Advocates for Indiana’s poorest families seek updated support

By Victoria Arthur

Life has changed dramatically since 1988, when the internet was still in development, the average rent was $420 per month and gas cost 96 cents a gallon. But one thing remains frozen in time: the monthly payout that Hoosier families in deep poverty receive to help them temporarily in the most dire circumstances. That amount was set at $288 then by state law, and so it remains 33 years later.

Indiana lawmakers and advocates for the poor—including the Catholic Church—are once again aiming to change this reality.

Sen. Jon Ford (R-Terre Haute) is leading the charge to modernize the state’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which is funded by a block grant from the federal government. Only a fraction of the poorest families in Indiana currently receive even those modest cash benefits from the federal program because of outdated eligibility guidelines—another issue that Senate Bill 233 is designed to address.

The bill passed out of the Indiana Senate by a 43-5 vote on Feb. 1, and now heads to the House for consideration.

“This is money that families depend on for survival,” said Ford, the primary author of the proposed legislation. “But right now only six in 100 families in poverty are being helped by this program.”

The primary reason is that Indiana’s eligibility level for TANF is the fourth-lowest in the United States, behind Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama. During a Jan. 25 hearing before the Senate Family and Children’s Services Committee, Ford pointed out that to be eligible for TANF, the maximum income of a Hoosier family must be less than 17 percent of the federal poverty level.

“The poverty level for a family of three is around $20,000,” Ford said. “So what a family in the state of Indiana has to meet

See MOTHER, page 8

The fullness of knowing and loving someone

Young mother experiences joy and love in her journey to a deeper relationship with God

(Editor’s note: In this series, The Criterion is featuring young adults who have found a home in the Church and strive to live their faith in their everyday life.)

By John Shaughnessy

Rebecca Kovert flashes a radiant smile when she talks about her nearly 2-year-old daughter Avila.

And her smile continues to beam when she discusses her relationship with Jesus.

“Our life is there except that? And everything flows from that, and through that, and in that, and for that.”

There’s also an undeniable joy in her voice as she talks about her efforts to help other young adults deepen their faith for the

See MOTHER, page 8

March is small, but group’s ‘message of solidarity’ with unborn is as strong as ever

WASHINGTON (CNS)—It was the coldest national March for Life in some years, it was the smallest, and it also may be remembered as the bravest.

A little more than 200 people, tightly flanked by members of the Knights of Columbus, endured subfreezing temperatures and wind as they sang hymns and trudged a zigzag route with Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund, from the Museum of the Bible to the Supreme Court on Jan. 29.

This year’s theme was “Together Strong: Life Unites.” Mancini acknowledged “that we’re all symbolically marching, and we’re all in solidarity with each other.”

See MARCH, page 16

A March for Life participant demonstrates near Union Station in Washington on Jan. 29 amid the coronavirus pandemic. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)
Archbishop, priests to offer Stations of the Cross reflection podcasts during Lent this year

By Natalie Hofer

To help members of the archdiocese still struggling with feeling isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the archdiocese is offering a series of Stations of the Cross podcasts this Lent. Each of the 28 episodes—14 in English (also made available in American Sign Language via separate videos) and 14 in Spanish—will include a scriptural reflection focusing on Jesus’ walk to the cross, as well as an idea for fasting, almsgiving and works of mercy.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and more than 20 priests throughout the archdiocese will host the approximately 5-10-minute podcasts. (See related article for podcast schedule.)

“The Stations of the Cross, for many Catholics, are one of the most familiar prayer practices of Lent,” explained Laura Sheehan, project coordinator for the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities-Social Concerns office. She is one of four staff members on the archdiocese’s COVID-19 Pastoral Response Team that developed and coordinated the podcast project.

“Many do not yet feel comfortable or are not able to return to the physical sacred spaces of our churches where we normally have encountered the Lord during Lent through such practices as the Stations of the Cross,” she said.

The stations will be based on those prayed by St. John Paul II on Good Friday in 1991. “They’re Scripture-based, so slightly different from the ones that are hanging in our churches,” said fellow team member Theresa Chamblie, director of Catholic Charities-Social Concerns.

“The hope is that, by listening to reflections by our archdiocesan priests, in some small way they will feel more connected spiritually with their archdiocesan community,” Archbishop Thompson shares her hope.

“The Stations of the Cross, in some way, are akin to the Franciscan spirit that first brought the Stations of Cross to those who could not make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to retrace the footsteps of Jesus’ passion and death,” he said.

Since our ability to gather has been greatly compromised by the limitations involving the pandemic, the podcasts are a creative means to bring the Stations of the Cross to those who cannot otherwise gather together.

“They are yet another example of the creativity and talent that exists in the archdiocese to provide ongoing pastoral and spiritual outreach to the people of God throughout central and southern Indiana.”

Father Timothy DeCrane, associate pastor of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, will also host an episode.

“I think last year with Lent, we had a very real opportunity to know what suffering really meant and focus on God when things are out of our control,” he said.

“We’re still in the pandemic and will be in Lent. But it’s not new anymore, so there’s less of a desire to offer up the challenges of mask-wearing, social distancing and, for some, continuing confinement.

“The podcasts are a good way to look at the Stations of the Cross and realign Christ bore all those things patiently, and reflect on how we continue to deal with challenges in our lives.”

The advantage to using a podcast format is that “podcasts can be listened to anywhere through our smart devices or home computers,” Chamblie explained. “People can listen to them on their commute to work or at home. They can listen to them during their prayer time or while getting ready in the morning.

“Our hope is that the podcasts will provide a powerful Lenten prayer experience for the listener, that through each podcast, people will develop a deeper relationship with Christ by reflecting on his Passion.”

The archdiocese is offering podcasts this Lent reflecting on a Scripture-based Stations of the Cross, as prayed by St. John Paul II on Good Friday 1991.

The 28 podcasts—14 in English (with separate American Sign Language videos available) and 14 in Spanish, each about 5-10 minutes—will be available by 6 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays at www.archindy.org/Lent2021 and on Soundcloud, Spotify and Apple podcasts.

They will be hosted by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and more than 20 priests throughout central and southern Indiana.

Following is a schedule of the podcasts, as well as who will offer each episode and in what language.

—Feb. 16, Station 1: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Father Eric Johnson (English), Father John McCasin (Spanish).

—Feb. 17, Station 2: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested. Father Douglas Hunter (English), Conventional Franciscan Father Mark Weaver (Spanish).

—Feb. 23, Station 3: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin. Father Christopher Wadelton (English and Spanish).

—Feb. 25, Station 4: Jesus is Denied by Peter. Father Rick Nagel (English), Father Nicholas Apjaca Tzoc (Spanish).

—March 2, Station 5: Jesus is Judged by Pilate. Father Michael Keucher (English and Spanish).

—March 4, Station 6: Jesus is scourged and Crowned with Thorns. Archbishop Thompson (English and Spanish).

—March 9, Station 7: Jesus Bears the Cross. Father Jude Christ Mer Followahay (English), Father Vincent Gillmore (Spanish).

—March 11, Station 8: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross. Father Jeremy Gries (English), Spanish—TBD.

—March 16, Station 9: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem. Father Dustin Boehm (English), Spanish—TBD.

—March 18, Station 10: Jesus is Crucified. Father Todd Goodon (English and Spanish).

—March 23, Station 11: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief. Father Douglas Marchette (English), Father Timothy DeCrane (Spanish).

—March 25, Station 12: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and Disciple. Father Jeffrey Dufrnese (English and Spanish).

—March 30, Station 13: Jesus Dies on the Cross. Father Jonathan Meyer (English), Father Anthony Hollowell (Spanish).

—April 1, Station 14: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb. English—TBD, Father Michael O’Mara (Spanish).
Pro-life witness is rooted in the Eucharist, Archbishop Lori says

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The witness of the pro-life movement is rooted in the Eucharist, said Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore.

“The Eucharist unites us and strengthens us in our efforts to secure justice for the unborn, and to create a culture wherein every human life is cherished, nurtured and protected from the moment of conception until natural death,” said Archbishop Lori, chairman-elect of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

“All these extraordinary efforts, in the midst of this pandemic, testify to the importance of anchoring our pro-life mission in the Eucharist,” Archbishop Lori said in his homily at the Jan. 29 closing Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

Eucharistic adoration followed by the celebration of Holy Mass is like a school that forms and equips us to place our humanity at the service of the least of these, the tiniest human beings and the most vulnerable of all,” the archbishop said.

