Persecution worsens for Christians in post-coup Myanmar, experts say

BANGKOK (CNS)—Christians and ethnic minorities in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar are facing increased oppression under the junta that overthrew the civilian government on Feb. 1, experts said during an online forum.

The observers warned of the increased danger of persecution of ethnic and religious minorities including Christians in a July 8 panel discussion hosted by U.S.-based International Christian Concern (ICC).

The panelists also discussed the ICC’s report released on June 16, “Caught in the Crossfire: Myanmar’s Christian Minorities Under Tatmadaw Rule,” ucanews.com reported.

The report revealed details of Christians in ethnic minority areas such as Kachin, Kayah and Chin states and in Wa state where they have historically faced oppression and persecution under more than five decades of iron-fisted military rule.

Nadine Maenza, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, said during the discussion that the situation in Myanmar had significantly deteriorated since the coup.

“No ethno-religious minority has been safe from persecution or discrimination,” she said.

David Eubank of Free Burma Rangers, a Christian humanitarian group, spoke about the thousands of displaced persons in ethnic areas, especially in Karen state where he has been serving.

He shared a recent story of being shot at by the military while villagers attempted to plant rice.

Eubank stressed the need for humanitarian assistance, especially in Karen, Kayah and Chin states where thousands of people have been displaced. Because of air strikes and indiscriminate attacks by the military, thousands of people have been displaced.

The observers warned that Myanmar had significantly deteriorated since the coup.

“Instead of peace and security, the military junta is destroying lives and livelihoods,” said Andrew Palaniikkal, executive director of the New York-based religious freedom advocacy group International Christian Concern.

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Archbishop Thompson and Cardinal Tobin ask Catholics to sign petition on Hyde Amendment

NEWARK, N.J. (CNS)—Taxpayer-funded abortion "represents a failure to recognize the sanctity of human life and promotes a culture in which the foetus in its most vital moment is perceived as expendable," said Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark.

A bipartisan proposal to categorically ban abortion would "eliminate" the Hyde Amendment, a ban on funding abortion for most federal programs. After his resignation from the Senate, Cardinal Tobin said, "We need to act decisively with a proposal that will be sent to Congress to keep the Hyde Amendment.

The Hyde Amendment, which has been in place for 45 years, is credited with saving the lives of millions of children.

Unlike Cardinal Tobin and Archbishop Thompson, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori called on July 12 to sign the online petition calling on Congress to retain Hyde.

"I am deeply concerned that the proposed federal budget would eliminate the Hyde Amendment, which, for 45 years, has prohibited the use of federal funds for abortion," Cardinal Tobin said. "The Hyde Amendment is credited with saving the lives of millions of children.

Hyde first became law in 1976 to prohibit federal funds appropriated through the Labor Department, the Health and Human Services Department and related agencies from being used to pay for abortion or fund health plans that cover abortion except in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the woman would be endangered.

Hyde has been re-enacted in spending bills every year since it was first passed. On May 28, Biden unveiled his proposed budget of $6 trillion for fiscal year 2022 and did not include Hyde Amendment. His proposal would include spending to improve and modernize the nation’s infrastructure, provide free pre-K and community college, and increase domestic programs aimed at boosting public health and helping the poor.

The Hyde Amendment was also included in the $3.5 trillion American Rescue Plan Act that Biden signed into law on March 11. The U.S. bishops called its absence "unconscionable."

In a statement released on July 12, the Vatican press office said, "The bishops’ proposal for a number of provisions to help the vulnerable Americans, Clinton called it remiss in leaving out Hyde, which protects the most vulnerable—the unborn.

In recent weeks, 22 state attorneys general, including Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, signed a joint letter to Senate leaders asking them to retain the Hyde Amendment in any budget measure that passes.

In the meantime, the House Committee on Appropriations was prepared to mark up two appropriations bills without Hyde-related provisions: the Financial Services and General Government bill, which funds the Treasury Department, the Judiciary, the Executive Office of the President and other federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration; and the State and Foreign Operations bill, which funds the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, along with other international programs and activities.

On July 9, Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action participated in "Save Hyde" rallies alongside Democrats for Life of America in Philadelphia and in Akron, Ohio.

One thing that has been consistently true about abortion policy is that people, who self-described as pro-life or pro-choice, do not want to pay for abortion across the board," said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action.

"Yet President Biden and his party have prioritized the deliberate ending of preborn life like no other administration in history," she added in a July 8 statement. "Maybe he should refresh his memory on his past position [supporting Hyde]”

Pope Francis to remain in hospital a ‘few more days,’ Vatican says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Despite initial estimates of requiring a week of inpatient care, Pope Francis will continue his hospitalization as a patient at Rome’s Gemelli hospital after undergoing a colon surgery, the Vatican press office said.

In a statement released on July 12, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said the pope “will remain hospitalized for a few more days in order to optimize his medical and rehabilitation therapy.”

The day after his July 4 surgery for diverticulitis, the Vatican had said the pope was expected to stay in the hospital for seven days, barring complications.

The pope underwent a three-hour left hemicolectomy, which is the removal of the descending part of the colon, a surgery that can be recommended with diverticulitis, when bulging pouches in the lining of the intestine or colon become inflamed or infected.

Pope Francis appeared on the balcony of his suite at Gemelli hospital on July 11 and addressed pilgrims and well-wishers while delivering his Sunday Angelus. (See related article on page 11.)

He also visited young patients “of the oncology ward and their families, who then accompanied him to the terrace of the 10th floor for the Marian prayer.”

After his Angelus address, the pope—pushed in a wheelchair—with patients and medical staff at the hospital.

Despite his extended stay at the hospital, the Vatican said on July 12 the pope had “a peaceful sleep and completed his post-surgical treatment.”

The Vatican also said the pope “shared in the joy for the victory of the Argentine and Italian national teams with those closest to him.”

The pope’s native Argentina defeated Brazil on July 10 in the Copa America soccer championship, while his ancestral country of Italy defeated England on July 11 to win their first European championship since 1968.

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Faith Alive! takes vacation

The weekly Faith Alive! religious education feature, produced by Catholic News Service, began its annual summer break with our July 2 issue. It will return on Sept. 10.

Among the many patients the pope has met, the statement said, there were several who were bedridden and unable to return home at any time.

The pope’s hope, for them, the Vatican said, was that they would be able to “live this time as an opportunity, even if experienced in pain, to open themselves with tenderness to their sick brother or sister in the next life, with whom they share the same human frailty.”

###
Christian group calls for free election amid rare protests in Cuba

HAVANA (CNS)—The Christian Liberation Movement in Cuba has called on people to continue to pressure communist authorities to hold a general election.

The country has seen demonstrations in its major cities joined by thousands of people to protest the unprecedented scarcity of essentials and the rising death toll caused by COVID-19.

A few thousand people took to the streets on July 11 in a rare anti-government protest in Cuba where some demonstrators chanted, “Down with the dictatorship,” ucanews.com reported.

The protests erupted amid growing anger because of long food lines and a shortage of medicines while coronavirus infections and deaths continued rising.

Eduardo Cardón Concepción, national coordinator of the Christian Liberation Movement, known as MCL for its initials in Spanish, said thousands of Cubans were demanding freedom and an end to repression and misery.

“The MCL, as part of this people tired of oppression and injustice, is fully identified with their desires. We support our brothers and sisters of the Christian Liberation Movement and all Cubans who demonstrate peacefully, making use of this legitimate right,” the organization said in a statement.

The group also demanded “the release of political prisoners, the annulment of the repressive laws against the recognition of economic rights of free enterprise for Cubans, and recognition of each Cuban’s—inside and outside the island—right to vote and to be elected,” it said.

Catholic dissident Oswaldo Payá Sardinas founded MCL in 1988 to achieve peaceful democratic reform in Cuba. At the time, he said he was explicitly inspired by Catholic social teaching.

Taking advantage of a loophole in Cuba’s constitution, Payá Sardinas organized a collection of signatures to introduce democracy in the country.

As a consequence, the movement was persecuted nationwide and 42 of its leaders were imprisoned during the 2003 wave of repression known as the “Cuban Spring.”

Payá Sardinas and another MCL leader, Harold Cepero, were killed in a car accident in suspicious circumstances on July 22, 2012.

During a speech on television on July 11, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who also heads the Communist Party, blamed the United States for the unrest and called on “all the revolutionaries in the country, all communists, to take to the streets and go to the places where these provocations are going to occur” to counter protest.

