Belief in God as Creator of all has practical consequences, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Professing faith in God as the Creator of all human beings, or even simply recognizing that all people possess an inherent dignity, has concrete consequences for how people should treat one another and make decisions in politics, economics and social life, Pope Francis has written in his latest encyclical.

“Human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history, and no one can consider himself or herself authorized by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it,” the pope wrote in his encyclical, “Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship” (#213).

Pope Francis signed the encyclical on Oct. 3 after celebrating Mass at the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi, and the Vatican released the more than 40,000-word text the next day.

The pope had been rumored to be writing an encyclical on nonviolence. And once the COVID-19 pandemic struck, many expected a document exploring the societal consequences of the deadly virus.

But the pope instead wrote a document that expands on themes he has been developing since his 2015 encyclical, “Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home.”

When Francis wrote “Laudato Si’,” the world was in the midst of a global environmental crisis, the document’s continued relevancy, he said, “Our 2020 theme for Respect Life Month is ‘Live the Gospel of Life.’”

At the heart of that theme “is the steadfast conviction of our Catholic faith that every human being is created in the image of God,” the archbishop noted.

The archbishop called all to “stand against anything that denies the dignity of any human being” and to “be the hands and feet of Jesus for the unborn, the elderly and all those whom society tends to perceive as burdens rather than persons.”

To do so, he said, means to follow the call of Pope Francis “to go out to the very margins and peripheries of society, to the poor, the defenseless, the abandoned, the homeless, the immigrant, the refugee, the addicted, the unemployed, the incarcerated, the sick and the dying,” and to properly care for the environment lest “we hurt ourselves and those who will come after us.”

Catholics stand for all life. Likewise, they should stand against anything that... See RESPECT, page 2

Growing in faith: Film features Holy Angels and a program that helps children soar to their potential

By John Shaughnessy

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In the scene at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis, Elijah Montgomery drums on the cafeteria table, creating a pulsating beat for the unlikely rap song that Willo McClain delivers flawlessly—a rap song about plants, seeds, learning and the joy of life that leaves her fellow students at the table dancing, smiling and clapping. Smiling and clapping too in that scene

See HULT ANGELS, page 2

At Respect Life Mass, archbishop calls all to ‘live the Gospel of Life’

By Natalie Hoefer

A quarter of a century ago, St. John Paul II penned one of his most well-known encyclicals, “Evangelium Vitae” (“The Gospel of Life”). It addressed the dignity of the human person as well as the various threats to the sanctity of human life.

“The encyclical is as relevant today as when it was first published in 1995,” said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

He made this comment during his homily at the annual Respect Life Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Oct. 4.

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his dialogue with the Muslim leader and by their joint statement that “God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters” (#5).

The encyclical takes its title from the words of St. Francis of Assisi and is inspired by his “fraternal openness,” which, the pope said, calls on people “to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives” (#1).

The title, which literally means “all brothers and sisters” or “all brothers,” are the words with which St. Francis “addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel,” the pope wrote (#1).

That flavor, explained throughout the document, involves welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, listening to the poor, guarding a heart open to the poor, defending the rights of all and ensuring that each person, at every stage of life, is valued and involved in contributing to the community, he said. It also means supporting public policies that do so on a larger scale.

Building on the social teachings of his predecessors, Pope Francis’ document once again strongly condemns the death penalty. “The whole theme of the document (the right of some to free enterprise or “aggressive nationalism,” the closing paragraph) is about the way in which we’re called to attend to the world as Christ attended to the world,” pays attention to reality rather than “evading it and avoiding it,” and praying for the grace to respond as Jesus would.

When people ask, “Who is my neighbor?” often what they really want to know is “Who is not my neighbor?” or “Who can I legitimately say is not my neighbor?” (#353). Anna Rowlands, a British theologian invited to help present the document at the Vatican, told Catholic News Service the text’s “golden thread is about discerning what gives life and helps everyone to develop their full potential and flourish.”

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Pope Benedict had approved Vatican-China agreement, cardinal says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Vatican-China agreement on the appointment of bishops was a pastoral, not political agreement, that also had been approved by Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican Secretary of State said.

Every pope, from St. Paul VI to Pope Francis, has tried to resolve what Pope Benedict described as a difficult situation “of misunderstandings and incomprehension” that did not benefit “either the Chinese authorities nor the Catholic Church in China,” Cardinal Pietro Parolin said, according to Vatican News on Oct. 3.

Pope Benedict himself, the cardinal said, approved “the draft agreement on the appointment of bishops in China,” which was signed in 2018 by the Holy See and Chinese officials and is due for renewal at the end of October.

The cardinal was speaking at a conference in Milan, marking the 150th anniversary of the presence of missionaries of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions in China.

Vatican officials repeatedly have said that the agreement in China deals only with the appointment of bishops, a question essential for the unity and survival of the Catholic Church in the country.

Cardinal Parolin said the agreement “is only a starting point,” which has already led to some good outcomes, including “signs of growing closeness among Chinese Catholics who have long been divided on many issues.”

“It is necessary to continue the dialogue so it can bear more substantial fruit,” he said in the opening speech at the conference.

Since the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, the Holy See has “felt the need for dialogue, even if the circumstances of the time made it very difficult,” Cardinal Parolin said.

It is important to reject any political interpretation of the 2018 provisional agreement, which is purely a pastoral agreement, he said.

“I remind you once again that the agreement of 22 September 2018 concerns exclusively the appointment of bishops,” Cardinal Parolin said.

He explained that there were “many other problems concerning the life of the Catholic Church in China. But it has not been possible to deal with them all together.”

“We know that the road to full normalization will still be a long one, as Benedict XVI foresaw in 2007. The question of the appointment of bishops, however, is of particular importance. It is, in fact, the problem that has caused the Catholic Church in China the most suffering in the last 60 years,” he said.

For the first time in decades, all the bishops in China are in communion with the pope, and the faithful “know how important it is that all Chinese bishops are in full communion with the universal Church,” he added.

Before the agreement, there was always the possibility of illegitimate ordinations, which is why it was necessary “to face the delicate problem definitively” with an agreement aimed at helping “the local Churches enjoy greater freedom, autonomy and organization, so that they can dedicate themselves to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and contributing to the integral development of the person and society.”

The agreement, the details of which have never been made public, was set to expire on Oct 22, and a decision was expected regarding a Vatican proposal to extend the provisional agreement.

The agreement does not cover “direct diplomatic relations between the Holy See and China, the juridical status of the Catholic Chinese Church, or the relations between the clergy and the country’s authorities,” wrote Andrea Tornelli, editorial director of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, in an editorial on Vatican News in late September.

