Court’s new term to look at abortion, death penalty, religious liberty

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court’s new term, starting on Oct. 4, returns to its standard routine: hearing arguments in person and taking on hot-button issues.

The big cases, among the 34 it has so far agreed to hear, include those on abortion, the Second Amendment, and religious liberty issues related to a death penalty case and religious schools excluded from a state school choice program.

The nine justices are jumping into the fray at a time when the public’s perception of the court is becoming more negative.

A Gallup poll released two weeks before the court’s new session said only 40% of Americans approve of the job the court is doing, compared with 49% two months ago and 58% a year ago.

“Not since Bush v. Gore has the public perception of the court’s legitimacy seemed so seriously threatened,” said Irv Gornstein, executive director of the Supreme Court Institute at Georgetown University Law School referring to the Supreme Court’s decision settling the 2000 presidential election.

Likely the most anticipated case of the term is Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the abortion case that will be argued on Dec. 1 and has been described as potentially taking down Roe v. Wade, the court’s 1973 decision legalizing abortion.

Here, the justices will consider the constitutionality of a Mississippi state law prohibiting abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy. The state ban was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

The nation’s high court already stepped into the abortion debate in early September when it declined to block a Texas law banning abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. The state ban was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

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St. Joseph, protector of Holy Family, is model for 2021 Respect Life Month

WASHINGTON (CNS)—As part of the Year of St. Joseph declared by Pope Francis, the U.S. Catholic Church’s annual Respect Life Month celebration in October highlights the example of that great saint as protector of life, said the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee.

“St. Joseph is a profound reminder of our own call to safeguard and defend God’s precious gift of life, and in our day, we asked Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan.,” said St. Joseph is “a profound example of that great saint” in the Year of St. Joseph declared by Pope Francis.

“We can imitate his care and provision by helping to start Walking with Moms in Need,” the archbishop said.

The prelate, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, made the comments in a Sept. 27 statement.

During October, Respect Life Sunday is observed on the first Sunday of the month, which this year is on Oct. 3.


“Many of us have our special moments and situations in which we bring our life to God, when we know, when we feel, when we understand, when we deeply feel, for you, what is that one thing in your life that brings you closer to God and why?”

Pope Francis said that now, more than 50 years later, the council fathers wanted the Church to be a “‘horizon, the arguments and the method it presented was open, in dialogue with contemporaries in the world.’”

The council became the horizon of our belief, our language and our practice, that is, the horizon of our ecclesial, ecclesiastical and spiritual horizon, the horizon of our mutual, love, acceptance and solidarity.”

At the same time, Pope Francis cautioned that the Christian message can never be reduced to a social program nor can it be so separated from real life that it focuses only on the spiritual and the heretical.

What is that one thing in your life that brings you closer to God?

It may be happening while you are working, or helping someone in need. Or sitting in silence during eucharistic adoration. Or while teaching, painting, running, playing sports, or talking with a friend.

Many of us have our special moments and situations in which we bring our life to God, when we know, when we feel, when we understand, when we deeply feel, for you, what is that one thing in your life that brings you closer to God and why?”

A favorite moment in your life when you knew God was there for you?

The criterion is inviting you to share your answers, thoughts and stories concerning these questions. Send your submissions to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.

October 1-2

Wedding at St Augustine Church in Lebanon, Ky.

October 3 – 1 p.m.

Respect Life Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis.

October 3 – 6 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for youth of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, Indianapolis, at St. Gabriel the Archangel Church.

October 4 – 2 p.m.

Groundbreaking ceremony for the Ritter High School, Indianapolis.

October 4 – 4:30 p.m.

Mass for the Indiana Non-Public Education Association at St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis.

October 5 – 10:30 a.m.

Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis.

October 6 – 11 a.m.

Lunch gathering with Archdiocese of Indianapolis priests, Indianapolis.

October 6 – 7 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for youth of Our Lady of Good Counsel School, Greenwood, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

October 7 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center.

October 9 – 8:30 a.m.

Corrections Ministry Conference at Roncalli High School, Indianapolis.

October 9 – 4:30 p.m.

Mass for Giabault Children’s Services 100-Year Celebration at Giabault Children’s Services, Terre Haute

Pope Francis said Vatican II shaped his theology, including in social teaching

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis said the Second Vatican Council shaped his theological and pastoral vision that perhaps he has not been as explicit as he should have been in highlighting those ties, especially when it comes to his contributions to Catholic social teaching.

“Many of us have special moments and situations in which we bring our life to God, when we feel, when we understand, when we deeply feel, for you, what is that one thing in your life that brings you closer to God and why?”

“St. Joseph, defender of life, pray for us!” †
House OKs abortion bill called ‘far outside the American mainstream’

WASHINGTON (CNS)—In a 218-211 vote on Sept. 24, the U.S. House passed what opponents concern is one of the most extreme abortion bills ever seen in the nation—the Women’s Health Protection Act.

“This bill is far outside the American mainstream and goes far beyond Roe v. Wade,” Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., co-chairman of the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus, said in remarks ahead of the vote. “This bill constitutes an existential threat to unborn children and to the value of life itself.”

H.R. 3755 codifies the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion nationwide. The measure would establish the legal right to abortion on demand at any stage of pregnancy in all 50 states under federal law.

“For the first time ever by congressional statute, H.R. 3755 would legally enable the death of unborn baby girls and boys by dismemberment, decapitation, forced expulsion from the womb, deadly poisons or other methods at any time until birth,” Smith said. “A significant majority of Americans are deeply concerned about protecting the lives of unborn children,” the Catholic congressman added.

He pointed to a 2021 Marist Poll that found 65% of Americans want Roe v. Wade “reinterpreted to either send the issue to the states or stop legalized abortion.”

The bill nullifies: requirements to provide women seeking abortion with specific information on their unborn child and on alternatives to abortion; laws requiring a waiting period before a woman receives an abortion; laws allowing medical professionals to opt out of providing abortions; and laws stating that only licensed physicians can perform abortions.

“This deceptively named bill is the most extreme pro-abortion bill our nation has ever seen,” Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee, said on Sept. 24. “H.R. 3755 is not about the health of women, but only about eliminating any and all protections for unborn children—including baby girls.” If it became law, “it would lead to the deliberate destruction of millions of unborn lives, leaving countless women with physical, emotional and spiritual scars,” he said in a statement.