The MCL condemned violence from any side and criticized Díaz-Canel’s call for confrontation among Cubans.

“We are seeking freedom. It is time to react and tell the tyrants that their reign of terror and misery has come to an end. Only the people can save the people,” the group said in its statement.

The Associated Press reported that the demonstration in Havana grew to a few thousand as people poured through the capital despite being charged by groups of police officers, who also fired tear gas on the crowd. People standing on balconies applauded the protesters as they passed by while others joined the march.

Cuban authorities shut down Internet service as the demonstration grew, and protesters attempted to use cellphones to broadcast the protest live.

In a statement released by the White House on July 12, President Joe Biden said the United States stands with the people of Cuba in their call for freedom and relief from the pandemic and decades of repression and economic suffering.

“The Cuban people are bravely asserting fundamental and universal rights,” Biden said. “Those rights, including the right of peaceful protest and the right to freely determine their own future, must be respected.”

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis offered his prayers and condolences after a fire in a COVID-19 hospital ward in Iraq left at least 82 people dead and injured 110 at a hospital in the capital city of Baghdad.

“God gives where He finds empty hands,” St. Augustine

Iraq has recorded 1.4 million infections and reported more than 17,000 deaths from the coronavirus, according to Johns Hopkins University data. 1

According to press reports, the coronavirus pandemic has severely strained Iraq’s health service, already suffering after years of war, neglect and corruption.

Pope offers condolences after fire in COVID-19 ward at Iraqi hospital

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Mike Krokos, Editor
Publisher

Column for the Independence Day — Archbishop Charles C. Thompson abusing and scapegoating. Unfortunately the measure of civility. This is especially survive, even thrive, amid adversity is that are based on knowledge and writes, but “there are some who seem out of hand before they can even be erode the trust and openness needed to calling, making threats and raising voices to preserve authentic dialogue: name—another,” Archbishop Thompson argues that no society can survive, let alone thrive, when fundamental civic virtues are absent from conversations among people with different opinions.

Far from agreeing to disagree, persons of differing opinions are quick to demonize one another. Archbishop Thompson writes, “with little ground for compromise, there is little possibility for authentic disagreements visiting to everything as ‘black and white’, we perceive each other as ‘for’ or ‘against’ me. Such are the effects of extreme polarization.

This lack of civility has become commonplace among families, in communities and throughout the news and entertainment media, especially on the Internet. When we disagree with someone, we’re quick to demonize them, to attribute to them evil motives. Instead of giving those with opposing views the presumption of good intentions, we too readily dismiss them out of hand.

The result is a widespread lack of trust among people from diverse political, racial, social and economic segments of the country. There was a serious problem before the pandemic, but it has increased during the past 15 months, and instead of bringing us closer together, the crises spawned by the pandemic seem to have caused further polarization and division. As a result, mistrust among families, communities, religious organizations, and national and international groups.

“Within any dialogue, there must be an ability to listen and learn from one another,” Archbishop Thompson says. But he argues that “three things, in particular, must be avoided if we are to preserve authentic dialogues: name-calling, making threats and raising voices in hostility. Any one of these can readily erode the trust and openness needed to maintain mutual relationships.”

Name-calling demeans those who have different opinions or points of view. Even the common labels used in public discourse such as “liberal” or “conservative” function as attempts to dismiss people’s beliefs and ideas out of hand. Instead of even being expected to listen to his or her opinions, the archbishop writes, but “there are some who seem to have no awareness that open and honest conversation needs to be spoken. Others still seem unable to distinguish between opinions that are based on knowledge and those that are based on pure emotion or speculation. While conscience and intuition are to be respected, these should not be confused with pride and vanity. Making threats and raising our voices in hostility carry things to extremes and make common ground difficult to establish. As Archbishop Thompson observes, “lack of civility is what we have experienced in our country recently with the pandemic, social unrest and the political election process.”

He is not arguing against legitimate disagreements. On the contrary, “the freedom to protest, march, advocate, hold up signs and make one’s voice heard is a right that we all share,” the archbishop writes. However, “such freedom gives none of us the right to violence, rioting, looting, stealing, slander or defamation. It is in the absence of civility, of course, that the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable becomes blurred.”

Archbishop Thompson’s renewed call to civility should be taken seriously by all Catholics, and all people of good will, in central and southern Indiana. It is a wake-up call for Americans who cherish freedom of speech and who want to safeguard the rights of everyone to express opinions without the fear of repercussions from those who think differently. “Civility is not the absence of differences and disagreements.”

Archbishop Thompson writes, “though it does involve a refusal to allow polarization to divide and destroy the very soul of humanity. Rather than pulling away, civility demands that we pull together. Rather than succumb to despair, we must dare to trust in the Holy Spirit. It requires of us the capacity to seek forgiveness, understanding and justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy.”

Let’s refuse to allow name-calling, threats and hostile shouting to divide and destroy us as free people. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to help us pull together as sisters and brothers in Christ.

—Daniel Conway

OPINION

Archbishop Thompson renews call to civility

“The ability of any community to survive, even thrive, amid adversity is the measure of civility. This is especially true during times of chaos, division and transitioning of authority. Unfortunately, this measure of civility is often dismissed out of hand before it can even be addressed. There are some who seem to have no awareness that open and honest conversations need to be spoken. Others still seem unable to distinguish between opinions that are based on knowledge and experience from those that are based on pure emotion or speculation. While conscience and intuition are to be respected, these should not be confused with pride and vanity. Making threats and raising our voices in hostility carry things to extremes and make common ground difficult to establish. As Archbishop Thompson observes, “lack of civility is what we have experienced in our country recently with the pandemic, social unrest and the political election process.”

He is not arguing against legitimate disagreements. On the contrary, “the freedom to protest, march, advocate, hold up signs and make one’s voice heard is a right that we all share,” the archbishop writes. However, “such freedom gives none of us the right to violence, rioting, looting, stealing, slander or defamation. It is in the absence of civility, of course, that the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable becomes blurred.”

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Let’s refuse to allow name-calling, threats and hostile shouting to divide and destroy us as free people. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to help us pull together as sisters and brothers in Christ.

—Daniel Conway

Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson delivers a homily during the annual Race for Right to Life. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Be Our Guest/Mike Fichter

Indiana judge blocks new abortion pill reversal law

On June 30, a state judge ruled in favor of abortion-rights extremists and against the will of the people of Indiana, whose duly elected representatives passed and signed into effect HB 1577, which provided that doctors tell women receiving chemical abortion drugs about abortion pill reversal.

Archbishop John N. Roditi, the Indiana Attorney General, said in a court filing: “Patients have the right to choose not to take the second pill and pursue alternative options to save their pregnancies... Denying patients information regarding alternatives should they wish to continue their pregnancies harms women by depriving them of that choice.”

Prior to Judge Hanlon’s temporary restraining order, the new law was set to go into effect on July 1.

Chemical abortion has recently been on the rise in Indiana, which is why HB 1577 was such welcome news to BTL. According to the Indiana State Department of Health’s 2020 Indicators Annual Pregnancy Report released on June 30, chemically induced abortions, for the first time, comprise the majority of abortions done in Indiana, accounting for 55% of all abortions done in the state. The report also reveals 119 more unborn children were killed by abortion in Indiana in 2020 compared to 2019, an increase of 1.5%.

The 4,252 chemically induced abortions in 2020 represent a 25% increase compared to the 3,351 done in 2019.

(Mike Fichter is president and CEO of Indiana Right to Life.)

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

The lighthearted reality and the double blessing of being a parent and a grandparent

Whenever I meet a fellow grandparent, it’s been universal that he or she will flash a smile that exudes pure joy and say, “Isn’t being a grandparent the best ever?”

Then that wondrous smile will often quickly become a mischievous grin when he or she adds, “You can spoil them all you want, give them all the sugar they can handle and more, and then you hand them back to their parents and you just walk away without a care in the world.”

These conversations often leave me with the impression that they consider their time as a grandparent as being better than the time as a parent was.

For what it’s worth, here’s my perspective. Few parts of life are more challenging, fulfilling, occasionally heartbreaking, frequently joy-filled and overall rewarding than being a parent. And if God has doubly blessed you, your extra reward for being a parent is becoming a grandparent.

Pope Francis has recognized the importance of grandparents by proclaiming July 25 as the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly. And the stories that begin on page 1 of this week’s Criterion show the dramatic and touching ways that grandparents preserve and cherish the dreams, the lives, marriages and faith of their grandchildren.