Catholic Charities-Social Concerns offers Immigration Roundtable Series this month

The Catholic Accompaniment and Reflection Experience (CARE) program of the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities-Social Concerns office is offering a virtual roundtable series throughout the month of October every Tuesday from 7-8 p.m.

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“Immigration 101” presented by Tim Lopez, both of the Immigrant Welcome Center. Learn about the resources available to immigrants often face, and the Natural Naturalization Program. Program to support reunification of families, and how to become involved.

• Oct. 27: “Immigrant Resources,” presented simultaneously in Spanish and English by immigration consultant Haley Bastin. Learn the difference in the statuses of migrant, refugee, asylum seeker and undocumented immigrant; the root causes of migration; the Catholic Principles of Migration; and recent policy changes to immigration enforcement.

The remaining topics in the series are:
• Oct. 13: “Know Your Rights,” presented simultaneously in Spanish and English by immigration consultant Haley Bastin. Learn the differences in the status of migrant, refugee, asylum seeker and undocumented immigrant; the root causes of migration; the Catholic Principles of Migration; and recent policy changes to immigration enforcement.

• Oct. 20: “Unaccompanied Minors” led by Cindy Neal, a foster care licensing specialist for Bethany Christian Services. Foster Care Program works to support reunification of families, and how to become involved.

In October every Tuesday from 7-8 p.m.

The roundtable events are free, but registration is required for each. Recordings of all presentations are also available.

To register go to immigration. eventbrite.com or contact Simona Reising at sreising@archindy.org or 317-236-2457.

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Editorial
An encyclical for all brothers and sisters

“If every human being possesses an inalienable dignity, if all people are members and brothers, and if the world truly reflects the Lord’s command: ‘Love one another, for in this matters whether my neighbor was born in my country or elsewhere’” (Pope Francis, “Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship”).

Can a papal encyclical be controversial before anyone has read what it says? Unfortunately, yes. Some criticized Pope Francis’ new encyclical before it was published because its title, “Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship,” is a modest contribution to continued

beginning of his new encyclical: himself in an empty St. Peter’s Square
to make this reflection an invitation to dialogue among all people of good will” (“Fratelli tuti,” n.5). Los Angeles Archdiocese Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, welcomed the new encyclical calling it an important contribution to the Church’s rich tradition of social doctrine.

According to Archbishop Gomez, “Pope Francis’ teaching here is profound and beautiful. God our Father has created every human being with equal sanctity and dignity, equal rights and duties, and our Creator calls us to form a single human family in which we live as brothers and sisters. “God’s plan for humanity, the pope reminds us, has implications for every aspect of our lives,” Archbishop Gomez said. “From how we treat one another in our personal relationships, to how we organize and operate our societies and economies.”

Archbishop Gomez continued: “In analyzing conditions in the global arena, the Holy Father provides us with a powerful and urgent vision for the moral renewal of politics and political and economic institutions from the local level to the global level, calling us to build a common future that truly serves the good of the human person.”

Everyone should read “Fratelli tuti.” It is worthy of St. Francis of Assisi, the pope’s namesake, because its central theme is our unity with all creation and our solidarity with all members of the human family, all who have been made in the image and likeness of God. Pope Francis concludes his new encyclical with two questions: “A Prayer to the Creator,” and “An Eucumenical Christian Prayer.” Both call for a renewed sense of sisterhood and brotherhood among all members of the human family. Both seek “a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war” wherein we can discover Christ in each person regardless of who they are or where they come from.

Let’s pray that “Fratelli tuti” will inspire us all to open our hearts to the beauty and joy of all God’s creation, and to love all our sisters and brothers in Christ.

—Daniel Conway

Making Sense Out of Bioethics/Fr. Ted Pacholczyk

COVID-19 vaccine myths

Several popular myths about gaining traction on social media in recent months, particularly in regard to messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines being developed by Moderna, Sanofi, Pfizer, and a handful of other companies. I would like to consider five of these myths.

Myth 1: For vaccines that rely on injecting patients with mRNA, the possible incorporation of these genes into our genetic makeup will fundamentally alter us as human beings, moving us into a project of Transhumanism, the production of a “Human 2.0,” etc.

Reply: Any incorporation of new genes into our chromosomes from a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine would be an exceedingly rare occurrence, if it were to occur at all. It is actually very difficult to get any additional information of mRNA to integrate into our chromosomes, partly because this would mark a reversal of the flow of DNA into the so-called Central Dogma of Molecular Biology: our DNA or chromosomes are read (“transcribed”) to produce an mRNA, which is then read (“translated”) to make proteins. Even if the accidental and unintentional incorporation of an mRNA message into our chromosomes were somehow to occur following vaccination, this would not mean that we were creating “Human 2.0,” since those genetic changes would not be expected to affect our stem cells, and therefore would not be transmitted to the next generation. Vaccinating people with an mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, therefore, does not imply that we are “remaking man” or heading down the path of Transhumanism.

Myth 2: The rapid pace of clinical trials means that vaccines will be unsafe and/or ineffective.

Reply: This could be a legitimate concern, if proper testing were to be carried out, or approval for public vaccination campaigns were to be granted ahead of conclusive safety and efficacy testing. The actual approval, however, appears highly unlikely when it comes to any of the major national regulatory agencies, like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, or Australia’s Therapeutic Goods Administration (with the possible exception of regulatory agencies in China and/or Russia).

Myth 3: Luciferase is the name of the bioluminescent enzyme contained in the vaccine, which seems connected to “the forces of evil.”

Reply: Luciferase, an enzyme involved in firefly illumination, is being used in various testing and development stages ahead of the production of a COVID-19 vaccine, but is not itself part of the vaccine being included in human vaccinations. Luciferase is a commonly used biomedical research tool that has been used, for example, in lab animals to study the most effective way to deliver mRNA vaccines, whether by an injection into the skin, muscle, or a vein.

Myth 4: Vaccine manufacturers have no legal repercussions for any bad effects from their vaccines.

Reply: Dr. John Grabenstein, retired global executive director of Medical Affairs for Merck Vaccines, offered a helpful corrective: “Manufacturers are indemnified for unforeseeable adverse events. They are not indemnified for negligence. This is standard practice.”

With pharmaceutical companies getting limits on immunization for millions of people, the question of who will cover claims for damages in case of unanticipated future side effects is quite important.