“This bill assumes that abortion can be the only, or best, solution to a crisis pregnancy” and “is built on a false and despairing narrative that utterly fails women,” he continued. “In treating abortion as the moral equivalent to the removal of an appendix, this proposal is radically out of step with the American public.

“As a nation built on the recognition that every human being is endowed by its Creator with the unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, this bill is a complete injustice,” Archbishop Naumann said.

“Congress should embrace public policy that respects the rights of mothers, their children and the consciences of all Americans,” he added. “It’s not advancing a radical ‘abortion on demand until birth’ policy that is completely out of step with our country’s principles.”

The Senate version of the Women’s Health Protection Act, S. 1975, is not expected to pass, but sponsors of the House bill said their vote still sends a message about the outrage they say has been felt by women over the new Texas law banning abortion after six weeks. The vote also comes ahead of the Dec. 1 oral arguments to be heard by the Supreme Court in an appeal from Mississippi to keep its ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Supporters of the law are urging the court to re-examine its previous abortion rulings, including Roe.

“In the United States, the tragically pervasive acceptance of abortion has resulted in more than 62 million abortions since Roe v. Wade,” Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Va., said in a statement. “Let us be clear: Abortion harms women and ends the life of a child; it is not health care, and it protects no one.”

“Health and protection are about healing, defending and saving lives, not destroying them.”

National pro-life leaders were quick to respond to the House vote, including Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, who said that “pro-abortion Democrats have revealed their true vision for abortion policy in America” by pushing legislation she also called “deceptively named.”

All House Democrats but one voted for H.R. 3755; Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, who is Catholic, was the lone Democrat opposed to it. No House Republicans voted for the measure.

If President Joe Biden, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., “and their allies get their way, the United States will soon be indistinguishable from North Korea and China on the human rights issue of abortion,” Smith said.

Biden and Pelosi are both Catholics who support legal abortion and have vowed to see Roe codified in federal law.

Regarding the bill’s provision invalidating all state laws, National Right to Life’s president Carol Tobias noted that “the 10th Amendment, which gives each state the right to set its own policy, is in the U.S. Constitution. Abortion is not.

“Only abortionists and abortion providers like Planned Parenthood benefit from this legislation,” she said in a statement. “Tragically, the losers in this debate are the mothers and their unborn babies.”

In a tweet on Sept. 25, Bishop Donald J. Hying of Madison, Wis., said: “With the full support of our Catholic president, our Catholic speaker of the house, and scores of Catholic representatives, the most radical pro-abortion bill was passed by the House of Representatives, claiming that any restrictions on abortion are misogy.”

A few days before the House vote, San Francisco’s archbishop said the bill allowed “nothing short of child sacrifice.”

The “misnamed” measure “shows to what radical extremes the supposedly ‘pro-life’ Roe coalition in our country will go to protect what they hold most sacred: the right to kill innocent human beings in the womb,” Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone said in a Sept. 21 statement. 
Despite differences, we are all called to fulfill God's plan

We all have a role in our Creator’s mission to build his kingdom. Young, middle-aged, old, Black, white, Hispanic, and on and on; the list of those called as missionary disciples who make up God’s earthly Christian family is a unique canvas of races, colors and creeds. Each has the task of evangelizing, and many would argue there is no definitive way to use that charge to build the kingdom. But we must be open to appreciating others’ gifts as they fulfill this mission.

Pope Francis reminded us of that lesson during his Angelus address on Sept. 26 at the Vatican. Reflecting on that day’s Gospel reading, the pope shared how John—speaking for the Apostles—approached Jesus, noting how they were upset that someone who was not part of their group was casting out demons in Jesus’ name. “Jesus invites them not to hinder those who do good, because they contribute to the fulfillment of God’s plan,” the Holy Father said. “Then he admonishes them: instead of dividing people into good and bad, we are all called to be vigilant over our own hearts, lest we succumb to evil and bring scandal to others.”

Human nature, especially in today’s chaotic world, makes many of us uneasy when we see outsiders enter onto our terrain—even if they are successful. We feel threatened because someone is completing a task that we believe is exclusively meant for us. Reacting as the Apostles did, the pope reminds us, is wrong.

They think they have the “exclusive right over Jesus,” and that they are the only ones authorized to work for the kingdom of God. But in this way, they end up considering feeling that they are themselves privileged and consider others as outsiders, to the extent of becoming hostile toward them,” Pope Francis said.

Thinking in this way, the pope continued, tends to keep us at a distance from those who do not think like we do and is the root of many evils in history. But we need to be vigilant about closure in the Church, too. The devil, who is the divider—is this what the word “devil” means, the one who divides—always incites suspicions to divide and exclude people,” the pope said. “He tempts with using cunning, and it can happen as with those disciples, who go so far as to end up excluding even someone who had cast out the devil himself!”

Times like this call us to humility and openness. Keeping others at a distance who are building the kingdom in their unique way and excluding them because they are not part of our group, the pope reminds us, is a sin.

“Let us ask for the grace to overcome the temptation to judge and to categorize, and may God preserve us from the ‘nest’ mentality, that of zealously guarding ourselves in the small group of those who consider themselves good,” the Holy Father said. During his talk, the pope warned of groups that could potentially be unwelcoming to others—clergy with loyal followers, pastoral workers closed up among themselves, movements and associations in their own particular charism, and others.

When groups are closed and not welcoming, Pope Francis said, “all this runs the risk of turning Christian communities into places of separation and not of communion. The Holy Spirit does not want closeness; he wants openness, and welcoming communities where there is a place for everyone.”

Building community is at the heart of our mission as Catholics. And, now more than ever, we must allow the Spirit to open our minds and hearts to understanding God’s will for other disciples.

As we move forward in carrying out our charge, may we have the courage to do our part in building God’s kingdom, and allow others to use their gifts in fulfilling this mission as well.

—Mike Krokos

Guest Commentary/Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board

It’s time women’s care centers receive the support they deserve

(Following is as an editorial published online on Sept. 14 by Our Sunday Visitor, a national Catholic newswisely bureau in Huntington, Ind. The editorial was written by the publication’s editorial board.)

