Facing challenges

The life of St. Theodora Guérin offers guidance in present times, page 9.

Expansion to school choice program under consideration at Statehouse

Ten years after the passage of groundbreaking legislation that made Indiana a national leader in school choice, state lawmakers are considering a bill that would extend the reach of the program to far more Hoosier families.

House Bill 1005 builds upon the 2011 law establishing Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program, more commonly known as the voucher program. As he was a decade ago, the lawmaker behind the effort is Rep. Bob Behning (R-Indianapolis). His current proposed legislation, which passed the House Education Committee on Feb. 3, would expand eligibility to allow more parents in Indiana to select the school they believe is best for their children.

“We have excellent schools across the state, but it is nearly impossible for them to meet every unique need of every child,” said Behning, chairman of the committee. “Because the coronavirus pandemic has changed how some students attend class, parents began considering other options to educate their students. Many Hoosier families already enjoy the flexibilities of Indiana’s school choice program, but there is still a large group shut out of these opportunities.”

House Bill 1005 would help middle- and upper middle-class families still struggling to pay for private school tuition by raising the financial eligibility requirements for vouchers. That threshold, which currently stands at a maximum family income of 150 percent of the federal free and reduced lunch program, would be increased to 225 percent this year and then 300 percent by July 2022 under the proposed legislation.

In addition, the bill would increase the scholarship amount that a voucher student receives in a school year. Currently, the program operates under three tiers, with students receiving vouchers of 50, 70 or 90 percent of the cost of attending a public school.

See ICC, page 15

Faith, family and Seton community help small school star live his NBA dream

By John Shaughnessy

On the day his dream came true, Desmond Bane stood in front of the modest home where he grew up, wanting to pay tribute to all the people who supported him along the way. Flashing a huge smile, the 22-year-old Bane created a video that focused on his family, his friends and all his supporters in his hometown of Richmond.

In that emotional moment, Bane thought of his great-grandparents—how he had lived with them since he was 2, how they loved him, and how they guided him to live a life rooted in faith, hard work and humility.

In the background, the video also captured a glimpse of the driveway where he had been playing basketball since he was 3, where he and his friends played countless games, and where his dream of playing in the National Basketball Association (NBA) began.

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See NBA, page 8

‘A hopeful moment’

Church dedication points to a positive future for Greenfield parish in a time of pandemic

By Sean Gallagher

GREENFIELD—The dedication of a church is a joyful time for a faith community.

But the Jan. 30 dedication of the renovated St. Michael Church in Greenfield was marked by a special joy—and hope.

That’s because the $2.7 million project began shortly before the suspension of public celebration of worship in churches across Indiana on March 18, 2020, at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The dedication of the church now comes at a time when there is greater knowledge on how to protect people from the virus, how to treat those infected by it and shortly after the launch of vaccines.

See DEDICATION, page 16

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson pours chrism oil on the altar of St. Michael Church in Greenfield during a Jan. 30 dedication Mass of the recently renovated church. Looking on is Father Dougues Marcotte (partially obscured), pastor of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis who grew up in St. Michael Parish. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)
Naming undersecretaries for synod, Pope Francis gives a woman a vote

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Xavierian Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart will not be the first woman undersecretary of a major Vatican office, but she will be the first woman with a right to vote at a meeting of the Synod of Bishops. Pope Francis named Becquart one of two undersecretaries of the Synod of Bishops on Feb. 6.
The other undersecretary is Augustinian Father Louis Marin de San Martin, whom Pope Francis also named a bishop on Feb. 6.
Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, was asked by Vatican News if Sister Nathalie having the right to vote at the synod would open the possibility to other women as well. Although the issue has been brought increasingly to the Synod hall, until now only bishops and a few priests and brothers belonging to religious orders have had a vote.
Pope Francis, Cardinal Grech responded, has “highlighted several times the importance that they be involved in the processes of discernment and decision-making in the Church,” and in recent synods, the number of women participating as nonvoting experts or observers has increased.

“With the appointment of Sister Nathalie Becquart and the opportunity that she will participate with the right to vote, a door has been opened,” Cardinal Grech said. “We will then see what other steps could be taken in the future.”

Sister Nathalie, who was an observer at the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, was named a consultant to the Synod of Bishops in 2019. She told Catholic News Service at the time that the appointment was “a symbolic and effective step toward appointing more women at the Curia, and it reflects Pope Francis’ desire to give more places to women at all levels of the Church.”

Sister Nathalie, the former director of youth evangelization and vocations for the French bishops’ conference, also said in the interview she was convinced more progress would come.

“Changes will come with the new generation as more and more young people—not only young women, but also young men—as for women’s equality,” she said. Added hope comes from meeting “more and more priests and bishops now that are speaking out for women. I have seen an evolution; at the beginning, the question of women in the Church was a question from women, and now it is also an important topic for many men, priests and bishops—and even the pope.”

But one will not be able to say there is true collaboration between men and women at all levels of the Church until “more women in leadership positions and decision-making processes,” she said.

Obviously, this should continue appointing women to councils and dicasteries, she said. But she also had another idea: “Another symbolic step could be, for instance, that he ask a woman to lead the spiritual retreat for the Curia one year.”

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Failure to pass the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act “shows just how extreme the majority of Senate Democrats are,” said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.
The measure was proposed as an amendment to the 2021 Budget Resolution in the Senate. In a roll call vote on Feb. 4 all Senate Republicans, along with Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin, D-West Virginia, and Bob Casey Jr., D-Pennsylvania, voted in favor of the amendment.
F orty-eight Senate Democrats blocked the amendment, which required 60 votes to pass.
The measure requires that, when a baby is born alive following an abortion, health care practitioners must exercise the same degree of professional skill and care that would be offered to any other child born alive at the same gestational age. It also requires that, following appropriate care, health care workers must transport the child immediately to a hospital.

Th e bill and other supporters of the measure say current federal law does not sufficiently protect a child born following an abortion, saying evidence exists that some abortion providers do not regard babies born alive during abortions as person as provided for under the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, enacted by Congress in 2002 with unanimous support.

Under this law, babies who are born alive, whether before or after “viability,” are recognized as full legal persons under federal law.

Deadline is March 15 for ministry fellowship with Holy Land pilgrimage

Catholic pilgrimage company Verso Ministries, located in Notre Dame, Ind., is accepting applications for its inaugural Frassati Fellowship, a six-month journey of prayer and formation, including a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Catholic leaders hope this will be a stepping stone to fuel continued leadership, creativity and commitment within the Church.

It was created especially to encourage individuals in Catholic ministry, whether as a volunteer or working full or part time in a parish, school, or nonprofit ministry. Individuals enrolled in full-time graduate studies in theology, divinity or related fields may also apply.

Fellows will meet virtually for bi-monthly meetings that will include forms of prayer, meditations, readings, prayer and readings in anticipation of a nine-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land on July 10-18.

With visits to places like Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee, participants will experience firsthand the land of Jesus’ birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

Following the pilgrimage, each Fellow will present a creative capstone project expressing outcomes from their participation.

The cost of the program is $2,499, plus the cost of roundtrip airfare to Israel. This final cost includes a $2,000 scholarship courtesy of Verso Ministries.

For a $500 discount, enter referral code ArchIndy when submitting the application.

Applications can be completed online at www.VersoMinistries.com/FAQ.html and mailed or mailed. Materials must be submitted by March 15 and selections will be announced during the week of April 5.

