issues with significant moral dimensions that should be carefully considered in each campaign and as policy decisions are made in the years to come.”

Part three lists goals for Catholics’ participation in political life, whether they are citizens, candidates or public officials.

Notably, it invites Catholics to assess moral and ethical questions emanating from public policy issues. It also lists nine goals for Catholics to weigh in public life.

“Faithful Citizenship” also draws from the teaching of Pope Francis, retired Pope Benedict XVI, St. John Paul II, St. John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council, and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

The introductory letter reminds Catholics that “we bring the richness of our faith to the public square” and that “faith and reason inform our efforts to affirm both the dignity of the human person and the common good of all.”

The letter also says, “The threat of abortion remains our pre-eminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity, such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty.”

It concludes by reminding Catholics to “bring their faith and our consistent moral framework to contribute to important work in our communities, nation and world on an ongoing basis, not just during election season.”

The full document also is available in Spanish.

The text of “Faithful Citizenship” can be downloaded as a free PDF from USCCB.org, or it can be purchased by going to Store.USCCB.org.

In addition to English, the videos were produced in Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

The productions explore various aspects of Catholic social teaching while reflecting on the teaching of Pope Francis.

The videos are posted on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website at faithfulcitizenship.org and the USCCB’s YouTube channel at bit.ly/1HDBC2N. They are part of the bishops’ effort to broaden their outreach through the document.

“People need to see different media,” Archbishop Coakley said. “This is a very technically savvy audience today, especially younger voters. The videos use powerful images and brief statements that illustrate some of the teaching embodied in the formal document.”

Four English-language videos of about two minutes in length examine participation in public life, protecting human life and dignity, promoting the common good and loving others. The fifth is a six-minute compilation of the highlights of the four shorter pieces.

The foreign language videos are slightly longer.

Each video was produced with young people in mind, said Jill Raush, director of education and outreach in the USCCB’s Department of Justice Peace and Human Development.

Along with the images and voices of young people, each piece features one bishop narrating an aspect of Catholic social teaching. Each production closes with a different prayer specifically written for the series.

Scenes showing people feeding the hungry, protecting God’s creation, comforting the elderly, caring for children, migrant people and families, and engaging in civil discussions are prominent in the productions.

“The videos are meant to reflect the teaching of the bishops in ‘Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,’” Raush said. “The videos are really trying to make that teaching more accessible.”

Other wide-ranging resources are being made available to parishes, schools, prayer groups and other interested parties through the faithfulness citizenship web page.

As summer ends and Election Day, Nov. 3, nears, dioceses and parishes have been gearing up their use of “Faithful Citizenship” resources, according to social ministry directors across the country.

Archbishop Coakley said the bishops expect the guidance offered in the “Faithful Citizenship” materials will gain wider attention this year.

“My hope and prayer is that Catholics who really want their faith to influence their decision making when it comes to going to the polls will give the reflections in this document consideration rather than just going to their favorite news source,” he said. “That’s going to be a very different kind of guidance than what they receive from their favorite cable news anchor or pundit.”

“This is our chance to bring a different light to bear to a very important fundamental civic responsibility.”

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This document is intended to be that, an official guide for the formation of consciences that Catholics can utilize as they weigh these questions, ... The Gospel cannot be parsed in political or partisan terms. The Gospel calls us to live by standards and our Catholic faith calls us to embrace standards that are not divisible into left or right, Republican or Democratic terminology.

---Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development
Hurricane destroys Louisiana churches, closes schools, displaces priests

LAKE CHARLES, La. (CNS)—Hurricane Laura destroyed six churches in the Diocese of Lake Charles, left a dozen others “highly compromised” and did heavy damage to chancery offices.

The diocese, in a report posted on its website, said that only one of six Catholic schools reopened on Aug. 31, while the others needed at least some repairs before classes could resume.

The storm, which slammed southern Louisiana with winds of up to 150 mph in the early hours of Aug. 27, also left a diocesan rectory housing 20 priests, a third of them in active ministry, uninhabitable. The death toll in the U.S. from the storm stood at 18 as of Aug. 31.

State officials said power could be out in some areas for up to a month.

“We are here, we are open and we are trying to meet the needs of the community,” the diocesan report quoted Mercy Sister Miriam MacLean, the agency’s director, saying, “The Lord preserved Catholic Charities from any possible to survey the storm’s impact firsthand.