It has been weeks since the U.S. Supreme Court declined to protect Texas S.B. 8 from going into effect. The law blocks most abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected and limits private providers to sue those who “aid and abet” abortions. While such stories generally burn hot and are extinguished quickly, in this case, the media firestorm has continued to spread.

Commentators and pro-abortion politicians continue to write their hands over the legislation that abortion providers say “would immediately and catastrophically reduce abortion access in Texas, barring care for at least 85% of Texas abortion patients [those who are six weeks pregnant or greater] and likely forcing many abortion clinics ultimately to close.”

According to Texas Health and Human Services, 54,741 unborn children were aborted in the state in 2020. If the abortion lobby is correct, the state’s new law may save nearly 47,000 lives in a single year.

As this editorial board pointed out in early September, the heavy media coverage of the Texas law has given pro-life supporters a rare opportunity outside of an election cycle to discuss why abortion is and what abortion is not.

Beyond that, it has provided an opportunity to address one of the main criticisms lobbed at those who advocate for the rights of the unborn—namely, that they do not care about the well-being of pregnant mothers or their children once they are born.

Critics claim despite the fact that there are nearly 2,500 pro-life crisis pregnancy centers in the United States that provide free or low-cost medical services (pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, prenatal care, etc.) and material aid (clothing, diapers, formula, even housing).

Just days after the Texas abortion law went into effect, the Texas Catholic Conference—the policy arm of the state’s bishops—issued a statement trumpeting the Lone Star State’s funding of the Alternatives to Abortion program, a statewide program that was founded 16 years ago and served more than 100,000 pregnant women, families and children last year alone.

According to the state, the program “provides support services to pregnant women and their families, adoption parents, and parents who have experienced miscarriage or the loss of a child.” The Texas Legislature has pledged $100 million to fund the program during its current two-year term.

In contrast, President Joe Biden’s Justice Department announced on Sept. 22 it will not allow the state to attempt to block the state’s abortion law. Biden, a Catholic, recently said that he does not agree with the Church that the sanctity of life begins at conception—a reversal from his previous public position.

This isn’t the first time he has changed course on the matter when it became politically advantageous to do so. Until 2019, he supported the Hyde Amendment, which blocks federal tax dollars from being used to pay for abortions. Instead of federally funding abortion, how many lives could be saved if politicians from both parties encouraged government at all levels to give pregnant women the support they need to keep and raise their children.

For far too long, local women’s care centers have been forced to do this important work on shoestring budgets made possible largely by proceeds from silent auctions, charity golf outings and the like. And yet they still save countless lives.

Imagine their reach if these centers were supported by lawmakers from both sides of the aisle. Even politicians who advocate for legal abortion claim that, in an ideal world, women should feel supported enough that they should never feel compelled to have an abortion. While it might seem like a pipe dream in today’s political climate, this is a cause that should bring Democrats and Republicans together to make this a reality.

Advocating for an end to legal abortion continues to be of the utmost importance, but it’s also past time that we call upon our local, state and federal governments to fully support programs that provide tangible assistance to mothers who might otherwise choose abortion.

We as the body of Christ—both the institutional Church and individual disciples of Jesus—are called to remind lawmakers that each child killed by abortion is a tragedy that could be prevented if only they prioritized people—born and unborn—over politics.

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “courageous, responsible, and freely-held expression of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressus, 116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 75 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, for security reasons, may be edited for identity.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@agsupply.org.

"promotes childbirth and provides support"
Hoy, viernes 1 de octubre, es la festividad de santa Teresita del Niño Jesús, “la florecita de Jesús.” El lunes, 4 de octubre, celebraremos la festividad de san Francisco de Asís, cuya vida fue relatada por sus primeros seguidores y publicada como Las florecillas de san Francisco. Junto con María y todos los santos, estas dos “florecitas” dan testimonio de la grandezza de Dios y de la maravillosa belleza de toda la creación divina.

Al principio, santa Teresita (1873-1897) parece ser un testigo de menor importancia, murió joven, a los 24 años, y pasó casi toda su vida en Lisieux, Francia, y en el Carmelo de Lisieux como monja de clausura. Pero su impacto fue poderoso y se extendió mucho más allá de los muros del claustro de su pequeño pueblo.

Sus escritos, especialmente La historia de un alma, son conocidos en todo el mundo, y le han valido los títulos de “Doctora de la Iglesia” y “Patrona de las Misiones.” Como papa emerito Benedicto XVI una vez escribió, “Teresa es uno de los ‘tíos’ del Evangelio que se dejan llevar por Dios hasta las profundidades de su Mito.”

San Francisco de Asís (1182-1226), por su parte, fue una figura de gran envergadura cuyos gestos grandiosos y cuya interacción con pobres y sultanas y con todos los que conoció, ciertamente puede calificarse como un testimonio magnánimo de la alegría del Evangelio. La vida y las enseñanzas de esta flor tan pequeña le han valido un lugar destacado entre todos los santos y mártires que, de diferentes maneras, han dedicado su vida a la búsqueda de la santidad. Como dijo el papa Benedicto de este santo de Asís, “Desde la altura de la Cruz [de san Damián], que ahora se conserva en la Basílica de San Damián, Francisco oyó a Jesús decirle: ‘Ve a reparar mi casa que, como ves, está toda en ruinas’. Esta ‘casa’ era, en primer lugar, su propia vida, que necesitaba ser reparada mediante una auténtica conversión; era la Iglesia, no la hecha de piedras, sino de personas vivas, siempre necesitadas de purificación, era toda la humanidad, en la que Dios le gusta habitatar.

Teresa y san Francisco de Asís son dos ‘flores’ muy diferentes cuya belleza llena la Tierra hasta nuestros días, un testimonio de que, aunque desechadas por los demás, debemos permanecer cerca de Jesús en la oración, en los sacramentos y en el servicio a los demás para que seamos capaces de albergar su corazoncillo en nuestro interior.

Que su ejemplo nos inspire a vivir en común y oración constante. Y les aseguro que estaré a ustedes. Y les aseguro que estaré con ustedes siempre, hasta el fin del mundo” (Mt 28:18-20).

