



Evangelization & Catechesis Supplement

Jesus: The foremost authority on evangelization

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” Jesus tells us in the ninth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 9:37). Throughout his ministry, Jesus made many statements that are still quite relevant to the world today. This is one of those statements.



Sam Rasp

Not only has Sunday Mass attendance dropped during the last 10 years, but many people have not returned to Sunday Mass since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jesus knew that this would be something that his Church would struggle with throughout its 2,000-year history. He tells us, just as he told his Apostles that day, that there are way more people that need to hear the truth of the kingdom of heaven than there are people to present them with it.

As people continue to leave the Church, there are more and more people who are living outside the truth of the Catholic faith. Jesus, in his goodness and his love, did not leave us without an answer to this issue. At the very end of his public ministry, Jesus left his Apostles, and us, with the most authoritative statement ever made. Jesus tells us that:

“All authority in heaven and Earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18-20).

Jesus tells us, with “all authority in heaven and Earth,” to go and make disciples of all nations. He is inviting all of us to be the laborers that he needs to gather his harvest. Not only is he asking us to go and gather his harvest, but he is also asking us to help make these people into fellow laborers.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Some might say, “How am I supposed to do that?” or even, “That’s not for me. Jesus isn’t talking to me.”

Pope Francis disagrees. He says in his apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel”: “All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization” (#120).

All of us are called to evangelize.

The pope goes on to tell us that “we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries,” but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.”

To answer the how, Pope Francis tells us, “Indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus” (#120).

All human beings have a longing for God written on their heart. Every person longs for a love that only God can give. We are all called to be “missionary disciples” to share that love with every single person we meet. Every baptized person has that love to share.

The question is, are we willing to share the love that Christ has given us?

(Sam Rasp is coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the archdiocese’s Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. For resources that help create a culture of evangelization in your parish, contact Sam: srasp@archindy.org.) †

Parish, campus ministry leaders experience Eucharist as the source and summit of the faith

By Sean Gallagher

The Eucharist is at the heart of the Catholic faith. It’s a reality that was highlighted at the Second Vatican Council when the bishops there taught that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” (“*Lumen Gentium*” #11).

This central sacramental teaching of the Church has great personal meaning for Father Jerry Byrd, pastor of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon, and St. Ann and St. Joseph parishes, both in Jennings County.

“If it wasn’t for the Eucharist, I wouldn’t be here,” he said.

That conviction is firmly founded on an experience he had in 1997 when Father Byrd was a 16-year-old Baptist attending his first Mass. It was at St. John the Baptist Church in Harrison, Ohio, and he was there with a friend who was preparing to be received into the Church.

“I sat far away from the altar,” Father Byrd recalled. “We were up in the balcony in the back row. I can close my eyes and picture every bit of it like I was there right now.

“The priest said the words of consecration and elevated the host. There was no doubt for a second that that was the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus.”

That encounter that Father Byrd had with Christ in the Eucharist at 16 led him to be received into the full communion of the Church a year later. He eventually discerned a call to the priesthood and was ordained a priest for the archdiocese in 2012.



Father Jerry Byrd, second from right, leads Benediction during a eucharistic procession on June 3 at St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County, which he serves as pastor. Assisting him are Father Jeffrey Dufresne, left, and Father James Brockmeier. (Submitted photo)

“To me, the Eucharist is everything,” Father Byrd said. “I think that’s what the council fathers were getting to in reminding us that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith.”

Other parish and campus ministry leaders in central and southern Indiana share this great love and draw to the Eucharist and seek to share it with those whom they serve.

‘I don’t know why God is so good to me’

Renee Jackson grew up in St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County. As a student in its school, the seeds of her love of the Eucharist were planted when she attended Mass daily with her fellow students.

See **EUCCHARIST**, page 12

Alpha Catholic Context is ‘great way to invite people back into the Church,’ build parish culture

By Natalie Hoefler

St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg is building a new church physically—and spiritually.

“Our new church will be dedicated [on] Dec. 19,” said Marlene Stammerman, the parish’s director of discipleship. She said pastor Father Thomas Clegg commented that “we’re building a new church, and if all we do is build a new church building, we’re missing an opportunity.”

To fulfill that vision, she said, “We’re building a new church building, and we’re building a new church with people who really pass on their faith and become disciples who are missionaries and go out and serve and evangelize.”

This changing of parish culture is being accomplished through a catechetical tool called Alpha.

“Alpha provides a place to come and explore and ask questions regardless of where someone is on their faith journey—questions about life, faith and obviously about a relationship with Christ and what that might look like,” said Stammerman.