Beyond that impact, the blessings of being a grandparent are also welcome. They open a new life into the world and the faith, witnessing again the miracle of a child’s development, and giving the gift of seeing your child grow as a parent. At the same time, there is another side for a grandparent to experience often marked by a shared mischief and a mutual childhood joy that is different from the parent-child relationship.

Consider these differences between being a parent and a grandparent.

• When you’re a parent, you listen attentively and solemnly as the parents give you detailed instructions on how to take care of the child. Then as soon as the parents leave, you ask, “OK, who wants ice cream?”

• As a parent of small children, you give the grandparents specific instructions about your children, sometimes even writing a list—because it’s not like they’ve ever raised children themselves. Then as soon as you leave the house, your spouse tells the grandparents to do everything!”

• As a new parent, you can’t even give the grandparents specific instructions about your children, sometimes even writing a list—because it’s not like they’ve ever raised children themselves. Then as soon as you leave the house, you ask “What would you like us to do for our kids if they want ice cream. But who cares—we’re out of the house for three whole hours by ourselves!”

• As a new parent, you will consult the advice of so-called experts about caring for your child, valuing a complete stranger’s input over the time-tested knowledge of your parents who gave you life and helped make you the person you are—which may explain why, in many cases, new parents consult total strangers.

As a new grandparent—and this probably just applies to grandparents—you will be initially insulted that your son or daughter prefers the child care advice of strangers over you. But then you remember that most of your own advice can be summed up in this way: just “winging it” and making it up as you went along.

• As a new parent, you can break Halloween candy from your children, rationalizing that you are looking out for their teeth and their teeth will be gone by the time you are. As a grandparent you sneak candy to your grandchildren and then feign ignorance as to why they are suddenly ravenous and insist you’re the “Road Runner.”

• When grandchildren babysit, they believe they’ve been successful if they can say, “Hey, the kids are still alive.”

When parents come home after having the grandparents babysit, they consider it a success if they can say, “Hey, the kids are still alive.”

See REFLECTION, page 10
No hay paz sin tranquilidad; no hay tranquilidad sin contemplación

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el viernes 16 de julio, la festividad de Nuestra Señora de la Virgen del Monte Carmelo. Este es uno de los muchos días señalados en el calendario litúrgico de la Iglesia para honrar a la Santísima Virgen María. Las diferentes festividades celebran aspectos específicos de la vida de María, como la Anunciación, la Inmaculada Concepción y la Asunción. Las festividades son un momento para recordar y celebrar aspectos de Mary’s life, such as the columns es el viernes 16 de julio, la festividad de Nuestra Señora de la Virgen del Monte Carmelo. Este es uno de los muchos días señalados en el calendario litúrgico de la Iglesia para honrar a la Santísima Virgen María. Las diferentes festividades celebran aspectos específicos de la vida de María, como la Anunciación, la Inmaculada Concepción y la Asunción. Las festividades son un momento para recordar y celebrar aspectos de la vida de María, como su vida de recogimiento, de oración, de obligación ininterrumpida a Dios, en contacto continuo y de unión íntima con Él. No puede haber paz sin tranquilidad, y para nuestras mentes y corazones inquietos y agitados, la tranquilidad no es posible sin alguna forma de contemplación. La Virgen del Monte Carmelo está estrechamente asociada a los esfuerzos por promover la paz mundial, especialmente mediante la eliminación de las armas nucleares. Resulta que la primera bomba atómica explotó en Estados Unidos en el sitio de pruebas de Trinity el 16 de julio de 1945, cerca de Alamogordo, en Nuevo México. Para muchos, el día de la Virgen del Monte Carmelo es la oportunidad para seguir imitando a la Virgen, persuasora a los líderes mundiales para que pongan fin de forma decisiva y permanente al desarrollo y al uso de las armas nucleares. En este Año de San José, tenemos una oportunidad única de conectar la dimensión contemplativa de la vida de María con la de su esposo, la figura paterna más silenciosa pero poderosamente presente en la historia de la salvación. San José era un hombre justo y buen padre, pero también un hombre de fe. Nos dicen las Escrituras. Era firme en su fe, trabajador, buen ciudadano y abierto a la voluntad de Dios para él y su familia. Amaba a su mujer y a su hijo y estaba dispuesto a hacer lo que fuera necesario para protegerlos. El silencio contemplativo de San José, mucho más que las palabras, comunica la clase de hombre que era y lo que tiene que enseñarnos hoy. José vivió en una época de graves distorsiones políticas. Sabía lo que era ser un indigente, un emigrante obligado a huir de su tierra y un padre que no siempre entendía lo que su hijo pensaba o hacía. Sobre todo, José es el patrono de todos los que buscan aceptar con calma y tranquilidad la voluntad de Dios en momentos de duda o peligro. El primer fiesta importante del Monte Carmelo y san José Carpintero, sueñan por nosotros; Ayúdennos en encontrar la paz en nuestro mundo, y luego imitámonos a su Hijo. Enséñenle a escuchar con atención la Palabra de Dios, y a los demás, para que sean ángeles de la paz en un mundo donde la división y la violencia abundan.
July 26-29
Our Lady of Grace Parish, 1009 W. 150th St., Worth (Lafayette Diocese). Encounter Summer Intensive, 6-9 p.m. nightly, $75 for clergy, religious, seminarians or college students, register by July 21. Information: 317-795-4912, indianapolisencounterschool.org or encounterschoolindy@gmail.com.

July 29-31
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road, Carmel (Lafayette Diocese). Retreat: Saturday 6-11 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m.-4 p.m. admission rides, inflatables, children’s games, food trucks, outdoor dining, open daily, daytime hours of game, bingo, beer and wine tent, frisbee field and Saturday nights. Monte Carlo and live music: The Woonbells Rock Orchestra, The DOO! and My Rickshaw, free admission. Information: 317-846-3850 or kevin.sweeney@seton-carmel.org.

July 30-August 1
Rachel’s Vineyard Healing Retreat, greater Indianapolis area (exact location given upon registration), for women and men who have known regret, sorrow, guilt or shame after abortion. $175, scholarships available, registration deadline July 22. Registration and information: 317-452-0504 or projectreaches@rchindy.org.

August 4
MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. Soo Senior, 5:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charity and social singles—and separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8685 or 317-243-0777.

August 6

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, 5:30 to 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following Mass until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-790-7395, 37011@msnl.com.

August 7
John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schollers Ave., Sellersburg. First Saturday Marian Devotion, 8 a.m., rosary, meditation, prayer, 8:30 a.m. with Mass if confessions present. Information: 812-246-3522.

St. Michael Church, 145 S. Blvd., Brookville. Second Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group, Mass, devotional prayer, rosary, 10 a.m. Information: 765-647-5467.

County Courthouse lawn, 609 E. National Ave., Indianapolis. Brazil, Pray USA Prayer Rally, noon, sponsored by Apostleship of Prayer Legion of Mary, prayers for the country. Information: tanya.donnelly@foster.com.

August 8
St. Mary Parish, 2500 St. Mary’s Dr., Lansdowne. Homecoming & Annual Parish Picnic, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., gifts, prize capital drawing, online auction, outdoor dining and drive-thru fried chicken or ham and potato salad with dinner, potato chips, country style green beans, baked potatoes, colelaw, dressing and choice of pie. $12, adults; $5 children 12 and under. Information: 812-952-2583.†

Wedding Anniversaries

Marty and Diane Brown

The couple was married at St. Joseph Church in Fremont, Ohio, on July 9, 1966.

They have five children: Julie Lawson, Stephanie McKinney, Gina Stowers, Chip and the late Christopher Brown.

The couple also has eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.†

Steve and Dora Bir

The couple was married at the Barbers Point Chapel, 216 S. Shore Dr., Honolulu, Hawaii, on Jan. 15, 1971, and had their marriage convalidated by the archdiocese of New Orleans on July 31.

The couple plan to celebrate with family and friends on a sunset cruise on the Belle of Louisville.

James and Dawn Maeder

The couple was married at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on July 9. They have one child, Stephen Bir.

The couple also has one grandchild. They plan to celebrate with family and friends on a sunset cruise on the Belle of Louisville.

Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.

Wedding Anniversaries

Marty and Diane Brown

Marty and Diane (Burkett) Brown, members of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on July 9.