Como misioneros, nuestro trabajo apostólico puede limitarse a la casa—a nuestras familias, amigos y compañeros de trabajo—o puede extenderse hasta los confines de la Tierra. Si queremos imitar a las “florecitas,” cuyo gran amor por Jesús y su Iglesia las transformó en gigantes que siguen tocando la mente y el corazón de millones de personas en todo el mundo, debemos permanecer cerca de Jesús en la oración, en los sacramentos y en el servicio a los demás.

Como nos recuerda con frecuencia el papa Francisco, los santos son personas corrientes que están cerca de Dios. Lo que les hace destacar no es su estatus especial, sino sus corazones llenos de amor y su voluntad de ir más allá en el servicio a sus hermanas y hermanos en Cristo.

A los ojos de Dios, lo que hace “grande” a una mujer o a un hombre es si la riqueza, ni el poder ni la posición social. La grandeza se mide por nuestra humildad, nuestro amor desinteresado a Dios y al prójimo, y por nuestra disposición a sacrificar nuestra propia comodidad y seguridad por el bienestar de los demás. En su exhortación apostólica “Gaudete et Exsultate” (“Alegran y regocijémonos”), el papa Francisco identificó los siguientes “cinco signos de santidad”:  
• Alegria y sentido del humor. 
• Audacia y fervor. 
• En comunidad.  
• En oración constante.  
• Constante oración.  

Estas son ciertamente características que destacan en las vidas de Teresa de Lisieux y Francisco de Asís. Pues de dar en sus personalidades tan diferentes, sus vidas irradiaban fuerza interior, algo que debemos aprender por la vida en común y oración constante. Que su ejemplo nos inspire a vivir como ellos, independientemente de nuestro tiempo, lugar o dones individuales.
May 27, 5520 Castleton Corner Lain, Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, 5:30 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrating (for registration for the evening following the Mass is now closed). Information and registration: 317-236-1482 or archindy.org.

October 5
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. St. Thomas More Society Red Mass and Dinner: 5:30 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Joseph M. McFadden. Welcome, also call about reserving your seat for a Friday night dinner event. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

October 7, 14, 21, 28
St. Michael Parish, 519 Jefferson Blvd., Greenwood. The Parables of Jesus Bible Study, Thursdays, 10 a.m. or offered by Guadalupe Bible college graduates, bring Bible, online option available, free. Information and registration: jiarlene@gmail.com.

October 7
Mt. Cletus, 5552 Castleton Corner Lain, Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, 5:30 p.m. Mass, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed, divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about reserving your seat for a Friday night dinner event. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

October 9-10
90 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Oct. 7. The couple was married in St. Gabriel Church in Connersville on Oct. 7, 1961. They have four children: Kathy Dungan, Amanda Greg and Tom Seln. The couple also has 12 grandchildren. †

October 10
10 St. Monica Church, 6331 Michigan Rd., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 4:30 p.m., second Sunday of every month. Information: 317-236-1474 or saintmeinrad.org.

October 10, 17, 24

October 12

October 13, 27

October 16-17
Mary Queen of Peace Church, 1005 W. Main St., Danville. Bruté Weekend: all weekend Masses, Father Daniel Bedel, spiritual director of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, will celebrate Mass and share from the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or pspringer@archindy.org.

October 20
5:30 p.m., all weekend Masses, Father Andrew Syberg, vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, will celebrate Mass and share from the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or pspringer@archindy.org.

October 21
6:30 p.m. Fri.-11 p.m. Sun., sundries, two overnight stays in private guestroom, meals, snacks, Indiana. Providence Sister Connie, 6:30 p.m. Fri.-11 p.m. Sun., sundries, two overnight stays in private guestroom, meals, snacks, two overnight stays in private guestroom with private bathroom. Registration: cutt.ly/anniversaries or call 317-236-1474.

October 31
1306 27th St., Columbus. Polter SR Run/Walk, 8:30-11 a.m., benefiting ALFA program in northern Haiti. 330 with shirt, with registration by Oct. 15. Information and registration: 812-378-0967 or HaitiALFA@gmail.com.

December 9, 5:30 p.m., all weekend Masses, Father Andrew Syberg, vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, will celebrate Mass and share from the seminary forms future priests. Information: Ellen Sanders, 317-236-1501 or pspringer@archindy.org.

December 10
In previous abortion rulings, the Supreme Court has consistently said states cannot restrict abortion before 24-weeks of pregnancy, focusing on viability, or when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own. If the court sides with Mississippi in this term’s case, it would be the first time it would allow an abortion ban before the point of viability and could lay the groundwork for other abortion restrictions.

Catholic leaders and pro-life organizations have shown support for the Mississippi law in friend-of-the-court briefs. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), in its brief, stressed the court “continues to treat abortion as a constitutional issue,” it will face more questions in the future about “what sorts of abortion regulations are permissible.”

The court also is taking up two death penalty cases. On Nov. 1 it will look at an issue it has previously weighed in on: the presence of religious leaders at an execution. But this case will specifically examine exactly what a spiritual adviser can do during an execution.

The focus is on the case of John Ramirez, a Texas death-row inmate who was granted a stay of execution by the court “continues to treat abortion as a constitutional issue,” it will face more questions in the future about “what sorts of abortion regulations are permissible.”

Another big case that similarly echoes previous ones is the Dec. 8 oral arguments in Carson v. Makin, where the court will determine if Maine violated the Constitution by prohibiting students from using funds from a state school choice program for schools that provide religious instruction.

In a similar case last year, the court ruled in Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue that states are not required to subsidize private education, but they can’t exclude religious schools from receiving tuition funding simply because they are religious.

The USCCB praised the Espinoza decision, saying it “means that religious persons and organizations can, like everyone else, participate in government programs that are open to all.”

This term, the court also will look at handicap laws, reviewing a New York law, upheld by the lower courts, that requires individuals to have a license to carry a concealed gun outside the home.

The U.S. bishops have not weighed in on this case, but they have spoken out against hand guns in the past, arguing that they should be accessible to those in law enforcement and the military, but that all others should have significantly restricted access.

Also in the weeks prior to the court’s new term, three of the justices—Barrett, Clarence Thomas and Stephen Breyer—spoke in public about the court’s role, stressing that decisions the justices make are not political.