In his homily, Archbishop Lori brought the words of St. Paul to “have no anxiety” into topical focus.

“We might be tempted to say, ‘St. Paul, are you kidding? Have you seen the executive order rescinding the Mexico City policy? Do you know that the cancel culture portrays pro-life advocacy as hate speech?’” he said.

“Friends, I suggest that we give St. Paul more credit than that,” Archbishop Lori added. “His encouragement should be ringing in our ears as we march for life—if only virtually.”

Anxiety, he said, “betokens a lack of trust in the Lord and his providential care.”

“Anxiety incites us to engage in behaviors counterproductive to the cause of life, and, worst of all, it hinders us from discerning the Lord’s will amid the challenges we face.”

God has not abandoned anyone, Archbishop Lori said, but “remains with us, most especially in the Eucharist, and he continues to exercise the power of his love in our midst to this very day. That very fact should not only console us, but also embolden us to pray and work for the cause of life perhaps as never before.”

The Roman Empire of Paul’s time was “right in the midst of a culture filled with idols and decadent living,” but contained “signs and indicators of God’s own truth and love,” Archbishop Lori said. “Similar signs and indicators of God’s truth and love exist in our culture.”

He added, “Our culture gives a lot of credibility to science. Well, science attests to the humanity of the unborn child, psychology attests to the interior pain often associated with procured abortions, while almost everyone has a soft spot in their hearts for a newborn child.”

Reflecting on the Gospel passage from John 14, Archbishop Lori said, “Make no mistake: We do not manufacture the peace of Christ… The world says ‘peace’ is not a mere good feeling, but is rather the amazing experience of a love that is stronger than sin and death.”

“Our mission,” he said, “is not to preach to ourselves, but to connect with and speak persuasively to those who have not yet understood the truth, justice, and love of our cause.”

“Our mission is to reach those who are searching, because at some level, they understand the stunningly beautiful truth about the inviolable dignity of each human being.”

At vigil Mass, archbishop criticizes Biden, hopes for change from courts

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The head of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities criticized President Joe Biden’s stance on abortion “religiously and ethically inconsistent” during his homily at the opening Mass of the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life Jan. 28.

“I take this opportunity proudly to profess to be a devout Catholic even as he promises to codify Roe v. Wade, seeks to force American taxpayers to fund abortions and desires to force the Little Sisters of the Poor to provide contraceptives and abortifacients in their employee health plans,” said Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan.

“Sadly, President Biden is the perfect example of the religiously and ethically incoherent straddle: claiming to believe that human life begins at conception and personally opposing abortion, while doing everything within his power to promote and institutionalize abortion not only in the U.S.A., but also around the world.”

He added, “The people of the United States have entrusted enormous power and responsibility to President Biden. However, the presidency does not empower him to define Catholic doctrine and morals.”

Archbishop Naumann made his remarks in a startlingly empty Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington as coronavirus restrictions capped the number of those in attendance at 250.

“What’s more, March for Life organizers, because of the pandemic and security issues arising from the rioting at the Capitol three weeks earlier, decided on an all-virtual march, except for a small contingent of pro-life leaders making speeches on the National Mall, followed by a walk up to the U.S. Supreme Court on Jan. 29.”

Archbishop Naumann called the seating of Amy Coney Barrett on the Supreme Court “one of the unanticipated blessings of the past year.”

“The makeup of the court has vastly improved in the last four years,” he added. “There is legitimate hope that the U.S. Supreme Court could modify or even reverse the decisions that we commemorate each year,” a reference to the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions in 1973 that legalized abortion throughout the country.

As Barrett noted during her confirmation hearings, Archbishop Naumann said, “the Roe and Doe decisions are far from having the features of settled law as evidenced by the many statutes passed in state legislatures annually testing and challenging the assumptions of Roe and Doe.”

He offered a refutation of the notion held by some Christians that the Bible is “silent on the morality of the issue.”

“What these Christians ignore is how frequently the Scriptures speak about the wonder, awe and beauty of life in the womb. The Bible speaks of children as a blessing. In fact, fruitfulness is recognized as a great gift from God.”

As Christians, We Are Called to Do the Same.

Sharing our gifts with others helps them to know that God does exist in their lives. We are living examples of Jesus by the way we practice and live out our faith!

Help others experience the love of Jesus today by making a gift to the United Catholic Appeal. 100% of your gift goes directly to fund many wonderful ministries that bring hope to others. Make your gift securely online at www.archindy.org/UCA.
Abortions ... and desires to force the Roe v. Wade National Prayer Vigil for Life on Jan. 28 at homily at the opening Mass of the annual and ethically incoherent” during his head of the U.S. bishop’s Committee on our country. challenges have taken on new meaning to convert those hardened hearts that plant seeds of wisdom and understanding for life, be voices for the voiceless, and including in Indianapolis—was down gatherings throughout the U.S.— prayer rallies, and taking part in scaled-created in the image and likeness of God. live the lives God had planned for them. Little ones who never had a chance to insist that doing this is OK, that we’re children’s lives taken from the womb by natural death. committed to the tenet of our Catholic our country. It has been 48 years since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in our country. And that day—Jan. 22, 1973—will But our work must not end there. We must continue our mission of educating those who think abortion is OK, helping them better understand how precious each and every unborn life is. We are, after all, our brothers’ and sisters’ march on Jan. 29, prayer and stand up for life. The virtual rally to the annual March for Life on Jan. 29, speakers used YouTube and other social media platforms to encourage young people from across the country to rally, pray and stand up for life. The virtual rally and Mass were celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington. The youth rally prior to the liturgy focused on training young people how to engage in civil dialogue and pro-life apologetics. Josh Brahm, president and co-founder of Equal Rights Institute—a national organization training pro-life advocates to think, reason and argue persuasively—urged young people “to utilize practical dialogue,” when speaking of the pro-life movement. In a series of videos, he taught “three essential skills” for presenting a pro-life argument: asking clarification questions then responding with your own thoughts; listening to understand and finding genuine common ground when possible; and making a compelling argument for the rights of the unborn. It is advice we can all use in our pro-life efforts. As we continue this mission, may we ... help overcome the darkness of abortion. Vatican official: Vaccines are safe People can be confident that the approved COVID-19 vaccines are safe and ethical and that receiving the vaccine is an expression of solidarity and our responsibility to work for the common good. The worldwide commitment of many scientists and public and private institutions, the availability of scientific knowledge in the virological and oncological fields, the relevant funding and the resources of certain bureaucratic steps all have made it possible to have tested vaccines in a few months, vaccines that are safe and approved by the competent authorities. Real protection By vaccinating a large number of people now, it will be possible to offer real protection while subsequently studying the duration of immunity to define future protocols more accurately. This whole process has been the subject of ethical reflection, including by the Catholic Church, considering the entire “life cycle” of the vaccine from its production to its approval, through to its distribution and administration. Ethical criteria for priority As noted in the COVID-19 Vatican Commission, “Vaccine for All: 20 Points for a Fairer and Healthier World,” was published on Dec. 29, 2020, in cooperation with the Pontifical Academy for Life. As the title states, it is essential and urgent that approved vaccines are made available in every part of the world, including in the poorest and most remote areas. It is also necessary to define the priorities for administering the vaccine. There is a general agreement in many countries to start with medical staff and health care operators and nursing homes for the elderly, and then proceed with other subjects engaged in essential public services (law enforcement, schools) and with more vulnerable and fragile groups of people. It is necessary to define ethical and organizational criteria, with actions at an international and local level to facilitate universal access to vaccines, avoiding a situation in which the richer countries create a sort of reserve of large quantities of vaccines, leaving poor countries with fewer and later vaccination possibilities. This is a commitment that fits into the perspective of the Pope Francis’ encyclical “Fratelli Tutti: fraternity and Social Friendship.”

