Seminarians’ wood-chopping work helps neighbors facing rural poverty keep warm

By Sean Gallagher


But that’s exactly what happens at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. It volunteers with Project Warm, an initiative in which seminarians and other volunteers collect, chop and deliver firewood for people in need in four counties around Saint Meinrad. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

On New Year’s Day, Pope Francis says a mature faith is realistic, but hope-filled

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—As Catholics begin a new year contemplating the motherhood of Mary, they should be inspired not to let problems weaken their faith or prevent them from helping others grow, Pope Francis said.

“In her heart, in her prayer,” he said, Mary “binds together the beautiful things and the unpleasant things,” and learns to discern God’s plan in them.

Pope Francis celebrated Mass on Jan. 1, the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day, in St. Peter’s Basilica and then led the recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter’s Square with thousands of people, including dozens who held signs with the names of countries at war. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)
William Bruns leaves a legacy of service to the archdiocese

By Natalie Hoefler

If there was a book on the life of William “Bill” Bruns II, it would have included a long list of contributions to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and been grammatically correct, filled with trivia and completed ahead of schedule. So say the friends and former co-workers of Bruns, 77, who died on Dec. 14, 2021. One of his greatest legacies was serving as executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Communications from 1994-2006.

“I’ve spent my entire career in journalism and communications, and Bill was the best editor I ever worked with,” said Greg Orosko, current archdiocesan executive director of communications who took on the role when Bruns retired in 2006.

Prior to working for the archdiocese, Bruns spent 26 years working for Eli Lilly and Company’s corporate communications office in Indianapolis. He spent his last nine years there as editor for the office.

“He brought his communications expertise from his time at Eli Lilly and used it to greatly advance the archdiocese’s communication efforts,” said Orosko.

Bruns hired Otolski as editor of The Criterion in 1999.

“We continued to work together right up to his death,” said Otolski. “Until he went into the hospital, he continued to do monthly freelance editing for various archdiocesan writing projects,” including editing the archdiocesan directory.

He lauded Bruns for his “work behind the scenes helping shape [the late] Archbishop Daniel [M.] Buechlein’s communications with the people of the archdiocese,” and called him “a driving force behind the messaging that made several stewardship campaigns in the archdiocese such a success.”

Suzanne Yakimchick also worked with Bruns at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis while she served as archdiocesan chancellor from 1991-2008.

She described him as “unique, funny as can be and very knowledgeable about a wide range of things. He was extremely talented in his writing and editing and respected for his high standard of work.”

Yakimchick mentioned a tradition of his when the two had a difficult topic to discuss.

“He would always toss some pieces of chocolate on my desk first,” she said. “We’d eat the chocolate to start a conversation to make it seem better.”

She admired him for his “deep faith and the ability to write about that. And he was dedicated to not just practicing but spreading the faith.”

Part of spreading that faith involved Bruns writing two books on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and another for Catholics recently welcomed into the full communion of the Church. Before working as executive director of archdiocesan communications, he served as a member or director on more than 20 boards, committees and teams for the archdiocese, its agencies and his parish on topics ranging from Catholic education to catechesis to liturgy and more.

Bruns’ broad efforts for the archdiocese and beyond were enhanced by a well-rounded education. He graduated cum laude with a degree in English from Xavier University in Cincinnati in 1966, earned his Master’s in Business Administration from Indiana University in 1967 and received a Master’s of Pastoral Theology through St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in 1987.

“He was deeply committed to the Church, and he was very well-read,” said retired Father James Farrell, a friend of Bruns for nearly 45 years. “His home library might be larger than the library of some small towns—and that’s after giving away many of his books.”

Otolski agreed.

“Because Bill was so well read, he was a great conversationalist,” he said. “There was nothing better than having a drink and dinner with Bill, especially if he made the meal. He loved a good cocktail and he enjoyed cooking for family and friends.”

Bruns’ talent, skill, faith and personality had an impact on the archdiocese, his family and friends.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better mentor when I came to the archdiocese, and he was an even better friend,” said Yakimchick. “I visited him many times when he was sick [during his final years], and he always kept his sense of humor.”

Bruns’ talent, skill, faith and personality had an impact on the archdiocese, his family and friends.