The seminarians, from 23 U.S. dioceses, were tested for COVID-19 a few days before boarding their flights to Rome and were being monitored each day within the confines of the NAC campus on the Janullum Hill overlooking the Vatican.

The quarantine, mandated by the Italian government, meant that the students were not able to join Pope Francis for the Angelus prayer on their first Sunday in Rome. It also meant the second-year students who volunteered for the orientation team could not take their charges down the hill and into the city in search of the best gelato.

But they did experience the traditional arrival “clap in,” being welcomed with applause by the orientation team and staff and food to found trucks of supplies delivered on Aug. 31, to St. Pius X Parish in Ragley, La., to help people in need in the wake of Hurricane Laura. The pastor of St. Pius X, Father Jeffrey Sterkovich, is a member of a priests’ support group that includes nine priests from five south Louisiana dioceses.

Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana began providing relief effort are being accepted online at www.catholiccharitiesla.org and www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Flying into a quarantine: U.S. seminarians create a ‘bubble’ in Rome

ROME (CNS)—Close to 30 masked men got off a bus at the Pontifical North American College (NAC) on Aug. 20, beginning a new student orientation that kept as many traditions as possible in a 14-day quarantine.

The seminarians, from 23 U.S. dioceses, were tested for COVID-19 a few days before boarding their flights to Rome and were being monitored each day within the confines of the NAC campus on the Janullum Hill overlooking the Vatican.

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Nation is at ‘pivotal juncture’ in racial justice struggle

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Celebrating an Aug. 28 Mass to mark the 57th anniversary of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s historic speech given to the nation, Washington Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory urged Catholics to continue the dream of the late civil rights leader to work for reconciliation and unity building.

“Ours is the task and the privilege of discovering theSpirit that has too eloquently expressed 57 years ago by such distinguished voices on that day,” Archbishop Gregory said. “Men and women, young and old, people of every racial and ethnic background are needed in the movement.

The Mass of Peace and Justice was celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, marking the 57th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington.

It was organized by the Archdiocese of Washington’s Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach and the archdiocesan Secretariat for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns.

Washington Auxiliary Bishops Mario E. Dorsonville, Roy E. Campbell Jr., and Michael W. Fisher welcomed the Mass, which was livestreamed on various social media platforms. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, seating was limited at the cathedral, but Archbishop Gregory said, “the intensity of our prayer is not diminished in the least.”

“We are at a pivotal juncture in our country’s struggle for racial justice and national harmony,” he said. “Believers and nonbelievers, sports stars and corporate giants, small town residents and urban dwellers must all engage in the work of reconciliation and unity building so that our common future will be better and more secure than the past.”

To that end, Archbishop Gregory announced during the Mass an archdiocesan initiative to “fight against racial injustice everywhere.” The initiative was outlined on a scroll presented to the archbishop by archdiocesan Catholics, including Betty Wright, a member of St. Martin of Tours Parish in Washington, who participated in the 1963 March on Washington.

The initiative will include a wide range of pastoral activities and outreach, including prayer, listening sessions, faith formation opportunities and social justice work.

Archbishop Gregory called the historic March on Washington “a moral and religious event.” He also noted that he was celebrating the Mass in the cathedral where then-Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle had invited people to pray before the march.

Archbishop O’Boyle also delivered an opening prayer on the steps of the cathedral.

In his homily, Archbishop Gregory said the beatitudes, he said, “all point to a society of harmony and justice which were the desired end of that march 57 years ago.

“Dr. King spoke movingly about what our nation was destined to and must become—he no doubt must have reflected often on the beatitudes,” Archbishop Gregory said.

The archbishop has had a long association with the civil rights leader.

He previously served as archbishop of Atlanta, Rev. King’s birthplace. He has preached in Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, where both Rev. King and his father preached, and, in 2006, he was inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

He noted that the Mass was being celebrated during the COVID-19 pandemic and at a time of nationwide protests for racial justice following highly publicized police shootings of unarmed Black men and women.

He urged the faithful not to become discouraged in their fight to end racism.

“We must take heart and be not dissuaded or intimidated by the voices that seek division and hatred because ‘We shall overcome,’” the archbishop said as he concluded his homily, quoting a gospel song that became an anthem for the civil rights movement.

After the Mass, he spoke with and blessed some young adults who had participated in the march earlier that day.

