From heartbeat to hope
Readers share how pandemic has impacted their faith, page 7.

First ‘Legacy Gala’ will support Catholic schools, Catholic Charities and seminarians
By Natalie Hoefer

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The gala, which will include music, online bidding, social media posting and more, will also serve this year to honor archdiocesan chancellor Annette “Mickey” Lentz for her 60 years of service in the archdiocese.

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It took place on Feb. 22, 2020, a matter of weeks before the coronavirus pandemic made such gatherings impossible.

With the pandemic still affecting the daily life of people around the world, the sixth annual conference was held last month on Feb. 27 on the St. Joseph campus of All Saints Parish with an in-person audience of 150.

Approximately 1,000 people viewed a livestream of the conference in 22 states and in the United Kingdom.

E6’s in the conference’s title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up “the armor of God” in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

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They were anxious for several reasons. It was their first performance of a new play, and their practice time had been cut short by snowstorms closing their school two weeks prior.

Adding to their shaky nerves was the presence of a certain audience member: Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

“The farther we got in the play, I think the more relaxed we got,” said junior Victor Beeler.

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Business executive who is gospel singer, author to receive Laetare Medal

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (CNS)—Carla Harris, a top executive at the investment bank Morgan Stanley and a celebrated gospel singer, speaker and author will be awarded the University of Notre Dame’s 2021 Laetare Medal.

“The Laetare Medal is the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics, will be awarded at the university’s May 23 graduation ceremony.

“Harris has exemplified the highest ideals of American enterprise, championed the principle that opportunity should never be denied on the basis of gender or race, and generously mentored countless rising leaders,” said Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, Notre Dame’s president, in a March 14 announcement of this year’s award recipients.

“Enriched by her gifts as a singer and public speaker, her work in the competitive world of banking is firmly rooted in her commitment to service, developing the next generation of leaders and her Catholic faith,” he said.

The Laetare Medal is announced each year on Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent.

Harris, vice chairman of wealth management and senior client adviser at Morgan Stanley, began her career at a time when very few of her colleagues were Black or women. She was chair of the Morgan Stanley Foundation from 2005 to 2014 and is a member of the boards for Harvard University and Walmart.

In 2001, she married Victor Franklin at St. Barbeome’s Church, in the Harlem neighborhood of New York, where she remained an active parishioner. She and her husband have two daughters.

Established at Notre Dame in 1883, the Laetare Medal has been awarded annually to a Catholic “whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity.”

Previous recipients of the medal include Martin Luther King Jr.; Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement; Walker Percy, novelist; Mgr. George Jones, an labor activist; and Sister Norma Pimentel, a Sister of the Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at 8:45 p.m.

The liturgy will be livestreamed at: www.ssppc.org/streaming:

• April 3, Holy Saturday—8:45 p.m.
• Easter Vigil
• April 4, Easter Sunday—10 a.m.
• Easter Sunday Mass.

Easter liturgies are set at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad Archabbeley

Easter liturgies at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis are open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements, congregation size will be limited at the cathedral Liturgies at St. Meinrad Archabbeley will only be accessible online.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is scheduled to be the principal celebrant at the Easter Vigil Mass at the cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at 8 p.m. on April 3. He is also scheduled to be the principal celebrant at the 10 a.m. Mass at the cathedral on Easter Sunday, April 4.

Starting times for all liturgies at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in Saint Meinrad are Central Time.

Due to space constraints, The Criterion is only able to list these Easter liturgical schedules. For information about liturgies at parishes or other religious communities, contact them individually.

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

All Cathedral services will be livestreamed at www.sansieinsiedeln.org/live:

• April 3, Holy Saturday—5 p.m.
• Vespers, 8 p.m.
• Easter Vigil
• April 4, Easter Sunday—10:30 a.m.
• Easter Mass during the day, 5 p.m.
• Vespers.

War in Syria must end; tormented people need relief, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—All sides need to come together to end the war in Syria and bring some sign of hope to an exhausted and tormented people, Pope Francis said.

The international community also needs to commit itself to helping rebuild the nation, so that once the fighting has stopped, “the social fabric can be mended and reconstruction and economic recovery can begin,” the pope said after praying the Holy Rosary with visiting pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square on March 14.

March 15 marked 10 years since the beginning of the war in Syria, causing "one of the most serious humanitarian disasters of our time," the pope said.

Protestors began rallies demanding an end to repression in Syria on March 15, 2011, after being inspired by other "Arab Spring" demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

However, President Bashar Assad’s government respond with a brutal shooting demonstrators and trying an on-going civil war that has drawn in rebels, Islamic State militants and other nations in a proxy war.

The U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported in January 2020 it had estimated that nearly 85,000 people had been killed since the beginning of the war of which more than 115,000 were civilians, including children. More than 11 million civilians have been displaced with 5.6 million of them registered as refugees outside of Syria.

The archdiocese’s annual Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 7 p.m. on March 30, Tuesday of Holy Week, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

Ordinarily celebrated yearly during Holy Week, the chris mass features priests renewing their ordination promises and the blessing of oils used for the celebration of several sacraments and the ordination of deacons, priests and deacons.

At this time, because of limited seating capacity at the cathedral due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only priests and parish life coordinators serving in central and southern Indiana and a representative number of archdiocesan deacons, men and women religious and lay faithful are guaranteed a seat for the liturgy.

A limited number of seats for others interested in attending the Mass may become available in the coming days. Check next week’s issue of The Criterion or www.archindy.org for updated seating information.

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Effects of veto override hitting home for vulnerable renters

By Victoria Arthur

While federal COVID-19 relief efforts are offering hope to the most economically disadvantaged in Indiana, hundreds of Hoosier families are still facing eviction each week following the state legislature’s action on a controversial landlord-tenant bill.

Advocates for the poor, including the Catholic Church, are deeply concerned about the effects of Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 148, which became law in Indiana in February. They say the legislation severely undermines legal protections for renters, who make up about one-third of Indiana’s population, and that it has the potential for increasing the state’s homeless population amid the continued coronavirus pandemic.

These concerns persist even following the recent passage of the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act—which includes $50 billion for housing and homelessness assistance nationwide—and the recent passage of the $1.9 trillion coronavirus pandemic.

The enactment of SEA 148 is opening avenues of harm for renters at most risk of eviction, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

—Angela Espada, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

Despite the CDC moratorium and the potential for increasing the state’s homeless population amid the continued coronavirus pandemic, the potential consequences when a federal eviction moratorium expires on March 31. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the national public health agency of the United States, originally called for the temporary halt on evictions in February. They say the legislation placed an even greater imbalance in the relationship between landlords and tenants, which in Indiana typically favors landlords.

SEA 148 was the result of language added to an unrelated Senate bill in the state legislature in 2020 and passed with virtually no opportunity for public debate. It was the only bill vetoed last year by Gov. Eric Holcomb, who cited among his concerns the coronavirus pandemic, which was then beginning to profoundly alter life for Hoosiers.

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), Prosperity Indiana and numerous other advocates wanted the veto to stand.

Critics of the measure point to the lack of tenant protections against landlord retaliation and substandard living conditions. Among the most troubling aspects of SEA 148, according to Bradley, is the addition of seven new forms of expedited three-day evictions.

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The enactment of SEA 148 is opening avenues of harm for renters at most risk of eviction, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Holy Family Shelter, a program of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, is a prime example. The facility, which opened in 1984 as the first shelter specifically for homeless families in Indianapolis, can house up to 22 families per night, but due to COVID-19 has had to make other housing arrangements for some of those it serves. The shelter is currently serving 29 homeless families with a combination of the shelter itself, hotels and other alternative housing.

There is certainly an uptick in demand for emergency shelter for homeless families, which seems to be due to a combination of factors, including the overall pandemic effect with loss of jobs and loss of child care,” said Bill Bickel, associate director for Catholic Charities in the archdiocese. “Certainly, the override of the governor’s veto of SEA 148 is causing part of this demand, but the most profound effects I think are yet to come.”

At the same time, Bickel said many landlords are waiting to see how the American Rescue Plan Act may benefit them with past tenant debt assistance.