The couple was married at St. Joseph Church in Fremont, Ohio, on July 9, 1966.

They have five children: Julie Lawson, Stephanie McKinney, Gina Stowers, Chip and the late Christopher Brown.

The couple also has eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.†

Steve and Dora (Halla) Bir

Steve and Dora (Halla) Bir, members of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on July 17.

The couple was married at the former Holy Trinity Church in New Albany on July 17, 1971.

They have one child: Stephen Bir.

The couple also has one grandchild. They plan to celebrate with family and friends on a sunset cruise on the Belle of Louisville.

James and Dawn Maeder

The couple was married at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, on Jan. 15, 1971, and had their marriage convalidated years later at St. Andrew Church in Romeoville, Ill., where their children: Michael and Timothy Maeder.

The couple also has two grandchildren.†

Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to http://myHAMDMD.com or call 317-216-1585.
In his weekly audience on April 7, Pope Francis shared his thoughts on the role saints play in the life of the Church. The communion of saints includes all those who have journeyed—both living and deceased—who show us how to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in good times and hard times.

“A saint” who does not bring you to Jesus is not a saint, not even a Christian,” the Holy Father says. “A saint makes you remember Jesus Christ because he or she has journeyed along the path of life as a Christian.” We look to the saints not because they are, or were, perfect people. We look to them because they were once sinful people who repented and let the grace of Christ transform their lives.

As Pope Francis reminds us, the first person to be “canonized” a saint was a thief. “And he was canonized not by a pope, but by Jesus himself.” Tradition names him Dismas, the Good Thief, but although we know next to nothing about him, what we do know from St. Luke’s account of the crucifixion is that while hanging on the cross next to Jesus he asked our Lord to “remember him” (Lk 23:43) when he came into his kingdom. This acknowledgment of Jesus’ Lordship confirms that he, and the other Good Thief, were sinners guilty of many crimes, whereas Jesus had done nothing wrong.

“As this Gospel passage illustrates, “a saint is a witness, a man or woman who encountered Jesus and followed Jesus.” We find saints of all ages, and of every conceivable temperament and skill. What they have in common is the way the encounter with Jesus changes their lives. “It is never too late to convert to the Lord, who is good and great in love,” Pope Francis says, quoting Psalm 103:8. Only the Blessed Virgin Mary was sinless. The rest of the saints reflect our wounded humanity, the result of our first parents’ original sin. When we recognize the essential humanity of all the saints, it allows us to turn to them and seek their assistance in times of temptation or doubt.

“Saints remind us that holiness can blossom even in our lives, however weak and marked by sin,” the pope tells us. The universal call to holiness, which was emphasized in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, becomes concrete in the lives of the saints. Their struggles with faith, with humility, with chastity and even with seemingly small sins of impatience, gossip or petty prejudices, allow us to draw closer to them. They know what it’s like to live the Christian life imperfectly. “We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world,” the pope says, quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2083).

When we call on the intercession of one or more saints in our prayer, we acknowledge that death cannot separate us completely from those who have gone before us. “Saints are still here, not far away from us,” the pope assures the faithful. “Nuestros amigos como la impaciencia, los mentirosos, el gacetillaje o incluso con pecados aparentemente ínimos como la impaciencia, los chismes o los prejuicios de poca monta, nos acercan a ellos. Saben lo que es vivir la vida cristiana de forma imperfecta. Podemos y debemos pedirles que intercedan por nosotros y por el mundo entero,” 

San Francisco. “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)
**GRANDPARENTS**

Continued from page 1

wracked his plan for my life. I did not know how to find my way back to a relationship with him, and I could not even pray.

During that low point, she received a letter and a gift in the mail from her grandmother, Virginia Prior. Her brother was a labor-and-delivery nurse who had been there when Bush was born. Now her grandmother was there for her again in this time of despair, encouraging her to do one thing: pray the rosary. She even enclosed what Bush describes as “a beautifully illustrated booklet on ‘How to Pray the Rosary.’”

Bush’s reaction was immediate, he called the rosary request was immediate—and dismissive.

“I rolled my eyes thinking about the rote prayers said over and over and the boredom that I would experience. I set it aside,” she recalls. “But one night, in desperation, I decided to look through it. I found that I’d forgotten most of the mysteries of the rosary. I was intrigued about how to meditate on the mysteries while saying the prayers. I realized that I’d never learned how to properly pray the rosary.”

As those thoughts raced through her mind, she also thought of her grandmother—she imagined her grandmother praying with her as she began to pray the rosary for the first time in a long time. It was the beginning of a transformation for her.

“Over time, my heart of stone softened. The priests there were young, funn...”

**MYANMAR**

Continued from page 1

thousands of people have fled their homes and taken refuge in churches and other places of their generation—sacri...
At MDI, real encounters lead to radiant witnesses

By Aubrey Major
Special to The Criterion

On June 14, car after car pulled into the parking lot of Marian University in Indianapolis. Out of the cars came high school students, some from hours away and others only a few minutes. With duffel bags and pillows in hand, they waved goodbye, full of nerves and excitement as they stepped into the week to come.

The outcome? A week of transformation beyond all plans and expectations.

The Missionary Disciples Institute (MDI) has always been driven by intentional creation, creating an experience for high schoolers that goes far beyond the week spent on Marian University’s campus. There was something especially unique about MDI this year, with one of the largest number of in-person participants and biggest group of college mentors that it’s ever had. However, it wasn’t the numbers that drove this year’s institute.

On the contrary, it seemed to feel more personal. This year’s institute was powered by the theme “Radiant Witness,” inspired by Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel.” Full of colorful stained-glass imagery and powerful saint witnesses, this theme explored the call to allow Christ’s light to shine through our lives to illuminate the world.

Inviting students to bring their whole selves to the gathering, it served as a reminder to consider their individual gifts and to let those be their guide through the flow of the week.

MDI follows an intentional path to teach students how to live as missionary disciples: encounter, accompany, community, sent. This year’s keynote speakers dove into these steps each day, bringing honesty and authenticity to the table. They invited students to dive into what the faith truly is: an encounter with the Lord to be remembered and shared.

One keynote speaker, Vanesa Zuleta Goldberg, spoke of encountering Christ: “[Jesus] will walk with you. If you are small, he will be small with you. If you are broken, he will be broken with your.”

If you are small, he will be small with you. If you are broken, he will be broken with you,” said Zuleta Goldberg, who has worked in youth ministry for 13 years as a youth minister, Franciscan Youth Volunteer, worship leader and speaker. “He will ask you to go back out on the road and tell people what happened, and walk with them, journey with them—because that’s what Christ does with us,” she continued.

Students discovered that evangelization is based on a relationship with God, a retelling of our encounters with the Lord rather than just a telling of points and information. Even further, encountering Christ is not based on one all-encompassing template, but it is knowing that Christ meets each of our hearts exactly where they are.

“We all have a seat at the table. We have to accompany one another to get to that table, and Jesus accompanies us to get to that table,” said student Daysun Brown, a three-time MDI participant who is a senior at Zionsville Community High School in Zionsville, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese).

“But once we get there, Jesus invites us to sit at his table, break bread with him, and then he says, ‘Go out and be a missionary disciple. Go out and evangelize to the rest of the world.’ ” added Daysun, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. “In addition, I know that I always have a place, and I can always go back to that table, always go meet God again and be replenished and go back out.”

Opportunities for adoration, the sacrament of reconciliation and daily Mass created spaces for students to be still and encounter the Lord in this way amid a busy week of learning and immersion activities. High school student Nate Chistry, another MDI participant, said that the time in adoration was one of his favorite parts of the week.

“Praying in front of Jesus with so many other people my age who share my faith is the best feeling in the world,” explained Nate, a senior at Beavercreek High School in Dayton, Ohio, and a member of Ascension Parish there. Being fueled by prayer together is what led to a big transformation in the students’ hearts, rooting them in relationship with God so that they felt ready to be equipped to put love in action.

The first step? Learning true accompaniment—walking side by side with others as God walks with us.

The genuine community that Rosie mentions is the next step in the path to missionary discipleship.

Day by day, “missionary discipleship” shifted from an idea that the participants read on paper into a tangible calling that they were already able to start living during the week together. They also put it into action during a day of service immersion in the Indianapolis area at multiple locations, including the Society of St. Andrew, the Learning Tree and Providence Cristo Rey High School, as well as crafting mission plans to bring their strengthened faith back to their home communities.