What to do as a Church On a personal level, as individual believers and as Christian communities, to get vaccinated can be a moral responsibility to protect one’s health and that of others, especially those unable to do so due to the presence of other pathologies, and to help achieve a sufficient “herd immunity” to safeguard all subjects. It should be recalled also that falling ill with COVID-19 leads to an increase in hospital admissions with the consequent overloading—and even possible collapse—of health care systems, hindering access to health facilities for other patients with often equally or more serious conditions. There is a responsibility to practice real solidarity, in the light of that “we” on which Pope Francis strongly insists, because by vaccinating we save ourselves together. The relationship between personal health and public health creates an interdependence and a deep bond that must be taken care of by all of us. The duty to get correct information Curing for oneself and for others is a moral commitment, which Pope Francis said, “Everyone must take the vaccine.” On the other hand, it is also important to inquire, possibly by talking to your doctor, resolving doubts and overcoming unjustified prejudices and fears. An atmosphere of trust in scientists and doctors and an attitude of participation and hope would help to practically express that solidarity that will help all of us to come out of the pandemic together soon.

(Mgr. Renzo Pegoraro is chancellor of the Pontifical Academy for Life.)
Las Escrituras nos recuerdan que el Señor sana nuestros quebrantos

“¿Cuándo me levantaré?” Pero la historia sigue, y estoy dando vueltas continuamente hasta el amanecer. [...] Mis días pasan más velozes que la lanza. y, llegan a un fin sin esperanza. Recuerda, oh Dios, que mi vida es un soplo, mis ojos no volverán a ver el bien” (Ps 1:6-7). [...

Recemos para que la gracia de Dios nos dé la bendición que buscamos y nos dé la paz que tanto anhela. Amen.
February 9
Monthly Virtual Taizé Prayer Service: 7 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Link: TaizéSisters@Adrianosf.org.
Information: 317-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

February 11
Sisters of Providence White Violet Center for Education and Justice Virtual Workshop: Baking Sourdough Bread. Via Zoom: 6:30-8:30 p.m., $15 includes instruction materials and sourdough bread starter, register by Feb. 4. Registration and information: 317-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class, “Responsibility and Blame Game,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelthirdoption.org/web then click on link at top of page.

February 18
St. Joseph Church, 1401 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, intervening 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 Harretriek Road, Indianapolis. Monthly Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8899 or www.carthelocatholics.org.

The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class, “Understanding Expectations,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelthirdoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirdoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingdomt aiacint.com or 317-324-8446.

February 27
Sisters of Providence White Violet Center “Virtual Alpaca Encounter,” via Zoom, 10-11 a.m., $15 plus optional $10 per alpaca ornament festiNget kit, register by Feb. 19. Registration and information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/event.

Annual Shave and Hope John Virtual Auction Dinner, benefitting Prince of Peace schools in Madison, two raffles, prizes up to $10,000, 200 raffle tickets at $20 each. To buy tickets, donate items or sponsor event: 812-273-5835 ext. 246, or 812-801-1660. raffle information link: gogo-gig.com/dk/opinkoparty21.

March 3
MCU Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. First Friday Mass, 5 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317- 796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

March 4
The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class, “Re-Defining Power Structure,” 7-8 p.m., Thursdays bi-weekly through May 20, viewing all sessions recommended but not required, no registration needed, free. Log on: carmelthirdoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirdoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingdomt aiacint.com or 317-324-8446.

March 6
John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. First Saturday Marian Devotion, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer, 8:30 a.m. Mass with simple music, silence. Link: carmelthirdoption.org/web then click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirdoption.org/web, or Keith Ingram, kingdomt aiacint.com or 317-324-8446.

The Dominican Sisters, Adrian, Mich., offer ‘Zoom and See’ weekend
The Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Mich., will host a virtual “Zoom and See” weekend for single Catholic women ages 19-35 seeking to discern their call in life on Feb. 12-13.

The weekend is a virtual opportunity to spend time spend with the Adrian Dominican Sisters and with other young Catholic women discerning their future.

On Feb. 18, licensed foster parents will discuss “Supporting Kids and Families in Our Community.” They will share why they chose to become involved in supporting children and families, and explain how others can volunteer.
On Feb. 25, the topic “Current Trends and What’s Next?” will be addressed by archdiocesan Refugee and Immigration Services policy advisor Laura McCarter and an immigration attorney. They will discuss current policies and how individuals can advocate for future needs.
The webinars are free, but to register, go to www.adrianophn.org/events.
For more information, contact Simona Reising at tdeyonker@adriandominicans.org or 317-920-1395.

Webinars on unaccompanied children available on Thursdays in February
The archdiocesan Catholic Charities- Social Concerns office is offering a series of three separate webinars on unaccompanied immigrant children called “Family Changes Everything” from noon-1 p.m. on Feb. 11, 18 and 25.
There is no cost to join the webinars. The Feb. 11 program is “Linked: Connected and Safe: How the Need is Being Met.” The discussion will address the life of an unaccompanied child, share how they are being helped by the archdiocesan Refugee and Immigration Services and Indianapolis-based Christian Bethel, and how individuals can help in meeting the needs of such children. Several experts will speak, including Heidi Smith, archdiocesan director of Refugee and Immigrant Services, and Bruce Garrison presenting.
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Pope meets with head of World Food Program, which has been flagging crises

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis on Jan. 27 met with David M. Beasley, the executive director of the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.

Headquartered in Rome, the WFP is the world’s largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.

The private papal audience was held in the apostolic library at the Vatican, and the Vatican provided photographs, but no other details.

The WFP, however, released a statement saying it was a 40-minute meeting during which Beasley “voiced specific fears about famine looming in several countries at the same time as COVID-19 is ravaging communities around the globe.”

The statement, released on Jan. 28, said, “Beasley also briefed Pope Francis on his appeal to billionaires who have become wealthy during the COVID-19 pandemic to step up and fund efforts to become wealthier during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Speaking to the gathering virtually on Jan. 27, Beasley said the COVID-19 pandemic showed how important it was to bolster vulnerable supply chains to poor countries that have been unable to get food to their people, according to the Associated Press.

“If you think you’ve had trouble getting toilet paper in New York because of supply chain disruption, what do you think’s happening in Chad and Niger and Mali and places like that?” he said in his talk.

The global food supply system does work, but the pandemic has worsened weaknesses, he said. Beasley noted 10% of the world’s population experiences extreme poverty, and they need to be proactively reached out to by suppliers.

“With 270 million people on the brink of starvation, if we don’t receive the support and the funds that we need, you will have mass famine, starvation, you’ll have destabilization of nations and you’ll have mass migration. And the cost of that is a thousand times more,” he said, according to the AP.

The same day Beasley met with the pope, the WFP issued a joint press release with UNICEF warning that millions of children have missed out on more than $39 billion meals at school since the start of the pandemic.

They called for greater support for governments so they could reopen schools safely and get school feeding programs going again to avert a “nutrition crisis.”

School meals, the joint press release stated, are “often the one nutritious daily meal that children get,” and they “must be prioritized in school reopening plans” that include infection prevention measures like clean water and soap in every school.

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The WFP estimates that some 270 million people will face severe hunger this year, fueled by COVID-19, conflict, climate shocks and other factors, the statement said.

The meeting came the day after Beasley participated in the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting, which was held both online and in-person in Davos, Switzerland.

The gathering on Jan. 26-29 included key government and business leaders from around the world and focused on the theme, “The Great Reset,” as part of a call for leaders to commit to ensuring the global economic and social systems could be more fair, sustainable and resilient.

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The same day Beasley met with the pope, the WFP issued a joint press release with UNICEF warning that millions of children have missed out on more than $39 billion meals at school since the start of the pandemic.

They called for greater support for governments so they could reopen schools safely and get school feeding programs going again to avert a “nutrition crisis.”

School meals, the joint press release stated, are “often the one nutritious daily meal that children get,” and they “must be prioritized in school reopening plans” that include infection prevention measures like clean water and soap in every school.

Saint Meinrad monk professed solemn vows on Jan. 25

Benedictine Brother Stanley Rother Wagner professed solemn vows as a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad on Jan. 25 in the monastery’s Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

A native of Quincy, Ill., Brother Stanley Rother, 33, currently serves as an assistant to the Saint Meinrad archivist, as an oblate novice mentor and as custodian for pilgrimages to the monastery’s Shrine of Our Lady of Monte Cassino.

Before entering the monastery, he worked as a teacher at St. Anthony High School in Effingham, Ill., and as an archivist for the Illinois secretary of state.

Brother Stanley Rother earned a bachelor’s degree in history at Quincy University in Quincy, Ill., and a master’s degree in liturgical studies at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill.