Ruben Dodber, a member of the senior executive team at the pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, recently argued: “This is a unique situation where we as a company simply cannot take the risk if in…. four years the vaccine is showing side effects. … In the contracts we have with governments we are asking for indemnification. For most countries it is acceptable to take that risk on their shoulders because it is in their national interest.”

In the U.S., for example, a 2005 law, “The Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act,” or PPAE, provides immunity from liability, apart from any willful misconduct, for products like vaccines that are developed to address a public health emergency.

Myth 5: Using hydrogel nanotechnology to deliver an mRNA vaccine will mean we will have a “big brother” monitoring and the introduction of microchips into the human body.

Reply: No microchips are present in vaccines. Hydrogel nanotechnology refers to the introduction of “lipid nanoparticles” which encase the mRNA. This is a glorified way of saying “very small oil droplet.”

Lipids are what our cell membranes are composed of, so when the mRNA vaccine is injected, the lipid of the vaccine particle merges with the lipid of the cell (like two oil droplets merging) and the piece of mRNA is delivered to the outside of the cell ("transfection"). These “lipid nanoparticles” could theoretically be misused to deliver other genetic material, but this does not mean they should not be used for valid purposes, like delivering life-saving mRNA vaccines during a pandemic.

Debunking these various myths does not mean that there aren’t still questions and concerns about proposed COVID-19 vaccines. But we shouldn’t argue against vaccines in ways that make neither ethical nor scientific sense.

(Bev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale University and did post-doctoral work at Harvard University. He is president of the diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as the director of education at The Catholic Center in Philadelphia. See www.nccbcenter.org and www.fathered.com"
“While Jesus was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you were nursed!’ He replied, ‘Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it’” (Lk 11:27-28).

Continuing our October reflections on the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Gospel reading for this Saturday’s Mass (Lk 11:27-28) reminds us that all of us, including Mary, are called to listen to the word of God and to incorporate it fully into our daily lives.

When a woman from the crowd shouts out “Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you were nursed!” (Lk 11:27), Jesus appears to contradict her. “Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it” (Lk 11:28).

St. Augustine, in his treatise, “On Holy Virginity,” made this startling, seemingly contradictory, statement: “Thus also her nearness as a mother would have been of no profit to Mary, had she not borne Christ in her heart after a more blessed manner than in her flesh.” This is not a diminution of Mary’s singular role as the Mother of God. It is an affirmation of her openness to God’s will—no matter what it cost her. It also calls attention to the true meaning of Christian discipleship.

What Mary did so perfectly when she opened her heart to God’s messenger, and said “yes” to the divine call to sacrificial love, is what each of us is invited to do in our life’s journey. That’s why Jesus emphasizes the blessings that come from fidelity to God’s word. Mary was blessed because of her generous response to the will of God, not simply because she gave birth to God’s Son.

What the woman in the crowd exclaimed is no different from Elizabeth’s greeting to her young cousin, which we repeat each time we pray the Hail Mary: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Lk 1:42).

There is a singular honor in Mary’s being chosen to be the Theotókos (Mother of God), but there is an even greater honor in her free decision to hear God’s word and then do it. That’s why we look to Mary and all the saints as examples.

It’s also why it’s so important for us to encounter Jesus in prayer, in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and in service to those in need. As Jesus tells us clearly in Saturday’s Gospel reading, we’re blessed when we respond to God’s call the way Mary did—freely and without hesitation.

Successful as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be attentive to God’s will for us. That means tuning out all the distractions that prevent us from hearing God’s word. We also must be willing to sacrifice our own comfort and to do things that would otherwise be impossible for us without the help of God’s grace.

Fortunately, we can always turn to Mary, our mother, for inspiration and assistance. With the help of her intercession, doors that would otherwise be closed and locked are miraculously opened for us. As long as we follow her instructions to the servants at the wedding feast in Cana—to do whatever Jesus tells us—nothing is impossible for us.

As St. Augustine would remind us, nearness to God profits us nothing unless we also bear Christ in our hearts and express his self-sacrificing love in our actions. Let’s pray for the conversion of the hearts of those who reject Christ. Let’s be attentive to God’s word, and let’s strive to observe it in every way we say and do. †

**Recemos por el valor y la fidelidad para imitar a María**

“Mientras Jesús decía estas cosas, una de las mujeres en la multitud alzó la voz y dijo: ‘Dichosa la matriz que te concibió y los senos a los que te amamantó’” (Lk 11:27).

En María, no hay diferencia entre su papel de Madre de Dios y sus responsabilidades como primera discípula cristiana. Está bendecida (llena de gracia) tanto por lo que es (bendita por la Eucaristía) y por lo que hace (bendita por la Eucaristía). Afortunadamente, siempre podemos recurrir a María, nuestra madre, para que nos inspire y nos ayude. Con la ayuda de su intercesión, se nos abren milagrosamente las puertas que de otra manera estarían cerradas y trabadas.

Mientras sigamos sus instrucciones como los sirvientes en el banquete de bodas en Caná, a hacer lo que Jesús nos dirá, nada es imposible para nosotros.

Como san Agustín nos recuerda, la conexión de Dios no se detiene en nada a menos que también llevemos a Cristo en nuestros corazones y extienda nuestras manos al prójimo en nuestras acciones. Recemos por el valor y la fidelidad para imitar a María. Estemos atentos a la palabra de Dios, y esforzémonos por observarla en todo lo que digamos y hagamos. †
October 13
Immigration Virtual Roundtable Series: “Know Your Rights” (offered in English and Spanish), second of four stand-alone sessions (Oct. 20, 27), sponsored by the archdiocese’s Parish Social Ministry, 7-8 p.m., existing rights regardless of immigration status, free, registration required. Registration, information: immigration.eventbrite.com or 317-236-2457.
October 15
St. Joseph, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.com.
October 16
Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. “Passion and Prayer” Christ-centered marriage enrichment conference: “Sacramental Marriage,” 7-9 p.m., Mgr. Mark Swolahlop presenting, space limited to 20 couples. $20 per couple option for online participation with donation at facebook.com/OurLadyGreenwood. Registration required either way. Registration, information: Tom and Marcya Rezenk, alemarriageministry@gmail.com or 317-489-1557.
Mount St. Francis, 101 St. Anthony Blvd., Mt. St. Francis. Chick N’ Fish To-Go Dinners, fried chicken or fish, mashed potatoes, green beans, cole slaw, roll, homemade dessert, $33, order by 5 p.m. Thur. for Fri. 4-6 p.m. pick-up. Order at mountainsaintfrancis.com/order of 812-923-8817.
October 18-23
St. Vincent de Paul Society of Indianapolis “Struttin’ Our Stuff” virtual silent auction, more than 150 items. Registration, information and option to donate available starting Oct. 10 at www.evdpindYOUraised.com. Questions: Jenny Matthews, 317-289-3324 or smtbeary@gmail.com or Mary Ann Klein, 317-796-6325 or Kleinjm@yahoo.com.
October 20
Immigration Virtual Roundtable Series: “Unaccompanied Minors,” fourth of four stand-alone sessions (Oct. 27), sponsored by the archdiocese’s Parish Social Ministry, 7-8 p.m. understanding their journey, information on resource reunifying families; free, registration required. Registration, information: jeanson@archindy.org or 317-236-2457.