“We are hopeful that serious absolving of past rent can happen quickly and that the process is user-friendly for the poorest of the poor,” said Bickel, who fields 10 to 12 calls each day from families searching for help. “So many of the families we serve have fallen through all of the community’s safety nets—rent assistance included—which lands them on the streets and into the homeless system. Of course, we have a particular concern considering that our largest percentage of individual residents at the shelter are homeless children.”

The Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition, an umbrella organization of various advocacy groups formed last spring due to concerns over the pandemic as well as SEA 148, is seeking input from people whose housing situation has been directly affected by either or both. One of the driving forces behind the coalition is Prosperity Indiana, with Bradley and his colleagues at the forefront of the efforts.

“We are working to build momentum for amendments that would address some of the worst dangers of SEA 148,” Bradley said. “That’s why the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition wants stories from tenants and community partners who are affected by the fallout of this legislation.”

Personal stories may be directed to Natalie James, coalition builder for Prosperity Indiana, at www.housinghoosiers.org/share-your-experience.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacatholic.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN 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.)
Quiet St. Joseph had a dramatic life

For someone with the reputation for being quiet, St. Joseph, whose feast day is today (March 19) certainly had a dramatic life.

It is often noted that St. Joseph doesn’t speak a single word in the Four Gospels. That would lead you to think that he never spoke. We don’t believe it. As for the drama in his life, what could be more dramatic for a man than to learn that the woman he has just married, but hasn’t yet taken into his home, is pregnant and he knows that the child isn’t his? Can we honestly believe that Joseph kept quiet about that?

Of course not. Matthew’s Gospel says that he decided to divorce Mary quietly, but they had to talk about it first. It’s clear that he had doubts about her explanation that an angel had appeared to her and told her that she would conceive a child when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. Really? Can we imagine an angel leaving Mary’s home on hearing that?

But then Joseph, too, got a message from an angel, in a dream. The angel told Joseph that what Mary told him was true, and he believed. Can we now imagine a contrite Joseph returning to Mary’s home in the morning? Since Matthew’s Gospel doesn’t tell us what was said, we have to supply our own dialogue, but certainly there was some. That should be enough drama for anyone, but more was to come—much more. The emperor decided that he wanted a census that required everyone to register at their family’s original hometown. Joseph was from the house and family of King David, who was born in Bethlehem 1,000 years earlier. So that’s where they had to go—about 90 miles away.

Where would they stay in Bethlehem? How long would they be there? Joseph figured that Mary’s baby would be born there, and they would stay at least until it was time for Mary’s purification 40 days after the birth. He had better take his carpentry tools with him so he could work while they were gone. They probably loaded everything on a couple donkeys, or perhaps in a cart pulled by a donkey, for the long journey.

Once they arrived, it was as Joseph feared: so many people were descended from King David that the inn in Bethlehem was full. He was directed to a cave a few animals. And that’s where Jesus was born.

After the birth, Joseph apparently was able to find a house for his family until they could return to Nazareth. When Jesus was 40 days old, Joseph took his family to the Temple in Jerusalem, about five miles away, for Mary’s purification and Jesus’ presentation, as prescribed by the Law of Moses. He undoubtedly heard Simeon’s prophecy about Jesus.

Then came more drama. We can imagine the Holy Family fast asleep in a cave that was being used to house a few animals. And that’s where Jesus was born.

Finally, the image was processed. What it showed was not a new star—or even a single star—but whole galaxies whose light took more than 100 hours while pointed at a small, dark patch in the constellation Ursa Major. For 10 days during Christmas in 1995, Hubble swung around the Earth in silent arcs, opening its lonely eye to a void that looked out past our galaxy. More than 300,000 stars were discovered, the scientists said, nearly all of them distant. Patience Quietly. Consistently. One bit of light at a time.

Finally, the image was processed. What it showed was not a new star—or even a dozen—but whole galaxies whose light had travelled from the distant past and all the way from the edge of the universe to reach us.

And not just a few galaxies, but nearly 3,000 of them, each with worlds and stars and nebulae of untold diversity, all hanging up there in the cosmos—far beyond our reach—as if only to give us the slightest hint of what infinite creativity really means.

Within that experiment there is a lesson, and it’s the same one the Church is driving home during Lent. Whether it be in our voluntary sacrifices or the ones that are forced upon us by life, there are times when our spirits and senses are called to be still. It is in those dim moments of the soul that there are stars we can see that no one else can: insights, revelations, visions, stories, dreams—all things that only we need to see to and that the whole world will miss if we don’t find and share them.

It is just one of the purposes of suffering and penance, because beauty—deep beauty—is found not just in the boisterous and luminous, the obvious and painfully delightful, but also in the faint and delicate, in the small and hidden spaces of our stories. Some splendors can only be seen after one’s spiritual eyes have waited and watched—and grown accustomed to the dark.

This is part of what the Church is doing in Lent, and even more so in the final days before Easter, when the altars are laid bare and the Good Friday service ends in a silent walk back down the aisle.

The whole Church is hushed; she closes her eyes on Holy Saturday and settles into that night, her sanctuaries darkened and stained-glass wonders obscured. In that last silence, Easter finally comes at the nighttime vigil, not with clanging bells and Alleluias, but with light and flowers and smiles—not just light, anyway. The triumph of the resurrection arrives with a single flame processed into a church and shared with each person holding their own taper. For a moment, the light of Christ twinkles softly against the illuminated faces of those who have waited and welcomed just a bit more spiritual winter before allowing in the spring air.

That all Lent is broken by the beauty of a single flame reminds us of what we already know deep down, and have felt in one way or another throughout our own inspirations and experiences.

That each of us is ever walking beneath a sky filled with invisible stars. They are ours to find in the still places of life, and more terribly wonderful, we are there to find a world which badly needs their light.

(Sight Unseen is a regular column that explores the beauty of God and his creation. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of The Criterion and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.)

A depiction of St. Joseph cradling the infant Jesus while Mary sleeps is seen in this illustration photo. (CBS photo/ Gregory A. Shemitz)

A sky filled with invisible stars

Lent consistently strikes me as one of the most ill-timed of seasons—an idea that our yearlong pandemic has only served to make more obvious.

In the U.S., we’ve already endured the long slog through winter’s dark nights, barren trees, cold stars and frigid temperatures. And then, just as springtime starts to fill the air with its heavy, earthy smell and the sun slows its dip into the evening sky—just as the birds begin chirping again and we all breathe a sigh of relief—the Church drives hard in the opposite direction.

She proclaims a fast, and declares the days to become a time for penance and prayer, for reflection on the sorrows of Jesus and the sufferings of the world.

Liturgies become more solemn and the hymns more sparse, the sanctuaries plain and eventually the statues covered.

The whole of Catholicism leans in toward the darkening of Lent. It seems like a cruel trick, but I think that it’s actually an old trick, one meant to help us celebrate joy more fully. It’s a quirk built right into our human nature: namely, that it’s in the stilling of our senses that we find new depths to them.

The same rule is woven through the fabric of the universe. Take the night sky, for example. You have, even on the darkest night and in the remotest of places, never seen but a handful of the stars in our own Milky Way, and beyond that only the faint glow of our closest neighboring galaxies.

We know there is much more out there, but just how much? Nearly 30 years ago a team of NASA scientists asked the same question and came up with an idea.

They tasked the Hubble Space Telescope to take the longest exposure ever attempted in photography: to open its camera for more than 100 hours while pointed at a small, dark patch in the constellation Ursa Major.

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This is a just a portion of the Deep Field image taken in 1995 by NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope. (Photo credit: NASA/STScI, the Hubble Deep Field Team and NASA/ESA)
Se nos invita a seguir a Jesús en el camino de la cruz

Christ, la piedra angular

‘Si alguno me sirve, sígame; donde yo esté, allí también estará mi servidor’ (Jn 12:26).

Este fin de semana celebraremos el quinto domingo de Cuaresma, lo que significa que la Cuaresma de 2021 está a punto de terminar. En poco más de una semana comenzaremos el Triduo Pascual, caminando con Jesús en el Via Crucis.