For more information, go to www.versoministries.com/frassati-fellowship and scroll to the Frequently Asked Questions section at the bottom of the page; contact John Paul Lichon at 574-383-9396 or jp@versoministries.com.

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Father John Peter Gallagher served in archdiocesan high schools, parishes

By Sean Gallagher

Father John Peter Gallagher, pastor of the Lady of Fatima Church and parochial vicar of St. John the Evangelist Church in French Lick and Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Parish in Paoli, died on Feb. 6. A native of Indianapolis, Father Gallagher was 60.

As the Criterion went to press, funeral arrangements for Father Gallagher had not yet been completed. Go to CriterionOnline.com for updated information, including where memorial contributions can be sent.

Father Gallagher was nearly ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. A deacon for two years, he was drawn to priesthood in Indiana, he later moved to California and became a seminarian there.

In his last year of formation, however, Father Gallagher felt the call to return home. “Indiana is my real home,” he said in a 1992 interview with The Criterion. “… Those were the roots of my vocation. It is the One Church that I am familiar with and comfortable with.”

Father Gallagher also noted the importance of his family in his Hoosier home. “My family was very, very important part of my vocation,” he said. “They are the people who really supported me.”

Father Gallagher ministered in a variety of settings in central and southern Indiana: urban high schools and parishes, as well as faith communities in suburbs, small towns and rural areas. He also was a valuable asset to the Indianapolis Colts National Football League team for several years, including when it won the Super Bowl in 2007. Father Gallagher was proud for years afterward to wear the Super Bowl ring he received from the Colts.

No matter where he was, though, Father Gallagher felt comfortable with the people he dealt with. He had said Father Daniel Mahan, pastor of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, the homilist at his brother priest’s funeral, “He had a deep understanding of human nature,” said Father Mahan. “And was able to relate to people. He was one of those rare background, from very poor people in the center city of Indianapolis during his time.”


Father Marks, pastor of St. Mary-of-the-Robs Branch of Floyd County, praised his friend’s “ability to accept people where they were at in their journey with God, and walk with them, whether there with the person in their journey.”

“My life was a discovery of himself and a discovery of God in the midst of that,” Father Marks said.

John Peter Gallagher was born on Jan. 23, 1961, in Shelbyville to the late David and Elizabeth (Moore) Gallagher. He grew up as a member of St. Joseph Parish. His family later lived for periods in Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota before returning to Shelbyville.

After graduating from Shelbyville High School in 1979, Father Gallagher became an archdiocesan seminarian and received formation at the former Saint Meinrad College, graduating in 1983.

At that time, he entered the novitiate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Father Gallagher professed temporary vows for a three-year period as a Benedictine monk in 1984. By the time that period was complete, Father Gallagher had discerned that he was not called to monastic life, left Saint Meinrad and moved to California, where he taught for two years at the former Daniel Murphy High School, an all-boys Catholic school in a south central neighborhood of Los Angeles.

In 1989, Father Gallagher became a seminarian for the Los Angeles Archdiocese and received formation at St. John Seminary in Camarillo, Calif., earning a master of divinity degree there.

During his final year of priestly formation, Father Gallagher re-affiliated with the archdiocese of Indianapolis. He was ordained a priest on June 6, 1992, in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis by Bishop William L. Higi of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind.

At the time, the archdiocese was under a shepherd, Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara who died having in January of 1992. Father Gallagher celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving on June 7, 1992, at St. Joseph Church in Shelbyville.

His first pastoral assignment was as associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, where he served until 1994.

Father Gallagher then served in Indianapolis from 1994-96 as pastor of the former Holy Cross Parish and as sacramental minister at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish and St. Patrick Parish.

From 1996-2005, Father Gallagher ministered in Indianapolis as chaplain for Father Thomas Seconia Memorial High School while living at St. Simon the Apostle Parish.

From 2005-09, he served as chaplain at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis. During that period, he also ministered as associate pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg from 2005-07 and provided sacramental assistance at St. Anthony Parish and the former Holy Trinity Parish, both in Indianapolis, from 2007-09.

In 2009, Father Gallagher was appointed pastor of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, where he served until 2018.

In that same year, he became pastor of Our Lady of the Springs Parish in French Lick and Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Parish in Paoli, where he served until his death.

He is survived by his sisters Anne Gallagher of Bloomfield, Ind.; Beth Keele Gallagher of Indianapolis; Kevin Gallagher of Omaha, Neb.; and by his brothers David Gallagher of Indianapolis; Kevin Gallagher of Fort Collins, Colo.; Patrick Gallagher of Shelbyville; and R.T. Gallagher of Bloomfield, Ind.

California bishops welcome Supreme Court’s ruling easing worship restrictions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Two California Catholic bishops applauded the Supreme Court’s ruling easing the state’s restrictions on indoor worship put in place with the COVID-19 pandemic. It was “a very significant step forward for basic rights,” the high court’s decision makes clear we can now return to worshipping safely indoors without risk of harassment from government officials,” said San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone in a Feb. 6 statement.

Similarly, Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, Calif., said the decision “was a victory for religious liberty rights for all Americans.”

The high court’s decision gave California churches the right to resume indoor worship services while still allowing them to keep its ban on singing and chanting, and limiting attendance at 25% of capacity until their appeals against these restrictions are resolved by lower courts.

The decision, issued just before 11 p.m., was in response to challenges from South Bay United Pentecostal Church, near San Diego, and Harvest Rock Church, with campuses in different parts of southern California. The churches argued that the state’s restrictions on indoor worship services violated the Constitution since some branches are allowed to remain open.

The churches reminded the Supreme Court of its decision last November in the case of Belk v. Cuomo, where the court lifted the pandemic restrictions on congregation sizes at houses of worship that had been imposed by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The court’s ruling varied a variety of differing views of the COVID-19 pandemic issue. In one opinion, Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch said they would have gone with the state 30 more days to present additional evidence before an injunction against the singing ban and the 25% capacity limits would take effect.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that the ban on indoor worship services “appears to reflect not experts’ definitive and instead insufficient appreciation of the interests at stake.” And Justice Amy Coney Barrett, in her first signed opinion, joined by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, said the churches should have offered the court reasons why they should be permitted to have singing and chanting in their services.

Justice Elena Kagan dissented from the court’s ruling, joined by Justices Stephen Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor, noting that even though the justices “are not scientists,” they chose to go against the “judgments of experts about how to respond to a raging pandemic.”

She also said the court’s action “leaves state policymakers adrift, in California and elsewhere. It is difficult enough in a predictable legal environment to craft COVID policies that keep communities safe. That task becomes harder still when officials must guess which restrictions this court will choose to strike down.”

In summer, California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued restrictions prohibiting most indoor religious services in California counties that have experienced a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations.

In his Feb. 6 statement, Archbishop Cordileone said the Supreme Court made clear to state officials that permitting indoor worship is “a fundamental right and the law of the land.”

He also said state officials will “appreciate the care we’ve taken all throughout this crisis to protect the public health with masks, social distancing and other reasonable measures.”

The archbishop said the court’s ruling was “a break with fresh air in dark times.”

And thanked those who have spoken up in favor of Church members worshipping together indoors andBug the part of their very identity.

Bishop Barber, in his Feb. 6 statement, said he also was enthusiastic about the decision and pleased that “churches and synagogues will fall under the same safety rules which govern retail shopping and gambling casinos, and we will no longer be singled out for arbitrary restriction by the government.”