The final days of the institute focused on being sent to continue this good work, encouraging students to let the week be more than just a one-time experience, but a lasting change in how they live.

“When you come to MDI, yes, you come so that Christ can fill you,” said college mentor Timothy Hosford. “But you also come so that Christ can send you out.”

Getting out of their cars on the first day, many of these students were unsure, yet hopeful, at what was to come. Together in friendship, they left MDI 2021 equipped with honest encounters and a calling to share them boldly.

In only six days, the Missionary Disciples Institute made an impact that will surely leave a footprint in eternity.

(Aubrey Major is a junior at Marian University in Indianapolis.)

At MDI, real encounters lead to radiant witnesses

The Paul J. Norman Center on the campus of Marian University in Indianapolis serves as the backdrop for this photo of participants at the Missionary Disciples Institute.

Franciscans Friars of the Renewal Father Agustino Torres, a keynote speaker, discusses the “Joy in the Cross” during the annual Missionary Disciples Institute at Marian University in Indianapolis.

Students take time for prayer and reflection at the annual Missionary Disciples Institute.

Participants at the Missionary Disciples Institute at Marian University in Indianapolis pose for a group photo. The theme for this year’s weeklong gathering was “Radiant Witness,” inspired by Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel.” (Submitted photos)
Guaras truly lived ‘bond of love’ that is family life, says pastor

SURFSIDE, Fla. (CNS)—Father Juan Sosa, pastor of the Catholic church that is close to the now-demolished condominium building in Surfside, held up a photo of a 11-year-old Lucia Guara’s first communion in 2019.

He placed it on the casket holding her and her sister, Emma, 4, during the funeral Mass on July 6 for the girls and their parents.

“I would like to place it on her casket as a symbol of her union with Christ,” the pastor of St. Joseph Parish said of the photo. A couple of minutes earlier, he pointed to the church’s baptismal font where Emma was baptized four years ago.

You can see that the girls were brought [here] by their parents, but now Christ has encountered them at a different stage, at a different phase, in a different moment, because Christ never leaves us abandoned,” Father Sosa said.

“Death cannot define our lives. For those who believe, death is a transformation of Jesus, from loving Jesus, a companion for Christians in our daily lives from baptism to natural or tragic death,” he added.

“Marcus’ Marc,” 52, along with his wife, Ana “Ana” Rodriguez, 42, and the couple’s two daughters, perished in the June 24 collapse of the condo building.

Marcus’ body was pulled from the rubble on June 26, and the bodies of his wife and daughters were found on June 30.

As of July 13, the death toll had risen to 94, and the search and rescue operation officially shifted to a recovery mission.

Lucia and Emma were laid to rest in the same white casket, which was adorned with pink and purple ribbons. Inside the church, their casket was placed between the caskets holding the bodies of their mother and father.

“In today’s Gospel, we hear that Jesus doesn’t want to leave anyone alone or anyone lost. … He’s praying to the Father about that, he’s also praying about you and me. Death does not define us,” Father Sosa said in his homily, alternating between English and Spanish.

Addressing the Guara’s relatives and friends in the congregation, the priest said: “God gifted them with many gifts that you can identify better than I can because you knew them every well and God continues to bring us gifts. Let us not refuse them.”

He said one lesson the Guaras and others who have lost their lives in the tragic building collapse can impart is “that family life is worth more than anything we hold dear to us.”

“Family life is the bond of love that we cherish,” he continued, “the bond that helps us grow even when we fight with each other, which is normal in family life—even when we get angry at one another, which is normal in family life.

“God is near to us, and he knows us in our humanity,” Father Sosa continued, “but at the same time he transforms us by the power of the Spirit to become better each day, to grow out of our own weakness and to be enriched by his own presence.

Gesturing toward the caskets, he added, “They now inspire us to lead family life in that context more than ever before. They and all the ones they haven’t been found yet—[15] members of our parish who are still missing.

“Marcus, Anaely, Lucia and Emma, may the Lord grant you peace always and from the communion of saints may you intercede for us to continue our long journey to the heavenly kingdom,” Father Sosa said.

Throughout the funeral Mass, Guara family members and friends wiped away tears and clung to each other ‘during the singing of ‘Amazing Grace’ as the caskets were being carried out of the church at the end.”

The Associated Press reported.

As the search and rescue effort changed to a recovery operation, the search teams paused their work around 1:20 a.m. on July 8. Standing at the edge of the rubble, they bowed their heads in silence to honor the victims, said Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava.

She told reporters the recovery effort was “proceeding just as rapidly as just as many people on the [rubble] pile,” and authorities were “taking as much care as ever” to find victims.

“We are working around the clock to recover victims and to bring closure to the families as far as we possibly can,” she said.

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said local officials still hoped for the best. “We are still praying for a miracle. We haven’t given up all hope.”

Biannual grants awarded to parishes, schools and archdiocesan agencies

During the second half of fiscal year 2020-21, $31,250 was awarded in grant monies to parishes, schools and agencies in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

These grants, awarded from Oct. 1, 2020 to Sept. 30, 2021, are made available through the St. Francis Xavier Home Mission Endowment Fund, the Groth and Edward Endowment Fund and the James P. Scott Endowment Fund. These grants were made possible through the generosity of archdiocesan parishioners, who set up the endowments.

The grant process is jointly administered by the archdiocesan Finance Office and the Office of Stewardship and Development.

Applications are due to the archdiocese for the two grant allocation periods on April 30 and Oct. 31 each year.

The award period for Fall/Winter 2021 will open in September, with applications due the first of Oct. 31.

The Spring grants awarded for fiscal year 2020-21 are as follows:

• Holy Spirit Parish, Indianapolis; James P. Scott Fund; $20,000 for church door replacement and security features.

• St. Ann Parish, Indianapolis; Home Mission Fund; $20,000 for church LED lighting project.

• St. Jude Parish, Indianapolis; James P. Scott Fund; $5,000 for installation of school HVAC lines.

• St. Louis Parish, Batesville; James P. Scott Fund; $5,000 for playground equipment and resurfacing.

• St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Bedford; James P. Scott Fund; $9,700 for church sound system replacement.

• St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington; Growth and Expansion Fund; $7,782 for furniture and equipment for meeting rooms.

• St. Michael Parish, Brookville; James P. Scott Fund; $4,000 for parish office security doors.

• St. Anthony of Padua School, Clarksville; Growth and Expansion Fund; $18,240 for school computer lab upgrades.

• All Saints Parish on behalf of Dearborn County; Growth and Expansion Fund; $11,400 for ministry priorities for newly combined parishes.

• St. Rose of Lima Parish, Franklin; Home Mission Fund; $79,000 for school HVAC replacement.

• St. Michael Parish, Greenfield; James P. Scott Fund; $31,200 for school HVAC replacement.

• St. Mary Catholic School, North Vernon; Home Mission Fund; $18,900 for school boiler replacement.

• Seton Catholic Elementary School, Richmond; James P. Scott Fund; $3,750 for electrical box upgrades.

• Seton Catholic High School, Richmond; James P. Scott Fund; $7,500 for heating and AC upgrades.

• St. Nicholas Parish, Sunman; Growth and Expansion Fund; $19,784 for establishing new preschool program.

• St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Shelbyville; James P. Scott Fund; $10,000 for church boiler project.

• Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Terre Haute; James P. Scott Fund; $10,000 for replacement of two HVAC units in parish hall.

• Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis; James P. Scott Fund; $20,000 for window and door replacement at residences.

• St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities, New Albany; James P. Scott Fund; $15,000 for security cameras, lighting and fences.

• Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis; James P. Scott Fund; $15,000 for emergency/intercom replacement.

For information on how to apply for the grants, go to archindy.org/finance/grant.html or contact Stacy Harris in the Finance Office at sharris@archindy.org or by phone at 317.226.1355 or 800.382.9836, ext. 1355.

In response, they’ve given me a look of joy that says, “You are the coolest dude in the world!” And since I’ve rarely—OK, never—received that look in my lifetime previously, I’ll do anything with my grandkids that’s just short of me needing CPR.

I could continue with this list, but my grandparents are telling me they need more ice cream, and I have to hide the first carton before their parents get home.

(John Shawcrossy is assistant editor of The Criterion)
Hundreds gather outside hospital to greet recovering pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pilgrims and well-wishers gathered at Rome’s Gemelli hospital to greet Pope Francis as he made his first public appearance in a week after undergoing intestinal surgery.