Wedding ANNIVERSARIES

65 Years
RAYMOND AND SHARON (HOECKER) CLARK, members of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Oct. 8.
The couple was married in St. Philip Neri Church in Indianapolis on Oct. 8, 1955.
They have one child: Cynthia Kemp. †
The couple also has four grandchildren. †

50 Years
ROBERT AND CATHERINE (MEGEL) BRANCHAM, members of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 12.
The couple was married in St. Joseph Church in Jennings County on Sept. 12, 1970.
They have three children: Teresa Flaspohler, Joseph and Mark Brancham. The couple also has eight grandchildren. †

60 Years
DALE AND SUSAN (FOWLER) RUDICILL, former longtime members of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis and now members of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in The Villages, Fla., celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 27.
The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 27, 1960.
They have three children: Lisa, Sheryl and Richard. The couple also has six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.
Their anniversary was celebrated with a surprise “golf-cart drive-by” from their friends and neighbors. †

50 Years
CARL AND KATHLEEN (SHIAKRA) CHERNICH, members of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 19.
The couple was married in St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church in Chicago, Ill., on Sept. 19, 1970.
They have three children: Sandra Balint, David and Michael Chernich. The couple also has five grandchildren. †

Jack and Rita (Keenie) Ferkonkoff, members of St. Maurice Parish in Napoleon, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 10.
The couple was married in St. Louis Church in Batesville on Oct. 10, 1970.
They have three children: Andrea, Kristina and Zachary Ferkonkoff.
The couple also has five grandchildren. †

October 20
Immigration Virtual Roundtable Series: “Unaccompanied Minors,” fourth of four stand-alone sessions (Oct. 27), sponsored by the archdiocese’s Parish Social Ministry, 7-8 p.m. understanding their journey, information on resource reunifying families; free, registration required. Registration, information: jeanson@archindy.org or 317-236-2457.

THOMAS AND NOLA (HAYDEN) GREGG, members of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 3.
The couple was married civilly on Oct. 3, 1970, but later had their marriage consolidated at St. Michael the Archangel Church in December of 1984. They have three children: Jennifer Anderson, David and Thomas Gregg. The couple also has five grandchildren. †

TEDDY AND RUTH ANN (LAKES) REUS, members of St. Michael Parish in Brookville, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 26.
The couple was married in St. Michael Church in Brookville on Sept. 26, 1970.
The couple has two children: Craig and Jason Reus. †

JIM AND ROSE (MENSMER) WATEN, members of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 3.
The couple was married in St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church in Floyd County on Oct. 3, 1970.
The couple has two children: Brian and Doug Wathen. The couple also has three grandchildren. †

WILLIAM AND CONSTANCE (KNECHT) WENTZ, members of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 17.
The couple was married in St. Peter Church in Franklin County on Oct. 17, 1970.
The couple has two children: Rebecca and Douglas Wintz. The couple also has three grandchildren. †

Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to bit.ly/2M4M0n or call 317-236-1585.

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Events Calendar
For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.
Trump administration drops refugee cap to historic low

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The steep slope, appearing almost as a vertical line, is a stunning mark by the Trump administration on what was once a refugee program. Formerly a 40-year-old program, with a steep drop starting in fiscal 2011, the program had been under scrutiny by both Republicans and Democrats and had been around 95,000. But the federal fiscal year—to a historic low: 15,000.

“The administration’s proposal is an act of love and hope. By helping to restore the most vulnerable, we are living our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do,” said Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington said they “continue to be disappointed by the Trump administration’s continued disapproval of the U.S. refugee resettlement program.”

“These decisions have a tangible impact on those facing the most desperate of situations that are beyond their control,” they said. “While refugees will be allowed to seek refuge here in the United States in 2012, the last notification of admissions, given the global need and the capacity and wealth of the United States, is heartbreaking.”

“Welcoming refugees is an act of love and hope. By helping to restore the most vulnerable, we are living our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do,” said Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington said they “continue to be disappointed by the Trump administration’s continued disapproval of the U.S. refugee resettlement program.”

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Respect Life Award winners dedicated to ‘changing culture into a culture of life’

By Nicole Havel

Each year, the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity calls upon Catholics in central and southern Indiana to nominate individuals or couples for the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Respect Life Award. This year’s winners are Eric Slaughter of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and Margaret (‘Maggie’) Ayers and her husband Master Sergeant Solorzano of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis.

"The 2020-21 Respect Life theme ‘Love the Gospel of Life is fitting for this year’s award recipients,” said Brie Anne Varick, the archdiocese’s Human Life and Dignity office director. She recognized the winners during the Respect Life Mass on Oct. 4, at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

"They not only live the Gospel of Life, but lead others to recognize the dignity of the human person in the most vulnerable, and advocate for their loss to changing our culture into a culture of life."

Below are the inspiring stories of one man who helps men who have been told to be silent through abortion, and a couple who serve women in unplanned pregnancies and migrants on Indianapolis’ east side:

Father of aborted child seeks to heal, save others from ‘lost fatherhood’

By Nicole Havel

Years ago, when Eric Slaughter’s then-girlfriend wanted to abort their baby, he helped pay for the procedure. Now he is on a mission: I want to help men who have been told to be silent and hide into suppressive lives. I want to help those men find the loss and heal their scars (for little ones), and [let them know] that they have a right and responsibility to speak up and protect their baby and the mother, even when the law of man denies them.

Catholic since 2004, the member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis says he is thankful for the love for Christ he developed through his former Baptist faith.

He has two sons for his passion in the pro-life movement: Gospel of Life, a pro-life group that formed when he learned what was then the archdiocesan Office of Pro-Life and Catholics for Choice were having a baby through adoption.

The group continues to pray and volunteer at the Advent Children’s Medical Center at Holy Rosary for the past eight years and currently the Respect Life Coordinator. He also helps coordinate a Pro-Life Lecture Series in collaboration with St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

In the broader community, he helps organize the annual Indianapolis March for Life, as involved with the 40 Days for Life campaign and supports the Great Lakes Gabriel Project.