Participants in Alpha meet once a week for 11 weeks. Stammerman describes each meeting as having three components.

“We start with a shared meal,” she said. “Part of the philosophy around sharing a meal is it’s a way to build relationships and have conversations.”

Next comes a 25-minute video—or a witness talk, depending on the preference and resources of the parish.

The gathering closes with small-group discussions.

St. John Paul II Parish uses the Catholic context of Alpha, which started as a Protestant tool but created an additional version several years ago to embrace Catholic teaching.

“We like [catechetical] programs ... that speak of Catholic teaching as true, good, beautiful and helpful,



Sarah Vaughn, left, smiles with her table leader Katie Krueer during an Alpha Catholic Context session in the gym of the St. Joseph campus of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. (Submitted photo)

because God loves us and wants us to be happy,” said Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis. “We like resources that are clear about the relationship between sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the magisterium. These all have a role to play in ensuring that it’s Jesus we’re encountering and not someone else.

“When Alpha Catholic Context is led by a parish leader well-formed in the faith, it can provide new growth in helping a parish embrace the fullness of the faith.”

After offering several sessions of Alpha since 2019, Stammerman sees it as “very much a Catholic program. It focuses on sharing the Gospel message—that’s what we as Catholics are called to do.”

See **ALPHA**, page 10

Evangelization and catechesis “resonate” in archdiocese’s pastoral plan

By Natalie Hoefer

When Ken Ogorek, director of the archdiocesan Office of Evangelization, looked over the archdiocese’s proposed pastoral plan in March of 2020, he noticed something.

“Of the plan’s numerous action steps for the five main goals, 44 fell under the offices of Evangelization and Catechesis—more than any other archdiocesan office,” he observed.

As executive director of the Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization, Father Patrick Beidelman sees the presence of evangelization and catechesis throughout the pastoral plan as “a sign of its quality, that it’s based on the great commission of Christ—to go out to all nations and share the Good News. Flowing from that commission, evangelization and catechesis are a natural outflow of the call to carry on that mission.

“Because so many action steps are related to evangelization and catechesis, the pastoral plan resonates with the Gospel of Christ.”

Sam Rasp, the new archdiocesan coordinator of evangelization and discipleship, attributed the role of evangelization and catechesis in the plan to their importance “to every aspect of the life of the Church—they’re not just two offices or the people who hold those positions in parishes.”

Ogorek, too, noted that, while evangelization and catechesis are “specific ministries that require focused leadership in their own right, they are related to multiple ministries as well.”

One staff member in the Office of Catechesis had a front-row view to the making of the pastoral plan and the role evangelization and catechesis play in its goals.

“I was on the pastoral planning team on behalf of the disability ministry and the catechesis office,” said Erin Jeffries, coordinator of ministry to persons with special needs. “There was a variety of people and backgrounds on the team—priests, schools, offices here [at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center]. It was really a cross-section of the whole archdiocese.”

The process began in September 2018 with the team reading Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel.”

“That was foundational to our mission statement and goals,” said Jeffries.

“We also reviewed information from the Connected in the Spirit process and pastoral needs assessments from the

deaneries to get a sense of the needs people expressed. People on the team also brought their own needs to the table.

“Evangelization and catechesis really rose to the surface as the needs were discussed. So many of the concerns and needs had to do with parish life, with the decrease in nuns and priests. It was a need seen and very clearly expressed.”

So while action steps in those two areas obviously appeared under the pastoral plan’s goal area of Evangelization and Catechesis, they also appeared in the goals of Prayer and Worship, Stewardship, Family and Community, and Clergy Life and Ministry.

For instance, under the goal area of Family and Community is an objective to “cultivate communities that are centered on invitation and evangelization for people in all phases of life.”

To help carry out this objective, the Office of Catechesis and the Office of Marriage and Family life have an action step to “design and execute a campaign to encourage openness to new life.”

Another example is the goal area of Prayer and Worship, which includes an objective to “cultivate a sense of belonging for all God’s people through liturgical experiences that honor our growing cultural and ethnic diversity.”

Attached to that objective is an action step for the Office of Evangelization and the Office of Communications to “design and execute a campaign to increase Mass attendance percentages.”

Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the number of action steps, the staff members of the offices of Evangelization and Catechesis felt “a spirit of excitement,” said Jeffries.

“It was like, ‘Let’s go! Let’s do this!’ ” she recalled. “It’s been exciting to see our work confirmed, that our work is important, and that people are asking for it as an expressed need.

“It also enforced for us the number of areas in parish life that catechesis and evangelization touch, how many areas we find our name attached to.