Addressing a crowd of nearly 6,000 people crowding the 10th-floor balcony of his suite of rooms at the hospital on July 11, the pope was greeted with applause and shouts of “Viva il papa!” (“Long live the pope!”) from the crowd that stood under the scorching midday sun to see him.

“I thank you all,” the pope said. “I have felt your closeness and the support of your prayers. Thank you very much. Pope Francis arrived at Gemelli hospital on July 4 to undergo “a scheduled, supervised therapeutic intervention for a symptomatic diverticular stenosis of the colon,” the Vatican said. The pope has recovered and resumed working from the hospital.

Among the well-wishers outside the hospital was Liliana Valina who, like Pope Francis, is a native of Argentina living in Rome. Draped in the Argentine flag after the country’s July 10 win against Brazil in the Copa America soccer championship, Valina told Catholic News Service (CNS) that she was there “because I care for this pope very much and not just because he’s from Argentina like me.”

“I think he tells Jesus’ message in a clear way, even on things that are uncomfortable for some,” she said. “I came here hoping that he recovers soon, that he be healthy.”

When asked what she would tell her fellow countryman if she could speak directly to him, Valina said: “Never feel alone because you have God and you have many people who love you and are with you.”

Marlene Barbosa, a native of Peru living in Rome, also was outside the hospital with her husband, Maximo Leper, as well as her mother, Susanna Morante, who traveled from Washington, D.C., to be with him and have a chance to see the pope.

“We wanted to see him and receive his blessing because we are Catholic, we are believers and through prayer, we have been close to the pope in these days in which his health has been delicate,” Barbosa told CNS.

“We are with him, we are always praying for him so that he will recover completely,” she said. “We love him, all of Peru loves him and the whole world loves him.”

In his address, the pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. Mark, in which Jesus sent out his disciples to anoint with the sick and heal them.

The oil, he said, not only represents the sacramental anointing of the sick, but also symbolizes “the closeness, the care, the tenderness of those who take care of the sick person.

“It is like a caress that makes you feel better, soothes your pain and cheap all up. Of all us, everyone, sooner or later we all need this ‘anointing’ of closeness and tenderness, and we can all give it to someone else, with a visit, a phone call, a hand outstretched to someone who needs help,” he said.

Pope Francis said that his time in the hospital gave him the opportunity to experience “once again how important good health care is,” and that free, universal health care, especially for the most vulnerable, is a “precious benefit [that] must not be lost.”

ACKNOWLEDGING that some hospitals run by the Church face the threat of closure “due to poor management,” the pope said the Catholic Church’s vocation “is not to have money; it is to offer service, and service is always freely given.”

Before praying the Angelus prayer with the faithful, Pope Francis expressed his “appreciation and encouragement” to the doctors, nurses and staff at Gemelli hospital. He also asked for prayers for the patients, especially the children, at the hospital, several of whom stood on the balcony with him.

“Why children suffer is a question that touches the heart. Accompany them with prayer and pray for all those who are sick, especially for those in the most difficult conditions,” the pope said. “May no one be left alone. May everyone receive the anointing of listening, closeness, tenderness and care.”

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As news events made headlines across the United States for months last year—particularly the 2020 election, the coronavirus pandemic and racism in America—priests’ homilies did not mention these events nearly as much as did sermons by Protestant preachers, according to a report issued on July 8 by the Pew Research Center.

Compared to their Protestant counterparts—whatever the stripe, be it mainstream, evangelical or historically Black—Catholics brought up the rear when it came to sharing at least one sermon about the election last fall. Overall, 67% of churches did, but just 41% of Catholics.

And just 19% of Catholic parish websites mentioned the election, compared to 26% of all churches surveyed.

While 20% of Catholic church-run hospitals encouraged voting—on par with all Christian sermons surveyed—just 36% discussed issues, candidates or political parties, the lowest percentage of all Christian groups.

During the time period studied—which not only included the period but the pandemic and months and months of racial protests spurred by the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer—Catholics came up last in the two measures.

While 69% of Catholic parishes heard at least one sermon relating to COVID-19, at least 82% of other Christian denominations registered hearing a sermon on it. And just 32% of Catholics heard a sermon mentioning racism, while 44% of Protestant Christians did.

The Pew study, “Pandemic or Other Distressed Election, Pandemic and Racism in Fall of 2020,” conducted its analysis based on the texts of 12,832 sermons shared online by 2,151 Catholic churches, representing nearly all of them Catholic churches—delivered between Aug. 31 and Nov. 8, 2020, a period Pew noted that included the presidential election and the Sunday following Election Day.

Pew’s data set includes sermons from 438 evangelical Protestant congregations, 388 mainstream Protestant congregations, 225 Catholic parishes and 205 historically Black Protestant congregations. Pew said the remaining congregations could not be reliably classified, belong to other Christian traditions such as Orthodox Christian denominations, or belong to other faiths.

There are a couple of fundamentals at work,” on why Catholic mentions of topics in the news may not be as prominent in sermons as those by Protestants, said Dennis Quinn, a computational social scientist for Pew, who was the principal researcher for the study and a similar one based on sermon texts from 2019.

The Mass, Quinn said, will “by definition be more structured than the services of other groups. That reduces the opportunity for this happening, like an election” mention. Also, “Catholic homilies are by and large shorter than the sermons or homilies of other groups,” he noted, which means priests have “substantially less time” to get a point across.

“Even among Catholics who were the least likely to talk about the three topics we look at in the study, fewer than half of the congregations at least touched on the election,” Quinn told Catholic News Service in a July 7 phone interview.

“All else aside, Americans were essentially deluged with information in 2020 about the issues that dominated the airwaves. We can see here that the hours spent in the pew was not a respite from that informational deluge,” he said.

The 36-page study was split fairly evenly between the results and the methodology.

“Among the congregations included in this study for which researchers were able to identify a religious tradition, 52% were evangelical Protestant; 22% were mainstream Protestant; 4% were Catholic; and 16% were historically Black Protestant churches,” the Pew study said.

Quinn noted they were weighted to more closely reflect each faith group’s presence in the U.S. population.

“Because Catholic congregations are so much larger,” he said, “there are far fewer of them. We could end up with a ton of evangelical [churches in the study otherwise] because they are so much smaller.”

Compared to the first survey of sermon texts from 2019, fewer homilies from 2020 were examined. Quinn acknowledged that many houses of worship were closed for months last year, yet at the same time—because they lacked the ability to deliver their message face-to-face—churches more aggressively posted sermons online.

Pew included sermon excerpts from Catholics and other denominations without identifying whose words they were.

One Catholic homily, given at the end of the survey period, said: “Perhaps, then, today we need to look beyond the chaos of Tuesday’s [Nov. 3] election and settle instead on the overarching truth of our lives on Earth. That is what St. Paul told the Thessalonians: “Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words [1 Thes 4:17-18]. So dead or alive, we are always with the Lord in the Gospel. Today, we are reminded to be ready for anything in life, to be a people prepared not only to deal with the pandemic and a messed up presidential election, but to remember that we are to follow on the path of those wise virgins. To have not only our own lamps lit, but to have extra oil with us just in case. Like it or not, we need to be prepared to meet the Lord when he does call us home.”

Another homily, that addressed racism, said: “The murder of George Floyd has blown open the terribleness of evil individual and institutional racism that serves the dominant culture so well. Whether blatant or hiding menacingly under the surface, [journalist and author] Roxane Gay wrote that we Blacks live with the knowledge that a hashtag is not a vaccine for white supremacy. We live with the knowledge that, still, no one is coming to save us. The rest of the world years to get back to normal. For Black people, normal is the very thing from which we yearn to be free.”

(Pew: Catholic homilies mention election, racism less than Protestant ones)
Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Jim Wood

New religion standards a witness to faith, hope and love

Almost two years ago, a small band of faithful individuals began a journey to create a new set of religion standards for the archdiocese. Recognizing the Office for the Catechesis, I was given the opportunity of leading this effort. While coming off a year of attentiveness in Catholic schools and continuing my efforts in deacon formation, this project would prove to be completed not by my efforts, but by the service of many people with the hope of inspiring new religion standards for our parish catechetical programs and schools. By God’s grace and inspiration, the newly revised standards were promulgated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson on May 24.