He also said he looks forward to “welcoming our congregations back inside our churches, at 25% capacity, and following all COVID safety procedures.”

No gift is too small. 100% of every gift goes directly to support ministries that support our schools, our parishes, our seminarians, our retired priests, and thousands upon thousands in need in the communities in which we live. You can make a big difference in so many ways by making a gift today.
They are the family members who help write our history, nurture seeds of faith, and love us unconditionally. They are our grandparents and, in some cases, our elderly parents. Sadly, many of them are isolated and feel threatened because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some grandparents and elderly family members have bunkered down at home, only leaving when it is absolutely necessary. Others are in independent living, assisted-living facilities and nursing homes, where visitors coming inside those places of residence are severely restricted. “Window visits” — where a family member or friend stands outside their window and communicates — are the new normal, as are phone calls, FaceTime and other forms of communication.

On more than one occasion, Pope Francis has reminded us of the important role that grandparents and the elderly play, serving as a link between generations.

So we should all be grateful. Our Holy Father recently announced the establishment of a World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly.

During his Sunday Angelus address on Jan. 31, the pope said the day will be celebrated every year on the fourth Sunday of July, which is the Sunday closest to the July 26 memorial of Sts. Joachim and Anne, Jesus’ grandparents. The first celebration of this day will be on July 25, when Pope Francis will mark the first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly with an evening Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican.

“It is important for grandparents to meet their grandchildren and for children to meet their grandparents because — as the prophet Joel says — grandparents, before their grandchildren, will dream and have great desires, and young people — taking strength from their grandparents — will go forward and prophesy,” he said.

Offering a reflection on the annual Feb. 2 feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the pope said the recognition of Christ as the Messiah by the elderly Simeon and Anna is a reminder that “the Holy Spirit still stirs up thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly today.”

“They are our children and grandparents, those who — in the experience of life and faith to the young — are the grandparents of the elderly,” he said.

The pope said that while many people tend to think of older people as a burden, they are a resource for the young, who can learn from them.

What is it about service that touches us so deeply?

During the Washington lockdown before the inauguration, I talked with U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court police and the members of the National Guard. As I left them, I felt a beautiful feeling of belonging.

The reason for this sentiment came from my father being a Chicago fireman. I was also a fireman and taught in a police academy. I was among first responders, whom I taught in a police academy. I was also a fireman and I was a fireman in the Air Force in 1954 and stationed in Biloxi, Miss. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

I was with my dad in the backyard.

During conversations with the police and National Guard, a moment I experienced as a boy came to mind. I was with my dad in the backyard. Suddenly, he saw smoke coming from the house next door. Vaulting over a high fence, he raced into the building and extinguished the fire. No concern for his safety — he was a first responder doing his duty.

The Greek poet Homer considered duty the real mark of a nobleman. For Homer, a nobleman is happily judged by a severe means—his sense of honor.

As inspiring as it is to fulfill our sense of honor, it can also be hard. Sometimes, it can be dangerous. The pope’s announcement reminds us of the importance of our spiritual leaders, who can help us to fulfill our duties as one.
La lectura del Evangelio del próximo fin de semana (Mc 1:40–45), cuyo domingo del tiempo ordinario, describe uno de los muchos casos en los que Jesús curó a un hombre que padecía lepra, una enfermedad contagiosa que afecta la piel, las mucosas y los nervios, provoca manchas y bultos en la piel y, en casos graves, desfiguración y deformidades. Según san Marcos: “Y vino a él un leproso impúdrelo, y de rodillas le dijo: —Si quieres, púdes limpiarme. Jesús, movido a compasión, extendió la mano, lo tocó y le dijo —Quero, se limpia. Y al instante desapareció la lepra de él, y quedó limpio. En seguida lo despidió, después de amonestarle” (Mc 1:40–43).

La lepra (enfamilia de Hansen) es relativamente rara hoy en día, pero cuando se producía se propagaba a través de gotitas respiratorias (tos o estornudos) y debe ser tratada por profesionales médicos para evitar enfermarse de gravedad e incluso la muerte. En tiempos de Jesús, y hasta hace muy poco, no había cura para esta terrible enfermedad, por lo que a los hombres, las mujeres y los niños con lepra se los excluyó del resto de la sociedad. Aunque estamos familiarizados con los relatos de las curaciones que realizó Jesús, su impacto es seguramente mayor ahora que todos hemos experimentado los horrores causados por la pandemia de la COVID-19.

Cuando nos encontramos por primera vez con esta plaga moderna, sin embargo, no habíamos cura. El aislamiento, usar mascarillas, desinfectar frecuentemente las manos y todo lo que tocamos, todo eso las medidas de precaución originales siguen siendo de vital importancia para la salud y la seguridad pública en los Estados Unidos y en todo el mundo. A raíz de la actual pandemia, podríamos comprender mejor el significado de las sencillas pero poderosas acciones de Jesús. Al acercarse y tocar a los leprosos, estaba transgrediendo un tabú estricto. En su compasión por el sufrimiento de la humanidad, Jesús empleó el poder curativo de Dios y afirmó la fe del hombre: “Si quieres, puedes limpiarme” (Mc 1:43).

Sin embargo, esta historia no es tan sencilla como parece. Por qué Jesús desechó a lo que se consideraba a un leproso recién curado, “después de amonestarlo” (Mc 1:43)? Por qué lo hizo: “Mira, no digas nada a nadie. Más bien, muéstrate al sacerdote y ofrece por nosotros la purificación, para testimonio a ellos” (Mc 1:44). Hoy en día deberíamos comprender mejor la importancia de seguir los protocolos obligatorios a la hora de tratar enfermedades mortales y contagiosas. Jesús está dispuesto a salirse de la norma para llevar a cabo la curación del hombre, pero insiste en que sigan estrictamente los procedimientos adecuados para cerciorarse de que esté “limpio” y, por tanto, sea capaz de volver a la vida cotidiana. Entonces, como ahora, los protocolos para garantizar la seguridad pública eran de vital importancia, por muy irritantes o incómodos que pudieran parecer.

Por supuesto, san Marcos nos dice que, en su euforia, el hombre recién curado ignoró la amonestación de Jesús y “comenzó a proclamar y a difundir mucho el hecho” (Mc 1:45). El resultado de esto lo trajo problemas a Jesús. Como leemos en el Evangelio de este domingo, el hombre comenzó a “difundir mucho el hecho, de modo que Jesús ya no podía entrar abiertamente en ninguna ciudad” (Mc 1:45). En nuestro contexto contemporáneo, podemos sintetizar esto enfatizando ciertas lecciones. "Ninguna buena acción queda impune," pero en realidad este incidente en la vida de Jesús debería recordarnos que, aunque nuestras reacciones a menudo conducen consecuencias desdichadas, la gracia de Dios es suficiente para superar cualquier dificultad. A Jesús se le impidió entrar en los pueblos vecinos, pero la gente de todas formas se le acercó. Los tocó, y sus corazones, mentes y cuerpos fueron sanados. Puede que esta sea especialmente el caso en este momento que estamos atravesando: nuestro país y nuestro mundo necesitan urgentemente el toque sanador de Jesús.