In professing solemn vows of obedience, fidelity to the monastic way of life and stability in the community at Saint Meinrad, Brother Stanley Rother is a full and permanent member of the Benedictine community.

Benedictine novice professes temporary vows at Saint Meinrad

Benedictine Novice Simon Holden professed temporary vows as a monk in the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

A native of Lexington, Ky., Brother Peter, 24, earned a bachelor’s degree in music in 2019 at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Ky. He professed as a music theory and music history tutor while a student.

His most recent home parish was St. Leo Parish in Versailles, Ky., where he was a volunteer in the faith community’s Alpha program.

Temporary vows are typically for three years. This period offers a continuing opportunity for the monk and the monastic community to determine whether monastic life is, indeed, the right vocation for this individual.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey receives new novices into community

In a recent ceremony at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, two new novices were received by the monastic community.

Benedictine Novice Connor Zink and Matthew Morris were clothed on Jan. 19 in the Benedictine habit. They now begin a year of monastic formation, including study of the Rule of St. Benedict and monastic history.

Novice Connor, 24, a native of West Chester, Ohio, earned a bachelor’s degree in Catholic studies at Mariann University in Indianapolis in 2018. He previously worked in retail for Meijer and was a member of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Liberty, Ohio, where he did volunteer work.

Novice Matthew, 33, a native of Fort Thomas, Ky., earned a bachelor’s degree in history and theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky. He worked for Kroger for 18 years in a variety of positions and was a member of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Fort Thomas.

Novices take a year off from formal studies and trades. The novice is a time of prayer and learning intended to help a novice discern his vocation as a monk.

At the end of this year, a novice may be permitted to profess temporary vows of obedience, fidelity to the monastic way of life and stability in the community of Saint Meinrad.

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past four years as the event and volunteer coordinator for the young adult and college campus ministry. Even turning 30 on her most recent birthday didn’t deter her from exclaiming—"I’m pretty pumped about it." Kovert says with another smile.

"It’s hard to imagine her time in college when she was so disenchanted with the Catholic faith that she crossed her arms, put her head down, and was ‘all grumpy’ during a Bible study that focused on the Blessed Mother instead of Jesus. To know the depth of her disenchantment with the Catholic faith during her first two years at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., consider the approach she took toward the young Catholic campus missionary who said hello to Kovert every time she saw her.

"We laugh about it now, but there was a point where I was actually trying to convert her away from Catholicism," Kovert says.

"We definitely had a struggle with my Catholicism in college. I think I really turned away and turned toward the non-denominational aspect of Christianity. I just wanted Jesus and the Bible." A short time later, she learned what Jesus wanted for her—a turning point that came in an unexpected way.

‘Once you fall into love . . .’

Although Kovert had turned away from her Catholic faith, a friend recruited her to serve as a volunteer for a youth group headed to the 2009 National Catholic Youth Congress in Kansas City, Mo. Surprisingly, she says yes.

"On the bus ride there, I was reading the Bible and thought, ‘I’m so much better than Catholics because they don’t read Scripture. I was so prudish; she recalls. "In that moment of pride, God said, ‘Do you trust me? Do you allow Catholicism to be on the table of potential churches and potential truths?’ In that moment, I opened the door, and the Lord used that to come in.”

So did the young college missionary who Kovert tried to turn away from the Catholic faith.

"Her persistence and her friendship were there when I started having more questions about what the Church teaches," Kovert says. "She introduced me to the person of Jesus Christ. And there’s a huge difference between knowing about and knowing someone truly, and that just dangled everything in headfirst. Once you fall into love, you want to just launch into the fullness of loving and loving that person—that’s what I feel I did with my faith.”

That dive led her into depths of her faith she never once imagined.

‘It changed my life’

After graduating from Ball State in 2012, Kovert became a campus missionary with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FCUS). An organization “whose mission is to share the hope and joy of the Gospel with college students.” She served two years at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. and a year at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

"I know that God just wanted me to do it,” she says. “The same zeal I have for young people now was present then. I was convinced that I was handed on this truth, and that it changed my life.”

Another defining life change came in 2015 when she married her husband Kyle. Two years later, she joined the staff of the archdiocese’s young adult and college campus ministry.

"I choose to work with young adults because of my own conversion as a young adult,” she says. "And also because so much happens in young adulthood. There are so many transitions. You’re going away to school, you’re trying to find a job, you’re getting married, you’re moving, you’re having children—all within this time frame. So much is happening.

"Young adults are just spending so much time figuring out who they are, where they’re going, their path in life, and what they’re supposed to do. There are so many choices. Young adulthood is fertile soil. You’re old enough to make your own decisions, but still young enough to have some decision made for you. I want to make it. I want to think the faith can keep us grounded, offering some practical foundations for life.”

There are certain things we long for

Kovert has reached another transition point in her own life. She will soon be stepping aside from her role with the archdiocese to become a full-time mom to her daughter. At the same time, she hopes to volunteer for the young adult and college campus ministry, with the thought of helping to expand its outreach toward young married couples, including those with families.

In her own marriage and family, her faith is her foundation; her relationship with Christ her inspiration.

"It’s my everything, and I continually seek to put Christ more and more into the center of my life and just make that my lifestyle,” she says. ‘I’ve been reading different parenting books. They talk about love and self-discipline. That language comes to mind when I think about my faith. The Lord has blessed me and given me everything. Out of love for him, I want to give in return. Also, out of love for neighbor.”

Her exuberance is full-throttle now. "There are certain things we long for; we desire, we want. There are so many paths we can choose. But there is an authenticity that fulfills us fully, and it only comes through Jesus Christ, only comes through the Church, who knows our heart and what will make us truly happy.

"From my experience, I was feeling kind of lost without God. Now, knowing that God could fulfill me most perfectly and show me what is true, good and beautiful, I want others to know. I want that for others.”

This is money that families depend on for survival. But right now only six in 100 families in poverty are being helped by this program.

—Sen. Jon Ford, the primary author of Senate Bill 233

To qualify for TANF is roughly $3,400 in annual income. States around us like Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan have eligibility levels of a little over $10,000 for a family of three.

Indiana set in income requirements to qualify for TANF in the mid-1990s, when welfare reform was signed into law by the then-President Bill Clinton. These eligibility guidelines have not been adjusted for inflation since then. Among other problems, Sen. Spackman-Woodward says increasing monthly TANF payment amounts—for a family of three, from $228 to $513—and modify them annually using Social Security cost-of-living adjustment rates.

If enacted, the legislation would also update TANF eligibility guidelines to enable more Hoosiers to take advantage of the program, which also includes intensive job training assistance and other services to lift people out of poverty for good.

The bill has a broad base of support, including from the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC).

“We are in favor of this bill because a variety of reasons based on Catholic social teaching,” said Angela Espada, the executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

“From the standpoint of solidarity when our brothers and sisters are in need, we must do what we can to help them. Beyond the cash benefits, which are certainly crucial, TANF also promotes the dignity of workers, from providing job training to helping with transportation to work, uniforms and other necessities. Especially considering the devastation that many families have gone through because of the coronavirus pandemic, the needs are greater than ever.”

One of the staunchest supporters of modernizing TANF is the Indiana Institute for Working Families, which for years has been promoting legislation like Senate Bill 233. To bring home the point that it has been more than three decades since TANF was updated in Indiana, Jessica Fraser, program manager for the organization, routinely shares lawmakers a photo of herself from 1988—when she was 7 years old.

“We need to make this change,” said Fraser, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis. “Families in Indiana need this and have needed it for a long while. TANF is the only program for families in deep poverty to have cash in their pocket so they can take care of their day-to-day needs that aren’t covered by other programs. Income matters for families.

She and other advocates emphasize that other government assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—more commonly known as food stamps—place limits on what can be purchased with the funds. TANF payouts can help close that gap.

“TANF provides cash assistance that families can use for expenses that no other program can address—things like gas money, diapers, clothes for school and medication, to name a few examples,” said Emily Weikert Bryant, executive director of Feeding Indiana’s Hungry, another organization backing Senate Bill 233.

This does not even begin to touch on the other valuable supports that TANF provides, like child care and workforce training. We support the purposes of Senate Bill 233, to raise both the eligibility guidelines and benefit levels for TANF. Both are long overdue and vital to help families with few resources to better provide for their children.”