¿Cómo podemos evaluar nuestro progreso hasta la fecha en este viaje cuaremesal? ¿Nos hemos renovado espiritualmente a través de las prácticas cuaremales de oración, ayuno y limosna? ¿Hemos crecido más cerca de Cristo a través de nuestras reflexiones sobre la Palabra de Dios? ¿Estamos siendo más fieles en nuestro discipulado misionero?

Las lecturas de las Escrituras del quinto domingo de Cuaresma nos brindan la oportunidad de examinar nuestro progreso como seguidores de Jesús. El examen de conciencia que se nos invita a hacer ahora que estamos a punto de terminar este periodo de Cuaresma tiene que ver con la pureza de nuestros corazones.

¿Qué significa esto según lo establece el profeta Jeremías en la primera lectura (Jer 31:31-34)? Dios ha hecho una nueva alianza con Israel: “I will place my law within them and write it on their hearts. When the Lord sees that you do good...” (Jer 31:33, 34).

Reconocemos que la ley de Dios está escrita en nuestros corazones cuando seguimos los impulsos de una conciencia informada, y cuando “hacer lo más correcto” se ha convertido en algo natural para nosotros. Es cuando reconocemos la voluntad de Dios para nosotros sin vacilar ni dudar, incluso (o especialmente) cuando lo que se nos pide es doloroso o difícil de hacer.

La lectura del Evangelio de este domingo (Jn 12:20-33) nos dice que Jesús luchó contra las exigencias que le imponía su Padre. “Ahora mi alma está turbada—dice Jesús—. ¿Y acaso diré: ‘Padre, sálvame de esta hora’?” (Jn 12:27).

Si para esto he venido!” (Jn 12:27). Claramente Dios ha escrito su ley en nuestro corazón: “Cuando Cristo vivía en este mundo, con gran clamor y lágrimas ofreció ruegos y súplicas al Padre...” (Heb 5:7).

Dado que Jesús era plenamente humano, la perspectiva de soportar una humillación, una tortura y una muerte inimaginables en una cruz provocó “gran clamor y lágrimas” (Heb 5:7). Pero aceptó la voluntad de su Padre porque reconoció que “ha llegado la hora de que el Hijo del Hombre sea glorificado” (Jn 12:23). Y como resultado “aunque era Hijo, aprendió a obedecer mediante el sufrimiento; y una voz que alcanzó la perfección, llegó a ser el autor de la salvación eterna para todos los que los obedecen” (Heb 5:8-9).

Todos los que obedecen la ley de Dios, como hizo Jesús, reciben el don de la salvación eterna. Pero las exigencias que se imponen a los seguidores de Jesús son serias. “Si alguno me sirve, sígame; donde yo esté, allí también estará mi servidor” (Jn 12:26).

¿Estamos listos? ¿Acaso la observancia de la Cuaresma nos ha preparado para caminar en el Camino de la Cruz? ¿O todavía dudamos si dejar de lado nuestra cómoda existencia? Como si respondiera a nuestras dudas, el Evangelio según san Juan nos recuerda con fuerza una de las mayores verdades de nuestra fe cristiana:

“De cierto, de cierto les digo que, si el grano de trigo no cae en la tierra y muere, se queda solo; pero si muere, lleva mucho fruto. El que ama su vida, la perderá; pero el que aborrece su vida en este mundo, la guardará para vida eterna” (Jn 12:24-25).

A menos que nos rindamos como lo hizo Jesús, y a menos que estemos dispuestos a renunciar al ego, a nuestras posesiones y nuestra necesidad de controlar nuestras vidas, no podremos heredar la vida eterna. No podemos conocer la verdadera libertad ni la alegría mientras nos enfrentemos a la propia voluntad. A menos que tengamos el corazón puro y nuestras acciones sean verdaderamente desinteresadas, no podemos seguir a Jesús.

Durante estos días que quedan de Cuaresma, recemos:

“Dios mío, ¡crea en mí un corazón limpio! ¡Renueva en mi espíritu de rectitud! [...] Desvuelve el gozo de mi corazón (Dame un espíritu dispuesto a obedecer)” (Sal 51:10, 12).

Así como la observancia de la Cuaresma nos prepara el corazón para el sufrimiento, pero también para la alegría que se nos promete como fieles discípulos misioneros de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. †
March 14-17 Come and retreat: “Living the Mission of God” on Zoom, Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, 7-9 p.m. Sat-Sat, 7 p.m. for women ages 18-42 exploring religious life, free. Register online: cutt.ly/CNMN or 317-838-7209.

April 1-4 Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Triiduum Retreat, 4:30 p.m. Thurs. - 1 p.m. Sun., includes room and meals. $350. Registration: www.benedictinn.org.

April 2 Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Good Friday Retreat, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., includes lunch and dinner. Registration: www.benedictinn.org or call 317-788-7581.

April 3 Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Holy Saturday Retreat, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. for men, includes lunch and dinner. Registration: www.benedictinn.org.

April 4 Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Easter Vigil Retreat, 9 p.m. - 7 a.m., includes lunch and dinner. Registration: www.benedictinn.org.

March 19-20 Virtual Storm the Castle, sponsored by Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, 5:30-7:30 p.m., for young men in grades 9-12, meeting about life at the college seminary, includes tour and chance to chat with college seminarians. Register: bhosseodcall.com. Information: 317-236-1490 or vocations@ archindy.org.

March 25 The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class, “Personality Difference,” 7-8 p.m., series offered most Thursdays through May 20, no registration needed, free. Go to carmelthirdoption.org/web. Click on link at top of page. Information: carmelthirdoption.org/web or Keith Ingram, k Ingram@ aicinvest.com or 317-324-8446.

The Eucharist, Source and Summit of Faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and Victim. A series of four sessions on Benedictine spirituality in April, still applies today and can enhance happiness through the concepts laid out by Rule of St. Benedict. Benedictine spirituality is not just for religious living a monastic vocation. This series explores how the centuries-old happiness through the concepts laid out by St. Benedict. The cost for the sessions is $90 or $35 for individual sessions for $25 each. To register, go to www.benedictinn.org/programs. For specific questions, send an e-mail to benedictin@ benedictinn.org or call 317-788-7581.

March 26 Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1350 Union Street, Indianapolis. Praying the Stations with St. John XXIII, 7-8 p.m. registration, prayer, song. Information: 317-638-5551.

Planned Parenthood abortion center, 8590 Georgetown Road, Indianapolis. 40 Days for Life Closing Rally, noon. It’s the last chance to save human life, 317-731-1812. Dr. Haywood Robinson speaking, bring baby items to support the Great Lakes Gabriel Project or donate online at glproject.org. Information: 317-236-4778.

April 1 April 1 Cardinal Charities Indianapolis Office Virtual Breaking of Bread fundraiser, noon-1 p.m. in response to three times the normal requests during the pandemic, prayer, stories and facility tour. Event link: facebook.com/ CatholicCharitiesIndianapolis. Information: Raphael@benedictinn.org or 317-236-1411.


Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass until 9 p.m. Sacrament of reparation available. Information: 317-755-7321 or maria@ bcv.org.

April 3 John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellere Ave., Sellersburg. First Saturday Marian Devotion, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer, 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522.

St. Michael Church, 145 S. Michael Blvd., Brookville. First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group, Mass, devotional prayers, rosary, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

April 4 March 27 Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Faithful Citizens Rosary Walk, 10:45-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: faithfulcitizens2014@gmail.com.

Benedict Inn will offer four sessions on Benedictine spirituality in April

A series of four sessions on Benedictine spirituality will be offered at the Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove, from 7-8:30 p.m. on April 6, 13, 20 and 27. In a world where pop culture promotes self-love, self-praise and self-promotion, those who practice Benedictine spirituality instead seek inner peace and happiness through the concepts laid out by the Rule of St. Benedict. Benedictine spirituality is not just for religious living a monastic vocation. This series explores how the centuries-old tradition still applies today and can enhance happiness through the concepts laid out by Rule of St. Benedict. The cost for the series is $90 or $35 for individual sessions for $25 each. To register, go to www.benedictinn.org/programs. For specific questions, send an e-mail to benedictin@ benedictinn.org or call 317-788-7581.