But that’s not how everyone views the current court. Gorstein, who spoke at a Sept. 21 online preview of the court’s new term, said: “It is all well and good for justices to tell the public that their decisions reflect their judicial philosophies, not their political affiliations.” But he argued that it’s hard to see otherwise, noting: “If the right side’s judicial philosophies always produce results favored by Republicans and the left side’s judicial philosophies always produce results favored by Democrats, there is little chance of persuading the public there is a difference between the two.”
leads that court's Junior Daughter Court, boasts of all the organization has to offer.

"I think it’s an excellent program to empower the young girls to be positive role models in the community as well as our churches."

'Service to God and his Holy Church' The Knights of Peter Claver is named for St. Peter Claver, a Spanish Jesuit priest who ministered to African slaves in what is now Colombia.

According to its website, the organization’s mission is to “render service to God and his Holy Church, render aid and assistance to the sick and disabled, and promote social and intellectual association among [its] members.”

The mission of the Junior Daughters is similar, said Ana Bardo, Grand Lady for the Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Court at St. Rita.

"The goal is to teach them leadership and Christian charity," explained the priest who ministered to African slaves in our churches.”

The Junior Daughters play an active role as lectors, in the choir, as altar servers," Daughters are set up has allowed me to branch out and learn many skills that stick with you for life."

"Helping people is fun" Setting the example is another of the Junior Daughters’ major goals—a goal made more challenging during the last year and a half, said Angel Bardo.

The member of Holy Angels serves as leader, or counselor, for the parish’s Junior Daughters Court.

"Operation Christmas Child is something Holy Angels [Parish] does each year," sending children Christmas and hygiene items to organizations that help children, said Ingram. "But because of COVID people were going to put the packages together"

The parish’s Junior Daughters members stepped in to help, creating and wrapping packages with toys, school supplies, personal hygiene items and candy.

"I joined Junior Daughters because I wanted to help people more," she said. "We brought the people the gifts, it made them so happy. Helping people is fun!"

The Holy Angels Junior Daughters members also provided input in making 300 homemade Mother’s Day cards and care packages for women living in transitional housing and substance abuse recovery facilities "who don’t get much for Mother’s Day," said Raelynn.

"The girls in the court and the way Junior Daughters is set up has allowed me to branch out and learn many skills that stick with you for life."

"Everything we do is Catholic" The Holy Angels Junior Daughters do—and of every aspect of the Knights of Peter Claver—is the Catholic faith, said Bardo.

"Everything we do is Catholic," she explained. "The whole organization is geared towards lifting each other up."

"We also take on social justice issues— bullying, human trafficking, racism, just to name a few."

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GREENWOOD—As Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrated a Mass on Sept. 20 to mark National Migration Week, nearly 7,000 Afghan refugees arrived just 26 miles away at Camp Atterbury, continuing their transition from fleeing their homeland to starting a new life in the United States.

And near the border in Texas, more than 14,000 migrants—from Haiti and other Central and South American countries—buddled under a bridge, desperate for food, shelter and hope.

These situations were among the ongoing realities that served as part of the backdrop for the archbishop’s homily at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church in Greenwood—a homily that focused on the Christian call to be in solidarity with one another, to reach out to the vulnerable, and to bring the light of Christ into the darkness of the world.

“The plight of migrants and refugees is certainly an ongoing concern for our families, communities and countries, involving multiples issues on a daily basis,” the archbishop said during the Mass which was celebrated in both English and Spanish.

“A nervous young lady approached. She told me she had missed her opportunity. She is nervous about it and she told me she had been preparing for this all afternoon and she felt devastated that she had missed her opportunity,” the archbishop said.

“With all of the people at the Mass from a Hispanic background, the archbishop shared the last part of his homily mostly in Spanish, then in English. He spoke from this eucharistic celebration, with grateful hearts may we appreciate our own blessings as the starting point in responding to the needs of others, particularly migrants and refugees,” he noted.

“A nervous young lady approached. When she saw that we were disassembling the reconciliation area, she began to cry and asked me if she had waited too long. She told me she had been preparing for this all afternoon and she felt devastated that she had missed her opportunity.

“I looked around and saw a single piper who was preparing to leave. I approached him and asked if he had time for one more confession. He looked at the young girl and motioned for her to join him. As the two of them sat down, he placed his stole around his neck, and 20 minutes later the priest left and directed the reconciliation area obviously filled with grace and the mercy of God. I asked the boy if he had been in reconciliation before, the boy said yes. I asked him if there was a problem he wanted to talk about, a sin he wanted to talk about. He said there was a problem he wanted to talk about. He did not know how to talk about it. The archbishop was preparing to leave. I told him I was prepared to hear his confession. The priest and the young girl began to talk. He told me he had been preparing for this all afternoon and he felt devastated that he had missed his opportunity. He did not come here because he wanted to. He came here because he needed to. I told him I had found him in my own country—education and work.

“She also said she has created a home here with her husband, Miguel, and their two children. It’s a life that includes involvement with her Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, where she is a catechist in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program. “I always feel like I’m welcome here,” she said.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrates Mass on Sept. 20 to mark National Migration Week at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church in Greenwood. Deacon Reynaldo Nava, left, and Father Tim DeCrane, associate pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, participated in the celebration of the liturgy. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

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“Webelieve in the darkness of injustice, violence, fear, despair and hopelessness,” the archbishop said.

“We wanted to be here because this Mass is for the immigrants, and we are immigrants,” said Claudia, a native of Mexico. “We have 20 years in this country.”

“The Gil and Tenorio were among a long line of people who waited patiently for a conversation and a blessing from the archbishop as he greeted them in the narthex of the church following the Mass.

“As he shared that time with people from different backgrounds and circumstances, the archbishop’s words during the conference, along with Kevin McNulty. The couple raves about the faith-filled experience that adult volunteers get to share with the youth.

“I am overwhelmed by our youth. Each Church each time I participate in NCYC,” Halbert says. “It is amazing to see this eucharistic procession to open the conference. It is a common sight to witness youths, volunteers and [Indiana] Convention Center employees drop to their knees in reverence.

“The first time I was present for a eucharistic adoration in Lucas Oil Stadium with 20,000 youths and adult chaperones, I was overwhelmed by the silence and total commitment from our youths. We have participated as part of the local steering committee since 2015 and feel as though we long for the opportunity to have the experience as a retreat. So, this past retreat, I long to see 20,000 youths actively participate in worship.”