Allow me to recall the efforts of so many. After the selection of our steering committee in August 2019, we began meeting monthly to outline a vision of what would become our new religion standards for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The previous standards from 2001 had served the archdiocese well, however, we knew a revision was needed. We wanted a more user-friendly document that provided our catechists and teachers with ready-made objectives for lesson plans and guided experiences in parish and school settings.

In February 2020, just before the pandemic hit, our steering committee plus an interested group of teachers, catechists, parish catechetical leaders and principals met at the Benedict Inn at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove to begin the work of revising the standards. The newly formed revision team spent several days making edits to old standards. Through the efforts of our revision team, we began the process of piecing together the standard of prayer. Several features served as our priorities. First, the standards are accurate and thorough in a developmentally appropriate way due to the attention that has been paid to the process, whereby the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops evaluates doctrinal conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

Second, special attention is focused on the Christian view of the human person as well as an accurate depiction of human love as articulated in St. John Paul II’s “Theology of the Body.” Finally, while the standards can be taught in any order, they are arranged according to the four pillars of our faith as seen in the CCC: creed, sacraments, morality and prayer.

While attending the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He can be reached at jwood@archindy.org.

The Theology of Technology/Brett Robinson

A witness to the power, beauty of human compassion

I recently spent a few days visiting the hospital to take care of a loved one who had some complications from a cancer procedure. I marveled at the sophisticated medical technologies that were being used so expertly to treat her.

At one point, a doctor came into the room, removed fluid buildup from around her lungs using what could only be described as a pocket sonogram. It was remarkable.

We should be grateful for all these technological advances. In “Laudato Si,’ on Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis writes, “It is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities which they continue to generate.” (No. 1012) St. John Paul II said something similar in an address to scientists: “Science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity.”

However, we seem to have crossed a strange line in our race to overcome the material limitations of nature. Just like the sonogram, we can see parts of the body hidden from the human eye, our efforts to transcend material limitations also mean that we can lose sight of the whole human person. The patient becomes a collection of body parts and conditions to be treated.

The consequences of this shift in perspective are worth paying attention to. We adopt systems and processes that privilege the technology over the physical and spiritual needs of human beings.

The Human Side/Fr. Eugene Hmrcik

Saints offer examples of the weight of carrying regrets

When saints are lauded, we often envision a person who has lived an inspired life. Take for example the goodness of Christ’s life and is endured. On one hand, St. Peter embodied despised it.

When saints are lauded, we often envision a person who has lived an inspired life. Take for example the goodness of Christ’s life and is endured. On one hand, St. Peter embodied despised it.
The Sunday Readings
Sunday, July 18, 2021

• Jeremiah 23:1-6
• Ephesians 2:13-18
• Mark 6:30-34

The Book of Jeremiah is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. One of the four major prophets of ancient Israel, Jeremiah firmly saw himself as God’s representative that he wrote as if God were writing through him. In Jeremiah’s works, God often speaks in the first person. The reflection in this reading. It reveals the disorder and turmoil that existed in Israel at the time. The split was not only political, but also religious.

Advocates for various views and different interpretations of the Law of Moses did battle with each other. Assuming the role of prophets, individuals on their own pressed for this viewpoint or another.

In the writing of Jeremiah, God warns the people against these varying approaches to religion. God’s warning is severe. These people—impostors in prophecy—lead people astray. Caring for the people and for their well-being, God predicts doom for those who would mislead others in matters of religion.

God’s people are not helplessly the victims of these frauds. God will send legitimate prophets.

Two lessons are clear: Objective truth is real, given by God. God’s truth is not simply the conclusion reached by individuals on their own pressed for this viewpoint or another.

In this passage, the Apostles have come back to Jesus, having been sent on various private missions to tell the Lord what He had taught them. It is evident that many people were assembling around Jesus at the time. However, Jesus quite pointedly took the Apostles aside. He led them to a quiet, private place. This was not a rare occurrence. Jesus often took the Apostles to be alone with them. They were his special students. They were especially commissioned. They knew things about the Lord’s teachings that the rank and file did not know.

Reflection
Directly and clearly, the Church in these readings introduces itself and sets forth its credentials. In so doing, it stresses a fact of belief firmly presented since the days of the Old Testament.

God’s truth is exact. It is neither fluid nor open to compromise and amending. Simply as it is as All is else is fraudulent and unreal. The prophets stressed this fact in the Old Testament.

Those people who usurped the prophets’ places were guilty of great fault and brought upon themselves God’s rebuke, for they mislead the people whom God loved and whom God intended to be holy.

The same theme is evident in this weekend’s New Testament readings. St. Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians assures us that the salvation achieved for us by Jesus does not depend upon ethnicity or earthly advantage. It is offered to all. Importantly, however, we need it.

The path to Christ, and thus to God, is not of our own human creation. Those whom Jesus appointed to be our guides, namely the Apostles, whose teachings the Church devoutly keeps and gives to us, guide us along the path.

Just as the Old Testament belittled individual interpretation of revelation and emphasized the prophets, so the New Testament emphasizes the Apostles.

The Criterion  Friday , July 16, 2021

My Journey to God

Cocoon

By Greg Hublar

What if we live out our life, always striving to break free. Never realizing the struggles and fear were always meant to be. What if we spend all of our days, looking around the bend, Only to find we have been living life, in a circle that never ends. What if we stumbled and contemplated all of our past was wrong. Only to discover they did nothing, but to rob us of all our joys. What if we recognized that today is only tomorrow’s yesterday, And maybe more tomorrow morning God is leading the way. Why can we plainly see, that no one lives on Earth forever, Yet somehow gloss over the fact, nor does our earthly treasure. Lord, help me never to worry about what tomorrow may bring, And to never miss the melody of today, that which I was born to sing. God, please keep me mindful that this world is not my home, And fill me with the joy of knowing, I am never alone. Lord, thank you for your promise, that you will return one day soon, And for helping me to remember, we will all eventually leave this cocoon.

By Greg Hublar

Q grew up Catholic, and we always did meatless Fridays year-round as part of the Catholic practice of abstinence. We ate fish instead. Now, as a vegan adult, since I’m already skipping meat anyway (fish, too), if I still wanted to do some kind of Friday abstinence, could I give up things like soda pop, desserts or even beer? (Indiana)

A On the Fridays during Lent, Catholics who have reached age 14 are asked to abstain from eating meat as a penitential act to join in the sufferings of Jesus. In 1966, when the Catholic bishops in the U.S. lifted the rule of mandatory abstinence on Fridays throughout the year, this is what they said: “Since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most, to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies penance, while renunciation of other things would be more penitential.”

Your question—about what other things you might give up—suggests that you have captured the spirit of that statement. All of your choices—soda, dessert, beer—have merit, because they would require a conscious decision on your part to forgo something that you like.

But the sacrifice you pick need not even be centered on dietary matters. I’ve always thought that a good idea for Christians on Lenten Fridays would be to take five minutes around three o’clock in the afternoon just to be quiet and to thank Jesus for dying on the cross to redeem our sins.

Q Our pastor is rude (at times, obnoxious) to a parish volunteer who contributes a lot of work as an assistant to a paid parish employee. That paid employee has told me that he himself has been treated the same way, and the same priest for insubordination—for telling the priest that he should be on time for confessions and that his remarks from the altar at the end of Mass are too long. Is there anyone who can put a stop to this? My friend, the volunteer, is afraid that if he files a complaint with the parish secretary, his colleague (the paid employee) might be punished. (New York)

A I am sorry that your pastor has acted rudely, and I apologize on his behalf. Priests are human and are often very busy these days—some, with multiple parishes under their responsibility—but that doesn’t excuse them from treating each person with respect, especially someone who volunteers time to help the parish. I don’t think it would be productive for you to involve the parish secretary in this matter; a parish secretary would normally have no role in a grievance like this. The most upfront way, of course, would be for you to seek some time with the pastor himself and explain, as a parishioner, your concern over what you’ve been hearing.