Hagamos todo lo posible para llevar la bondad y la compasión a las situaciones en las que el resentimiento y la división se están enconando. Recemos para que los líderes del país, y todos nosotros, pongamos en práctica el mandamiento de Jesús de amarnos los unos a los otros, perdonar a nuestros enemigos y orar por los que nos persiguen. Podemos tocar la vida de los demás con actos de simple bondad y generosidad, y al mismo tiempo cumplir con los protocolos de distanciamiento social.

Sanamos las heridas causadas por el malestar social, las dificultades económicas y las diferencias políticas; unámonos como hermanos y hermanas en Cristo dejando de lado nuestros desacuerdos para construir comunidades de justicia y paz. Que el toque sanador del Señor nos unga, curando nuestras heridas. San José, patrón de la Iglesia, ora por nosotros.
Mt. St. Francis, Scholl-Scheuren, Indianapolis: A 45th wedding anniversary celebration for Robert and Maureen Scholl-Scheuren will be held on March 25, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at St. Francis Church in Indianapolis.

Benedict Inn offers six ‘Combating Racism’ sessions starting on Feb. 23
Registration is open to join all or any of six in-person sessions on “Combating Racism” at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southen Ave. in Beech Grove, from 7:30-8 p.m. on Feb. 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30. The sessions will be led by Dr. Mary Beth Riner, a professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis’ School of Nursing. She has been on a racial-literacy journey for the past five years. Increasing awareness of the harm resulting from racialized public policies and community practices led her to develop an experiential education offering for those seeking faith-based approaches to reaching the goal of racial healing. She has led this program in parish and prayer group settings.

An interactive program is free for those who want to explore how to begin or continue the work of dismantling racism to create a more racially just and compassionate society. The series will explore faith-based and public policy strategies and organizations that are leading local and national anti-racist initiatives; examine personal perspectives on white privilege; and engage in prayer practices seeking racial equity and justice in the United States.

Session topics include white identity development; racial awareness experience activity; Scriptural basis for anti-racism work; the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; cultural arts and literature of people of color; health disparities and social conditions; policing and criminal justice; and becoming a white antiracist. The cost for all six sessions is $125, or $25 for individual sessions. To register online, go to benzainfranciscan.org/leitcrio. For questions or to register by phone, call 812-923-0177.

Mount St. Francis offering six ‘Letting Go’ Zoom sessions starting on Feb. 18
A series of six Zoom sessions called “Letting Go” will be offered by Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality from 7:30-8 p.m. on Feb. 18 and 25, and March 4, 11, 18, and 25. The sessions will be led by Judy Riber, the center’s associate director.

The series offers participants an opportunity to consider letting ...<snip>
In his message for the 55th World Day of Communications on Jan. 24, Pope Francis combined praise “for the courage of journalists, camera operators, editors, directors—who often risk their lives in carrying out their work” with a stern warning about the dangers of online communications where “the risk of misinformation being spread on social media has become evident to everyone. We have known for some time that news and even images can be easily manipulated, for any number of reasons, at times simply for sheer narcissism.”

Thanks to the efforts of many communications professionals, “we now know, for example, about the hardships endured by persecuted minorities in various parts of the world, numerous cases of oppression and injustice inflicted on the poor and on the environment, and many wars that otherwise would be overlooked.”

The pope observed that “it would be a loss not only for news reporting, but for society and for democracy as a whole, were those voices to fade away. Our entire human family would be impoverished.”

At the same time, the Holy Father insisted that “nothing replaces seeing things at first hand.”

Our reliance on the various news and entertainment media (especially social media) to keep us informed, shaped our opinions and influence the way we act has some disturbing implications. It may be that we can ever completely replace seeing things in person,” the pope said. “Some things can only be learned by firsthand experience. We do not communicate merely with words, but with our eyes, the tone of our voice and our gestures.”

By relying on printed reports and electronic images prepared for us by third parties, we risk giving ourselves over to those who do not value our individual best interests or the common good. “We think of how much empty rhetoric abounds, even in our time, in all areas of public life, in business as well as politics,” the pope said.

To counteract the negative effects of “fake news” regardless of its sources, Pope Francis called attention to the “preaching of Jesus.” “Jesus’ attractiveness to those who met him depended on the truth of his preaching,” the pope said. “Yet the effectiveness of what he said was inseparable from how he looked at others and how he spoke to them, even and from his silence. The disciples not only listened to his words; they watched him speak. Indeed in him—the incarnate Logos—what we see on a face, the invisible God let himself be seen, heard and touched, as John reports to us (Jn 1:1-3). The word is effective only if it is ‘seen,’ only if it engages us in experience, in dialogue.”

For Pope Francis, truly effective communications require that the reader or viewer be actively engaged, and not simply passive. What is being reported or viewed in the media. This necessarily involves “encounter” and genuine dialogue. “In being open to differing points of view while never sacrificing fundamental principles. “We have books in our hands, but the facts before our eyes,” said St. Augustine in speaking of fulfillment of the prophecies found in sacred Scripture. So too, the Gospel comes alive in our own day, whenever we accept the compelling witness of people whose lives have been changed by their encounter with Jesus.

For two millennia, the Church’s encounters has communicated the attractiveness of the Christian adventure. “The challenge that such encounters has communicated to us is to communicate by encountering people, where they are and as they are.”

To “accept the compelling witness of others” does not mean passive acceptance. It means letting the words and example of Jesus guide us as we seek to discover the truth “in all areas of [personal and public] life, in business as well as politics,” the pontiff said. Pope Francis concluded his message with a very powerful prayer. Let’s paste these words on our computer and television screens. Let’s bear them in mind always:

Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves, and to set out in search of truth.

Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen, not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions.

Teach us to go where no one else will go, to take the time needed to understand, to pay attention to the essentials, not to be distracted by the superfluous, to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.

Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.)
Now that dream was within hours of becoming a reality on this day of Nov. 18, 2020—the day of the NBA draft. Looking into the camera, Bane was trying to describe how he was feeling, and what it would mean for him—one of the 20 graduates of the 2020 class of Seton Catholic High School in Richmond—to be drafted. “You can’t really put it into words,” Bane said into the camera. “It’s starting to hit now. I mean, looking here at the home grew up in, being in the city I grew up in, my family here, close friends here. It’s indescribable. It’s indescribable.”

That next night, in that same house, Bane sat next to his great-grandmother, Fabbie, in a room filled with family and friends, watching the televised broadcast of the NBA draft. And when the NBA commissioner announced that Bane was the last pick of the first round, the room erupted in cheers, smiles and pure joy as Bane hugged his great-grandmother.

The only regret of the day was that his great-grandfather, Bob, wasn’t physically part of the celebration. He died on July 20 after contracting the COVID-19 virus. Still, Bob’s photo was prominently displayed on a table in front of where Bane sat. And he had the feeling that his great-grandfather—who was one of his coaches in his youth—was with him, celebrating the dream that came true.

“I’ve tried to make the most of it” Fast-forward to Jan. 31, 2021—two days before Bane returned home to Indiana as a member of the Memphis Grizzlies, to play for the first time against the team he rooted for as a child: the Indiana Pacers. Bane returned to the Seton Catholic gym to talk to the current students about his journey—his way of giving back for what he calls “the close-knit connection” he had with students and staff during his four years there.

“I told them I was sitting in those same seats as them not long ago,” Bane said about the basic theme of his talk. “I told them, ‘Whatever dream you have, do it, and you’ll live a happy life.’”