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Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties will host eucharistic tournament on March 20

Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties will host its third annual eucharistic tournament at Concordia Lutheran Church, 305 Howard Road, in Greenwood, at 12:30 p.m. on March 20.

Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties is an affiliate of Indiana Right to Life. Its mission is to protect and promote the respect of unborn children. The event will benefit CareNet Pregnancy Centers local to the two central-southern Indiana counties. The cost to enter the tournament is one package of baby diapers. Each place winner will receive a cash prize of $150, and the second place winner will receive a cash prize of $50.

Registration is encouraged but not required. For the register or for questions, contact Emily McNally at 317-697-2441 or ebrockshalekim@gmail.com.

April 3

March 19-20

March 25

March 26

March 27

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April 2

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VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While homosexual men and women must be respected, any form of blessing a same-sex union is “illicit,” said the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The negative judgment on the blessing of unions, not the people who may still receive a blessing as individuals, it said in a statement published on March 15.

The statement was a response to a question or “dubium” that came from priests and lay faithful “who require clarification and guidance concerning a controversial issue,” said an official commentary accompanying the statement.

Pope Francis approved both the statement and the note for publication.

“Does the Church have the power to give the blessing to same-sex unions?” That was “Negative.”

“It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage between two persons of the same sex,” the doctrinal office said.

The clarification does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to the revealed plans of God as proper to their relationship.

“Rather, it declares illicit any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such. In this case, in fact, the blessing would manifest not the intention to entrust such individual persons to the protection and help of God, in the sense mentioned above, but to approve and encourage a choice and a way of life that cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God,” said the doctrinal office.

The statement came days before the launch on March 19 of a yearlong process in the Catholic Church on “The Joy of the Gospel” that will focus on the family and conjugal love.

The Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of the Gospel”), which affirmed Church teaching on family life and marriage, but also underlined the importance of the Church meeting people where they are in order to help guide them on a path of discernment and making moral decisions.

The doctrinal congregation said in its note that some Church communities had promoted “plans and proposals for blessings of unions of persons of the same sex.

Such projects are not infrequently motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons, to whom are proposed paths of growth in faith,” it said.

In fact, the question of blessing same-sex unions arose from this “sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons” as indicated by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the two synodal assemblies on the family.

That invitation, it added, was for communities “to evaluate, with appropriate discernment, projects and pastures that are proposed to this end” and in some cases, those proposals included blessings given to the unions of persons of the same sex.

The doctrinal office said the Church does not and cannot have the power to impart her blessing on such unions and, therefore, “any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such” is illicit.

That is because a blessing “would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing” imparted to a man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, the statement said.

Such blessings are illicit for three reasons, it said.

In addition to such a blessing implying a “certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing” imparted to a man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, there is the nature and value of blessings.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said that blessings belong to “sacramentals, which are liturgical actions of the Church” that require consonance with Church teaching, to proclaim to them the Gospel in its fullness,” the explanatory note said.

Vatican says no blessing gay unions, no negative judgment on gay people

Dr. Patrick Knerr

Dr. Patrick Knerr never imagined the journey of faith he would take during the pandemic—feeling betrayed, then encouraged a choice and a way of life that cannot be planned by the plans of God as proposed by Church teaching.

Here are some of her stories.

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Meyer then to his listeners, “Raise your hands if you want things to get back to normal.”

Many in the congregation did. Father Meyer paused and said, “I wish you hadn’t raised your hand.”

He doesn’t want the pandemic and the changes it’s caused to continue, but he doesn’t want “things to get back to normal” in the life of the Catholic Church.

What Father Meyer referred to was the normal state of affairs for many Catholics in the U.S. prior to the pandemic: low percentages of regular Mass attendance, and high percentages of couples who got married online rather than in a church. He pointed to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and who disagree with the Church’s teachings on the sanctity of life, marriage and contraception.

“If you’re looking to get back to normal, now is not the time,” Father Meyer said. “We should never want to get back to normal.”

The conference’s three speakers—Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, Jason Evert and Patrick Coffin—encouraged the audience to go beyond waiting for things to get back to some normal state. They said we are all means for attendees to embrace this new and different kind of normal.

‘Men, pick up your weapon and fight’

Catholic author Deacon Burke-Sivers of the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., challenged his listeners near the start of the conference’s first presentation to “go and tell somebody about Jesus” when they go back home.

“The problem is, we keep our faith to ourselves,” Deacon Burke-Sivers said. “We never talk about that encounter with Jesus Christ that changes us from the inside out, that helps us become the men who God created each one of us to be.”

One of the reasons he said men have difficulty sharing their faith is that many men feel passivity, something which he also said affects husbands and fathers living out their own role of service, protect and defend their families.

Deacon Burke-Sivers traced this to the fall of Adam in the creation account in the Book of Genesis. When his wife Emily was tempted by the serpent to disobey God, Adam “stood there and said and did nothing. We have too many men who are standing by and doing nothing while Satan takes your masculinity, Coffin said. “Pornography is a prime means of isolation and the demeaning of authentic masculinity for many men in society today, Evert said.

“Masculinity is the crucifix, the lover who empties himself for the beloved,” he said. “Porn flips it backward, where men learn to empty women for the sake of themselves.”

Pornography and lust also turn men away from the true use of the strength with which they were created, Evert said.

“What is the purpose of a man’s strength? Because of original sin, instead of serving and sacrificing, we dominate and manipulate,” he said. “But the purpose of the body is to serve. Use your strength to serve.”

Like Deacon Burke-Sivers, Evert pointed to St. Joseph as a role model for his listeners.

“We look to men like St. Joseph, who was authentically a servant,” he said. “In our vocations, we’re obviously called to be men. Most of us are married men. One of the beauties of married life is that works of mercy are demanded of you daily.”

‘If you want to know what a real man is, read the Gospels’

Patrick Coffin, known for his popular weekly podcast “The Patrick Coffin Show,” said: “A man is perfectionism, pornography and passivity are three factors that keep men from authentic masculinity.

Patrick Coffin

Perfectionism, he said, “is not the Christian ideal.” Any perfection people experience, Coffin noted, is what “God is doing. The Father imparts to us a gift.”

“The standard of the Gospel is not the ceiling. The standard of the Gospel is the sky—unlimited growth.”

He noted that potential that will become actual only if heaven. Here below, we have to get out of the idea that we have to be perfect.

“We have to ask ourselves, what’s the grace to give up the perfection ideal that we have, because it’s a false god and we can never live up to it.”

The ultimate example of authentic masculinity, Coffin said, is seen in Jesus Christ.

“If you want to know what a real man is, read the Gospels,” he said, “and get to know [Christ], his emotional life, his yearnings, his loneliness, his desire for solitude, his work, his passion and his humor … .”

‘Live your lives with tremendous peculiarity’

John Rennekamp, a member of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour, attended last year’s E6 Conference in the packed auditorium at East Central High School.

He also attended this year’s conference and was glad its organizers didn’t let the pandemic keep them from offering it.

“It’s nice that they were able to overcome that challenge and still find a safe way to put this together to have this conference,” he said.

Rennekamp attended this year’s conference with his teenage sons.

“It’s important for them to continue growing in their relationship with Jesus,” he said. “These opportunities allow the Holy Spirit to work.”

His son Josh, 16, appreciated the example set by his father and other men at the conference.

“It’s been a cool experience to see all these older men learning more about their religious life and me learning about mine,” Josh said.

It’s this kind of experience that Father Meyer and the conference organizers hope will change the daily lives of attendees.

He spoke of this hope in his homily, referring to a verse from the first reading for the liturgy in which Moses told the Israelites that God had said to them: “You are a people peculiarly his own” (Dt 26:18).

“How peculiar are you?” Father Meyer asked them. “Among your family and friends? How peculiar is your way of life among those who live in your area?”

If your grace that comes from this conference, he needs to be that men are set on fire to live their lives differently from what the world sets before us. Through God’s grace, may it be so.”

(To purchase video or audio recordings of this year’s E6 Catholic Men’s Conference visit cutt.ly/xzYoEPD.)

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers of the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., holds a rosary while giving a presentation.

To register or for more information on watch parties, go to www.archindy.org/galawatchparty.