“We really love what we do and want to help parishes with evangelization and catechesis, and we’re hopeful [the pastoral plan] will strengthen a lot of areas of parish life.”

Father Beidelman shares Jeffries’ enthusiasm.

“It’s exciting to see in the pastoral plan action steps and initiatives that might light a fire in the hearts of the faithful to share the Good News and to bring Christ’s healing and strength in a time when it’s so desperately needed.” †

Proclaiming the Gospel of Joy: Living Christ's Mission

Pastoral Letter and Plan

ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS
The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

ALPHA

continued from page 9

St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield has also used Alpha Catholic Context for almost 10 sessions since 2018.

“It’s kerygmatic—it’s the basics of Christianity,” said Jeff McQueen, Alpha director at St. Susanna.

Among the weekly themes he listed are such topics as “Who is Jesus?” “Why Did Jesus Die?” “Why and How Should I Read the Bible?” and “Why and How Should I Tell Others About Jesus?”

“Alpha is for everyone from the unchurched to the Catholic not going to Mass to the Catholic in the pew,” McQueen explained.

“I went through a conveyor belt of sacraments,” he admitted. “I was told I had to go to confession, I went to church every day in school, was in fourth grade when I was confirmed. I got married in the Catholic Church.

“But sometimes you don’t get a chance to build a relationship with Jesus. You know *about* him, but you don’t *know* him. People who go through Alpha tell me they feel like they know Jesus.”

Stammerman agrees with the value of Alpha for all, from the unchurched to the active Catholic.

“I’ve been involved in Catholic ministry for 30 years, and I still grew spiritually from Alpha,” she said.

“I would say the people who have gone through it and come back [to serve] on the [Alpha] team, there’s

an energy. The Holy Spirit is alive in the parish—there’s an excitement.”

One component that Stammerman said separates Alpha from other catechetical programs is its formation of leaders.

“When you complete Alpha, you’re invited to come back to serve on the team for the next session. You get to work on a couple of teams, but then you have to move on. We’re always incorporating different teams. So Alpha cultivates more people with different talents and gifts.”

At St. Susanna, said McQueen, “What we really try to do is go from Alpha to connect participants with groups or ministries in the parish, and then they become disciples and go out and make their own disciples.”

Alpha Catholic Context is one of several catechetical programs used at parishes in central and southern Indiana, including Discipleship Quads, small group Bible studies and faith sharing groups, Christ Life and Evangelical Catholic.

“We’ll work with each of the 126 parishes in the archdiocese to see that they have the right fit” when choosing a catechetical program, said Sam Rasp, archdiocesan coordinator of evangelization and discipleship.

Stammerman has already found a way to incorporate the youths of St. John Paul II Parish utilizing Alpha Catholic Context for those preparing for confirmation.

“I’ve been a small group leader for confirmation the last four years,” she said. “This group [using Alpha] shares their faith so differently. Deeper, richer, relevant, meaningful. It’s been a good piece to see.”

Stammerman envisions “lots of ideas for Alpha down the road,” she said. “We definitely want to reach out to the community of Sellersburg. We’re developing a plan to start to go out and invite non-parishioners.

“You can run Alpha in prisons, nursing homes, we could start a group at IU [Indiana University] Southeast. You can have ‘date night’ Alpha—dinner, a movie and time to chat.

“Looking further down the road, we can tie Alpha with the confirmation piece as parents and youth do Alpha together. It can be a shared process where they’re given a tool to talk about it on the ride home. There’s a lot of potential for who we can reach in the future.”

McQueen enthusiastically called Alpha Catholic Context “an excellent tool or an experience for evangelization.

“I think we as Catholics are kind of scared of that word, and I think this is an easy entry into evangelizing, which we’re all called to do. Alpha is a great way to invite people back into the Church.”

(For more information on catechetical tools and what is best for your parish, contact Sam Rasp at 317-236-1466 or srasp@archindy.org.) †

(Editor's note: While teaching and helping others to embrace a deeper appreciation of their Catholic faith, catechists throughout the archdiocese have found their own relationship with God has deepened through the experience. Here are several stories of that transformation.)

'Twice blessed': Couple's love and faith grow in ministry together

By John Shaughnessy

The story of Paul and Jan Johnson is an uplifting one, touched by the love they have for each other, the surprising way they grew in their closeness to God, and their mutual desire to share their faith with others.

The couple met while Paul was serving in the U.S. Army and married a short time later. For Paul, a self-described "cradle Catholic," it was his second marriage, his first one ending in divorce. The early years of his marriage to Jan were also a time in his life when he continued to be away from the Church.