Living your dream is just part of his approach to life. Living your life with character is equally important to him. A pre-draft analysis of Bane noted: “Bane is regularly praised for his character and approach to life.”

“Character is huge, whether you play basketball or not,” Bane said.

“The person you are will last longer than your basketball career. My great-grandmother instilled that in me at an early age. Whether it’s the janitor or the CEO, you treat them all with respect.”

Markward marvels at Bane’s willingness to return to Seton that day. “It’s the biggest day of his life as he is about to get drafted by an NBA team, and he took the time out of his day to speak to the student body. His journey through Seton and TCU, and about his faith and never giving up on your dreams.”

“Desmond is an inspired human throughout his journey. His approach to life, how he treats others and fans and family is unbelievable.”

Those traits help explain why a few hundred people made the trip from Richmond to Connersville on May 15 to watch Bane play his first pro game in Indiana—against the Pacers in Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

“A dream come true” As he prepares for the game against the Pacers, Bane said, “It’s going to be a dream come true. I grew up rooting for the Pacers and not being on the court. To be in that game is going to be surreal. I wouldn’t be surprised if there were a couple hundred people [from Richmond] there.”

There were, and maybe a couple hundred more beyond that. Said Josh Jurgens, the head coach of Seton Catholic High School’s boys’ basketball team.

“I think there were only 1,400 fans there for the game [because of COVID-19 restrictions], and we had two sections that were pretty much Wayne County and Connersville contingent, letting them know he appreciated them being there and cheering for him. Then he did something that touched Jurgens and others even more.”

“He ended up giving his jersey to his uncle, Tony, in the crowd,” Jurgens said. “He gave his jersey to his uncle so he could give it to his great-grandmother because she wasn’t able to make it to the game.”

Soon, Jurgens was sharing another favorite moment about Bane. Everyone knows him for how he seems to have more than a few stories they want to tell about him.

‘He doesn’t forget people or where he came from’

“Desmond was a senior at Seton Catholic, a friend approached Jurgens and asked if Bane would make an appearance at a birthday party for her twin daughters, because the little girls were in awe of him as a star basketball player. Jurgens told Bane about the request after a Saturday practice, adding that the birthday party was in Connersville, about 30 minutes away. He also told Bane there was no pressure to go.

‘He showed up and surprised them.’ And he stayed for their whole birthday party—two to three hours,” Jurgens said. “I have so many stories of him helping people, and he didn’t have to do it. He went to so many little kids’ games just to be there for them.”

Bane also had a dramatic impact on his high school teammates.

“He’s always that person who wants to make everyone around him better,” Jurgens said. “He was the first player in the gym and the last one to leave. When you have that out of your best player, it’s easy to hold everyone else accountable.”

Bane’s high school coach shared one more tribute to him. Jurgens noted that his 9-year-old son, Tripp, is the proud owner of a Desmond Bane Memphis Grizzlies’ jersey. As a father, Jurgens views Bane as a worthy hero for his son. “He’s the old soul raised by his great-grandparents,” Jurgens said. “They raised him right, for sure. He listened to them and taught him about becoming a better person, staying humble, working hard and being kind to people. He took all that to heart. He gives back. He doesn’t forget people or where he came from.

Bane says he never could.

“The people who I have in my career and my life are special people,” he said. Those are the people I’ve known my whole life.

“There’s no reason to act differently because of the position I’m in now. I’m extremely grateful for the position I’m in, and I’m extremely grateful to have those people around me. They’ve been following me my whole life and make me feel supported.”
Learn from Mother Theodore when it comes to facing challenges

By Natalie Hoefer

Call it the “new normal” or call it “unprecedented.” Either way, neither is a positive due to the COVID-19 pandemic or social and political change, life in the last few years has been quite turbulent—if not all—Catholics in central and southern Indiana.

Fortunately, there is a source to turn to for wise guidance in facing such challenges. A local source. A holy source. Her name is Mother Theodore Guérin—now St. Theodore—founder of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods where her remains rest.

If anyone can relate to challenges, it is Mother Theodore. And she’s been a profound example in how to face struggles, even contemporary ones, it is St. Theodore.

As a young girl, Anne-Therese Guérin experienced the loss of two brothers and her father.

She became Sister St. Theodore after taking vows with the Sisters of Providence in Ruillé, France. From there, she “formed a close bond and significant friendship” with the general superior, Mother Mary LeCoeur, said Providence Sister Denise Wilkinson during the presentation.

But a misunderstanding led to Mother Mary withdrawing her friendship from Sister St. Theodore.

“At times,” the rupture in their friendship “almost crushed” the young Sister St. Theodore.

Flavin noted that life’s challenges offer an opportunity to “turn away, or to keep walking and God in.”

Mother Theodore shared the peace and joy she found in trusting in Providence.

“Remember what Mother Theodore said: ‘We are not called to do all the good that is possible, but only to that which we can do’,” Flavin noted.

As the daughter of immigrants, Providence Sister Jessica Vierne relieth to the “courage and confidence” it took for the saint to move to a foreign country with a different culture and language.

Noting the “social justice issues that have resurfaced and reopened wounds,” Sister Jessica said she finds in Mother Theodore “inspiration in how she always got back up.”

She cited several quotes from St. Theodore from which she draws inspiration:

• “Have confidence in Providence that so far has never failed us. This is not yet clear. Groping along slowly. Do not press matters; be patient, be trustful.”
• “If you lean all with your weight upon Providence, you will find yourself well-supported.”
• “You will see many things in new light if you give the Holy Spirit free access to your mind and your heart.”

Sister Denise finds wisdom to handle difficult relationships from Mother Theodore’s quotes regarding education:

• “A teacher accomplishes more by an act of kindness than by an act of harshness” and “Love the children first, and then teach them.”

Those were her key to winning hearts and minds,” she said, whether of students and parents or of other relationships.

Sister Gill Quigley, a member of the congregation of Sisters of Providence in Ruillé, joined the discussion from London, where it was midnight when the Zoom session began.

Conferences to be heard for 12 hours on Fridays in Lent in Batesville Deanery

By Sean Gallagher

Because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, many parishes in central and southern Indiana are not scheduling penance services during the upcoming season of Lent. But faith communities in the Batesville Deanery in the southeast part of the state will make the sacrament of penance widely available to Catholics in the region in another way.

Each Friday of Lent, priests in rotating locations will be available to hear confessions for 12 consecutive hours from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

This has been a regular practice at All Saints Parish in Dearborn County for more than 10 years. More than 100 people on average have gone to confession there on the first Friday of each month, according to Father Jonathan Meyer, All Saints Parish.

Although he did not start the practice at the parish, Father Meyer said it fits well with one of his phrases that “our priests are the one ministry.”

“If we want people to come to confession, we have to build a culture of availability around the sacrament,” he said. “Three hours a week says exactly how much we want people to believe about the Church. We’re there for you, and we’ll wait for you. It’s on your time, not ours.”

Father Michael Keucher has experienced the positive effect of offering the sacrament of penance for 12 consecutive hours at St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville, where he serves as pastor. It’s also happened in other parishes in the Batesville Deanery and in faith communities in other parts of the archdiocese.

“As dean of the Batesville Deanery, Father Keucher helped arrange having 12 hours of confession on a weekly basis during Lent.

“I’m excited,” he said. “There’s so much beautiful piety in this deanship. There’s such a hunger for God’s mercy and the sacraments. There’s a generosity on the part of the priests and parish life coordinators. It’s opening wide the doors of God’s mercy.”