“Volunteer activities range from directing buses and youth outside, to working with crafts,” says Glen Barker, one of the volunteer recruiters and managers for the event, which will be held at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium. “There is really something for everyone.

“The retiree educators—members of St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis—are looking forward to their sixth NCYC experience, knowing the impact it has on their faith.

“Because our Catholic faith is an important aspect of our lives, we were drawn to the Church for volunteer opportunities,” Halbert says. “What a blessing.”

Want to be an adult volunteer at NCYC? Here’s what you need to know

About 800 adult volunteers are needed to help make the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 18-20 a faith-defining experience for the 11,000 youths from around the country who are registered to attend.

“Volunteer activities range from directing buses and youth outside, to working with crafts,” says Glen Barker, one of the volunteer recruiters and managers for the event, which will be held at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium. “There is really something for everyone.”

Volunteers can sign up at ncyc.volunteerlocal.com/volunteer.

If anyone has questions about volunteering at NCYC, send a message to volunteers@ncyc.org.

To make the event as safe as possible amid the challenge of COVID-19, the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry has issued the following guidelines for NCYC, including for volunteers:

“Participants, including

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Annually, all volunteers must be safe environment compliant including both safe environment training/ background check, and EITHER proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide results of a negative COVID-19 test no more than 72 hours before reporting for their first volunteer shift.”

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Migrants, advocates gather at border, call on Biden to ‘save our asylum’

NOGALES, Mexico (CNS)—More than 200 supporters gathered on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border near Nogales, Ariz., on Sept. 25, the eve of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to accompany 25 families seeking asylum in the United States.

The Kino Border Initiative—a Jesuit-run organization that promotes border and immigration policies that affirm the dignity of the human person—is supporting the families, who are fleeing violence in various parts of Latin America.

“President Biden, save our asylum!” chanted marchers in English and Spanish as they gathered at the border fence for a rally at which several migrants shared their testimonies.

Christopher Kerr, executive director of the Ignatian Solidarity Network—of which the Kino Border Initiative is a part—told Catholic News Service (CNS) from the Mexican side of the border that the migrants were not trying to cross the border illegally, but were trying to assert their legal right to asylum.

“We need to be aware that our country is not upholding the legal right to asylum,” said Kerr. “People are facing grave danger in their home countries, in places like Guatemala or Honduras or Mexico. We’re not upholding that right—to have their story heard.”

During the 2020 campaign, President Joe Biden promised to roll back “on Day 1” a Trump administration policy known as the Migration Protection Protocols policy, or “Remain in Mexico,” requiring those seeking asylum to await their hearing in Mexico, he said. “People are facing grave danger in their home countries, in places like Guatemala or Honduras or Mexico. We’re not upholding that right—to have their story heard.”

“During the rally, each testimony was followed by a bilingual litany, with the leader crying ‘Respect their right’ followed by ‘The right to asylum!’ from the crowd,” Kerr told CNS.

Karla, who used only her first name, said she fled Guatemala with her two children after her husband was killed because the family couldn’t pay an extortion fee.

Even after arriving in Mexico, she said, she continued to face a danger of her children being kidnapped or of herself being assaulted. When she went to the border in Tijuana, Mexico, seeking asylum, she said the Border Patrol agents denied her entry and humiliated her.

“I cried along with my children, pleading and asking for help to ask for asylum. As I cried pleading to them for help, they laughed at me and my children,” she said in Spanish, adding that she had a similar experience in two other border cities.

Andrés, a migrant from the Mexican state of Guerrero, said some organized crime members tortured and humiliated him, threatening to kill him and his family if he didn’t cooperate.

“My house was guarded by those people. I decided to run away with my family because I don’t want them to live in fear that something might happen to them. That is why we are now requesting asylum, because I want a better future for my children,” he said.

From the Mexican side of the border, Bishop Edward J. Weisenberger of Tucson, Ariz., offered a prayer and blessing for all those participating in the march, comparing the experience of the migrants with that of the Israelites facing persecution in Egypt.

Supporters on both sides of the border wall headed toward the DeConcini Port of Entry at Nogales, Ariz., marching in solidarity with the 25 families requesting asylum. Kerr told CNS that all of them were not only denied entry, but were completely ignored.

“Asylum-seeking families were hoping they’d be heard today by CBP [Customs and Border Protection]. The first family that went to the port of entry with the bishop, they wouldn’t acknowledge them, they wouldn’t even respond, even when the bishop made a request of them verbally,” he said.

“CBP ‘shut the border point,’” he said, as well “as the steel door in front of the pedestrian entrance to the border point.”

“The door was shut. It was kind of biblical, in a way.” Kerr added, reflecting on the story of the Holy Family seeking shelter before Jesus was born.
Dante, who died 700 years ago, remains today a ‘prophet of hope’

By Vittorio Montemaggi

Dante Alighieri was born in Florence in 1265. We do not know the day, but he tells us it was under the sign of Gemini. We know relatively little about Dante’s life that does not derive from his writings. Dante’s mother, Bella, died between 1270 and 1273. His father, Alighiero, died the year Dante turned 18. After his father’s death, Dante married Gemma Donati, and they had four children: Jacopo, Pietro, Giovanni and Antonio. From the mid-1290s, Dante was actively engaged in Florentine politics and in 1300 was elected as one of seven priors to govern the city for two months. In 1302, Dante was condemned to exile from Florence. During his exile, he found refuge and hospitality in various locations in central and northern Italy. Dante died in Ravenna on Sept. 13 or 14, 1321. So, this year marks the 700th anniversary of his death. We also know relatively little about Dante’s education, where he studied and what exactly he might have read. We know, however, that he was indebted to the philosophy of Aristotle and the poetry of Vergil, to the theology of the Church’s patristic era in the later period of the Roman Empire and to the teachings of both Franciscans and Dominicans. At a time when Florence was home to key innovations in the visual and literary arts, Dante’s own originality as poet and intellectual played a significant role, both in itself and through its influence on authors such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, in the development of Italian and European culture in the centuries that followed. Dante was actively involved in the artistic, intellectual, religious and political life of his day, and his writings clearly reflect this. In both form and content, they are wide-ranging, encompassing poetry, philosophy, theology and political theory.