“In closing, the archbishop recommended some books and media for the students to continue educating themselves about anti-racism efforts. He recommended a speech given to United States bishops in 1989 by Sister Thea Bowman, the first African-American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, and the book History of Black Catholics in the United States by Benedictine Father Cyprian Davis, as well as select articles on the Black Catholic experience published in the journal U.S. Catholic Historian.

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Calling that march “a deeply faith-inspired event,” Archbishop Gregory said, “it was less about achieving something than to become something—a single family of justice, unity and harmony.”

“Surely those goals are noble and more than desirable even today—which, especially today,” the archbishop said. “Death has silenced the most significant voices of Aug. 28, 1963—Dr. King, John Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, Mahalia Jackson and Marian Anderson to mention only a few. Nevertheless, the intensity, determination and the energy of their spoken and sung words echo today.”

“Vast majority of the oratory of the day highlighted social and civil concerns, but always with a background of religious faith,” Archbishop Gregory said.

“People from a wide variety of religious traditions were in that moment for our nation. The existing social order was clearly challenged by people of faith. That is exactly what we need today.”

Many local Catholics were among the estimated 250,000 to 300,000 participants at the 1963 march.

“The spirit that they shared on that remarkable day was unmistakably sacred,” Archbishop Gregory said. “With that spirit, they were ready to change the world. It gave them a clear vision of what our nation was called to be—what we must become, as it was described so eloquently in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.”

Noting that the Gospel reading for the Mass was taken from St. Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, Archbishop Gregory said the beatitudes “fit the commemorative observance perfectly as they highlight the virtues and the spiritual vision that are necessary for society’s renewal.”

The beatitudes, he said, “all point to a society of harmony and justice which were the desired end of that march 57 years ago.

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Misery of slavery remains, Archbishop Gregory tells Notre Dame students

WASHINGTON (CNS)—In a class with anti-racism course at the University of Notre Dame, Washington Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory spoke in a small, cordial conversation call with faculty and alumni about the moral imperative of opposing racism.

It is a cry of the beast of slavery in the United States still leaves a misery that is not so easily dismissed,” Archbishop Gregory said. “That cry needs our reconciliation, and the Church must must exercise its mission as the repository of the reconciliating power of the Lord Jesus himself.”

The class, which took place over Zoom on Sept. 1 through the university’s Kroc Center for Civil and Human Rights, began with an address from the archbishop and allowed students to ask questions.

Archbishop Gregory noted how bishops in the United States have issued several public statements on the topic of racism and racial intolerance.

“Over the years, these statements have grown increasingly direct and forceful,” he said. “They have also revealed that changing focus from charity toward people to a serious realization of the personal and universal consequence that slavery has left on this nation and on all others, who were participants in the business of slavery.”

In the 19th century, the archbishop said, American Catholic bishops did not take a formal position condemning slavery. “Fearing that the Church might result in dividing Catholic people along the extraordinarily complex matters that would eventually result in a 4-year Civil War dividing the nation into warring camps.”

“The bishop who ever knew the number of African-American Catholics we might have had if the Catholic Church had publicly and enthusiastically jointly chosen to be identified with the anti-slavery movement,” Archbishop Gregory said.

When the civil rights movement began nearly a century later, Archbishop Gregory said, “We as Catholics issued a document ‘disavowing’ segregation but urging prudence to bring about the end of segregation.” However, “as things began to progress in 1968, the archbishop continued, civil unrest and threats of violence began to grow, moving the bishops to “speak with persistence and a passion that was new and greatly needed.”

“As we remain still on the threshold of a new millennium of Christianity, we stand at a hopeful juncture where the Church can fulfill the nobility of its mission and live out the dignity of a documented history,” Archbishop Gregory said. “Those in leadership of tomorrow’s Church will be judged by a much higher standard, one that is rooted in the Gospel and the Catholic Church’s ability and obligation to reconcile and heal the sins of humanity as well as those that may still lodge in the heart of the Church herself.”

When a new people might reclaim the moral dimension surrounding action against racism, Archbishop Gregory emphasized each individual’s heart and actions.

“I’d like to focus the question of the morality on the individual, that is, ‘Where is my heart?’” Archbishop Gregory said. “Taking down statues may be an important gesture, movement, long overdue in many situations, but asking the more important question of the individual is, ‘What is my attitude? How do I need to overcome?’” the archbishop said as he concluded his homily, quoting a gospel song that became an anthem for the civil rights movement.