Both priests think offering 12 hours of confession each Friday of Lent is a good way for many Catholics who have been away from the sacraments for a long time because of the pandemic to return to a more active living-out of the faith.

“Is this a great opportunity after so many months, where so many people needed to stay away,” Father Keucher said. “We’re at the point now where more and more people are ready to return to church. This Lent has the potential to be a real positive experience of grace for people who have had to be away from the sacraments for quite a while.”

At the same time, he noted that offering 12 hours of confession each Friday in the deanship is respectful of the continued need to take precautions to keep people safe from the virus.

“There won’t be many people in these churches at any one time,” Father Keucher said. “With 12 hours every Friday during Lent, there’s so much time in there for people to move around whenever they’d like to.”

While he acknowledged that the pandemic has been a challenging time for the Church, Father Meyer said that it might also be a spur to view ministry from new perspectives.

“I hope this will pave a new way for the future in which we’ll serve our people better and more effectively,” Father Meyer said. “I’m genuinely excited to see what’s going to happen in the many people that will be able to go to confession and [in] my brother priests. What a grace for them to see their people reconciled to God and their hunger for the sacraments.”

Batesville Deanery penance schedule

The sacrament of penance will be available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each Friday in Lent in the following locations in the Batesville Deanery: Camp RiverRidge Church in Franklin County; and 3 miles east of the Legion of Christ religious order with priests from the order based inometown.

• Feb. 19—St. Joseph Church, 228 E. Hendricks St., in Shelbyville.
• Feb. 26—Camp RiverRidge, 6145 Harvey Branch Road, in Oldenburg.

• March 5—All Saints Parish, St. Martin Campus, 8064 York Rd. in Guilford.
• March 12—St. Mary Church, 1310 Rt. 167, 1 mile west of the Badin Way, in Greenburg.
• March 19—St. Joseph Church in Shelbyville.
• March 26—St. Lawrence Church, 542 Walnut St., in Lawrenceburg.
• April 2—All Saints Parish, St. Martin Campus.
Black Catholic is trailblazer in science; she has been geneticist for 56 years

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (CNS)—As a child, Sheila Stiles Jewell played outside of the public housing where her family lived in Memphis. She felt one with nature and education was also the focus of her life in all its perfection of what is right, just and holy.

She was the first permanent African American female employee in Department of Interior in the Milford marine biological laboratory, where she has had a 56-year career and is still working today.

“I had a passion for genetics. Early in my career, there were no role models in this male-dominated field,” she said. She studies shellfish, such as oysters, clams, scallops and mussels and works on restoring this population through genetics and breeding for better survival and growth.

Women’s rights and civil rights have brought a lot of improvement, though there are still some barriers today, she said.

She loves working with young people, “reaching out and reaching back,” she said. “If you have a dream, follow it, do what it takes, don’t be discouraged, don’t give up.”

Jewell was a trailblazer. This past fall, she was inducted into the Memphis Catholic High School Hall of Fame.

For this photo, everyone’s masks were taken off briefly and then quickly replaced. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)
Be close to the saints during Lent to grow in holiness

By Fr. Herbert Weber

I was in the town of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. With a backdrop of two volcanic mountains and facing one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, it was a picturesque place. It was also where, in 1981, Father Stanley Rother became the first American citizen to be martyred. A group of parishioners had joined me for a Sunday afternoon outing, coming from the neighboring town of San Lucas, to visit Father Rother’s former church. We were spending some time in Guatemala working with people in San Lucas, building cinder block stoves, constructing simple houses and getting to know the Kaqchikel people.

Santiago Atitlan, so close, had a different culture. The people were Tz’utujil and many still spoke that language instead of Spanish. Father Rother, who had come from Oklahoma, had immersed himself into the people’s lives so fully that when members of his congregation were being killed during the Guatemalan civil war for their work for justice, he was in deep anguish.

Although he was a U.S. citizen, he discovered that his name, too, was on the secret death squad list. At first, he left the country and returned to Oklahoma. But eventually, saying that when the sheep are in danger the shepherd cannot run, he chose to return to guide his people. He took precautions, sleeping in a different room of the sprawling church complex eventually, saying that when the sheep are in danger the shepherd cannot run, he chose to return to guide his people. He took precautions, sleeping in a different room of the sprawling church complex each night. But one night the death squad came and found him.

The small room where Father Rother died is now a chapel for personal prayer. In 1981, Father Stanley Rother became the first American citizen to be martyred. Exploring the lives of the saints can help Catholics grow in holiness during Lent. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Spending time with a saint is an awesome experience. I felt like I was personally connected with Father Rother, now Blessed Stanley Rother. There are many ways to spend time with a saint, and Lent is a great time to do it.

Each Lent, I immerse myself in the experience of at least one saint. This has included both the ones of old and more contemporary ones, some not yet canonized. Often this immersion can be done by choosing the right books to read.

In recent years, I have read about Blessed Stanley Rother, St. Oscar Romero, Sister Maura Clarke, Dorothy Day, Sister Dorothy Stang, St. Maximilian Kolbe and St. Teresa of Calcutta. I’ve also found some excellent biographies of long-respected saints like Sts. Francis of Assisi, Jean de Brebeuf, Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, Damien of Molokai and Teresa of Avila.

I’m not sure why I started exploring lives of saints for Lent, but I suspect it was my desire to form an image in my mind of a holy person and not just analyze tenets of spirituality. In other words, I wanted to enter their experience and feel what they felt, to get to really know them. Faith as expressed through the experience of at least one saint, there are several common threads. The first is the profound and intentional prayer life that comes through. Some like Teresa of Calcutta had experienced great darkness, as she called it, feeling an absence of God. Others, like Catherine of Siena or John of the Cross, discovered a deep mystical oneness with God.

In addition to prayer, virtually every saint also served the needs of others. Besides Mother Teresa working with those dying in the streets of Calcutta, Sisters Dorothy Stang and Maura Clarke dedicated their entire lives to work with the poor of Latin America. Dorothy Day coupled her service of the poor with a radical voice against injustice, in her ministry through the Catholic Worker House.

As I explore the lives of the saints, I am overwhelmed by the way these men and women were willing to suffer for the faith. Some like Jean de Brebeuf, Oscar Romero or Blessed Peter To Rot died in direct response to their ministry for the faith. Others, like Damien, suffered many other setbacks before actually dying.

Upon reflection, the common qualities of these saints are prayer, charity and suffering. Those conform to three ways of observing Lent—almsgiving, prayer and fasting—found in the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18).

In 2005 when I was tasked with starting a new parish, I was also asked to propose a name for the parish. The possibilities were great as I considered all the saints I had come to know. Ultimately, I asked the bishop to consider Pope John XXIII to be our patron. And this new parish was born.

I was acquainted with Pope John through my own studies of his life and the Second Vatican Council. I remember his election in 1958, have visited his tomb, read biographies and his own journal. He encapsulated what I felt a parish should be in the new century.

Whether during Lent or any other time, making a connection with a saint can provide the necessary inspiration that we all need to follow the Gospel and live for the kingdom of God.