His writings offer striking perspectives on the questions they explore, from the nature of earthly love to the relationship of the human person to God; from political order to the order of the cosmos. All of Dante’s writings have a personal and experimental character, each in its different way an integral part of Dante’s exploration of truth, of human existence and of the relationship between them. Dante does not take the art, learning, politics and religion of his day for granted; and he does not take himself for granted. His is a life-long journey—artistic, intellectual, spiritual—impelled by the question of what the ultimate truth of all those things is.

Dante lived in a turbulent and polarized world, characterized in significant measure by tensions and violence caused by conflict between forces of the pope and those of the Holy Roman Empire. He was bitterly critical of many contemporary popes, who made bold claims to political and temporal authority. This, Dante believed, left humanity bereft of proper spiritual guidance, which he sought to remedy. This realization has its roots in Dante’s well-being as a whole. The interplay between the personal and the universal is clearly evident in Dante’s most important and influential work, the Divine Comedy. Written in exile between 1307-1321, this narrative poem tells the story of Dante’s journey through the realms of the afterlife, a spiritual pilgrimage from hell, through purgatory, to heaven, beginning in a “dark wood” of sin, suffering and confusion and ending in divine union with “the love that moves the sun and the other stars.”

An illustration by Sandro Botticelli of the infernal abyss from Dante Alighieri’s Divine Comedy is part of the manuscript collection of the Vatican Library. Written in exile between 1307-1321, the Divine Comedy tells the story of Dante’s journey through the realms of the afterlife, a spiritual pilgrimage from hell, through purgatory, to heaven, beginning in a “dark wood” of sin, suffering and confusion and ending in divine union with “the love that moves the sun and the other stars.” (CNS/courtesy of Vatican Library)

An oil on panel titled “ Allegorical Portrait of Dante, late 16th century” is seen in this undated photo. Dante (1265-1321) was actively involved in the artistic, intellectual, religious and political life of his day, and his writings clearly reflect this. (CNS photo/Samuel H. Kress Collection via National Gallery of Art)

What was at stake was nothing other than the well-being of humanity as a whole. The interplay between the personal and the universal is clearly evident in Dante’s most important and influential work, the Divine Comedy. Written in exile between 1307-1321, this narrative poem tells the story of Dante’s journey through the realms of the afterlife, a spiritual pilgrimage from hell, through purgatory, to heaven, beginning in a “dark wood” of sin, suffering and confusion and ending in divine union with “the love that moves the sun and the other stars.”

In this journey, Dante meets and passes judgment on many fellow human beings, some portrayed as damned, others as saved. Yet he also dramatizes the realization that ultimately no human being can presume to judge others as God judges, and that the perfect expression of justice is love, in recognition of the divinity inherent in each human being, in the human person as such. This realization has its roots in Dante’s early love poetry, which fuses the language of earthly love with that of religious devotion, and it sheds light on Dante’s writings as a whole. It also continues to make these writings relevant to us today, whether or not we agree with Dante’s particular opinions or worldview.

Within a Catholic context, as Pope Francis has recently highlighted, it is noteworthy that Pope Benedict XV, St. Paul VI, St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have all expressed great admiration for the spiritual and artistic value of Dante’s work.

Pope Francis himself speaks of Dante as “a prophet of hope, a herald of the possibility of redemption, liberation and profound change for each individual and for humanity as a whole.” As poet of justice, love and hope, Dante can certainly continue to inspire, even 700 years after his death.

(Vittorio Montemaggi is senior lecturer in religion and the arts at King’s College London and director of the Von Hagen Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry at St. Edmund’s College, Cambridge. He is the author of Reading Dante’s Commedia as Theology: Divinity Realized in Human Encounter.)

†
I'm grateful to work on a university campus because it reminds me that faith has been repeatedly tested, but her trust in God has never wavered. I’ve learned to want and appreciate what we’ve been given. She cited examples from her own life: being able to walk a little more each day; not constantly feeling nauseous; slowly regaining strength and focus, sitting with her grandchildren and enjoying their company.

“God has taught me so much during this time, especially the importance of prayer,” her journal entry read.

Patti Lamb, a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, is a regular columnist for The Criterion. †
The Book of Genesis is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Among the first five books of the Bible, Genesis reveals great facts. God is the creator of all. He gives life. God also created humanity in the genders of male and female. Further, it was God’s will that they be united in one male and one female, complement each other and live with each other.

The Scriptures at times are accused of belittling women. Certainly, the Scriptures were all developed within varying cultural contexts. To an extent, they were influenced by these cultural contexts. Do we consider that Eve was created from Adam’s rib? Adam and Eve, man and woman, were one in their nature. It was a revolutionary, fundamental basis for looking at both men and women. Both genders possess an equal dignity, because all are created by God and infused with an eternal soul.

Finally, every person, regardless of everything else, holds the supreme dignity of being created by God in his own image and likeness—a physical, earthly sign of God. This reading is a powerful testament to the historic Jewish and Christian concept of marriage. Ordained by God, marriage should never be defiled by exploitation, selfishness or insincerity.

For its second reading, the Church offers us a passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews that also reaffirms the dignity of each human. In this passage, women were little better than animals. Genesis, however, takes pains to declare the dignity of women and to that of men. This is the meaning of the story that Eve was created from Adam’s rib. Adam and Eve, man and woman, were one in their nature. It was a revolutionary, fundamental basis for looking at both men and women. Both genders possess an equal dignity, because all are created by God and infused with an eternal soul.

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If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, please contact the Archdiocese victim assistance coordinator:

Archdiocese of Indianapolis Victim Assistance Coordinator, 3548 N. Eads Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46218-8510

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, please contact the Archdiocese victim assistance coordinator:

218-300-0250 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
carlahill@archindy.org

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

Online Lay Ministry Formation
The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

• Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
• Complete the required courses online with ND STEP program
• CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

U.K. bishops fight assisted suicide bills, even to extend to St John Paul II

Conventional Franciscan Father Dismas Venom in three states.

MANCHESTER, England (CNS)—Catholic bishops of England and Wales are planning a novena to St John Paul II in the third-decade reading of an assisted suicide bill in the House of Lords, because the legislation will be considered on Oct. 22, the saint’s feast day.

Apostolic Visitor John Sherrington of Westminster, lead bishop for life issues, said in a Sept. 21 statement that the timing was “providential.”