After the Mass, he spoke with and blessed some young adults who had participated in the march earlier that day.
The opportunity to learn is one of the gifts I appreciate most in life. The process can be arduous, but knowledge, once earned, is ever-present and cherished. I choose to be in the presence of knowledge when I bear in mind the threats it faces.

In the last few months, as someone deep into an online master’s in the health sciences, I’ve witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by learning institutions and those who teach in a classroom. Programs have been adapted to virtual lectures and other work—but during a pandemic, no less!

Among the challenges are the virtual classroom—personal interactions that lose some of their spontaneity, even with the “raise hand” button. I find myself daydreaming of feeling always being “on camera” during synchronous sessions. (Dare I say—“it’s not so easy to snooze on Zoom!”) Yet, although these transitions have sometimes complicated the actual learning process, I have a sense of new freedom for easier roads for adult students in university programs than for families with young(er) learners.

Without the classroom atmosphere and the social component of being among classmates, children have experienced unprecedented and unaccustomed changes at a time when other aspects of life during COVID-19 have been disrupted.

The Human Side

God’s wisdom must accompany you to achieve peace of mind

Are every anxiety fraying your nerves? If so, take time out to seriously pursue peace of mind. And, if you have children, your focus should also go to their mental and emotional well-being.

One example of alleviating tightness is to take a ball, place it on your upper back and gently roll it back and forth across your spine to the side. Exercises like this aim at releasing tense muscles. It is also recommended to let your body’s sense relaxation. Mind over matter is a powerful way for releasing tensions and encouraging muscles to go, or kids get away with something. Age-appropriate expectations are important—and be sure to follow through.

Prayer with and for everyone strengthens spirituality and a sense of service to others, even as we develop our own spiritual growth.

“Saying grace and saying prayers at night,” said Poulson, “is doing something for other people.”

During the pandemic, the negative might seem to overtake the positive. Everyone thanks God for the regain balance.

“Gratitude—how important that is for mental health,” said Poulson. “There is an immediate satisfaction on research on mental and health health. When something good happens, even something small, write it down on a postit, a small note. That, even for our children, contributes to, O, put it in the refrigerator.”

Learning is hard and is made harder during a pandemic. But conscious attention to having fun is still important. “I’m a real believer in family fun together,” said Poulson. “Card games, a puzzle—sometimes as parents, we forget to have fun. Doing things as a family is a way of connecting that is nonverbal way, too.”

Fun, prayer, belonging and a sense of gratitude—sounds like a good way to go back to school!

(Maureen Pratt writes for Catholic News Service. Her website is www.maureenpratt.com)

Theology of Technology

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Concentration is the secret of strength.” One of Napoleon’s strengths was the ability to totally control the enemy’s troops’ needs, which incidentally, created extraordinary esperit de corps.

Additionally, those who maintain tension under control is asceticism. Discipline is needed if we are to control angst. True asceticism does not lie in a struggle to make us feel we are not our real selves. To counter this, a regular routine needs to be developed that aims at achieving tranquility. Deep breathing and physical exercise are winners, but being a winner takes endurance and determination.

One of Napoleon Bonaparte’s achievements was compartmentalizing his thinking. In preparation for a battle, he would shut his mind to all other business. When he retired to bed, he would close all the drawers. This is a gift, but with willpower it can go far.

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(Father Eugene Hennick writes for Catholic News Service.

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Sunday, September 6, 2020

- Ezekiel 33:7-9
- Romans 13:8-10
- Matthew 18:15-20

For the first reading at Mass this weekend, the Church gives us a passage from the Book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel’s name in Hebrew was, in effect, a prayer, “May God make him strong.” It was fitting since, as the prophet himself said in complaint, his calling to be a prophet put him at odds with too many people. He needed strength.

For God’s people, times were hard. The Babylonian empire, then one of the Middle East’s most powerful states, had destroyed much and had killed many. The Babylonians took back into captivity many survivors of their invasion of the Jewish homeland.

In Babylon, these exiles and their descendants languished for four generations.

Ezekiel saw this disaster not as a direct punishment from God, hurled down upon the people in a fit of divine revenge, but as the result of the people’s sin.

The prophet was determined in this view. People stray from God. They ignore His commandments. They blame for misery at their feet. They scorn the commandments. They believe that the commandments were given to Moses by God.

As the world offers itself in its own image, the Church gives us a passage from the Book of Romans.