(Father Herbert Weber is founding pastor of St. John XXIII Parish in Perrysburg, Ohio. His weekly podcast can be found at 23chuch.)
Loosening our grip helps us yield to God’s control

By Kimberly Pohovey

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Perspectives

When an obstetrical becomes a prayer

By Kimberly Pohovey

Our oldest son, Luke, recently graduated college and accepted a job working in Corpus Christi, Texas. I knew there was a better-than-average chance he would find work out of town. However, I didn’t consider him moving as far as Texas. It all happened so fast—right after I worked the half of a Stay-Cation in our home. My husband Mark and I didn’t want him to make the 20-hour drive and try to find a place to live on his own. So the day after my breast cancer surgery, Mark and Luke packed up his Ford Fusion and headed for The Lone Star State.

Luke’s job as a news producer at a TV station is going well. He’s learning so much so quickly, and they are giving him more and more responsibility. However, being 1,200 miles from home is difficult. He is used to being close to family and, especially during COVID, has little opportunity to meet people.

As his mother, my heart aches whenever he sounds down on our calls. I tell him all will be well—just needs to give it time. I suggest activities to keep him occupied, I suggest he pray, meditate, read, exercise.

Then it hit me: We are both sharing a similar experience. We are both in our own heads. Both of us want to control our own situations instead of trusting that God has our situations well under control. It is when we vie for control that we feel so frustrated, worried or lonely. We need to learn to let go and trust.

When I look back in my life, I see that there are situations that I let destroy me or cost me my peace of mind. What was it that the Lord was trying to teach me through one of these situations? I do not want to see someone else suffer the same way.

There are so many instances in my life that I’m now able to look back and say, “Oh, that’s what God was doing.” I just need to loosen my grip on the tug of war rope and slide his way.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.)

Twenty Something/Christina Capoccia

I paint. Basically, I’ve more and more about myself and what I want. I realize that I’ve been thinking about my life and, especially during COVID, has little opportunity to meet people.

As his mother, my heart aches whenever he sounds down on our calls. I tell him all will be well—just needs to give it time. I suggest activities to keep him occupied, I suggest he pray, meditate, read, exercise.

Then it hit me: We are both sharing a similar experience. We are both in our own heads. Both of us want to control our own situations instead of trusting that God has our situations well under control. It is when we vie for control that we feel so frustrated, worried or lonely. We need to learn to let go and trust.

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There are so many instances in my life that I’m now able to look back and say, “Oh, that’s what God was doing.” I just need to loosen my grip on the tug of war rope and slide his way.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.)

Prayer is the word against the city, but actually used a shell against Jerusalem. When Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Pharisees wanted the crowd silenced. Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke, says, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones [themselves] will cry out” (Lk 19:40).

It seems that the word must go forth and do God’s will, and in every situation, shall a way be found. There is a magnificent passage in the Book of Isaiah that reads, “For just as the rain descends and the snow comes down, it does not return to the earth...” (Is 55:10-11).

Isn’t that a fantastic image? Everyone has a next time you wonder where a response in conversation came from, you might ponder if it was a message directly from God.

Even the decision to write periodic columns for this publication was a faith-filled response within me to an assignment that I felt God wanted from me at this time in my life. Did you prayer about it? What message is God encouraging you to speak today, and to whom are you being sent? How long will you keep this urge to speak: Keep listening and praying about it. God alone knows the place and the time.

(Richard Etienne is a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, Ind., in the Evansville Diocese.)

Do you ever have a thought that cannot be shared? Have you ever wondered, “Where to someone and later wondered, “Where

Between COVID-19 and cancer, I’ve had a lot of time at home. Time to think. Time to worry. Too much time in my own head. I have had to be more intentional about trusting prayer. I have been reading devotions and Catholic spiritual books. I’ve been utilizing my Fitbit app to stay active and lose weight. I paint. Basically, I’ve been using all the tools in my power to stay occupied, stay centered, and to help me get to...
The first reading for Mass this weekend comes from the Book of Leviticus. In sequence, Leviticus is the fourth book in modern biblical translations. As such, it is part of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch includes the five books of the Bible attributed to Moses. These five books are also called the Torah. The Torah forms the fundamental law and philosophy of Judaism, both in current understandings and in ancient practices as well. In this reading, God speaks to Moses and his brother, Aaron. The sickness is leprosy. It is not known whether these references to leprosy in the Scriptures referred to what is known today as Hansen’s disease or to some other illness. Regardless of the exact scientific nature of what the ancients called leprosy, the problem was chronic and severe. An entire social system developed around the disease. Victims were outcasts. They were brutally shunned, often had to forage or beg for food and search for any shelter they could find. Ancient Jews would never have God for such a serious malady. God was seen as good, loving and merciful. The ancient Hebrews saw human sin as ultimately the cause of all earthly misery, including illness. St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians furthers this liturgy with its second reading. In this reading, the great Apostle counsels the Christians of Corinth never to offend anyone, Jew or Gentile. This advice reveals that the Corinthian Christian community involved both kinds of people. Jews lived in places throughout the Roman Empire, not just in the Holy Land. Paul urges that the Christians follow his example, because he imitates Christ. For its last reading, the Church gives us a passage from the Gospel of St. Mark. In this reading, a leper approaches Jesus, asking for a cure. The same attitude about leprosy applied among Jews at the time of Jesus as it did among Jews in the days of Moses. Jesus cursed the man, the Lord being “moved with pity,” according to Mark (Mk 1:41). This cure came when Jesus touched the man. Symbolic touching was important in those days, as it is important today in the liturgy. It represents contact and transferal. In ordinations, the ordaining bishop lays hands upon the candidates to be ordained bishop, priest or deacon. At weddings, the bride and bridegroom hold each other’s hands when exchanging their nuptial vows. Jesus transmitted the healing power of God to the man through this touch. Then, Jesus spoke the miraculous words of healing. The Lord ordered the man to go to the Jewish priests, since they could reinstate him in society if they saw he was free of disease. In recent years, there has been an option with regard to the distribution of ashes. Those administering them may say the traditional “Remember that you are dust...” or they may opt instead to use the formula, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”
PROVIDENCE Sister Charles Van Hoy served in Catholic schools for 32 years

PROVIDENCE Sister Charles Van Hoy, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Jan. 26 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her religious community’s motherhouse. She was 91.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held on Feb. 10. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Charles earned a bachelor’s degree at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master’s degree in library science at St. Louis University in Ky. During her 72 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Patricia ministered as an educator and school librarian for 32 years in schools in Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina and Ohio. She was married to Karl Van Hoy in 1969, and they devoted themselves entirely to prayer.

In the archdiocese, Sister Charles served at St. Anthony School from 1964-71, at St. Joseph School from 1970-71, the United Southside Community Organization from 1975-83 and at Our Lady of the Springs School from 1983-93. She also ministered as activity director at the motherhouse from 1994-2008 as a volunteer at Educational Family Services in West Terre Haute from 2006-14.

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 47875.

PROVIDENCE Sister Patricia McIntyre served for 34+ years

PROVIDENCE Sister Patricia McIntyre (formerly Sister Rachel), a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Jan. 18 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her religious community’s motherhouse. She was 87.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held on Feb. 8. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

Sister Patricia was born on March 10, 1933, in Elkhart, Ind. She was professed as an educator for 12 years in elementary and high schools and in a virtual education program.


As a volunteer, she ministered at the United Southside Community Organization from 1975-83 and at Our Lady of the Springs School from 1983-93. She also ministered as activity director at the motherhouse from 1994-2008 as an educator for 12 years in elementary and high schools and in a virtual education program.

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 47875.