"My wife was non-Catholic but very spiritual," Paul recalls. "After about 13 years of marriage, she told me that she wanted to attend RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes] and maybe become Catholic. I sort of surprised her by telling her that I would go with her and maybe see how I could re-enter the Church."

They went together to RCIA classes at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis, an experience that transformed them individually and as a couple.

"She was confirmed, and I made the necessary steps for annulment of my first marriage," Paul says. "After completing RCIA, Father Rick Ginther [then an associate pastor at Little Flower] asked us to be a part of the RCIA team. We were quite honored and humbled to serve.

"Neither of us realized that we would be involved with this wonderful ministry for more than 10 years. We probably learned more about our faith from the inquirers than we could from books. It was a joy to be with these people at a very important time of their lives."

Moving to the west side of Indianapolis, they became members of St. Christopher Parish. They also began to serve as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion at the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana.

"We conducted a Communion service a couple of times a week," Paul says. "We met people with a lot to share—and received many blessings from this ministry. Of course, this ministry came to an abrupt end with the onset of COVID. We hope someday to resume this ministry."

The Johnsons say they have been "twice blessed" by their work with the RCIA classes and the Communion services. There are also the blessings from their marriage in the Catholic faith.

"We have been married 50 years and in 1988, after receiving my annulment, we were remarried in the Church in a nice ceremony that really began the strengthening of our marriage," Paul says.

"God has been really good to us." †



Jan and Paul Johnson found a deeper connection to each other in helping bring people closer to God. (Submitted photo)

'My heart actually did a dance when I thought about serving the Lord'

By John Shaughnessy

Cathy Andrews wanted to find a new purpose when she retired. She also found a way of life that she considers a treasure.

"When I retired from government service in 2000, I promised the Lord that I would dedicate this time in my life to serving him and my family in whatever way I felt he was calling me," Andrews recalls. "During this initial time of retirement and through his copious graces, my personal relationship with Jesus grew, as did my prayer life, sacramental life and spiritual life."

Still, she wanted to do more to bring others closer to Christ, so five years into her retirement she became the faith formation director for St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford.

"My heart actually did a dance when I thought about serving the Lord in that way," she says. "My 16 years of Catholic school education from first grade through four years of college was finally going to be used as a foundation in my new position as a faith educator. Little did I realize the way my own faith was going to be deepened through that position."

In her new role, she taught the faith to children in different grades of religious education classes while also helping prepare them to receive the sacraments. She also volunteered to help adults learn more about the Catholic faith by leading Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes.

She soon discovered that all her experiences of teaching led to her own lessons in learning.

"The innocent, forthright and heartfelt responses and questions of the children often led me to delve deeper



Cathy Andrews helps prepare children for their first Communion at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford. (Submitted photo)

into my soul to gain a greater appreciation of what I believed and why I believed what I did.

"The questions that were posed by those in RCIA had a depth and at times an incredulity that pushed me to a greater understanding of the *whys* of Church teachings and how they fit into everyday living."

Andrews has savored every question and challenge because of the understanding and joy it has added to her own faith journey.

"My increased understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass and the theology of the sacraments that I gained in this catechetical preparation resulted in a further desire to enhance my relationship with Jesus, to be an authentic witness of the Catholic faith, and to ultimately deepen this treasure that the Lord planted in my heart—my Catholic faith.

"What St. Matthew wrote certainly rang true for me: *'For where your treasure is, that is where your heart shall be'* (Mt 6:21). †

Teacher takes a shared path to help a new generation 'find the love and glory of God'

By John Shaughnessy

As she tries to lead young people closer to God, 26-year-old Alicia Popson has experienced a deep satisfaction in her life.

Her satisfaction comes from a blend of "giving back" and "paying it forward"—all at the same time, and all with the added blessing of knowing that she is helping to guide the young generation of the Church while also showing her appreciation for the teachers who helped to deepen her own relationship with God.

"Teaching is a passion that requires a special kind of heart," Popson says. "I don't say this of myself, but of those who have taught me about faith, love and family. Through their own trials and tribulations, they said yes to a call from God to serve the young Church. These catechists weren't necessarily qualified teachers according to the state, but they were qualified by God to share his word, what it means, and the ways we share that with others—with me. That is truly a special and underappreciated yes."

Popson has paid that gift forward through the years in a number of ways, ranging from being a faith formation catechist in college to her current roles as the coordinator of religious education at St. Mary Parish in Navilleton and as an instructional assistant at St. Mary-of-the Knobs School in Floyd County.

"Some times are harder than others to say yes to these kinds of roles, but I have never once regretted a time that I have taken them on," Popson says.