"Evangelizing the Gospel of life within the Black community,” is important to Slaughter, who is Black. Varick staffs the pro-life booth at the annual Indiana Black Expo and the Indianapolis State Fair.

"Through his own journey of healing, he has shared his post-abortion testimony of how Jesus Christ redeemed his lost fatherhood,

Slaughter is also active with several other parish and community efforts to promote life and peace. At the parish level, Slaughter has been involved with the Respect Life Ministry, which includes a Respect Life Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic in Indianapolis on Oct. 4 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

"Father of aborted child seeks to heal, save others from ‘lost fatherhood’”

Couple sees award as nod from God to ‘defend me in precious unborn lives’

By Nicole Havel

It is difficult for Maria Guadalupe (“Lupita”) Soberanos Armenta to recall ever not being involved in the pro-life movement.

“God gave me the gift of being born a Catholic and having the opportunity to minister in this calling. I was introduced to a new life and a new way of life, a new way of practicing faith,” she said.

She was born with Trisomy 13 or Patau syndrome, raising their firstborn child, Maria de Los Angeles Solorzano, at Holy Rosary for the past eight years and currently the Respect Life Coordinator.

"With the help of the wonderful people I meet through the retreat, and by God’s grace, I accepted his forgiveness and found the courage to speak out against abortion,” she said.

Helping with Project Rachel Post-Abortive Healing Ministry, including Rachel’s Network and Rachel’s Vineyard Healing Retreat, is now “more dear to his heart,” said Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, as she described the couple prior to recognizing Slaughter as one of this year’s Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Respect Life Award winners.

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It was Sept. 15, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. A painting of the Blessed Mother, tears streaming from her eyes, stood near the pulpit where Msgr. William F. Stumpf delivered his homily.

“Mary knew firsthand the struggles and pain that life can bring,” the archdiocese’s vicar general said. “As our Mother, she cares deeply about the burdens and trials we face.”

The message resonated with the nearly 60 people gathered for the archdiocese’s Healing Mass for Mental Health Awareness.

The Mass, which is celebrated annually around central and southern Indiana, was held this year at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. An additional 34 people watched the Mass online. During his homily, Msgr. Stumpf empathized with the congregants.

― ‘This painful cross’

“The focus of our liturgy today and our time together, which centers on the struggles and impact of mental illness, is deeply personal,” he said. He shared how a person dear to him struggled periodically with depression.

― “I understand firsthand how challenging and painful mental illness can be for the patient and for those who love them,” he said. “And I also know that its effects touch all aspects of a person’s life—even their spiritual life.”

While awareness of mental health issues “has grown exponentially,” such issues are still misunderstood, and society often stigmatizes those who “suffer carrying this painful cross,” Msgr. Stumpf said.

“But amid those misunderstandings, our Church reminds us powerfully that mental illness is not a sign of insufficient faith or weakness of will. Indeed, men and women of heroic holiness—men and women like St. Thérèse of Lisieux [and St. Bernadette]—suffered from psychological wounds.”

Christianity does not promise a life with no pain or suffering, he noted. “However, faith, prayer and the sacraments are great aids for healing and the source of much comfort in coping with mental illness or any illness,” he added.

Catholics are called to care for others, to help “carry their burdens and crosses,” said Msgr. Stumpf. “Thus, we have a duty to reach out to those who struggle with mental illness and to accompany them—all the while doing everything we can to heal or diminish their suffering.”

― ‘We are not alone’

Such are the goals of the archdiocese’s annual Healing Mass.

This year’s event included opportunities for the sacrament of reconciliation, a personal blessing from Msgr. Stumpf, and for individuals or groups to be prayed over by two-person prayer teams. “We wanted people to have a full experience of healing with multiple sacraments available,” said Brie Anne Varick, coordinator of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity. The office’s Mental Health Ministry sponsors the annual Mass.

This year saw the highest turnout in the event’s four-year history, perhaps because of the pandemic, said Varick. “We had this [Mass] planned long before we knew about COVID-19,” she said. “I think we were in need of healing before COVID, and [the pandemic] just kind of brought it to the surface. … Anything people were struggling with before is now exponentially worse.”

“Add to the mix isolation, restrictions on socializing, anxiety regarding the coronavirus and the short-term inability to receive the sacraments, and the result is ‘a real crisis’ for mental health, said Varick.

Ed Cahill agreed. “It’s a complex issue,” said the member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. “We all have ups and downs in our lives, and we need each other to just push through it.”

Cahill worshipped at the Mass with five of his siblings. Noting that other members of the family have dealt with mental health issues, he was grateful for the healing Mass.

“Things like this help us understand how we can be more compassionate toward those people,” he said. “Through [the archdiocese’s] outreach and ministries and Masses, it helps us better understand the issue and gives us ways to be there for each other.”

Katie Warrenburg, a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, witnessed the positive effects of the event. The aunt of the Our Lady of Sorrows painting displayed during the Mass also served as one of the prayer team members.

“They seemed lighter, their faces not so tense, smiling,” she said of those over whom she prayed. “We just need to be reminded every once in a while that we are not alone.”

― By Natalie Hofer

A couple receives a blessing from Msgr. William F. Stumpf, archdiocesan vicar general, after the Healing Mass for Mental Health Awareness on Sept. 15 at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. (Photos by Natalie Hofer)

Documentary reveals the amazing life of the inspiring ‘rosary priest’

By Ann Margaret Lewis

I’m embarrassed to admit it, but when I heard the title of the film, Pray: The Story of Patrick Peyton, I said, “Who?”

Now having seen this award-winning documentary, I am not only embarrassed but angry at myself. Surely my late parents knew about “the rosary priest” Father Peyton and mentioned him to me, but I must have let it evaporate from my memory.

I had heard the phrase “The family that prays together stays together,” but I had no idea it came from Father Peyton’s on-air mission to encourage family prayer, enlisting Hollywood entertainers in his regular radio and television productions to this end, and teaching the souls of millions to the point of overturning the rule of corrupt Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.

Now I have no excuse. I knew about him, and I’m glad I do.

Peyton was born in a small town in Ireland and raised by parents who valued family prayer. He was drawn to the priesthood as a youth, but was rejected by Irish seminaries because of his minimal education. He and his brother therefore emigrated to the United States with dreams of riches, but the call to the priesthood never left him. Plunging himself into study and excelling beyond anyone’s expectations, he graduated from the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana, and after a miraculous cure from tuberculosis, was ordained a priest for the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1941.