To follow this and other priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacatholic.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)
For nearly 40 years, Dr. Haywood Robinson “loved” everything about his job as a family doctor. He “loved family medicine, loved my patients, loved doing deliveries [of babies],” he said, genuine joy resonating in his voice. “I’ve always loved helping people.”

Yet the same doctor who performed abortions for three years after finishing his nonabortion residency in 1978 at a hospital in Los Angeles, retired in 2019, some 50 years after he encountered Christ and became a Catholic. Robinson is one of the Catholics who recognized “the evil of abortion.”

“I don’t know why he didn’t save me before I died all those abortions,” he said. “But he had to keep me blind and build that testimony in me.”

Robinson said he now recognizes that testimony in Indianapolis on Feb. 17 during an event to kick off the spring campaign for 40 Days for Life (see related article below), a pro-life movement he has been involved with since it began in 2004.

### You become more desensitized

It was during his residency that Robinson met Noreen Johnson, an obstetrician and gynecology resident at the same Los Angeles hospital. It was Noreen whom he would later ask to be his wife.

And it was she who taught him how to perform abortions.

Upon finishing their medical training, the couple stayed in Los Angeles to practice medicine, he said, also “moonlighted” at abortion centers.

“Abortion facilities were all around L.A.,” he said. “It was easy to get after-hours and weekend work. You’d get paid 40 minutes kill her baby, take her money and walk out.”

Robinson believes that a relationship with Christ combined with knowledge about the medical world can fundamentally change a person’s view of abortion.

“They’re not separate,” he said. “You have to remember who made creation and laws of nature. … The enemy wants you to separate creation of life with God. But is killing any different between someone in their 20s and a baby in the womb, even when it’s just one cell?”

The pro-life movement recognizes that the lives of unborn children is “about God,” Robinson said. “And what he holds at his highest level of concern is the human beings made in his image.”

He mentioned the staggering statistic of the more than 62 million lives lost to abortion since the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. And that’s just in the United States, he said.

“It’s a global holocaust of unprecedented proportions,” said Robinson. “Until the Holy Spirit takes that knowledge to the heart, those 62 million lives are just another piece of information.”

“Come one time with an open heart.”

Thus, while Robinson’s role for 40 Days for Life is to ensure “people cannot be coerced” into embracing the cause of saving the lives of the unborn.

“That is the work of the Holy Spirit,” he reiterated.

So, for those “on the fence” about their involvement in the movement, Robinson does not encourage signing up for a weekly hour of praying outside an abortion center during the 40 Days for Life spring campaign.

For those who do, he suggested making a trip there to pray briefly.

“Why don’t you come one time with an open heart,” he said. “I said, ‘If you’re there, pray that babies are saved. Pray that the facility is closed, and pray that the facility would lose so many jobs. Then, with a truly open heart, pray: ‘Lord, if it be your will, give me your Spirit to motivate to come back. Put in me the same care and love that you have for these babies. Help me find time to carve out so I can be here again and make a difference, and to see your glory work through me in saving babies.’”

(40 Days for Life kick off where Dr. Haywood Robinson will speak will take place on the sidewalk in front of the Planned Parenthood abortion facility at 8590 Georgetown Road in Indianapolis on Feb. 17 at noon. Parking is available on the shoulder at 8590 Georgetown Rd, just south of Planned Parenthood. Do not park in the lots of neighboring businesses, including Women’s Care Center.)

### Spring 40 Days for Life starts on Feb. 17; Indy adds nighttime pray-at-home slots

#### Criterion staff report

**The 40 Days for Life 2021 spring campaign begins Feb. 17-March 28.**

Bloomington and Indianapolis are participating within the archdiocese. Campaing events include Evansville, Ind.; Louisville, Ky.; and Cincinnati and Dayton/ Kettering, Ohio. The 40 Days for Life is an international campaign that seeks to end abortion through peaceful prayer vigils at abortion centers, and to raise community awareness of the consequences of abortion.

The campaign runs twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. During the 40-day campaigns, individuals and groups silently pray during one-hour time slots in front of abortion centers around the world.

This year’s Indianapolis campaign is offering 24-hour coverage by inviting participants to sign up for an hour to pray at home between 7 p.m.-7 a.m. on Monday through Saturday, and 7 p.m. on Saturday through noon on Sunday. This is a great option for seniors, those who are sick, those who do not drive and those who are concerned about being exposed to others due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

**Bloomington**

The campaign will take place outside of the Planned Parenthood abortion center at 421 S. College Ave. To participate, call your parish to see if there is a parish 40 Days for Life coordinator, or sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/bloomington.

For more information, contact Deacon Russell Woodard of Holy Trinity Parish in Edinburgh at 317-759-1225 or deaconrussw@gmail.com.

**Indianapolis**

The campaign will take place on the public right-of-way of the Planned Parenthood abortion center at 8590 Georgetown Rd. To participate either in-person or at home, call your parish to see if there is a parish 40 Days for Life coordinator, or sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/indianapolis.

For more information, contact Tim O’Donnell at 317-372-0040 or timo@un变eaeimc.com.

Events associated with the spring campaign include:

- **Kickoff:** noon on Feb. 17 outside of the Planned Parenthood/Planned Parenthood abortion center at 8590 Georgetown Road. Former abortionist Dr. Haywood Robinson speaking. (See related article.)
- **Midpoint rally:** 1-2 p.m. on March 7 outside of the Planned Parenthood abortion center at 8590 Georgetown Road.
- **Closing ceremony:** Outside of the Planned Parenthood abortion center at 8590 Georgetown Rd. Bring diapers, gently used crib sheets (no drop-side).
- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** 3214 Auburn Ave., sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/cincinnati or contact Mary Clark at 513-791-4359.
- **Dayton/Kettering, Ohio:** 1401 E. Stroop Road, sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/dayton or contact Kelli Stoltz at 937-385-2592 or kstolz@wtr.net.

For information about cities participating near archdiocesan boundaries include:

- **Evansville, Ind.:** 125 N. Weinbach, sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/evansville or contact Right to Life of Southwest Indiana at 812-474-3319 or mvawwcl@live.com.
- **Louisville, Ky.:** 136 W. Market St., sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/louisville or contact Carol Masters or Ed Hampir at 502-444-6446 or 502-472-4575 or cbmasters2@aol.com.
- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** 3214 Auburn Ave., sign up at www.40daysforlife.com/cincinnati or contact Mary Clark at 513-791-4359.
- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** 8590 Georgetown Rd.
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### Yangon’s auxiliary bishop: Prayers, vigilance needed for situation in Myanmar

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—After a military coup and the detention of top government leaders in Myanmar, the nation’s largest city and northern state of Kachin for pastoral reasons during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the auxiliary bishop of Yangon urged the government not to act on the military’s claims of fraud in November’s elections and asked for an election instead. (See related article.)

The military declared a state of emergency and said Gen. Min Aung Hlaing would be in charge of the country for the year because it acted on the military’s claims of fraud in November’s elections and because it allowed for an election despite the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

The coup party had a majority of the available parliamentary seats in that election.

The military has promised a transition to civilian rule, but it is unclear how long that will take. The government has not acted on the military’s claims of fraud in November’s elections and because it allowed for an election despite the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

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The coup party had a majority of the available parliamentary seats in that election.
Lent in 2020 was a time of loss for Hoosier Catholics. In the dioceses of Indiana, public celebration of the Mass was suspended on March 18, 2020, just after the Third Sunday of Lent. It was a measure taken to help slow the spread of coronavirus. Although the pandemic continues, greater knowledge of how to protect people from it, advances in medical treatment of those infected by it and, more recently, the development of vaccines have allowed parishes for months now to welcome worshipers back to church.

“By a recovery of what we lost last year, the most significant celebrations of the liturgical year,” said Father Patrick Beidelman, executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Worship and Evangelization. The archdiocesan Office of Worship that he leads recently shared with parish leaders guidance regarding liturgical celebrations and public devotions related to Lent in 2021.

Many of the recommendations for Ash Wednesday, which occurs on Feb. 17 this year, penance services and the public prayer of the Stations of the Cross follow practices related to social distancing and sanitizing that parishes have followed for months now during the pandemic.

“We know a lot more,” Father Beidelman said. “And we’ve been doing this for a while. So, people have become comfortable, familiar and consistent with the precautions that we should take.”