Her approach to teaching the faith in her classes is making it a shared journey.

"I make it a point to tell students that I don't have all the answers, and that we are exploring God's love together. I truly learn just as much—if not more—about my faith and my relationship with God than the kids in my class because they really make me think.



Alicia Popson enjoys a moment of joy with sixth-grade students Graham Sillings, left, Adilene Torres and Noah Geswein at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County as she helps them prepare for a play. (Submitted photo)

"It's one of the most amazing things to be having a discussion where a student asks a question that I don't know the answer to. Because then I get to say, 'I don't have a good answer for that at this moment. Let's see if we can find the answer together or find someone more knowledgeable to share with us.' They are almost more excited and willing to participate because I make it clear that I am still learning too, and I always will be."

One of the most important lessons she has learned is that when you give back and pay it forward, you get so much more in return.

"I learn more about my faith, how I should live, and how to help the next generation of the Church be prepared for their own call to help a new generation find the love and glory of God." †

EUCHARIST

continued from page 9

She still tries to attend Mass daily as director of religious education at St. Nicholas and at St. Anthony Parish in nearby Morris.

Receiving Communion at those daily Masses is not routine for her.

“I recall that [Christ] has given his life for me and nourishes me,” Jackson said. “It’s a very personal experience for me.

“I don’t know why God is so good to me. I don’t know why he allows me to experience what I experience in the Eucharist.”

That deep love for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is something that she sees in the children that she prepares for their first Communion when they get to their big day.

“It’s just awesome,” Jackson said. “They’re so excited. They’re anticipating it. I wish we could all be like that every single time. It’s precious.”

The presence of a perpetual adoration chapel at St. Nicholas since 2004 has helped Jackson keep the Eucharist at the center of her life of faith.

“My parents had the very first hour that it was open, on Ash Wednesday of 2004,” she said. “It’s reassuring when I walk past there to my office to know someone’s in there praying, worshipping and spending time with the Lord.”

For a while, her office was turned into a kind of adoration chapel. When churches were closed in the spring of 2020 at the start of the coronavirus pandemic,

Teaching the faith leads to forgiveness, peace and a deeper love as a parent

By John Shaughnessy

Gayle Schrank recalls the moment as a defining one in her life and her faith, a moment when God seemed to be challenging her.

“During one particular year, God nudged me to come closer to him on a more personal, more honest level,” Schrank recalls. “I was asked to teach first reconciliation, and I had not gone to reconciliation for some time.

“If I was going to teach this class, I knew I had to practice what I was teaching, so I went to reconciliation. I experienced a newness of forgiveness from God that I did not know was missing.

From teaching about reconciliation, I was able to discover a deeper love and newfound peace.”

Schrank always tried to bring children to that same deeper love of God in her 15 years as a teacher of the faith at St. Mary Parish in Navilleton in southern Indiana. Her efforts as a catechist also had an impact on her faith and her role as a mother.

“I grew up in a Catholic home and attended Catholic schools throughout my elementary and high school years. Yet, I believe it was by teaching the faith that my own faith deepened,” she says. “I discovered the heart of God and learned so much about God through the hearts of those I was teaching. God was instructing me through the children I was instructing.

“In my early years as a catechist, I had three young children of my own. I recall feeling very grateful. God was preparing me. He knew I was going to need help as a parent. Our lives are in a way our classroom, and God was equipping me. He was helping me know him better, so I could live my life and my faith more intentionally at home.”

Those connections have continued to deepen in her present position as the pastoral associate of St. Mary Parish.

“Through my years as a catechist, and now through my work as pastoral associate, I am continually inspired,” she says. “I have seen so many people give so much of themselves, and I have a better understanding how each of us is a part of the body of Christ, and how each part is equally important.

“I am so thankful for the opportunity to teach about our Catholic faith. Through helping others on their faith journey, I have become increasingly aware of how God continually offers himself to me—through his Word, through the sacraments and through each person I get to walk with. Teaching the faith has been a blessing in my life.” †



Gayle Schrank

Father Shaun Whittington, St. Nicholas’ pastor, placed a tabernacle by a window in Jackson’s office facing a parish parking lot.

“People would stay in their cars and adore,” she said.

While the Eucharist has been the summit of the life of St. Nicholas Parish for a long time, Jackson also sees it as a great source of the ministry of the relatively small faith community of 447 households.

“For the size of our parish, we have a huge amount of ministries,” she said. “I think it comes from the life that they’ve gained from the Eucharist. That’s the source.”