But if you are reluctant to do that, there are other courses of action. Most dioceses have a priest who serves as director of clergy personnel, and you might seek some time with him to share your thoughts.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, July 19
Exodus 14:5-18 (Responsorial) Exodus 15:1-6
Matthew 12:38-42

Tuesday, July 20
St. Apollinarius, bishop and martyr
Exodus 14:21-15:1 (Response) Exodus 15:8-10, 12, 17
Matthew 12:46-50

Wednesday, July 21
St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and doctor of the Church
Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15
Psalm 78:18-19, 23-28
Matthew 13:1-9

Thursday, July 22
St. Mary Magdalene
Song of Songs 8:6-11, or 2 Corinthians 5:14-17
Psalm 62:2-6, 8-9
John 20:1-2, 11-18

Friday, July 23
St. Bridget, religious
Exodus 20:1-17, 21:3-17
Psalm 19:8-11
Matthew 13:18-23

Saturday, July 24
St. Sharbel Makhluf, priest
Exodus 24:13-24, 29-31
Psalm 50:16-2, 5-6, 14-15
Matthew 13:24-30

Sunday, July 25
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
2 Kings 4:42-44
Psalm 145:10-11, 15-18
Ephesians 4:1-6
John 6:1-15

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Church says penance on Fridays can be accomplished in various ways

Of course, I have a question regarding meatless Fridays. I am a doctor of the Church (New York)

I am sorry that your thoughts.

Online Lay Ministry Formation The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes: • Earn certification in Lay Ministry. • Complete 12 credits with ND STEP program. • CDU offers courses on Catechesis of the Catholic Church 

For more information, please go to www.archindy.org/layministry
Pope Francis asks for local events coinciding with World Meeting of Families

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)—**Pope Francis has asked dioceses around the world to make it possible for every family to participate in the World Meeting of Families by holding local celebrations during the gathering in Rome on June 22-26, 2022.

"After being postponed for a year due to the pandemic, the desire to meet again is great," the pope said in a video message on July 2.

The theme of the 2022 gathering is: “Family love: A vocation and a path to holiness.”

"Rome will be the main venue, the pope said, and bishops' conferences and international Catholic organizations will be invited to send delegates involved in family ministry to Rome for "the Festival of Families, the pastoral congress" and the concluding Mass.

At the same time, the pope said, "each diocese can be the focal point for a local meeting for its families and communities. In this way, everyone will be able to participate, even those who cannot come to Rome."

Pope Francis asked dioceses to be "dynamic, active and creative in organizing this with the families in harmony with what will be taking place in Rome. This is a wonderful opportunity to devote ourselves with enthusiasm to family ministry with spouses, families and pastors together."

Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, said the World Meeting of Families continues to grow and attract more families from around the world, "bringing enrichment with their languages, cultures and experiences."

The gatherings, he said, "have been an eloquent sign of the beauty of the family for the Church and for all humanity. We need to continue on this path, seeking to involve more and more families in this beautiful initiative."
By Natalie Hoefer

ST. LOUIS—As the world cautiously begins to open its doors again after the COVID-19 pandemic, some might long to strap on their sandals as pilgrims in search of spiritual growth.

But if the thought of cross-continent or overseas travel is still too anxiety-inducing, fear not, pilgrim. Right here in the Midwest is a pilgrimage that offers two basilicas, two shrines, the site of a miracle, several grottos, an outdoor Stations of the Cross trail with recorded reflections and more.

The pilgrimage destination? St. Louis and Belleville, Ill., to visit: the Basilica of St. Louis, King of France; the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis; the Shrine of St. Joseph; and the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville.

The pilgrimage can start by sleeping in for an extra hour—St. Louis is on Central Time, so you’ll gain an hour as you head west.

First cathedral west of the Mississippi

With its cornerstone laid in 1831 and its dedication taking place in 1834, the Basilica of St. Louis, King of France (or Old Cathedral) was the first cathedral built west of the Mississippi River.

It was dedicated just days before Bishop Simon Bruté was ordained there to serve as the founding bishop of the Diocese of Vincennes, Ind., now the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

The cathedral basilica stands today as a testament to the importance of both the Church and the church building—located just several hundred yards from the St. Louis Arch, it is the only structure not demolished when the grounds were cleared for the Gateway Arch National Park.

The humble simplicity of the church interior is striking, speaking to the popular architecture and materials available in the time and place during which the structure was built.

The eye is immediately drawn to the large painted crucifix behind the altar, towering as if from the tabernacle itself. It was commissioned by New Albany native and then-St. Louis archbishop Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter in 1959.

Just as eye-catching above it is a large oval window. It had been covered then rediscovered during renovations in 1959.

During that renovation, the marble altar was installed. It is a replica of the original altar placed in the sanctuary in 1834, which had been removed during renovations in the late 1800s.

Facing the sanctuary, a side altar dedicated to St. Louis IX, King of France, honors the namesake of the basilica and the city itself, which was established on French-claimed soil in 1764. Adorning the space are the reliquaries of the current cathedral of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Two additional altars—one dedicated to Mary on the right, and another dedicated to the Jesuits on the left. It was priests of the Jesuit order who led the parish for more than a century, from its founding in 1843 until 1954.

If at all possible, visit the shrine on Sunday after the regularly scheduled 11 a.m. Mass for a detailed, interesting guided tour.

The humble simplicity of the church interior is striking, speaking to the popular architecture and materials available in the time and place during which the structure was built.

Cardinal Ritter’s remains lie in stunning ‘new’ cathedral

The first word that comes to mind in describing the current cathedral basilica of the Archdiocese of St. Louis is “stunning.” No, “breath-taking.” No, “majestic”—I can’t decide.

Construction on the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis, or “new” cathedral, began in 1907.

According to a visitor’s guide, its size alone is impressive—83,000 square feet, including three large domes and a massive baldachino (a stone canopy help up by columns) framing the altar.

Now take that size and add 41.5 million mosaic pieces of glass, hand-cut enamels of glass and telling stories from the Bible and of local Catholic history, and the eye is defied to take it all in.

So beautiful is the beauty and so beautiful the beauty of the mosaic, by be sure to visit the Mosaic Museum beneath the cathedral.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis holds a special tie to the cathedral. It is here where the remains of Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter lie. He was bishop of the then-Diocese of Indianapolis from 1934-1944, and first archbishop of the newly designated Archdiocese of Indianapolis from 1944-1946, when he was appointed to the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

He and two other St. Louis cardinals are buried under a side altar known as All Souls Chapel. The cardinals’ hats, known as gallon, hang from the ceiling above the altar.

The cathedral was designated a basilica by St. John Paul II in 1997. The tell-tale umbraebractum and tintumabulum are present on the right side of the sanctuary.

In addition to All Souls Chapel, the cathedral boasts three other chapels: the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, which is shaded with blood red mosaic tiles arching over the space, the Blessed Virgin’s Chapel and the All Saints Chapel, where a copy of the colorful, artistic St. John’s Bible resides.

There is much for the eye and soul to contemplate in the basilica, which is open from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Whether you want to walk through on your own with the help of a printed visitors guide or join a guided tour between 10 a.m.-3 p.m., it’s recommended to call ahead to be sure the cathedral will be open, it is quite the wedding hot spot. Tours are also held each Sunday after the noon Mass.

A pilgrim’s respite

Whether you take in all of the pilgrimage sites in one day or two, before heading home you’ll want to spend the night at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows just across the Mississippi River in Belleville, Ill.

Owned and operated by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the shrine sprawls on 200 tranquil wooded acres with 10 outdoor areas for devotion.

They range from a Lourdes grotto to a Fathers Memorial Wall honoring St. Joseph and all fathers; a Mothers Prayer walk to an 85-foot Millennium Spire with candelarium of votive candles; Our Lady of Guadalupe Hill to a Way of the Cross walk with recorded meditations, and more.

A night drive around the grounds to enjoy the lighted grottos, an outdoor Stations of the Cross trail with recorded reflections and more. While a continental breakfast is included, be advised that it is a very small continent: coffee, juice, packaged muffins, granola bars and fruit. (Those familiar with the guest house should note that the former restaurant is no longer in operation.)

Holy sites are closer to home than across the sea. This pilgrimage to St. Louis and Belleville makes for a double weekend tour of shrines, basilicas, grottos and more for the mind, eye and heart to contemplate.

Pilgrimages help the soul grow in grace, and what simpler way to do so than—relatively speaking—in one’s own backyard.

(For more information on these pilgrimage sites available as follows:
• Old Cathedral: 314-231-2250 or oldcathedral.org
• Shrine of St. Joseph: 314-231-9407 or www.shrineofstjoseph.org
• Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis: 314-373-8200 or catherdral.org
• National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows: 618-397-6700 or snows.org for reservations.)

The sanctuary of St. Joseph Shrine in St. Louis boasts a three-footh “Altar of Answered Prayers,” the effort of parishioners in thanksgiving after a St. Joseph novena during a cholera epidemic in 1866. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)