Paul set the commandments in context. Judaism, Paul knew the commandments were given to Moses by God. The Babylonian empire, then one of the Middle East’s most powerful states, had destroyed much and had killed many. The prophet was determined in this view.

For its last reading, the Church this week offers a passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Jesus told the disciples to admonish anyone among them who is at fault.

“The Lord gives a progression of steps. First, a Christian should call a wayward brother or sister to task. This step failing, the Christian should seek the aid of others in calling the wayward person to task. Finally, this step also failing, the disciple should go to the Church. If the wayward will not reform, the Church should dismiss the wayward person.”

The reading reminds us of the teachings of the Church regarding how to read the Gospels. We should remember that the Gospels were not written at the time of Jesus, but rather many years later. The Church was already formed by the time the Gospel of Matthew was written.

The number of believers had multiplied. They had different backgrounds and experiences. Disputes had occurred. As a follower of Jesus is a serious matter. It means being part of a body, not just an individual. Christ is in the assembly of disciples. The Church, the mystical body of Christ, has the right to judge a member’s behavior, even a member’s sincerity, deciding which behavior actually is consistent with discipleship.

Reflection

In weeks, we have heard advice about being good disciples. Being faithful disciples means being fully aware that we are human beings, with limited insight and foresight, easily tricked by temptation and prideful. So we make excuses for ourselves.

Ezekiel knew this reality well. St. Paul knew it.

Humans sin and reap the whirlwind. They get into trouble. Their relationships collapse. Their societies enact bad laws. God has not put each of us into a small, fragile boat, set us adrift on a dark and turbulent sea, without an arm or a compass.

We often sail on stormy seas, but we are not adrift. Jesus is our compass, the ear by which we steer the course and the lighthouse pointing the way to a safe harbor.

Daily Readings

**Monday, September 7**

**1 Corinthians 5:1-8**

Psalm 5:5-6, 7, 12

Luke 6:6-11

**Tuesday, September 8**

**The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Micah 5:1-4a or Romans 8:28-30

Psalm 13:6abc

Matthew 1:16-16, 18-23 or Matthew 1:18-23

**Wednesday, September 9**

St. Peter Claver, priest

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

Psalm 45:11-12, 14-17

Luke 6:20-26

**Thursday, September 10**

1 Corinthians 8:1b-7, 11-13

Psalm 139:1b-3, 13-14h, 23-24


**Friday, September 11**

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22b-27

Psalm 84:3-6, 8, 12


**Saturday, September 12**

The Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Psalm 116:12-13, 17-18

Luke 6:43-49

**Sunday, September 13**

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Peter Claver, priest

Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12

Romans 14:7-9

Matthew 18:21-35

**Question Corner/ Fr. Kenneth Doyle**

**Scripture and Church’s moral teachings can guide discussion about same-sex attractions**

One of my close friends, whom I met through the Church, is a parish youth worker. The girl she lives with is a lesbian, although I believe that they do not share sexual relations. Lately, though, my friend has told me that she is pursuing same-sex relationships. I don’t know how I am supposed to react to this situation. I like her very much and want to maintain my friendship with her, but I do not condone Catholic teaching. What do you think is my duty to her as a Catholic and a friend? I am growing increasingly concerned about the state of her soul. (Ohio)

A: I think that your responsibility—as a Catholic and a friend—is to look for a chance to speak with your friend and to share with her in a non-threatening way that you are uncomfortable with her choice of sexual partners.

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Ann guide discussion about same-sex attractions.

Q: I am growing increasingly concerned about the state of her soul. (Ohio)

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Explain to her that the Church recognizes her dignity and sexuality are not primarily a set of condemnations, but together offer a positive vision of this important aspect of humanity. You should also share with her that the Church recognizes her dignity as a person created in the image of God, even if it does not approve her acting on her same-sex attraction.

Assure her that, despite your discomfort, she still means very much to you and that you want to maintain her friendship.

It occurs to me, too, that you may have one further responsibility. Since she is a parish youth worker, she witnesses to others in a public manner the beliefs of the Catholic Church. If there is a way for you—with the assurance of, course, of confidentiality and anonymity—to share your concern with the parish’s pastor, perhaps that priest could then speak with your friend.