For questions, send an e-mail to Dana Stone at dstone@archindy.org or call her at 317-216-1594 or 800-952-9836, ext. 1591.)
Catholic scholars: Any available COVID-19 vaccine is morally acceptable

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A group of prominent Catholic ethicists said they believe it is morally acceptable for anyone to receive any of the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States. “Catholics, and indeed, all persons of goodwill who embrace a culture of life for the whole human family, born and unborn, can use these vaccines without fear of mortal sin,” the scholars said in a statement released on March 5 through the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington.

The statement references the vaccines developed by Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson as well as AstraZeneca, which is expected to soon file for emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The scholars explained that their conclusion is based on the fact that the cell line used in the development of the vaccines, known as HEK293, is far removed from the embryonic kidney cells originally obtained from an unborn child that was aborted in the early 1970s. “The exact circumstance of the abortion are not known, but the scientists producing the cell line were not directly involved and, crucially, the abortion was not performed for the sake of providing biological materials to researchers,” the statement said.

Importantly, there is no ongoing use of aborted tissue to generate HEK293 cells, to modify these cells or to maintain them in the laboratory. Thus the use of HEK293 [and similar immortalized lines] does not create future incentives for more abortions,” it added.

The statement expressed as “scientific fact” that “no fetal ‘body parts’ are present in these immortal cell lines. The immortal cell lines are artifacts—biological products that have been modified and reproduced many times over, and they do not retain the natural function of the tissue from which they were derived,” the statement explained.

In response to the question regarding whether the production and use of any of the COVID-19 vaccines “contribute to, cooperate with, or promote any abortion,” the scholars said such was not the case because the abortions from which cell lines such as HEK293 were derived occurred decades ago.

In addition, they said, no new fetal tissue is being used or needed to maintain the cell lines, which are produced in research laboratories. The scholars also said that HEK293 cells are commonly used in testing other products, including processed foods, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. The cell line also is used as an alternative to animal testing, they noted.

Calling use of HEK293 cells in biomedical research “obiquitous,” the scholars said their use “has contributed to an enormous number of new medications and medical procedures developed over the last several decades.”

“It thus seems fair to say that in addition to the use of HEK293 cells by the scientific community, nearly every person in the modern world has consumed food products, taken medications or used cosmetics/personal care products that were developed through the use of HEK293 cells in the food, biomedical and cosmetic industries,” the statement said.

They concluded there is a strong moral reason for people to receive the vaccines when they become available because it will provide the “greatest possible protection for the most vulnerable among us.”

“The attenuated and remote connection to abortions decades ago and the absences of any incentive for future abortions offer little if any moral reasons against accepting this welcome advance of science,” the statement concluded.

(Washington Catholic)
archbishop’s scheduled visit to the high school on March 3.

And that stop was part of Archbishop Thompson’s effort to make pastoral visits to Catholic high schools in central and southern Indiana before the end of the 2020-21 school year.

‘Spiritual, pastoral, not business’
Archbishop Thompson was adamant about the nature of the high school stops. “I’m not coming there for administration,” he said. “I’m not coming there for boards. I’m coming for the students and the faculty. I want to make sure it’s a spiritual, pastoral visit, not a business visit. I want to make that connection as pastor and bishop to the young people.”

He noted that he does meet many youths briefly when celebrating confirmation Masses and at high school graduations.

But these occasions are “more formal.” Archbishop Thompson said. His current in-person visits “are more informal, where I get to actually interact with young people.

“It’s important, I think, for them to have that connection with me. It’s a way of encountering each other on a more relational level—as persons.”

He left it to each school to plan the few hours he would be on site. Consequently, each visit has been unique.

Celebrating Mass, student- and administration-led school tours, in-class visits, questions-and-answer sessions, watching the play at Our Lady of Providence High School—“I’ve done everything,” Archbishop Thompson said.

“It’s good to go into the buildings, too, to see the great things they’re doing. One has a new gym, one has a new chapel, one has a new weight room. So, I not only get to see [their accomplishments] but I get to hear the enthusiasm in their voices.”

Still, he said, “I enjoy most the dialogue with the young people, whether that’s [through questions and answers] or talking to them as they show me around. I enjoy the opportunity to interact with them."

‘He supports and cares about us’
The students seem to enjoy talking with him as well.

“He made jokes. He was easy to talk to,” said Jacqueline Hughey, a senior at Providence Cristo Rey High School near downtown Indianapolis where the archbishop visited on Feb. 23. The private school offers Catholic education and corporate work experience for students of families with limited incomes regardless of their faith background.

“We’re a smaller school, and nobody really knows about us,” Jacqueline added.

“The fact that the archbishop came to our little school—it’s so exciting!” Her classmate, Alonso Granados, agreed.

“It’s a really big honor for someone like him to come to a school so small,” he said. “It shows he supports us, and he cares about us.”

They were two of a group of students the archbishop spoke with in the school’s chapel after visiting several classrooms. During the small group discussion, he asked each scholar about their faith and their future plans.

Sophomore Florigel Garcia described the opportunity to speak with Archbishop Thompson as “really special.”

“Not everyone gets a chance to meet the archbishop and actually talk to him,” she said. “He’s a really faithful man, and he believes in us [students].

“When he talked to us about our classes and our plans for college, he was like, ‘You’ve got this. You can do this,’ ” she said.

Alonso nodded, adding, “Yeah, he gave us hope.”

Their words confirmed the opinion of school campus minister Facundo Gonzalez Kirdal regarding the archbishop’s visit.

“I think it is really important for our students to interact with the leader of our archdiocese and be able to share their experiences of faith with him,” he said. “Not only this, but they were also able to hear about Archbishop Thompson’s own journey of faith. “Something that I think resonated with a few of our students was when he shared that he used to study business in college, but he ended up entering the seminary. [He said,] ‘You never know where God is calling you!’ "

‘The Church is more than school or parish’
Kirdal’s thoughts were echoed more than 100 miles away in Clarksville by Our Lady of Providence principal Melinda Hughey, a senior Beth Wimsatt appreciated his visit.

“Anytime that any of our priests— and especially the archbishop—can be involved, the kids need that presence,” she said.

“I think his visit helps them feel connected with the archdiocese. They need the understanding that the Church is more than their parish or our school. The Church is the body of Christ. The archbishop represents that concept of the body of Christ and how we’re all connected.”

Despite the nerves she felt before performing the play for the archbishop, senior Beth Wimsatt appreciated his visit.

“It shows how much he cares, that he chose to go around to the high schools,” she said. “That takes a lot of time, especially since we have a large archdiocese.

Prior to watching the play, the archbishop met with a group of seniors for a question-and-answer session.

The questions started simple, such as how and when he discerned his vocation. They grew in complexity, ending with one on "how to handle Catholics who don’t abide by all of the Church’s teachings.”

“Dialogue,” Archbishop Thompson answered. “And keep on dialoguing. And put Christ at the center of the dialogue.”

“A good witness of spirit”
His own dialogue with students at the high schools he’s visited so far has made an impact on the archbishop.

“I’ve been impressed with their enthusiasm, their focus, their demeanor,” he said. He’s also been impressed with how school administrations, faculty and students have handled the pandemic.

“I have a great appreciation for how well everyone has handled these challenges and how everyone has done their part to make this work. … In practically every classroom I went, there were students in person and virtual. That can’t be easy for the teachers to do day in and day out. They’ve just been incredible in how they’ve balanced all that out.”

As of The Criterion going to press, Archbishop Thompson had been to six high schools, with more visits scheduled in March and April. By the time his tour is finished, he will have traveled more than 625 miles. And every one of them is worth it, he said.

“It’s a breath of fresh air to get out of the office,” he admitted.

More importantly, he added, “It seems there’s been a good witness of spirit in our schools, both among the faculty, the administration and the students.”

Visits continued from page 1
Lent reminds us, with God’s help, ‘you can do hard things’

By Katie Prejean McGrady

“You can do hard things.”

The text flashed on my phone, the words precisely what I needed to see at that moment.

I was sitting on the bathroom floor in my grandfather’s house. I’d been crying. Overwhelmed by the circumstances, I was unable to keep it together any longer, and the tears flowed. I was nine months pregnant.