A particular precaution related to the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday follows a note issued by the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, which the archdiocesan Office of Worship also shares with parishes.

The note describes sprinkling ashes on the top of a worshipper’s head during a time of pandemic.

“The archdiocesan Office of Worship noted in its guidance that this practice has been the norm throughout much of Europe for centuries. It was brought to southern Indiana in 1854 by the Benedictine monks of Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland who founded Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. It continues in the monastic community there today. Benedictine Brother Kim Malloy, who has served as sacristan for Saint Meinrad since 1982, spoke recently with The Criterion about the history of the practice.

“It was brought here [to Saint Meinrad] by the first monks when they came here,” Brother Kim said. “Historically, it started by ashes being put on top of the head. Putting ashes on the forehead was a much later development.

“In the early Church, people that were excommunicated put on sackcloth and covered themselves with ashes as a penance in preparation to be received back into the community. Ashes were a symbol of penance.”

He even noted that the kind of ashes early Christians had on their bodies and the amount placed on them could blister the skin.

“It was painful,” Brother Kim said. “It wasn’t just a fashion statement.”

In reflecting on the practice for the distribution of ashes recommended by the Holy See, Father Beidelman emphasized the interior disposition that the ashes are meant to symbolize.

“Where we put the ashes as a symbol for the beginning of our time of repentance in the season of Lent isn’t as important as our interior repentance and commitment to conversion of heart,” he said.

“That’s the most significant thing that we’re beginning, which is marked by this ritual gesture.”

The guidance shared by the Office of Worship also noted the deep roots of sprinkling ashes on the head found in the Old Testament, where covering the body in ashes was a sign of penance.

“What we’re doing in Lent is part of our heritage spiritually in the Judeo-Christian tradition,” Father Beidelman said.

The Office of Worship’s guidance noted that communal penance services are permitted.

“All would need to follow the same social distancing and sanitation expectations of Mass,” the guidance noted. “There may be a need for ashes to help maintain social distancing and sanitizing during the liturgy.”

Father Beidelman expects that many parishes in central and southern Indiana will forgo penance services and instead will increase opportunities for individual confession.

The public praying of the Stations of the Cross and other Lenten devotions are likewise permitted so long as “social distancing can be maintained and proper sanitizing procedures can be followed,” the guidance said.

“Much like hymnals, booklets for the Stations/devotions should not be used,” the guidance explained. “Participants could either be given booklets to keep and re-use, or disposable handouts may be used.”

(Link to “Considerations for Upcoming Liturgies and Lent 2021,” can be found at www.archindy.org/worship.)

Lenten disciplines each year include fasting, almsgiving, prayer:

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Ash Wednesday is on Feb. 17.

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those who are bound by this may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

The special Paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday.

By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the Church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday, which is on April 1.

Check your parish for opportunities to receive the sacrament of reconciliation during Lent:

The liturgical season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, parishioners are encouraged to consult their local parish for opportunities to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.
Church teaches work should contribute to human flourishing

By Don Clemmer

For people who prefer to keep their job and their faith separate, the Catholic Church poses a massive challenge. Catholic teaching simply does not see it that way. This isn’t about being a vocal believer at work, but about how work itself is an essential expression of human dignity.

The Church’s body of teaching on work and the dignity and rights of workers bridges from the very beginnings of our tradition to contemporary phenomena and the most cutting-edge advancements in society.

The Genesis creation stories depict God as working and proclaiming as good the fruits of labor. Being able to work and delight in that meaningful creative process is part of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. In his 1981 encyclical “Laborem Exercens” (“On Human Work”), St. John Paul II wrote that the Book of Genesis is the first “gospel of work” and that God also experienced “labour of hands, heart and body” to make the earth habitable (#14).

Faith Church teaches work should contribute to human flourishing

Leo XIII addressed with: “To defraud any What we would now call wage theft, Pope went to working people and society overall by through Catholic teaching to present day. Things”) addressed the challenges posed “(Of New to working people and society overall by the Industrial Revolution. The teachings enshrined in these and other encyclicals are enumerated in the 2004 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

This Vatican document describes work as a fundamental right and a good that workers have certain rights. These include: the right to a just wage; to rest; to a safe work environment; to unemployment assistance; to parental leave and benefits; to organize and to strike. These rights carry with them implications for how society should be structured, as well as what the Church advocates for in the public square. The principles of Catholic social teaching not only describe how individuals, businesses, governments and religious institutions can live in balance, but also challenges everyone, individually and systemically, to work toward the common good in solidarity with one another.

Catholic social teaching exists to advocate for in the public square. The U.S. bishops’ 2013 Labor Day statement said that current imbalances “worsened precipitously in recent decades, has drawn criticism from Church leaders. The U.S. bishops’ 2013 Labor Day statement said that current imbalances “demand boldness in promoting a just economy ... by creating jobs that pay a living wage and share with workers some profits of the company.”

Pope Benedict XVI wrote prophetically in 2009 encyclical “Caritas in Veritate” (“Charity in Truth”), noting that “not only human dignity is threatened by the causes of the perils of rampant inequality in his “Caritas in Veritate” (“Charity in Truth”), noting that “not only does social cohesion suffer, thereby placing democracy at risk, but too does the economy, through the progressive erosion of ‘social capital’ - the network of relationships of trust, dependability and respect for rules, all of which are indispensable for any form of civil coexistence” (#82).

This is why Pope Francis carries on the tradition of applying the Gospel to ever newer “new things,” including the widespread disruption of COVID-19, which has thrown millions out of work, and developments in artificial intelligence that could make entire job sectors obsolete in decades.

In November 2020, Pope Francis said progress in artificial intelligence should always be “joined to the common good.” He has endorsed universal basic income proposals—regular monetary payments from the government—as a way of helping people flourish. Whether it’s the factories of the Industrial Revolution or lines of binary code, the Church opposes workers’ humanity being sliced and diced by systems.

Work is a sacred space for flourishing, not a backdrop for exploitation and abuse. More than a way to pay the bills or sustain ourselves, the Church challenges us to make work where we become who God always intended us to be, and in doing so, get to know him better. The God who labored to enjoy the fulfillment of his only described by one of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of heaven” (#20).

“Rerum Novarum” was so influential to Catholic thought that it sparked numerous “sequels”—subsequent popes applying the Gospel to other signs of their times. The teachings enshrined in these and other encyclicals are enumerated in the 2004 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

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This is why Pope Francis carries on the tradition of applying the Gospel to ever newer “new things,” including the widespread disruption of COVID-19, which has thrown millions out of work, and developments in artificial intelligence that could make entire job sectors obsolete in decades.

In November 2020, Pope Francis said progress in artificial intelligence should always be “joined to the common good.” He has endorsed universal basic income proposals—regular monetary payments from the government—as a way of helping people flourish. Whether it’s the factories of the Industrial Revolution or lines of binary code, the Church opposes workers’ humanity being sliced and diced by systems.

Work is a sacred space for flourishing, not a backdrop for exploitation and abuse. More than a way to pay the bills or sustain ourselves, the Church challenges us to make work where we become who God always intended us to be, and in doing so, get to know him better. The God who labored to enjoy the fulfillment of his creation wants the same for all of us. (Don Clemmer is a writer and communications professional based in Indiana. He edits Cross Roads magazine for the Diocese of Lexington, Ky.)
A reflection on Black history and Catholicism

The celebration of Black History Month began as a way to address the small amount of information taught in the classroom regarding African Americans. Beginning in 1926, the second week of February was designated as Negro History Week by scholar Carter Woodson, who co-founded what was then called the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Starting in the 1940s, African Americans advocated for the addition of Black History Month to U.S. school curricula, and in February 1976, the commemoration of Black History Month was established. Since then, it has become a significant event celebrated in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Ireland.

What does Black History Month have to do with Catholics and the Catholic Church? It is difficult to talk about Christian or Catholic history without acknowledging the history of African descent, Black history. Yet, it is understandable given the current conditions, but it deeply affects our sense of place.

In 1970, African American professors at Kent State University in Ohio began researching, documenting and writing Black history books themselves. In 1976, the United States celebrated the second week of February as Black History Month. Today, the commemoration of Black History Month is celebrated in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Ireland.