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

**St. Peter Claver**

c. 1580 - 1654

Feast - September 9

This Spanish-born saint of the slave trade entered the Society of Jesus in 1601. After studies in Barcelona and on Mallorca, where the Jesuit port, Alphonsus Rodriguez, urged him to go to the New World, Peter went to South America in 1610 and was the first Jesuit ordained in Cartagena, Colombia, a port of entry for West African slaves. Peter ministered to the humans aboard the ships and ashore before they were sold, feeding, comforting and baptizing, by his own count, 300,000 slaves. He and St. Alphonsus were canonized in 1888.
New St. Louis sheep

During an Aug. 25 installation Mass in the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis in St. Louis, Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski holds the mandate from Pope Francis that proclaims him the 10th archbishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. A native of Baltimore, Archbishop Rozanski, 62, previously served as an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Baltimore and as bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Mass. (CNS photo/Lisa Johnston, St. Louis Review)

Use mercy to transform people who oppose the rights of unborn children, Vatican official says

BOGOTA, Colombia (CNS)—The president of the Pontifical Academy for Life said Catholic groups need to use mercy and compassion in campaigns as they seek to “transform” those who do not support the rights of unborn children.

Archbishop Vicenzo Paglia spoke at the second online meeting of the Pan-American Network for the Right to Life, when he was asked by audience members what the Church could do to counter politicians who say that they are Catholic but support abortion and whether one solution would be excommuncation.

The archbishop replied that while supporting abortion is certainly against Catholic doctrine, it is not enough to simply “condemn the sin.”

“The members of our Christian community must understand that our mandate is to save, more than to condemn,” the archbishop said. “Convert rather than exclude. And transform rather than eliminate.”

“As a Church, we need to have a greater capacity to influence those who are in error,” said Archbishop Paglia, who delivered a session on the lessons learned from St. John Paul II’s encyclical, “The Gospel of Life.”

The Pan-American Network for the Right to Life is a coalition of scholars, priests, Church members and groups created in 2018. Its members meet regularly to discuss ways in which pro-life policies can be supported in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the online meeting, Archbishop Paglia said that when it comes to defending life, the Church faces various challenges that include participating in the formation of new codes for bioethics and in the debate on how to regulate new technologies.

He said the Church must uphold universal values as it struggles against governments that promote ethical relativism and even engage in “dictatorial” behavior.

“Faced with the individualism that is infecting society like a virus, the Church must promote universal fraternity,” the archbishop said.

Archbishop Paglia said the Church also must turn its attention to the elderly as it strives to promote life. He said that instead of being sent to institutions and care homes, “the elderly have the right to stay at home, supported by their family, Christian communities and local governments.”

He added that providing proper care for the elderly should be seen as part of the struggle against euthanasia.

“You don’t just fight euthanasia by citing Scripture,” the archbishop said, “but by having the elderly at home and helping them to live well until the end.”

Jesus David Vallejo, a bioethics professor who is one of the founders of the Pan-American Network for the Right to Life, said Archbishop Paglia’s intervention in the online meeting reminded Catholics that “life must be defended from conception until natural death.”

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Serra Club Vocations Essay

Student sees personal struggles as a way God furthers his kingdom

By Sidney Swindell
Special to The Criterion

It is difficult for me to answer the question: “How are you allowing God to use you to further his kingdom?” It’s not because I don’t have an answer, but because answering is hard, because I struggle often. I have Asperger’s syndrome (AS), which makes it difficult to form and keep friends. So, while I don’t have a lot of friends, the ones I do have mean a lot to me. They are willing to understand my diagnosis and work with me to secure our friendship. I have difficulty concentrating and getting things done like cleaning my room and getting my homework done.

God has given me a capable mind and the ability to understand math and science, yet he left me disadvantaged at the same time by depriving me of the social and focusing skills essential to success. This has led my parents to seek counseling and medical therapies to help me adapt and cope with these challenges. It has also resulted in changing schools, creating individual education plans and working with teachers to implement the accommodations I need to engage in class and get work done.

Not all schools and teachers have been supportive though. Some of the faith-based schools I attended in the past were unwilling to support me and my needs, which has been frustrating. As a school and club athlete, I have also struggled many times in the past with coaches and bonding with teammates, often being misunderstood, disregarded and ridiculed.

Regardless, I don’t give up. I’m strong and healthy. I was born in a country with freedom and resources, and to parents who are loving, understanding and capable of supporting me academically and materially. These are the gifts God has bestowed on me.