‘One-on-one time with our Lord’

Jared Wuerzburger has a similar personal connection to the Eucharist as the source and summit of his faith—a connection he tries to nurture in the students of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College where he serves as campus minister and an associate professor of information technology.

That connection was deepened for him during the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020 when he was serving as the director of religious education at St. Patrick and St. Margaret Mary parishes, both in Terre Haute.

The parishes’ pastor at the time, Father Daniel Bedel, would livestream Mass daily since churches were closed and the public celebration of the sacraments was suspended.

Wuerzburger, who also oversaw technology for the parishes, was present at the Masses to operate a camera and make sure the livestream worked.

“It’s easy for everyone to go through the motions at Mass,” he said. “But when it’s just you and the priest there, you have to be the congregation. You are the people of God. You have to step up to the plate, respond with the responses. There’s no taking a back seat.

“The encounter with Christ was deeply personal. It was literally one-on-one.”

That experience also led him to examine his faith and the role the Eucharist played in it.

“It challenged me,” Wuerzburger recalled. “My ministry can only be effective if Christ is the source of my life. I can’t think of a more holistic way of doing that than through the Eucharist.”

Now he has the joy of leading college students to a similar one-on-one encounter with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Many of them travel from their college campus west of Terre Haute to St. Patrick’s perpetual adoration chapel.

A monthly night of Mass, adoration, praise and worship and Benediction is starting this fall on campus.

“The students are drawn to the Eucharist,” Wuerzburger said. “They see it as one-on-one time with our Lord and Savior. They don’t see it as abstract. They see it as a personal invitation, a personal communion in every sense of the word.”

This relationship of prayer with Christ that the students are entering into in the summit of the Christian life flows forth from that source in their daily life, according to Wuerzburger.

“The people that I see that are most confident in their God-given gifts and in the mission that Christ is setting out for them in their lives are the people who are spending time in prayer and in adoration of our Blessed Lord,” he said.

‘Eternal implications’

Dominican Father Patrick Hyde and the young adults and other Dominican priests who minister at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington know this from their daily experience.

These people start their day Monday through Friday with a holy hour. Two Masses are celebrated daily in addition to more on Saturday evenings and Sundays. And there are other times of eucharistic adoration at St. Paul each week.

“We want to make sure that that our ministry radiates from the love that we get from Christ that is especially present in the Blessed Sacrament,”

said Father Patrick, pastor of St. Paul. “We want to make sure that there’s ample opportunity every day for people to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, either in adoration or in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.”

Father Patrick noted that the Mass by itself “isn’t always a great evangelizing tool” for many college students who are either away from the Catholic faith or have little faith at all. That’s because the rituals that make up the Mass might be foreign to them.

But what Christ is doing through the Eucharist is something that answers the deep desires of all these young adults.

“God in the Eucharist is not only the answer to all of your problems, but he literally wants to give himself and be wholly united to you,” Father Patrick said. “And his way of doing that is so humble that you can receive him and be raised up.”

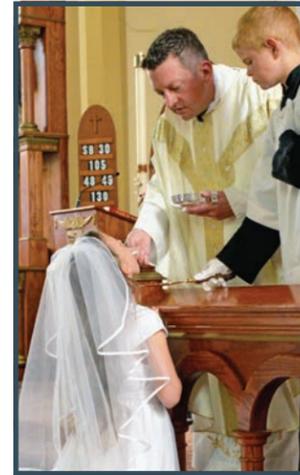
Father Patrick has found that this reality is attractive to the young adults he meets at Indiana University.

“When we can get people to really understand the fullness of the Eucharist and that the Church possesses the ability to make Jesus present in the Eucharist, that opens them up to the fullness of the Church,” he said. “They’re attracted to the Eucharist. They understand that value.”

Father Patrick has also seen how the Christian life flows from the source found in the Eucharist through young adults when they encounter Christ there.

“Any time we put the Eucharist at the center of our lives, all of a sudden everything I do has eternal implications, because it affects my participation in the Eucharist,” he said. “All of a sudden, that poor person by the side of the street who’s asking for food is no longer an inconvenience but is Jesus.”

“I’ve encountered Jesus [in the Eucharist] and now I can see him in every aspect of the world, not just the ones that are comfortable or convenient for me, that fit into my pre-conceived ideologies and notions.” †



Mary Yunger receives her first Communion on May 2 from Father Shaun Whittington at St. Nicholas Church in Ripley County. Assisting Father Whittington, St. Nicholas’ pastor, is altar server Lucas Ludwig.

(Submitted photo)

Faith leader shares the love of sports to help parents deepen their appreciation of a child’s baptism

By John Shaughnessy

Tom Yost considers it as one of the great privileges and passions of his life.