Taking us on location to his childhood home in Ireland and sharing interviews with many who knew him while he lived, as well as those inspired by his message, Pray successfully paints the portrait of a faith-filled man who wouldn’t take “no” for an answer (in the most loving way).

The documentary is produced by Family Theater Productions, an organization originally founded by Father Peyton in the 1940s for his radio and television shows. Intended as a launch point for a new “Pray Together Now” movement, it is fitting to tell the story of the priest who led a worldwide movement for family prayer while the world was embroiled in the Second World War.

The film itself is engaging, well-written and directed. Recordings of Father Peyton’s words help those of us who’ve never heard his lilting Irish voice, giving a sense of the man’s gentleness and strength. For someone like me who knew nothing about him, I went away fully educated on who he was and, impressed by all he accomplished in his lifetime. I had no idea that millions of people would gather in stadiums to pray the rosary. Could you imagine what could happen if we did that today?

I highly recommend the film to families because it will inspire them to pick up the rosary and pray it together. Those who wish to do so can pledge to start their own family prayer time on the film’s web site.

Pray: The Story of Patrick Peyton will be showing at the Parkland Theater, 6550 Parkland Ave. in Cincinnati, beginning on Oct. 9. It will begin streaming online in early 2021 through on-demand services that are yet to be announced.

To view the trailer or to search for show times, go to prayherfilm.com.

(Ann Margaret Lewis is executive assistant in the archdiocesan Office of Communications and the author of several books. E-mail her at alewis@archindy.org.)

Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton leads a rosary rally in Rio de Janeiro Brazil, on Dec. 16, 1962. There was an estimated 1.5 million in attendance. (Photo courtesy of praythefilm.com.)

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Loss of a ‘sense of place’ can harm relationships with God, others

By David Gibson

Many people suffer the loss of “a sense of place” when a region that is like home to them is exploited or abused in large ways. Places that afford us a sense of place have played major roles in our lives. They mirror key dimensions of our identity back to us.

Many in the U.S. region called Appalachia know what the loss of a sense of place means. The Catholic Committee of Appalachia said in its 2015 people’s pastoral letter titled “The Telling Takes Us Home” that harmful mining practices and other damage to streams, towns or mountain vistas harmed not just “the landscape.”

Rather, some developments, like “extreme mining activity,” exacted a toll on the “sense of place and of home.” Those living in Appalachia’s mining areas “and beyond often grieve the loss of home as they would the loss of a dear friend.”

For 50 years, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia has served as an advocate for this region. “The truth of Appalachia is harsh,” its first pastoral letter affirmed.

Released in 1975 and signed by 25 Appalachian bishops, it was titled “This Land Is Home to Me.” It explored a sense of powerlessness in this often-forgotten region, which it called “the spiny backbone of the eastern United States.”

It stressed that “the suffering of Appalachia’s poor is a symbol of so much other suffering.” It stands as a “symbol of the suffering which awaits the majority of plain people in our society if they are laid off, if major illness occurs, if a wage earner dies or if anything else goes wrong. Thus, “at stake is the spirit of all our humanity.” Indeed, said the pastoral letter, “there are too few spaces of soul left in our lives.”

I contributed a chapter to a 1987 book titled A Sense of Place. Visiting any locale that evokes this sense is always more than a “trek into the past,” I wrote. It means revisiting one’s roots.

These are places populated in our memories by people who fulfilled unforgettable roles in our lives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while my wife and I were unable to participate in our parish’s Sunday Mass, we turned to Sunday Masses livestreamed by St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., some 1,200 miles from us.

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My alma mater is the university my student years.
I'm on one side of the political spectrum, convicted in my choice for the upcoming presidential election. My house guest is on the other, while equally convicted in his selection, both faith-filled Catholics, who love and respect one another. Initially, when my guest came to stay, I knew this would be best for us not to discuss our political views—in an attempt to preserve the peace. However, there have been several instances when we have verbally sparred. I can't say if our arguments were more of an attempt to persuade the other as much as a defense of our own position, but in each case, when we walked away frustrated, maybe even a bit angry at the other's deeply held opinions, my guest texted me a couple of links to articles that accused my preferred candidate of lies or corruption. I shot back articles that accused his text back articles that accused my preferred candidate of lies or corruption. I conceded to suffering political fatigue, I admit to becoming increasingly intolerant of the opposing party's positions and actions. I can't say if our arguments were more of an attempt to persuade the other as much as a defense of our own position, but in each case, when we walked away frustrated, maybe even a bit angry at the other's deeply held opinions, my guest texted me a couple of links to articles that accused my preferred candidate of lies or corruption. I shot back articles that accused his text back articles that accused my preferred candidate of lies or corruption. I conceded to suffering political fatigue, I admit to becoming increasingly intolerant of the opposing party's positions and actions.

The day of Fritz's burial at Fort Snelling, the wind whipped, a black swallowtail flew between them and up into a tree. Fritz spoke to her. She spoke to him. Finally, she could truly believe in the communion of saints. She could feel it in her heart. She could feel her father close. As the days pressed on, and Paula lost her mother and raised her children, this belief turned into action. It became a way to live, on this side of heaven, a state of being that remains attached to those on the other side. "I don't feel a separation from my parents," Paula said. "I feel like I can access them any time."

The Minnesota mom for some years had been giving her dying father something so dear to them would remain connected. And being a Catholic, she had the vocabulary to express it.

She had come for one of my canoe trips with her dad on a Saturday afternoon. Her death appeared imminent, so she knelt at his side and a pensive heir. "Will you send me a sign?" Paula asked. "I really want to believe in the communion of saints, to want to believe that you hear my prayers." "I will if I can," he whispered. "I will if I can," he whispered.

The next day, Paula and her mom met with their priest to plan the funeral. They took the hearse home to their house, where they were to be buried. They had lived until Paula was 7. The owners were unawake, comfortable asking for a walk-through. As she entered the house, she felt a stress eroded, a relief that was "All you holy men and women, pray for us." And utter those powerful words:

"All you holy men and women, pray for us."

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unfolding event. It is difficult to think about the value of entertainment and our creativity in raising it to newfound heights.

(Walter Eugene Hemrick writes for the Minneapolis Star Tribune.)