For many of us, Black History Month evokes memories of our heritage. For others, it serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by Black Americans. For many, it is a time to reflect on the legacy of African American leaders and activists who fought for equality and justice.

Many of us have family members who were part of the Civil Rights Movement or other social justice movements. We may have heard stories of their struggles and accomplishments, or we may have read about them in history books.

On this day, let us remember the sacrifices made by Black Americans and celebrate their contributions to our nation. Let us honor their legacy and work towards a future where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed many victims, beginning tragically with the death of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Some of its harms are more visible and acute, but equally significant are the hidden harms of systemic racism, social distancing, the closing of public spaces, and barriers to isolate from others. And that can leave us with no true peace for us. Let us heed the words of Mother Teresa, who said: "The sons of my mother were angry with me; they charged me with the care of the vineyard; my own vineyard I did not take care of." (Sg 1:5-6).

When I talk about Black history and Catholicism, I point to my own experience. As a Black person, I was taught to love my people and to be proud of my heritage. I was taught the value of community and the importance of standing together in times of need.

Theologian and writer Brett Robinson suggests that "there is no community, it’s a network of bits and bytes. It’s not a place. It’s not a superhighway, it’s a superhighway. It’s not a community, it’s a network of bits and bytes that seems to matter less. As the pandemic has taught us, work and school no longer have to be conducted in a shared physical location. As long as we can ‘connect’, any place can become work or school.

The bottom line: once reserved for the family meal, has become a multifunctional space that doubles as a schoolroom and workspace. This is understandable given the current conditions, but it deeply affects our sense of place.

What does Black History Month mean to you? What does it mean to your family? What do you wish for others?

The Theology of Technology/Brett Robinson

A place to be fully human

Where are you? Are you reading this online? If so, where would you say you are? Are you reading this on your phone or a waiting room? When we’re online, our physical location seems to matter less. Focused on the screen, the rest of the world seems to fade away.

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The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 7, 2021

• Job 7:1-4, 6-7
• 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
• Job 7:1-4, 6-7

The Book of Job is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Scholars disagree as to when this book was written. This book furnishes few details about the identity of Job. It is nonetheless one of the great literary works in the Old Testament since it so remarkably captures the struggle experienced by many believers as they try to match their faith in the merciful God to problems in their lives.

A misreading of Job has led to a phrase that has entered into English common speech, the “patience of Job.” Clear in many places in this book is the common speech, the “patience of Job.”

A misreading of Job has led to a phrase that has entered into English common speech, the “patience of Job.”

While the cure is extraordinary, Mark tells us that Jesus did not come to bring humanity to a state of misery, but rather to forgive sins and bring life and salvation to all, including Peter’s mother-in-law. He did this with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church offers us a selection from St. Mark’s Gospel. It is the story of the Lord’s curing of Peter’s mother-in-law. Matthew and Luke have their versions of the same story.

The story is clear. Merely by touching her hand, Jesus cured the woman. She was so fully cured, in fact, that she immediately rose from her sickbed and began to walk on Jesus and the disciples. She was healthy again, and she used her health to care for others. For all Christians, the impulse to serve others is the story of the Lord’s curing of Peter’s mother-in-law. Matthew and Luke have their versions of the same story.

While the cure is extraordinary, Mark does not make the fortune-teller mother-in-law the centerpiece of this reading. That belongs to Jesus.

Christians long have remembered this miracle. Indeed, archeologists have found traces of this mother-in-law’s house in Capernaum. They confirmed their discovery by the fact that ancient Christian inscriptions were found on the walls.

As the story continues, Jesus heals the sick and drives demons away. He ordered the demons not to speak, and they obeyed. Jesus went by himself to a distant place to pray. The Apostles pursued Jesus, longing to be near the Lord, needing the Lord.

When at last they found Jesus, the Lord reminded them that the messianic role was to reach all people.

Reflection

The Church continues to introduce us to Jesus, a process begun weeks ago at Christmas and underscored in the lessons of the feast of the Epiphany and in those of the feast of the Lord’s Baptism.

Jesus is Lord, the Son of God, with all power. He came to us to bring humanity to a state of misery, but rather to forgive sins and bring life and salvation to all, including Peter’s mother-in-law.

The condition of Peter’s mother-in-law, and the anxiety with which Peter and the others searched for Jesus, tell us about ourselves. Conditions trouble our lives, such as this persistent pandemic. In their worries, Job, Paul and Peter’s mother-in-law were at home with us. We are helpless, but we are not doomed. Jesus is with us. †

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Holy Name Society supports prayer, Catholic schools, works of charity

One of my fondest memories of my priesthood is attending, in the 1960s, Mass and a breakfast meeting afterward with four sons that was sponsored by an organization called the Holy Name Society. It seemed to me an effective way to involve parish families in worship and fellowship. Does such an organization still exist? and if not, what caused it to cease existing? Could it and should it be revived? (Wisconsin)

The Holy Name Society does still exist, although its numbers have dropped in recent decades. An article a few years back in the Baltimore archdiocesan news outlet The Catholic Review noted that, whereas once the society listed 40,000 members within the archdiocese, membership in 2012 numbered some 700, with chapters in 30 parishes.

The society was founded in the late 13th century, when Pope Gregory X commissioned a Dominican preacher named John of Vercelli to encourage respect and devotion to the name of Christ to combat a heresy of the time that held that Christ was not divine.

The society’s agenda broadened through the years to include promoting the spread of the Gospel message, pledging a life of personal prayer, raising funds for Catholic education and encouraging the corporal works of mercy, especially by feeding the poor and finding shelter for the homeless. Although founded initially as a male fraternity, in many parts of the U.S. the society has opened its membership to women in recent years.

I have often heard in church the prayer which goes, “May his/her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.” It has caused me to wonder why we pray only for the souls of the faithful departed.

Shouldn’t we also pray for the souls of those who may have struggled with their faith or who may never have had the opportunity to learn about God? Could we pray instead for “the souls of the so-called children of God,” rather than focusing only on those who were faithful? (Indiana)

I couldn’t agree more. We should pray for all those who have passed from this life into eternity. And the do. Prompted by your question, I decided to take a closer look at the four principal eucharistic prayers for the Mass, one of which is commonly selected for use at parish Masses—and I think you will be comforted by the language.

In each of the four prayers there is a section that commemorates the deceased. The first eucharistic prayer, I would agree, could be used to bolster your contention; that text says, “Remember also, Lord, your servants who have gone before us with the sign of faith and rest in the sleep of peace. Grant them, O Lord, we pray, and all who sleep in Christ, a place of refreshment, light and peace.”

But the other three eucharistic prayers are more clear that the prayer is universal in scope. The second one says, “Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection and all who have died in your mercy; welcome them into the light of your face.”

The third one says, “Let our departed brothers and sisters and all to whom you are pleasing to us at their passing from this life, give kind administration of your kingdom. And the fourth eucharistic prayer is even more specific: “Remember also those who have died in the peace of your Christ and all the dead whose faith you alone have known.”

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

Daily Readings

Monday, February 8

St. Jerome Emiliani
St. Josephine Bakhita, virgin

Genesis 1:1-19
Psalm 104:1-2a, 5-6, 10, 12, 24, 35c
Mark 6:3-50

Tuesday, February 9

Psalm 8:4-9
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday, February 10

St. Scholastica, virgin
Psalm 2:4b-5, 9-11
Psalm 104:1-2a, 27-28, 29bc-30
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday, February 11

Our Lady of Lourdes
Psalm 128:1-5
Mark 7:24-30

Friday, February 12

Genesis 3:1-8
Psalm 22:1-2, 5, 7
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday, February 13

Genesis 3:9-24
Psalm 90:2-4c, 5-12, 13
Mark 8:1-10

Sunday, February 14

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46
Psalm 32:1, 2, 5, 11
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 21-23
Mark 7:40-45

My Journey to God

Salvation

By Greg Hublar

I am not in your endless worries, nor am I in your fears or anxieties. I can’t be found in the spiraling endless review of worrisome outcomes. I do not exist at the base of your wild imagination of worrisome outcomes. I do not reside in the fear of future events, that plays out the worst-case scenarios. I can’t be found in the spiraling endless review of worrisome outcomes.

Nor do I exist, although its numbers have dropped in recent decades. The society was founded in the late 13th century, when Pope Gregory X commissioned a Dominican preacher named John of Vercelli to encourage respect and devotion to the name of Christ to combat a heresy of the time that held that Jesus was not divine.