So, in looking through my sadness and frustration with the challenges he has also placed on me, I am enabled to answer the question of how I am allowing God to further his kingdom: psychologists and psychiatrists have an opportunity to learn from me how to better treat others. Teachers and school counselors have the opportunity to be exposed to kids like me, unique and in need, and are given an opportunity through God to gain perspective, empathy, understanding and to improve their ability to support me and others in the future.

Coaches and teammates have a chance to grow as people, reflecting later in life on what it was like to coach and play with people like me and make better decisions about how to work and interact with those who are different or need social emotional support. I believe, is a part of God’s plan for improving his kingdom through these experiences to learn patience, love and understanding.

Though it’s often frustrating having AS, I am an instrument for God’s work. I look forward to a future where I will continue to find lasting friendships, and will enjoy contributing to God’s world by designing structures to improve his world as an engineer.

Sidney Swindell
(Sidney is the daughter of Richard and Melissa Swindell. She completed the 12th grade at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis this spring and is the 12th-grade division winner in the Indianapolis Serra Club’s 2020 John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest.)

African religious leaders demand action on alleged theft of COVID funds

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS)—Church leaders in Kenya and South Africa have spoken out against corruption as funds meant to fight the COVID-19 pandemic go missing.

Archbishop Martin Kivuva of Mombasa led Kenyan religious leaders in condemning an alleged theft of funds meant to fight the pandemic, saying such a heist would be immoral and contrary to God’s teachings.

Archbishop Kivuva, chairman of the Dialogue Reference Group, an interfaith platform of religious leaders, spoke on Aug. 26 as anger over the alleged theft continued to rise. The anger has triggered demonstrations in towns and cities across the country, with protesters demanding the firing and prosecution of the involved government officials and their accomplices.

“It is inconceivable for us that a Kenyan can sit and plot how to steal money meant to save the lives of Kenyans,” the archbishop said, reading the religious leaders’ statement.

The East African nation has received millions of dollars in the form of grants, loans and donations to support the battle against the coronavirus, but the lack of transparency and accountability in the expenditures lends credence to the allegation that they are being embezzled, the archbishop said.

“This is a challenge for all of us, but the people [involved] should … pay for their sins,” Archbishop Kivuva said, responding to a question.

The religious leaders want the president to make relevant government ministries accountable for funds received, including how money was spent, names of companies that received the funds and the beneficiaries. They also urged the government to prosecute anyone implicated in the theft.

South Africa’s bishops said a culture of corruption should not be allowed to “characterize our nation.”

Noting a widespread “surge of anger” over graft linked to a COVID-19 relief program, the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference said, “South Africa is fast becoming known as a country where corruption is a way of life.”

South Africa’s corruption scandal includes allegations that public officials and their associates siphoned off money meant for those who lost their income during the coronavirus lockdown and gave inflated contracts for personal protective equipment to family members. Funds have disappeared from a $30 billion relief package to supplement the existing social security net that supports 11.3 million citizens. The government admitted that the COVID-19 aid, announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in April, should have reached many more than the 2.7 million people who had received payouts by the end of June.

Without transgressing COVID-19 safety measures, “let us begin to think about actions” to end corruption, the bishops said, noting that the time to act “is now.”

“As we get enraged with corruption, let us remember that the call against corruption starts with us … in our personal lives and in our work,” they said in an Aug. 27 statement signed by Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of Mthatha, conference president. In an earlier statement, South Africa’s bishops said the corruption scandal shows a “severe lack of ethical leadership.”

“Although we are deeply appalled, the news of the looting of public resources during the pandemic does not come as big surprise,” they said.

Local government officials have been accused of hoarding and selling food donations for the poor. Also, protective clothing and other coronavirus-related supplies have gone missing from many government hospitals.

The bishops urged Ramaphosa “to take bold steps to restore public trust in the presidency as an institution,” noting that the “lives and livelihoods of millions of people are at stake.”

As in South Africa, corruption persists in Kenya largely because of a lack of firm action against those involved in graft, Archbishop Kivuva said.

“If the people can see culprits getting generosity worse, they have been seen a few cases—this would frighten and scare away anyone attempting to steal public funds,” the archbishop said.

The Rev. Chris Kinyanjui, an Anglican priest and general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, added: “We call on responsible agencies to take urgent action on those involved. Kenyans are tired of theft of public funds.”

Monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey from Indy ordained a priest on Aug. 30

Criterion staff report

Benedictine Father Lorenzo Penalosa, a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, was ordained a priest on Aug. 30 in the monastic community’s Archabbbcy Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

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