We were evacuated from our home due to Category 4 Hurricane Laura and still didn’t know if our house had sustained any damage. I needed to find a new doctor because I was due to deliver any day. And, to top it off, we had not had air conditioning for more than three days due to widespread power outages from the storm.

So, at my wit’s end, I locked myself in the bathroom, sat on the floor and cried. I gave myself permission to just sob, letting it all out. And providentially, right at that moment, my friend Alison texted me.

She’d been through hurricane evacuation and recovery before, having endured Hurricane Michael just a couple of years before. She knew the stress and exhaustion and fear I was experiencing, so she said to me what had been said to her time and time again:

You can do hard things.

And I’ll add just one important note to such a vital message: You can do hard things—with the help of God.

I think we can all stand to hear those words, especially now, during the season of hard things, in fact. Fasting, praying and giving alms are a season for prayer, even (and especially) when we don’t have much to offer.

This Lent has felt particularly hard. It’s a Lent after a year that felt like an endless Lent. Last year during Lent, we learned of COVID-19, of what it could do and what we would have to do to keep safe and slow the spread. The world shut down during Lent, and I don’t think we imagined it still wouldn’t be entirely re-opened by and through the next Lent.

Yet here we are, once again finding ourselves in a season where we voluntarily embrace hard things like fasting and giving alms amid the hard things of the current circumstances in the world.

I could use a good bathroom floor cry just thinking about it.

But we can do, and have done, these hard things. God has helped us do these things. Fasting from the snooze button, the sodas, the Netflix binges, the social media scrolling—giving those things up has given us the chance to turn our attention more fully to the Lord.

Taking on the practice of reading Scripture, praying a rosary in the evening, trying to attend daily Mass and a weekly holy hour—the commitment of our time has given us renewed purpose.

Giving from our abundance, not just our leftovers, has made us more patient, hospitable and kind. We’ve given, knowing that our grace-empowered generosity reflects God’s abundantly generous outpouring of himself.

Fasting, praying and giving alms are hard things to do. They are practices that have stretched us, pushed us sometimes to the very margins of our hearts and minds. But it is in that stretching and at the margins that we have begun to see the hand of God, inviting and helping us to endure—to persevere—to take comfort in what I think he would say to us: You can do hard things.

Lent is a time where we hear more clearly each day: You can step away from this and you can begin to do that, and you can do it all for love of me.

With God’s help, we can endure, have endured, the Lenten desert, not merely because we want to seem holy or appear faithful, but because we actually want to grow in holiness and deepen our faith. We carry our cross, knowing we are not the first or last ones to do so, and confident the Lord carries it beside us.

You can do hard things. You can endure the Lenten season, even though there isn’t much of it left. And you can do that, and journey through what seems to be this permanent Lent, because he is with us as we do. He’s with us to help us in each step along the way.

(Katie Prejean McGrady is a Catholic speaker, award-winning author, and host of The Katie McGrady Show on The Catholic Channel on Sirius XM. She lives in Louisiana with her family. †)
Worship and Evangelization Outreach
Teresa Venatta

Spiritual direction: A blessing throughout the ages

Viewing the ministry of spiritual direction as a blessing throughout the ages has a dual meaning. It is not only timeless in the sense that it has been beneficial for souls of every tradition throughout history, but also a blessing for every individual's well-being—life—from vibrant young adults to those facing frailty and mortality.

Spiritual direction has deep roots in Christian communities, with the first “three person” encounter between the spiritual director, the directee and the Lord having been first attested in their relationship with God since the early Church. Unlike counseling, there isn’t necessarily a problem to be solved but something to be discovered, deepened and celebrated in the spiritual life of the directee. God’s call to greater awareness and holiness in the midst of our life is explored in spiritual direction. Though the call “the enlightened one.”

In later generative years, the question becomes: how do I continue to live for others now that my life is slowing down? This is often around the time of emptying, retirement and grandparenting. A Swedish proverb states that “afternoon knows what the morning never suspected,” and often thoughts turn toward reflecting on a lifetime of life and love. This is a paradoxical time of deep gratitude and regret, awareness and disillusionment. Sometimes overwhelming wounds surface.

Spiritual direction in this season provides a space to speak out loud these holy tensions and reflect on where God continues the call to give our life away. In the most mature time of life (or in times of grave illness), spiritual direction moves toward reflecting on increasing limitations and mortality. The challenge becomes how to live in hope and purpose with the more imminent awareness of limited time and shifting abilities. This space of stillness and reflection will be met.

Spiritual direction in this season can help us stay rooted and grounded in the places that will receive us. It will help us navigate how to “give our death away.” Henri Nouwen explains this as letting go, “in such a way that a space of peace that offers hope to those around us.”

Something deep, mysterious and sacred is happening in all our lives right now, regardless of where you are on the timeline of life. God always invites us to participate in every season of life. Spiritual direction provides the space to notice and speak about God’s loving presence in the present of our lives.

(Teresa Venatta is a spiritual director and discernment companion within the Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. She also directs spiritualdirection@archindy.org.)

Faith at Home/
Laura Kelly Fanucci

We need rituals to mourn

Our youngest recently turned 1 year old. We baked a cake, hung the birthday banner and presented this on the kitchen table.

The same rituals we do for every child, every milestone.

Family life is full of rituals: school pictures, special schoolMasses, reunions, game nights and grace before meals.

Anthropologists and sociologists tell us that rituals are essential. We need to mark the milestones of our lives and the passage of time in order to bring meaning and coherence to changes we face.

“Perhaps the most basic function of rituals is to praise the power of rituals at the core of our faith. Rhythms and practices of worship orient our lives toward God and set a solid foundation in an ever-shifting world.”

We’ve neglected ritual in a stark and sobering way this year.

We haven’t mourned our dead. In every gathering, we have passed a terrible milestone of 500,000 lives lost to COVID-19. I watched the media coverage and the president’s ceremony, but I saw next to nothing from our Church on national or local levels. While I’m sure there were responses I missed, I felt an ache of emptiness at so many lost lives— at that time, 2.5 million worldwide— without a loud cry of lament from the faithful.

We could change this: as individuals, families and communities.

We don’t need to make up new rituals for mourning. We can draw from the beauty of our tradition, bringing all that we have to this current crisis.

We can pray for the dead at each Mass, remembering in the prayers of the faithful those who have died from COVID-19, their caretakers and loved one. We can say a special prayer for them.

We could keep a votive candle lit in vigils for those who have died during the pandemic. This prayer is part of our Catholic identity.

We could offer a special prayer service each month to remember all the lives lost to COVID-19. As we mark the one-year milestone of the virus’ outbreak in the United States, it would be a powerful time to gather and pray during Lent. Rituals can come home, too. What if parishes sent home a psalm of lament for parishioners to pray together? Or a small candle lighted in memory of those in the parish who have died of the virus?

Every night, one of our kids prays for “those who have died from COVID and the doctors and nurses who are caring for them.” The simple act of remembering has been transformative for our family during the pandemic, as we reach out across our isolation.

Many of parishes make space for rituals that matter to their community: daily Masses offered for beloved dead, week-long prayer vigils for the sick, special Mass for the poor and vulnerable lived or yearly displays of crosses for babies lost to abortion.

If the Lord is sacred, then we must also ask how to honor half a million who have died here in the past 12 months.

What if we cannot do this?—or worse, callous. We are called to care more for the有些 who have lost each mourn every life lost, no matter the circumstances, because each life matters to God.

My youngest son recently turned 1. My faith taught me that his body and soul

Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson

How badly do we want to return? Community will help determine it

What if you were a Catholic who had not seen a priest in 60 years? What if you had not seen a priest in 12? We have a tendency to avoid community, just as Jesus did.

Jesus Father

Anthony Corcoran, Cleveland diocese’s citizens’ community in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, said he met a man who had waited six decades to see a priest. “Priest! I’m Polish,” the old man yelled excitedly when he saw Father Greg Erlandson

Boston, the temple and donations to the poor and needy. Cultural programs with music and dance, a feast for visitors to be ceremonial bathing of the statue of Tirthankar Mahavir, ceremonies in Jain temples. Among the ceremonies will celebrate annually Mahavir Jayanti, a one-day festival marking are soon to unfold as well.