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

The Balm for 2020: the communion of saints

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The Daily Readings

Monday, October 12
Galatians 4:22-24, 26-27, 31-5:1

Tuesday, October 13
Galatians 5:6
Psalm 119:41, 45-47, 49-50

Wednesday, October 14
St. Cuthbert I, pope and martyr
Galatians 5:18-25
Psalm 1:1-4, 6
Luke 14:42-46

Thursday, October 15
St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church
Ephesians 1:1-10
Psalm 90:1-6
Luke 11:47-54

Question Corner
Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Blaospheming against the Spirit involves refusing God's forgiveness

Q
recently read an article in the Catholic press about the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and it has caused me worry about something that happened long ago. I am now almost 60 and when I was in the seventh grade, this is what happened. I really liked a boy in my class, and I prayed that he would like me. But it turned out that he liked another girl instead. I was upset, especially since I had prayed so hard, and I decided (and said) that I didn't need the Holy Spirit. I regretted it right away and went to confession, but I'm not sure that the priest really heard what I was saying and that he understood. He seemed busy and somewhat rushed.

I recently went to confession and brought it up again, but I didn't go into all the details. Now, I'm a huge mess. I brought it up again, but I didn't go into all the details. Now, I'm a huge mess. I really need to live in today. As St. Teresa of Calcutta once said, “Yesterday is gone, tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today, let us begin.”

There are many crossroads in one’s life. You know—the point where opportunities open up along with situations. A decision needs to be made: do you go to your left and explore the unknown that awaits you there? Or do you just go straight ahead and keep doing what you’re doing and most likely get the same results?

As I look back over my life, there have been many crossroads. If I had taken a different path at any of these crossroads, I know things would have turned out differently. What I do not know is if they would have turned out any better? Only the God of the Universe knows this. So, for me to linger on any of these unanswerable questions of yesterday is more than an invitation for self-pity despair and depression. I need to live in today. As St. Teresa it Calcutta once said, “Yesterday is gone; tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today, let us begin.”

As a general instruction goes on to explain, “If Communion from the chalice is carried out by intinction, each communicant, holding a Communion-plate under the chin, the priest who holds a vessel with the sacred species, a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The priest takes a host, dips it in the chalice, and, showing it, says, ‘The body and blood of Christ.’ The communicant responds, ‘Amen,’ receives the sacrament in the mouth from the priest, and then withdraws” (#287).

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds readers in “Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America” that “the communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to come close to the priest, even by means of a spoon or a tube” (#45). I would note, though, that the use of a tube or spoon is not customary in dioceses in the United States.

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Staples offers tips to prove Resurrection at catechetical event

By Natalie Hoefer

For Christians, faith in the Resurrection is a given. In fact, there would be no Christian faith without belief in Christ rising from the dead. But how does Christian convince a non-believer of the Resurrection? Simple, according to Tim Staples—just look at history, because the Resurrection “cannot be understood as anything other than an historical fact.”

Staples is an author, speaker, and the director of apologetics and evangelization for the media ministry Catholic Answers. He was the keynote speaker for the archdiocesan Gathering of Disciples event on Sept. 12, held online this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The theme was “Christ is Alive!”

“We are engaging a culture that’s becoming increasingly antagonistic to our Catholic faith and to Christianity in general,” he said. “And there’s no more important place to start than the apologetic defense of the Resurrection.”

‘No other explanation makes sense’

Catechists from around central and southern Indiana watched and listened online as Staple urged them to defend the reality of the Resurrection. He pointed to the many “eyewitness accounts” of Christ’s resurrection, most notably his appearance “to more than 500 brothers at once” (1 Cor 15:6). The Apostles who claim the Apostles were hallucinating or that they stole the body, said Staples, “You don’t have 500 people hallucinating the same thing. And if you’re going to do a major fraud, you’re going to involve as few people as possible to keep the story straight, not 500.”

The Apostles’ own lives, ministry and death is further proof of the reality of the Resurrection, said Staples. “All but one of the 12 Apostles were martyred for their faith,” he noted. “No explanation makes sense other than the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because that’s the reason they gave for their own transformation, and went to their death rather than deny it.”

‘It doesn’t fit’

The explanation that Christ’s disciples stole his body from the tomb (Mt 28:11-13) is easily dismissed, said Staples. “We’ve got a crack troop of Roman soldiers guarding a sealed tomb … and a massive stone, and you’re going to move that and break the seal—and the guards are still asleep?” Staples scoffed. “That’s almost proof for the Resurrection!”

Even an acclaimed, 19th-century scholar Joseph Klaussner, refuted this theory in the 1800s, he said. Klaussner proposed that “when you look at the lives of the Apostles, it’s absurd to say that they would facilitate such a grand fraud.” Staples said. “It doesn’t fit what we know of their lives.”

Nor is there any logic in the “swoon theory” that Jesus never died but merely fainted, he said. “He’s in the tomb, he wakes up—how does he get out of the tomb, especially after being beaten?” Staples asked. “How does he get by the centurions? … And the sword would have gone through the sac [around Christ’s] heart in order that blood and water poured out—it’s ludicrous to say he swooned!”

‘He became Christian in the process’

For skeptics who will not accept any Scriptural proof of the Resurrection, said Staples. “You always begin with manuscript evidence.”

The fact that there are more than 5,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, “either complete or partial, written by hand before the advent of the printing press, … some fragments dating to within 10-40 years of the Resurrection,” he said, can only point to the impact of an actual historical event.

“This is unprecedented when you consider there are only nine manuscripts [about the Gallic Wars] that occurred just 50 years before Christ’s birth, he said. “And [no more than] 20 manuscripts for other major events.”

He also suggested pointing to second- and third-century Christian historians who wrote of historical accounts of the Resurrection event, including St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius.

And there is the “test of skeptics” that centuries who investigated the facts of the Resurrection and ended up Christian, Staples said. One such example is Sir William Ramsey, an acclaimed late-19th century scholar. “He set out to disprove Acts,” said Staples. “Not only did he find [the book] to be historically accurate—he became Christian in the process.”

‘So inspiring’

Breakout sessions on four additional catechetical topics were also made available during the Gathering of Disciples event, as well as time for virtual eucharistic adoration and songs of praise. “I am always inspired and motivated by others who witness and live a strong faith,” said participant Gayle Schrank, pastoral associate for parish ministry at St. Mary Parish in Navillenin.

Being so isolated this year, he was anxious to have this opportunity to gather in some way. I have had to cancel retreats I was scheduled to attend, and this was one way to be with others.” She found Staples’ “passion and knowledge so inspiring, and his love for God is contagious.”

Schrank has previously participated in—and presented at—the Gathering of Disciples. She finds the annual event “very reflective, educational and enriching. I am thankful to have this opportunity each year.”