The society’s agenda broadened through the years to include promoting the spread of the Gospel message, pledging a life of personal prayer, raising funds for Catholic education and encouraging the corporal works of mercy, especially by feeding the poor and finding shelter for the homeless. Although founded initially as a male fraternity, in many parts of the U.S. the society has opened its membership to women in recent years.

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Providence Sister Martha Ann Rifen served in Catholic schools for 32 years

Provide Providence Sister Martha Ann Rifen, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Jan. 16 at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. She was 95.

Sister Martha Ann was born on March 1, 1925, in Munice, Ind. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Feb. 2, 1953, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1960.

Sister Martha Ann earned a bachelor’s degree at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master’s degree in Indiana State University Terre Haute.

During her 68 years as a member of the Providence Sisters, Sister Martha Ann ministered as an educator for 32 years in schools in Illinois and Indiana. She later served at the motherhouse in transportation. Most recently, during the coronavirus pandemic, she volunteered up to a week before her death to sanitize one of her community’s kitchens.

In the archdiocese, Sister Martha Ann served at St. Michael School in Greenfield from 1966-68, at the former St. Margaret Mary School in Terre Haute from 1968-77 and at the motherhouse from 1987-2019.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876.

Batesville native Franciscan Father Jack Wintz served in Catholic media for decades

Franciscan Father Jack Wintz, a member of the Cincinnati-based Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist, died on Jan. 28 at the age of 84.


Father Jack was born on Feb. 22, 1936, in Batesville and grew up as a member of St. Louis Parish. He became a Franciscan novice in 1954, professed temporary vows in 1955 and final vows in 1956. Father Jack was ordained in 1963.

Known for his decades of service in the Catholic media, Father Jack received in 2006 the St. Francis de Sales Award, the highest honor of the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada.

He served on the boards on his province’s St. Anthony Messenger magazine, founded St. Anthony Messenger’s Catholic Media Update electronic news service and on St. Anthony Messenger’s United States. He traveled the world while reporting on articles and books that he wrote.

In addition to his ministry in Catholic media, Father Jack did parish ministry and taught high schools at St. Bernard, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Ind. He also served as a missionary in the Philippines.

Father Jack is survived by a sister, Tese Neighborhood of Seattle, and a brother, Gary Wintz of Marina del Rey, Calif. "


GIBSON, Rita K., 81, St. Therese of the Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 30. Father of Kathy Dial, David, Michael and Thomas Dial. Great-grandfather of seven. Great-grandmother of 10.


JOHNSTONE, Patricia R., 86, St. Jos, Indianapolis, Jan. 5. Sister of Kathleen Cecil, Maureen Green, Sharon Piazza, Danny and Terry Johnston. Aunt of several.


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Young people urged to be ‘persistent in highlighting’ sacredness of life

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The continuing COVID-19 pandemic and strict restrictions intended to slow its spread did not stop young people and others from rallying, praying and standing up for life on Jan. 29.

As it has been done for nearly 30 years, the Archdiocese of Washington hosted its “Rally and Mass for Life” prior to the annual March for Life. However this year, because of the ongoing pandemic, the D.C. event was virtual, with no traditional large-in-person gathering at the Capital One Arena.

The 48th annual March for Life, which marks the anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion, also was primarily virtual.

Using YouTube and other social media platforms, young people from across the country—and as far away as Australia—“gathered” for the rally and Mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington.

The event—which included a recitation of the rosary, talks, musical performances and reflections—was hosted by the Archdiocese of Washington Youth Leadership Team.

“I feel it is a joyful time for all those who are participating virtually. Our young people being with them is an energy that is likable,” Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory said. “I hope we realize as we do this from a distance that we are really close and united.”

He asked young people to be “persistent in highlighting the importance of human life.”

“Our young people know how to use social media, and I ask to use it effectively, persistently and consistently to flood [it] with the truth and do it in such a way that the truth is undeniable.”

The cardinal also asked young people to pray because “we are people of faith, and we have to anchor whatever we do in prayer. If our prayer is sincere, we will be most effective.”

Cardinal Gregory was the principal celebrant and homilist at the Mass for Life. Concelebrants included Washington Auxiliary Bishops Mario E. Dorsonville and Roy E. Campbell Jr.; Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl, retired archbishop of Washington; Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States; Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore; Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Va.; and other bishops from throughout the region.

Petitioners for the state’s death penalty Bishop Pierre noted that rallying, praying and marching for life is “so important because life, aside from the dignity that God gives us, is of inestimable value, if we receive it and we have to be careful about it.”

At his inauguration, President Biden called for unity, civility and cooperation in behalf of the community. That is a welcome message, which is in considerable tension with stances he has taken in the abortion and religious freedom conflict.

One of the most divisive of these is his newfound opposition to the Hyde Amendment, which allows Americans from having to subsidize elective abortions with their taxes. The amendment, first enacted in 1976, has been approved each of the past 45 years by Congresses and presidents of both parties.

The Hyde Amendment is opposed by many “pro-choice” Americans who believe in a woman’s right to choose. And as many “pro-life” Americans oppose public funding of abortion.

Support Hyde undermines that minimal respect and that regard for the will of the people. As the act of a president said to be “devout Catholic,” which can only mean a Catholic who accepts Catholic teaching, it seems to show disrespect for and hatred of his nature, and we should join our prayers and efforts with theirs.

(Richard Doerflinger worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.)
A prayerful, public witness for life

Before they stepped off, she told the marchers, originally a group of 60, that although this year was a deeply somber occasion, “let’s be prayerful” and fulfill the event “in the best way we can.” Marchers included Auxiliary Bishop Joseph L. Coffey of the Archdiocese for the Military Services. “Never despair, never give up and keep fighting,” Bishop Coffey told EWTN while marching.

Others included former pro football player Benjamin Watson and Abby Johnson, the former Planned Parenthood clinic director who operates the pro-life ministry And Then There Were None.

The 48th annual march, a continuing event, “to stay socially distanced at Constitution Avenue in previous years. And there were no counterprotesters. Tim Saccoccia, a March for Life board member and a senior policy director for the Knights of Columbus, said the original group was joined halfway through the route by more than 100 others who seemed to be mostly from the Washington area.

There was a brief moment of concern, but the additional marchers turned out to be well-behaved. “They were very respectful,” Saccoccia told Catholic News Service (CNS) in a phone interview from the march.

“We had a fantastic partnership with the D.C. police,” he added. “The Capitol Police also came out to help us.” It was tough, even with a diminished event, “to stay socially distanced at times,” Saccoccia acknowledged. “Not everyone is a professional marcher.”

The 48th annual march, a continuing protest of the court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion nationwide, already was hampered by COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and Mancini, announcing a virtual event, told people to stay home and participate in smaller local marches.

But the aftermath of the violent Jan. 6 insurrection—5,000 National Guard troops are still protecting members of Congress, House and Senate office buildings and the fenced-off Capitol building—and fears of more unpredictable violence by random individuals increased the symbolism of the moment. It was the first street event in Washington since Jan. 6.

In a callback to a former March for Life tradition, Mancini and others in the core group carried single red roses, which, she announced, would “symbolize the profound grief pro-life Americans feel over the deaths of 62 million unborn children through legal abortion.” They laid those on the sidewalk behind the fenced-off Supreme Court building as marchers broke into the “Ave Maria” and “God Bless America.”

In its early years, the march had sent individual roses to every member of Congress.

The smallest previous march, during a 1987 snowstorm, was officially estimated at 10,000. The U.S. Park Police stopped issuing crowd counts after disputes arose over the size of the Million Man March in 1995, and the agency’s estimates were always considerably lower than that of march organizers.

Last year, with President Donald J. Trump speaking at the pro-march rally at the National Mall, more than 100,000 were believed to be in attendance. Future restrictions on Washington protest marches of any size will be the topic of debate in the coming months.

The first march was held on Jan. 22, 1974, organized by Nellie Gray, a government lawyer, and the Knights of Columbus. The idea was to form a “circle of life” around the Capitol and Supreme Court. Mancini assumed leadership after Gray died in 2012.

Saccoccia pronounced the event a success. “We represented tens of millions of Americans who have suffered and lost their lives from abortion.”

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