Celebrations are part of other faith traditions this time of year. “Adulting” in today’s world is

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Celebrating the liturgy of the faithful traditions of this year

The warmth of spring is washing over us. Among people of varied faiths, habits, lifestyles and traditions, life in the Church is moving about the Egyptian households, destroying their property and protecting their homes from the angel of death. This angel visited the Egyptians at night and killed the firstborn of every household, except those of the Hebrew people who observed the Passover. The protection of the angel of death was due to the blood from the sacrificed lambs was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of their dwellings. This marking protected their homes from the angel of death. This angel moved about the Egyptian households, destroying their firstborn sons and animals.

The Exodus through the Red Sea, initial wanderings in the desert and arrival at Mount Sinai mark the Passover. Just as the Jain community completes its festival, the great Jewish festival of Passover commences on the evening of March 27 and continues for eight days. Passover celebrates Hebrew freedom from slavery in Egypt.

It is the onset of the great Exodus experience retold in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Nehemiah. Specifically, Passover commemorates the 10th plague. As the Book of Exodus relates, God, through his prophet Moses, enjoins the Hebrew people to prepare a feast of roasted lamb and unleavened bread. They are told to stand as they eat, as if on a journey. Blood from the sacrificed lambs was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of their dwellings. This marking protected their homes from the angel of death. This angel moved about the Egyptian households, destroying their firstborn sons and animals.

Our contemporary Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate the Passover meal in their homes. They gather as families of faith. Blood relatives and other Jews without local family often gather as one. For we non-Jews and citizens of the United States, those extended family gatherings are similar to large family gatherings at Thanksgiving.

As we Catholics and other Christians approach Holy Week and Easter, let us remember Jews and Jews as they prepare to celebrate their special festivals both historic and faith-based. Let us join our hope to theirs in the one family of humankind!

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady’s Parish on Chicago’s west side.

3350 N. German Church Road, in Indianapolis. For the basics of fasting, see the American impray during Lent.

As we mark the one-year milestone of the virus’ outbreak in the United States, it would be a powerful time to gather and pray during Lent. Rituals can come home, too. What if parishes sent home a psalm of lament for parishioners to pray together? Or a small candle lighted in memory of those in the parish who have died of the virus?

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The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 21, 2021

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Hebrews 5:7-9
- John 12:20-33

The Book of Jeremiah is the source of the first Scriptural reading for Mass this weekend. Jeremiah ranks among the greatest of the ancient Hebrew prophets. He wrote at a very difficult time for his people. Outside pressures had come to be so strong that the very future existence of the nation and, indeed, of the Hebrew race, was at risk. Nervous and uneasy, many blamed God for all the misfortune.

Jeremiah insisted that God had not delivered the people into peril. Instead, they had decided for themselves to pursue policies and to move along paths that inevitably led to their situation. These policies were dangerous because they were sinful. They ignored and rejected God. Nothing good could come of them. Great trouble was inevitable. Through all these acts of rebellion, God remained true to the covenant. The people broke it. God, forever merciful and forgiving and life-giving, promised a new, perfect covenant. If the people would repent and return to it and if they would sin no more, they would survive. Being faithful to the new covenant and sinning no more meant more than verbal pledges, vague, imprecise good intentions. It meant living fully in accord with God’s revealed word.

For its second reading, the Church offers us this weekend a selection from the Epistle to the Hebrews. This reading looks ahead to the passion of Christ, the centerpiece of next Sunday’s liturgy of Palm Sunday. The passion will surround the Church as it celebrates Holy Thursday. It will envelop the Church on Good Friday. Then, fully alert to all that the passion of Christ meant, the Church will rejoice at his victory over death in the Eastertide season. It may not have been easy. We have been distracted. Our intentions may have weakened. As inspiration and encouragement, the Church reassures us in these readings that if we are faithful to God, eternal life awaits us. Lent and our response to it reflect our life. Life can be dreary. It can be threatening, as the pandemic has showed us. Life can mean for any of us, often for many of us, a daily carrying of crosses to the cross. The Church urges us today to re-commit ourselves to God and to measure the sincerity of our intentions.

Reflection

The Church directs us toward the last remaining two weeks of Lent. For four weeks, we have been living through this season. It may not have been easy. We may have been distracted. Our intentions may have weakened. As inspiration and encouragement, the Church reassures us in these readings that if we are faithful to God, eternal life awaits us.

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My Journey to God

On This Day, O Beloved Spouse

By Natalie Hoefer

O beloved, cherished spouse! I sing a song of thanks to God.

For so loving, so devoted a husband, For so godly a man to help me raise The very Son of God.

Each day you rose early in the morning From a night of divinely dreaming. You gave to God the first fruits Of your breath and your time In prayer and with word.

Each day you meekly made manifest The goodness of God-made man. You glorified the Creator With your own carpenter-creations— And provided for our little, holy family.

You modeled the sturdy fabric made When wisdom in heaven’s own life begins after death. He promises life after death to us, if we are obedient ourselves. St. John’s Gospel provides the last reading.

John’s Gospel is a masterpiece of eloquence and instruction. This weekend’s passage is no exception. Indeed, quoting Jesus, it is nothing less than jewels of literary and theological exposition.

Jesus is clear. His hour is approaching. It will be the hour of the passion. The cross will mean intense suffering for Jesus. He was a human, as well as Son of God, subject to human suffering.

Yet, Jesus freely accepted the cross. He died, as all humans must die. But in glory, Jesus rose. He lives! All believers must walk in the Lord’s footsteps. All must die physically, but also all must die to sin. Death in either case will be hard in coming. If confronted in the love of God, the resurrection will follow.

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John & Johnson COVID vaccine is morally acceptable to be received

Q Have you read that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has a connection with aborted fetuses? Now that this vaccine is being authorized for use, does one have a moral obligation to request one of the other vaccines? Or is it morally acceptable to take whatever is available at a particular site?

A In December 2020—two months prior to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s authorization of the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine—the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated that, when alternative vaccines are not available, it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines developed or tested using cell lines originating from aborted fetuses.

The Vatican went on to explain that the “moral duty to avoid such passive complicity” does not apply if there is a grave danger, such as the otherwise uncontainable spread of a serious pathological agent.

In a March 4 video, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, the chairman of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, said that the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine “can be used in good conscience.”

He also issued a March 2 statement in conjunction with Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, that if a choice of vaccines is available, “the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen.”

So, the answer to your question, it would seem, is that if you have a choice, you should choose the Moderna or the Pfizer vaccine. But if the only one available to you is Johnson & Johnson, you may take that and there’s no need to postpone vaccination until you have a choice.

My husband likes playing PlayStation video games. One of the social barriers, a kind of a violent role-playing game where you summon the devil and take part in occult practices.

He had been playing for hours every day, but I insisted that he not play this game. (The Bible says to stay away from anything that deals with the occult.) He becomes more distant, angry and addicted when playing and I want these games out of my house.

He threw a chair across the room once when the social barrier, you know, the dangers of engaging in this kind of game. He has now stopped playing for a while, but he has not removed the games from the house. I am afraid that when he retires soon, he may return to them. Do you have any advice? (New Hampshire)

For some decades now, several studies have suggested a strong link between media violence, including those in video games, and violent behavior. Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for World Communications Day in 2007, said that “any trend to produce programs and products—including animated films and video games—which in the name of entertainment exalt violence and portray anti-social behaviour or the trivialization of human sexuality is a perversion, all the more repulsive when these programs are directed at children and adolescents.”

So, I agree with your concern over your husband’s fascination with violent video games; whether it actually produces violent behavior or not, it baffles me that any Christian could find entertainment in the suffering or death of others—whether real or simulated. (Throwing a chair is certainly not homicide, but it bothers me that your husband did that!)

It is also concerning that some of the games he plays involve occult practices. This is a threat to faith, in addition to his relationship with you and others.

Is there any way you might persuade him to go with you to speak to a counselor or priest about your concern?