This year was the first time Daniel Brock participated in the event. The prayer group leader from St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville is passionate about apologetics, and he appreciated Staples’ talk. “It was very interesting,” he said. “I really found it fascinating. I think it’s great that the archdiocese does this to help people increase their knowledge about their faith.”

Schrank agrees. “We live in a hurting world, and we need to grow in our ability to talk about God and share what we know about our Catholic faith.”

(Your parish catechetical leader for information on how to view the recordings of the Gathering of Disciples presentations.)

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Unrest leads to joint ecumenical gathering in New Albany

By Ray Day
Special to The Criterion

NEW ALBANY—“As the Church, we have a responsibility to reclaim the witness that God’s love should be treated as lesser or other, and that the lessons of the past should be remembered and repeated so as not to be repeated.”

“Therefore, we believe that all persons were created in God’s image, according to God’s likeness, and should be treated with divine reverence and affection. We believe that in Christ there are no distinctions, for all are children of God, and as such all are part of one family.”

Those words serve as part of a “Statement of Unity” recently issued by several churches in New Albany in response to ongoing civil unrest across the nation.

As a result, leaders of those churches—including members of three Catholic parishes—gathered for an ecumenical prayer service on Sept. 19 in New Albany. The event was an answer to a series of questions raised by the boards of directors of the city’s Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, Inc. (CRBFI) at its meeting.

Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter, who served as archbishop of Indianapolis from 1933-46 before becoming a cardinal in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, has long been praised for integrating the Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese. He did the same when he became archbishop of St. Louis in 1947.

Many questions arose during the CRBFI’s May discussion. What should be done to support those encountering social injustice in America? What would Cardinal Ritter do if he were still alive today? How would his legacy be reflected now, nearly 75 years after his transformative actions?

“We need to show up in new ways, not just do what we always do,” said Msgr. John Overton, pastor of St. Mary Parish in New Albany, which is now a part of the Archdiocese of Louisville. “We need to be forceful.”

Overton was one of a few Catholic representatives who spoke at the event.

Father Joseph Feltz, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany and dean of the New Albany Deanery, was among the clergy who worked on editing the initial draft of the statement.

“I was pleased the statement was biblically based. It expressed the Christian worldview that all people are created in God’s image and should be treated with divine reverence and affection,” Father Feltz said.

“I also was proud that Christian ministers were willing to stand together to witness human dignity.”

During the 30-minute prayer service held on the plaza behind the Town Clock Church, 11 ministers and priests representing some of the 20-plus local New Albany churches led approximately 125 attendees in prayer, song, a litany, reflection and benediction. The New Albany Deanery was represented by Father Feltz, Father Jeremy Gries, pastor of Holy Family Church in New Albany, and Conventual Franciscan Father Mark Weaver, pastor of St. Mary Parish in New Albany.

“The setting at the foot of the Town Clock Church was entirely appropriate for people of faith praying for unity in our community,” said Ernstberger. “I hope they also realize that there is much more that the community can do to prevent conflict.”

Hock described the prayerful presence of those gathered as “a special evening. I believe in addition to the clergy and attendees, the Holy Spirit may have been with us.”

Indeed, some in attendance believed it was the presence of the Holy Spirit when, at the very moment the service ended—7 p.m.—the bells in the Clock Tower Church unexpectedly pealed forth as in celebration of unity among all those present.

Of the 30-minute service, Hock added, “I was especially pleased with the new connections among the faiths that I witnessed. I felt a very important ecumenical spirit!”

And that spirit led to this message highlighted in the “Statement of Unity.”

“Therefore, we denounce racism in all its forms and choose to strive to be a witness to our community, especially our young people, that diversity is a cause for celebration not conflict, a display of beauty not ugliness, a show of strength not weakness.”

Father Feltz said he hoped that the community would come to “understand that the battle against the sin of racism is a duty of a follower of Jesus Christ. I hope they also realize that this important work is something that the New Albany Christian churches can work on together. Finally, I hope they realize that when we rely on God, all things are possible.”

(Ray Day is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany and is secretary of the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation. Criteriion editor Mike Krosko contributed to this story.)

Compiled by the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity and Catholic Charities-Social Concerns

The archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity and Catholic Charities-Social Concerns are collaborating to offer four of the seven weeks of prayer, study and action as the nation prepares for an upcoming election.

This week, we will continue to explore the teaching document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” which “provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens.”

We will take a brief look at the second section of the bishops’ statement.

Pray

“Holy Spirit, we praise and thank you! You give us the grace to offer another chance to be good citizens, to offer another chance to be as good as you expect us to be. The Holy Spirit continues to work in the world, continues to work in hearts, continues to be with us.”

Read

The following excerpts are from “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” Part II: Applying Catholic Teaching to Major Issues: A Summary of Policy Positions of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.”

Politics is a noble mission to promote the common good. As such, it is about ethics and principles as well as issues, candidates, and officeholders. To engage in politics, then, is more than getting involved in current polemics and debates; it is about acting with others and through institutions for the benefit of all. The fact that much of our political rhetoric has become very negative, and that political polarization seems to grow stronger should not dissuade us from the high calling to work for a world that allows everyone to thrive, a world in which all persons, all families, have what they need to fulfill their God-given destiny. In our democracy, one aspect of this task for all of us requires that we weigh issues and related policies.

“While people of goodwill may sometimes choose different ways to apply and act on some of our principles, Catholics cannot ignore their inescapable moral challenges or simply dismiss the Church’s guidance or policy directions that flow from these principles.”

Space does not permit us the opportunity to quote each issue at length, but we cannot urge you strongly enough to review “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” for yourself in order to discern your vote.

The following is a list of the issues that the document addresses in greater detail, and the paragraphs where you might find information on each.

• Human Life: #64-67
• Promoting Peace: #68 and #69
• Marriage and Family Life: #70 and #71
• Religious Freedom: #72
• Preferential Option for the Poor and Economic Justice: #73-79
• Health Care: #80
• Migration: #81
• Catholic Education: #82 and #83
• Promoting Justice and Countering Violence: #84
• Combating Unjust Discrimination: #85
• Care for Our Common Home: #86
• Communications, Media, and Culture: #87-89
• Global Solidarity: #90

Act

After a thorough reading of part two of “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” sign up to participate in national Catholic advocacy campaigns, find your official representatives, find legislation, and sign up for the newsletter at the USCCB Action Center at www.votervoice.net/usccbhome. For local Catholic issues and to receive updates and action alerts for statewide issues from the Indiana Catholic Conference, go to www.votervoice.net/INDIANACCHome. 3