“Their novena is a powerful reminder of St John Paul II, who spoke courageously about the infinite worth of each human person and witnessed to the cross in his final illness. For millions of people who have a fear that assisted suicide is wrong, to pray with perseverance that this bill will be defeated,” Bishop Sherrington said.

The bishops have written the必要 to encourage them to actively oppose the legislation.

Similarly, bishops of Scotland said Catholics must make politicians aware of the “serious dangers of assisted suicide” ahead of a debate over new Scottish legislation, as the Church’s parliamentary liaison officer.

Anthony Horan, director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office, said Catholics must engage with elected representatives to warn them of “the deadly and irreparable consequences of its legalization.”

His Sept. 22 statement came as the Assisted Dying Bill of Luan McCarthy, a Liberal Democrat member of the Scottish Parliament, was published. The bill would legalise doctor-assisted suicide.

“We are once again being confronted with the frightening proposal that doctors be legally permitted to prescribe lethal drugs to end their lives prematurely for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden on others.”

“Incremental extensions and the removal of protections and safeguards are inevitable,” he added.

The bill proposes assisted suicide for terminally ill adults with mental capacity and with the authorization of two doctors following a period of reflection.

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in this section. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are invited to contribute obituaries of natives of the archdiocese or those who ministered here, but do not come separately on this page.


CAVENS, Jewel Mae, 93, St. Mary, Rushville. Sept. 13. Mother of Theresa Barnes, Donna Buchanan.


STILLER, Helen M., 96, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Sept. 16. Aunt of several.


For a century, St. Joan of Arc has served ‘our little part of the vineyard’

By Natalie Hofer

One hundred years of stories weave the tale of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis’ northermost parish when it was founded in 1921. It was created on the heels of World War I and the Spanish Flu pandemic. It witnessed the Great Depression, World War II, Vatican II, urban flight and a flourishing renewal.

Molly Seidel was there to witness many of the events in the parish’s 100-year history.

“I’ve been a member of the parish my whole life,” said Seidel, 72. “I got all my sacraments there. My great-grandmother was on the founding committee.”

Like many of the faith community’s early—and even current—members, Seidel recalls walking to the church and the parish school, both situated at Central Avenue and 42nd Street in the middle of a thriving neighborhood.

It was an area Bishop Joseph Chaparrand identified in 1920 as the right location for the city’s first parish north of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

‘A large but sparsely settled area’

According to the parish’s 50th anniversary book, Bishop Chaparrand saw a need for “a new parish to serve the many families, largely German families from Sacred Heart [Parish] and Irish from SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral [Parish].”

The church would serve “worshippers from a large but sparsely settled area extending eastward to Keystone Avenue and north to the Hamilton County line.”

The parish was named St. Joan of Arc in honor of the saint who was canonized in 1920.

When the parish’s first church was dedicated on July 17, 1921, it seated 600—not enough seats for the faith community’s 800 members.

The current church was dedicated in 1929, with parish membership at nearly 3,000 souls. Its soaring ceiling called the faithful to Mass in a stunning setting.

The altar was made of marble from Pisa, Italy. The stained-glass windows were imported from Munich, Germany. Solid Indiana limestone pillars were so heavy that no truck could deliver them; they were shipped by train, and a temporary spur was built from the main rail line to the church to deliver the pillars.

‘Bright, clean and beautifully restored’

The parish continued to serve its broad boundaries through the Great Depression and World War II.

“After World War II, people were so happy to have no more war,” said Seidel. “Families grew. The parish grew and World War II.

“The roof was eventually fixed, but the church suffered long term, visible damage.

Discussions of a major restoration project began as early as 2007. Work finally began in February of 2019, and the final phase was underway by the time the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary Mass on July 17.

Father Guy Roberts served as the homilist at the Mass. He served the faith community starting as associate pastor in 2006 and as pastor in 2009. Just weeks before the parish celebrated its centenary celebration weekend, he was assigned to lead St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis as its pastor.

“St. Joan of Arc Church” after missing Mass at their own Church” after missing Mass at their own parish.

Cara recalled how Victoria, their adopted daughter from Russia who was about 6 at the time, “looked around and said, ‘Mom! There’s families here that look like us, different colors!’ She noticed right away. That made her feel really comfortable. It inspired us to check into the parish right away.

“It’s a parish that’s also diverse in the sense that there’s a good amount of established families—older families that have been here for generations—and also new, growing and young families.

Josh appreciates the parish’s dozens of ministries, noting, “There’s something here for everyone.”

One opportunity the parish is known for is its annual French Market festival. The free festival started 30 years ago “as a Sunday afternoon family picnic,” said Karen Blackwell Smith, the festival’s longtime chair. “It has evolved into a major neighborhood street fair with live bands, artisan booths, a raffle, children’s games, an array of French food and church tours.”

While the French Market serves as a fundraiser to support St. Joan of Arc’s ministries, “our main goal, always, is to bring our local neighborhood and the greater community of Indianapolis together in our own environ,” said the parish’s new pastor, Father Joseph Newton. “From tours of our beautiful church to gathering together with the many food providers and artisans of the French Market, it is all an opportunity to gather together at our little part of the vineyard of the Lord.”

‘It’s just a special place’

Through ups and downs, St. Joan of Arc Parish has shared the Gospel, whether in a “sparsely populated” area as in the past, or as what Josh Bach now calls “the entire base of the neighborhood.”

Father Roberts shared a story in his homily that told of the parish’s importance to the local community.

“A few years ago, lightning hit our bell tower, and for several weeks, the bells did not ring,” he said. “Several people in our neighborhood—many who were not Catholic—called to ask why they no longer heard the bells. They found them comforting and missed them. The bells, and our beautiful building, remind everyone who passes by that God is present and watching over them.

For 100 years, St. Joan of Arc Parish has been “a small microcosm of the larger world,” said Seidel. “It was a wonderful place to grow up, and still is. It’s just a special place.”

Indianapolis Archbishop Paul C. Schulte offers Benediction in front of the altar of St. Joan of Arc Church in Indianapolis in this undated photo. (Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Indianapolis Archives)
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- Member of the National Association of Fraternal Insurance Counsellors (NAFIC).
- Jeremiah, his wife Elizabeth and their five children are parishioners at Ss. Philomena and Cecilia Catholic Oratory in Oak Forest.

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