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

**DILGER, Sharon, 79, St. Joseph, Corydon, Feb. 18. Grandmother of one.**

**DIETZ, Shizu Fontanella. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandfather of 13.**

**DILGER, Agnes (Reier). St. Mary, Richmond, Feb. 21. Mother of Donna Kochell. Brother of Ralph, Robert, Jr., and Walter Dillingham. Father of Zita Moor, Christopher and Michael Buiting. Father of Zita Moor, Christopher and Michael Buiting.**


**CAMPBELL, Mary Jo, 86, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Febr. 4. Mother of Michelle, Bobby, David and Aline. Sister of Joseph and Barbara Fontanella. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of two.**

**CUMMINGS, Nora Jean, 86, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Feb. 23. Aunt of several.**

**Dietz, Shiril, All Saints, Daleville, Feb. 7. Mother of Candace Hochstatter, Vickie Mahoney and Bruno Dietz. Grandmother of 13.**

**Erlandson, Arlene (Hochstetler). 67, St. Mary, Columbus, Feb. 9. Mother of Mary Bugala, Carol Huske and Ronald Erlandson Jr. Sister of Eleanor Schaefler, Lorine Vogelt and Richard Beir. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of seven.**

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**FANUCCI, continued from page 12**

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**Hold infinite worth from the moment he spoke to life inside me.**

As our family turns to ritual to mark this milestone, I remember those who grieve even as I rejoice. This is part of what it means to be Catholic: that my concerns are forever united to the body of Christ and my life is never mine alone. May we as people and as parishes ask how we can remember our dead and those who grieve for them. Let us help us celebrate and mourn—and faith calls us to do both.

(Laura Kelly Fanucci is a writer, speaker and author of several books, including Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting. Her work can be found at lasarakellyfanucci.com)
The Archdiocesan Catholic Scouting Awards ceremony was held on Feb. 7 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson presiding. Scouts from throughout the archdiocese were honored for earning age-specific Catholic Scouting awards. A total of 67 Scouts earned awards. Boy Scouts of America Scouts usually earn the Ad Altare Dei emblem in middle school and then the Pope Pius XII Award in high school. The Marian Award is one of the emblems for middle school—high school-age Girl Scouts.

Two Scouts, Matthew Schelonka and Edward (Teddy) Isakson, both of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, were recognized with the Pillars of Faith Award for earning all four religious emblems. Karen Harbeson of St. Michael Parish in Bradford received the adult St. George Award.

More information about Catholic Scouting awards can be found at the Indianapolis Catholic Committee on Scouting at www.ccsindy.net.

Bradford received the adult St. George Award for earning all four religious emblems. Karen Harbeson of St. Michael Parish in Indianapolis, were recognized with the Pillars of Faith Award for completing all four Catholic Boy Scout awards.

Taylor Abell of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville earned the Girl Scout Marian Award. She is pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

Pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is Matthew Schelonka, left, Matthew Schelonka, and Edward “Teddy” Isakson, who earned the Pope Pius XII Award. All three are members of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. Matthew and Teddy both also received the Pillars of Faith Award for completing all four Catholic Boy Scout awards.

Employment

Youth and Young Adult Ministry Specialist

This position will coordinate, implement, and evaluate comprehensive youth ministry programs for grades 6-8 and 9-12. This program is to include aspects of the components of: catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service aspects, leadership development, pastoral care and prayer and worship opportunities associated with middle school and high school students.

In addition, the minister is responsible for initiating opportunities for young adults and young families within the parish for the sake of community and evangelization. Lastly, the minister will work alongside the Athletic Director to be a positive presence at Seton athletic events throughout the school year.

Some Basic Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

• Recruit, train, motivate, and evaluate all peer and adult volunteers
• Work alongside the Sacramental Preparation specialist as needed including the Confirmation retreat.
• Work in collaboration with other parish staff in scheduling, visioning, planning
• Attend Diocesan and deanery ministry meetings as necessary.

DESIRED MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

• Education/Experience: Bachelor’s degree required with course work in youth ministry, religious education, and/or theology preferred. Minimum of three years of experience working with youth. Demonstrated knowledge of the Catholic Faith and Church Doctrine.
• Skills: Strong organization and communication skills, ability to manage more than one project/event at one time is essential.
• Other Requirements: Computer proficient, Microsoft Office programs, internet savvy, familiar with Realm data base preferred but not required.
• Participate fully in the practice of the Roman Catholic Faith. Maintain confidentiality in all parish matters.

Interested Candidates should email resume to:

apply@setoncarmel.org

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Bishops: Relief will help many; lack of Hyde protections ‘unconscionable’

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The United Nations and human rights groups have strongly condemned the worsening bloodshed in Myanmar as at least 38 people were killed in the military’s crackdown on protesters on March 14, while the military rulers declared martial law in parts of Yangon, the nation’s largest city, and on March 15, the Global Day of Prayer for Myanmar. Christine Schraner Burgeson, the U.N. special envoy on Myanmar, strongly condemned the bloodshed as the military was dismissing international calls, including from the United Nations Security Council, for restraint, dialogue and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

She said she had heard from contacts in Myanmar heartbreakingly accounts of killings, mistreatment of medical caregivers and torture of protesters over the weekend. Mobile data was cut off nationwide at 1 a.m. on March 15.

Four days earlier, Thomas Andrews, U.N. special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said in a statement of this moment, credible reports indicate that Myanmar security forces had murdered at least 70 people. But the number had climbed past 125, according to Yangon-based rights group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

In a video message to an online prayer service on March 14, Yangon Cardinal Charles Bo said that the military coup and the ensuing crackdown plunged Myanmar into “yet another chapter of darkness, bloodshed and repression.” A “decade of reform and opening” that many had hoped for amid the pandemic, but it lacks “protections for the unborn,” the U.S. bishops said.

Their March 10 statement quickly followed U.S. House passage of the measure in a 220-211 vote. After the Senate version of the bill was introduced, it was sent to the House where members reconciled the differences in the version approved on Feb. 27. It then went to Biden for his signature.

In a joint statement, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the chairmen of six bishops’ committees praised “positive provisions” that “will save people from extremely desperate situations and will likely save lives.”

But they called it “unconscionable” that Congress passed the bill “without critical protections needed to ensure that government tax dollars are used for life-affirming health care and not for abortion.”

Unlike all of the previous pandemic relief bills, Hyde Amendment language was not included in this measure. Hyde outlaw federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

In addition to Archbishop Gomez, the committee chairmen who signed the statement are: Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., Committee on Pro-Life Activities; Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, Okla., Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Ill., Committee on International Justice and Peace; Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, Calif., Committee on Catholic Education; Bishop Sholton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, La., Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism; and Auxiliary Bishop W. E. Lori Mendell of Washington, Committee on Migration.

“As the American Rescue Plan Act was being written, Catholic bishops reached out to every House and Senate office to express our support for providing additional relief to help poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk of harm from this pandemic, and our strong conviction that this relief should also protect the unborn and their right to life,” the bishops said.

“We are grateful this legislation addresses many positive provisions, including unemployment assistance, child and earned income tax credit enhancements, nutrition funding, vaccine distribution funding, health care funding, housing assistance, international assistance to regions stricken by COVID, conflict and hunger,” they said.

“But unlike previous COVID relief bills,” the bishops said, “sponsors of the American Rescue Plan Act refused to include the long-standing, bipartisan consensus policy to prohibit taxpayer dollars from funding abortions domestically and internationally.”

Hyde Amendment language “was needed because this bill includes many general references to health care that, absent the express exclusion of abortion, have consistently been interpreted by federal courts not only to allow, but to compel, the provision of abortion without meaningful limit,” the bishops said.

The many important, life-saving provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act have been undermined because it facilitates and funds the destruction of life, which is antithetical to its aim of protecting the most vulnerable Americans in a time of crisis,” they added.

In remarks after its passage, Biden said the American Rescue Plan “represents a historic, historic victory for the American people.”

“Everything in the American Rescue Plan addresses a real need—including investments to fund our entire vaccination effort. More vaccines, more vaccinators and more vaccination sites,” he said.

No Republican in the House or Senate voted for the bill that would provide relief to Americans in need amid the pandemic, but it lacks “protections for the unborn,” the U.S. bishops said.

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