For most of his 39 years in ministry, Yost has led a class for parents whose first child is being baptized in the Catholic faith.



Tom Yost

While trying to lead others to a better understanding of one of the foundations of their faith, he has continued to have his own faith deepened.

“I have never lost my passion or enthusiasm of sharing what the sacrament of baptism means to me and could mean for them and their child or children,” says Yost, the pastoral associate of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany.

As part of his efforts, Yost constantly searches for connections of the sacrament to other parts of life. One of his favorite ones involves the world of sports.

“My vision—and question—is this: Is it possible that a baptized Christian can have the same kind of relationship and enthusiasm for Jesus Christ and the Church that the biggest fan has with his/her sport and team?”

In his conversations with parents, Yost tells them that baptism has two purposes—salvation and initiation. Most people understand salvation and God’s offer of it in the sacrament, but many parents struggle with the concept of initiation, Yost says. That’s where he introduces the connection to sports.

“I describe initiation in this way: Initiation is *identifying* with something or someone. It is *belonging* to something or someone. And it is *becoming* like something or someone. For the baptized Christian, the *something* is the Church and the *someone* is Jesus Christ. I believe sports offer one of the best examples of how people are initiated in our culture, and I illustrate this in my baptism class.

“Most people are *invested* fans of a sport and a sports team. If not, they usually know someone who is. An *invested—initiated—fan* is one who *identifies* with their team. They know the history, the players and the coaches. They follow their team through all kinds of media in and out of season.”

Even more, Yost stresses in his classes, “an *invested fan* is one who *belongs* to their team.”

“They will never give up on or change their team. An *invested fan becomes* like their team. They wear team apparel and watch or attend all the games. They introduce family and friends to their team, hoping they will join in their love and excitement.”

Yost experiences that love, excitement and investment in his faith.

“Hosting these baptism classes through the years has deepened my own appreciation of the potential and power of initiation in my faith life. I have come to realize all the Bible studies in the world will not likely deepen my faith if I am not invested in or have a relationship with the word of God.

“Christian initiation has taught me that my attachment to God is infinitely more joyful than my attachment to my beloved Boston Red Sox major league baseball team.” †

Revival in U.S. meant to renew Catholics' devotion to the Eucharist

By Sean Gallagher

While the Eucharist has always been at the heart of the life of the Church, that heart has undergone some trauma in the Church in the U.S. in recent years.

Sunday Mass attendance has declined. Polling data suggests a drop off in the number of Catholics who believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. And there was the closing of churches and the public suspension of the celebration of the sacraments, including the Mass, during the first part of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020.

These and other reasons are why the bishops in the U.S. launched earlier this year what they describe as a three-year "National Eucharistic Revival" that will begin on the feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord (*Corpus Christi*) in 2022.

The initiative, which will involve events at the local, regional and national levels, is called "Eucharistic Revival: My Flesh for the Life of the World."

The U.S. bishops' evangelization and catechesis committee is overseeing the revival. Its chairman, Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens, an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in Minnesota, recently spoke with *The Criterion* about the initiative aimed at renewing the Eucharist as the heart of the Church in the U.S.

He likened the revival to international eucharistic congresses that have been held usually every four years since 1881 to revive devotion to the Eucharist in Catholics around the world.

"This means that the pope and the Church believe a eucharistic congress or revival can affect a person, group, parish, diocese, country and yes, even the world in profound way," Bishop Cozzens said. "If we truly knew who waits for us, who searches for us, we would visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament frequently, attend Mass as often as we could—relishing every moment with him."

The following is an edited version of the interview with Bishop Cozzens.

Q. How do you see the upcoming eucharistic revival in the U.S. as a way to enliven the faithful's understanding of and devotion to the Eucharist?

A. "As more people are invited into a deeper dialogue about Jesus in the Eucharist, our hope is that more people choose to remain with him.

"With the support of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, dioceses and parishes will be invited to have eucharistic processions, and choose a team to form and train parish

revival leaders. There will be many opportunities to guide small groups, movements, parishes, dioceses and the nation to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist.

"But we don't have to wait for *Corpus Christi* 2022 to begin. Any priest or parish leader can begin cultivating opportunities to deepen the awareness of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist today.

"Ultimately, the desire is for the movement to reach the most basic unit: the family and every individual person. As each of us, from greatest to least, reflect on the Real Presence, it will foster a ripple effect. A catechist can invite someone to encounter our Lord; a family member can lead someone to encounter Jesus. Even a very small child can bring her parents back to the Eucharist. It an opportunity for all of us; let us not miss it."