PROVIDENCE Sister Catherine White served in education, child and youth protection

PROVIDENCE Sister Catherine White, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Jan. 21 at Mother Theodore Hall on the campus of her community’s motherhouse. She was 73.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a virtual funeral service was held on Jan. 29. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

In the archdiocese, Sister Catherine served at St. Mark School in Indianapolis from 1970-71, the United Southside Community Organization from 1975-83 and at Our Lady of the Springs School from 1983-93. She also ministered as activity director at the motherhouse from 1994-2008 as an educator for 12 years in elementary and high schools and in a virtual education program.

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Please submit in writing to the office of Colombia and Surinam, or by email, or mail at the address below:

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percent of tuition based on family income. House Bill 1005 would streamline the program by setting the scholarship amount at 90 percent for all students eligible for vouchers.

“A child’s success should not be dictated by their family’s income,” Bethnag said. “When we started looking at the current eligibility requirements, we found a lot of hard-working families still could not send their child to the school of their choice.”

House Bill 1005 seeks to expand the existing school choice program in two additional ways. First, it would add foster care as a pathway into the voucher program. Second, it would create the Indiana Education Scholarship Account, which would provide eligible families funding to directly pay for tuition or other education-related expenses at an Indiana school. This account would be offered to children in foster care, those with special needs, and those with parents on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA), which have been instrumental in school choice efforts for decades, stand in strong support of the bill. “All students being educated in any Indiana school are our kids,” said John Elcesser, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. “We always support what is best for the child, and families are best at making those decisions.”

Parents, educators and advocates on both sides of the school choice issue gathered at the Statehouse for the often emotional, more than four-hour committee hearing on Feb. 3. Among those testifying was Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC, who spoke not only on behalf of the Catholic Church in Indiana but as an expectant father. “We rise in support of House Bill 1005, and on a personal note, this program would certainly benefit my wife and me,” Mingus said. “We are expecting our first child, a baby girl, and we would certainly fall into the category that this bill would help in regard to expanding educational choice.”

The INPEA, which represents Indiana’s more than 400 non-public schools (including the state’s 175 Catholic schools), emphasizes that there is common ground between proponents of public and non-public schools.

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Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Michael Parish, described the dedication of his faith community’s renovated church in the broader context of the pandemic as “a hopeful moment for us.”

“It’s a visible sign that things are getting better,” he said in an interview with The Criterion.

In remarks at the end of the liturgy, he spoke to the limited number of parishioners who were able to gather in the church.

“It’s a glorious thing that God has given us the grace to get through all this and especially to be able to continue this project during this time [of pandemic],” Father Jenkins noted. “That speaks volumes to your commitment to this project.”

But as a sign of the continuing effect of the pandemic, the renovation was not entirely completed in time for the Jan. 30 dedication Mass.

Installation of decorative wooden panels that will adorn the back wall of the church’s sanctuary was delayed because of issues related to the pandemic. So, during the dedication Mass, worshippers instead saw plywood panels at the back of the sanctuary.

Father Jenkins found a spiritual lesson in this: faith is always under construction.

“It’s providential in some way that it’s not finished,” he said at the end of the liturgy. “It reflects our own faith. As we build this beautiful church . . . we need to build up our own faith and build it up well. We can’t just come here and worship. When we leave this place, we need to spread Christ’s joy and his love and help with charity throughout this community.”

The coronavirus pandemic isn’t the only challenge that St. Michael Parish has faced since it was founded in 1860. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson noted in his homily at the dedication Mass how the Indianapolis East Deanery faith community has lived through wars, natural disasters and times of social unrest in its 161-year history.

“Through it all, however, has been the constant divine assurance of God’s faithful presence with those who put their faith in him,” Archbishop Thompson said. “Throughout the course of these experiences, many have found solace in the sacred space of a church, whether for individual devotion or communal gathering . . . to lift mind and heart in prayer.

“When we dedicate this church, we pray that it be a great source of consolation, inspiration, invitation and dedication for all who seek refuge in the Lord. May those who call this place their spiritual home be steadfast in welcoming, praising, serving and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.”

The parish’s church, built in 1966, has inspired a generation of believers. But no major work had been done to the church since its construction.

The yearlong renovation project was significant, said Father Jenkins.

“The church was basically gutted and everything new put in,” he said. “The walls remained and major structural items remained. But there’s a new roof. Even a lot of the walls were cut so that we can have more viewing space in the narthex now.”

A major change in the church building is its interior reorientation. When it was built in 1966, a large clear window stood above its back entrance while a tall wall stood behind the sanctuary.

About 15 years ago, a colorful stained-glass window of St. Michael the Archangel was installed in the window above the entrance.

The renovation project turned the interior around, putting the stained-glass window behind the altar in a place where worshippers can see it and a large crucifix at its base during liturgies. The change also allowed for the construction of a large narthex behind the new entrance to the church.

Father Jenkins said the renovation “does a great job of respecting what came before us.”

“The beauty that was already there has not been taken away,” he noted. “I think it’s only been enhanced by the design.”

St. Michael parishioner David O’Donnell agrees. A retired engineer who supervised construction projects at Eli Lilly and Company, O’Donnell was involved in the development of the parish master plan beginning in 2012 and helped oversee the renovation project, visiting the parish daily during the renovation to check on the work.

“(The reorientation) gives it a totally different appearance, a different look, a different feel,” O’Donnell said. “And that’s a beautiful piece of stained glass. You see the crucifix, and it’s enhanced by the stained glass.”

St. Michael Church has been a special place for the parish’s executive assistant, Christie Murphy. It’s where her children were baptized, received their first Communion and entered more deeply into their faith.

It’s also where her father, the late Deacon Wayne Davis, ministered from his ordination in 2008 until his death in 2019.

Yet the Jan. 30 dedication stands out for her.

“It’s probably one of the most exciting things that I’ve experienced in this parish,” Murphy said after the dedication Mass. “It’s been so anticipated. All of the parishioners have really contributed to the success of the campaign and to the building.”

She and other women in the parish assisted in the symbolically rich Mass by preparing the altar for the liturgy of the Eucharist. Minutes before, Archbishop Thompson had anointed it with chrism oil, rubbing it across the altar’s entire surface.

Murphy and the other women carefully used towels to soak up the excess chrism oil. She was pleased that such a mundane act of cleaning could become a sacred act of worship.

“It felt like we were ministering to Christ as we were trying to clean the altar and make it beautiful,” Murphy said.

She wished that more of her fellow parishioners could have been there to share in the church dedication. Seating was limited due to ongoing restrictions to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

“We wanted to fit more people in,” Murphy said. “That was hard. It was great that so many people were here and able to experience it. But I just wish that we could have had a full church.”

Murphy’s desire to gather with more parishioners points to her and O’Donnell’s belief that the renovation is a sign of a positive future for St. Michael Parish.

“I think parishioners will be excited when they are in the renovated church and see the expanded narthex,” O’Donnell said. “I think the pandemic has maybe sapped some energy from all phases of life. Hopefully, it will inject a new enthusiasm.”

“We’re a very faithful parish,” Murphy said. “We’re an engaged parish. Going forward, that’s just going to continue. The changes to the building will help inspire changes within the parish. We’ll become more active and cohesive. It breathes a new life into the parish.”

(For more photos from the dedication Mass, visit www.CriterionOnline.com. To learn more about St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, visit stmichaelsgrfld.org.)