Q. Are there trends in our culture and society that make this an opportune time to have this eucharistic revival? How might it help Catholics in the U.S. to be better equipped to renew their own faith and share the Gospel with others in this particular cultural climate?

A. "The 2019 Pew Study was a call to mission for the bishops of the United States. [It showed that a majority of Catholics in the U.S. didn't believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.]

"It led to some soul searching and a desire to respond. My predecessor chairing the Catechesis and Evangelization Committee, Bishop Robert [E.] Barron, looked for ways to deepen the dialogue with all, practicing and non-practicing. Then came the pandemic and churches were closed and communities in general stopped meeting in person.

"Parish communities were very fractured and fragmented. This led to many people hearing about making a spiritual communion for the first time. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Yet, for many this was a consolation, not a replacement of receiving the Eucharist at Mass.

"When churches reopened, some people started coming back, and now we are ready and eager to engage the people who come to Mass daily, weekly or perhaps who still participate virtually to come to a deeper awareness of what the Church teaches about Communion. It is not an 'it' in holy Communion. It is a real person: Jesus Christ.

"One of the great goals and desires of the National Eucharistic Revival is to commission 100,000 Eucharistic



Auxiliary Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in Minnesota carries the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance during a eucharistic procession on June 19. Bishop Cozzens is leading the planning of a national eucharistic revival for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. (CNS photo/Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*)

Missionaries at a national event in 2024. These men and women will be sent forth to continue the movement in parishes, the Church and society at large. They will help those who are currently attending Mass frequently to deepen their faith, as well as reach those on the margins who are far from Christ. We also want to hold a special place for the family in all of this."

Q. What hopes do you have about how the eucharistic revival will affect Catholics and the Church as a whole in the U.S. once it has come to its completion in 2024?

A. "My hope is that we are able to cultivate a movement that goes far beyond these three initial years, prompting a new springtime in the Church, which Pope St. John Paul II referred to so prophetically.

"The way this mission will become a movement is by focusing in a way very much resonant with the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II, as well as with our Holy Father, Pope Francis—by focusing on each person, meeting him where he is at, helping him take the next best step toward Jesus in the Eucharist.

"For some, this will be a rediscovery of what she learned 40 years ago at her first holy Communion, for others it will be an epiphany moment: the Eucharist is really Jesus!

"John chapter 6 has both human and divine examples of how Jesus engages his believers on this topic. Eucharistic miracles show how Jesus has engaged the world for the last 1,100 years.

"If someone has never googled or studied the eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, Italy, that is a must. Your heart and mind need this information. The beautiful thing about Lanciano and many of the other eucharistic miracles is that there is scientific evidence to support what our faith reveals to us.

"Faith and reason always lead us to the good, the true and the beautiful. In all religions and faith backgrounds, the deity is able to feed their believers. Jesus is the only one who not only feeds his followers but becomes food for them, that I know.

"We are commissioning a study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate to get current data on what Catholics believe about the Eucharist today, and the plan is to commission another study at the conclusion of the three years to have some measurable data.

"But ultimately, this is not a program we are promoting, it is a movement we are cultivating. We hope to see the fruits of the movement for years to come. We are also engaging marketing experts to help us determine the best way to share this incredible news: God leaves his throne in heaven



Auxiliary Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in Minnesota celebrates a Mass on May 8 at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul, Minn. As chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, he is overseeing a national eucharistic revival to begin in 2022. (CNS photo/Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*)

to take his place in a host and wait for you and I to give him a place, hopefully a throne, in our hearts."

Q. What response have you seen thus far to the announcement about the eucharistic revival? How can Catholics assist in making it a success?

A. "There is so much excitement and energy about this initiative. Every day, we get calls or messages from people who want to be a part of this.

"I encourage your readers to consider how they can participate in this revival. For some, it is through offering a holy hour for the initiative and interceding. For others, it is speaking to their pastor or bishop about how they can help.

"Some parts of this initiative will be new, but others are a call to enter into the mysteries of our salvation in a renewed, deeper way. How can we prepare to attend Mass and recognize our Lord in the host? It would be great if in every Catholic parish, school or entity, there is a person who makes it part of their role to bring this good news to their communities:

"Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, body and blood, soul and divinity. We need you; Jesus needs you. The Lord transformed the world with the Apostles. If all faithful Catholics give their heart to this initiative, the potential is incredible.

"Will you become a eucharistic missionary not to the world or diocese, but to your family, neighborhood or parish?" †



Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, distributes Communion to Anne Bauer during a Jan. 30 dedication Mass at the Indianapolis East Deanery church. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)