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—To discriminate against or persecute those who profess their faith is an intolerable act that threatens the fraternal bonds shared by humanity, Pope Francis said. “How can we allow that in this society—which is so civilized—there are people who are persecuted simply because they publicly profess their faith? Not only is it unacceptable; it’s inhuman, its insane,” the pope said.

In a video message released by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network on Jan. 3, the pope offered his prayer intentions for the month of January, which he dedicated to people who suffer from religious discrimination and persecution.

The online obituary also notes Bruns as a “fanatic for being on time,” saying he “considered anyone who arrived on time, and any late arrival as unacceptable.”

“Yakimchick agreed with a laugh. “Good luck if you arrived late to a meeting and dared to ask to be caught up on what already happened!” she said.

She called Bruns “caring and funny.”

“His humor and ability to tease and accept teasing was a lot of fun,” said Yakimchick. “I visited him many times when he was sick [during his final years], and he always kept his sense of humor.”

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Bruns’ talent, skill, faith and personality had an impact on the archdiocese, his family and friends.
Family finds hope in Mary statue largely untouched by wildfire

LOUISVILLE, Colo. (CNS)— Amid the smoldering ashes of his family’s recently remodeled Louisville, Colo., home that was destroyed by a Dec. 30, 2021, wildfire, Tom Greany found hope in a statue of his deep Catholic faith.

A statue of Mary that he and his wife Kat had placed outside their home was left unscathed except for the soot that covered the sky blue surface. “Bricks appeared to have fallen all around her—some probably even hit her. But she didn’t even fall over,” Greany wrote in a reflection shared with Catholic News Service by a friend, who asked to remain unidentified. He wrote about what happened just hours after the blaze raced through the suburbs of communities of Louisville and Superior, about 20 miles northwest of Denver.

Greany wrote that the discovery of the statue is a reminder of how their faith provides protection and can “sustain us through everything.”

The Greany’s were among hundreds of families who lost their homes in the wildfire driven by winds estimated to top 100 mph. In the Greany’s Louisville neighborhood, 50 of 55 homes were destroyed. The other five were untouched.

Authorities said 991 structures, including businesses, were destroyed and another 127 damaged. Flames from what is called the Marshall Fire swept through more than 6,000 acres, devastating entire neighborhoods before it with $250,000. He asked that parishes throughout the archdiocese take a special collection at Masses on the weekend of Jan. 8-9. The Archdiocese of Denver’s Marshall Fire Recovery Assistance Fund is online at https://bit.ly/380I3FR (case sensitive).

Greany is also convinced no one can take away his family’s faith and their trust that the Holy Family is “looking out for us.” “They love us, and they care,” he wrote, adding: “They pray for us. And they pray for the world in these dark times we live in.”


The events begin with a Vigil for Life at St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., in Indianapolis, from 2-4 p.m. on Jan. 23, co-sponsored by the archdiocese and the Lafayette Diocese. Local Catholic composer, singer and songwriter Francesa LaRosa will lead participants in praise and worship, and local Catholic Dr. Casey Delcoco will give a hope and healing witness on the Abortion Reversal Protocol. Eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation will be available.

During the free event, donations will be accepted to benefit the ministries of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity and the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Lafayette.

Vigil registration, which is requested but not required, is available at bit.ly/365X453. For questions, contact Brie Ann Varick, coordinator of the Office of Human Life and Dignity, at 317-236-1543 or bvarick@archindy.org.

On Jan. 24, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will serve as primary celebrant with Lafayette Bishop Timothy L. Doherty concelebrating during a special Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church at 10:30 a.m. The Indiana March for Life and rally, both sponsored by Right to Life Indianapolis, will take place after the Mass. The march will begin at noon starting from West Georgia Street next to St. John the Evangelist Church. It will proceed to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument (Monument Circle) then to the south steps of the State Capitol Building at 200 W. Washington St.

There, a rally will take place featuring pro-life speakers. For more information on the march and rally, contact Right to Life Indianapolis president Marc Turtle at marc@archindy.org or 317-582-1526. To register for the Indiana March for Life, go to indyvild.flocknote.com/signup/76537.

For those unable to attend the Indianapolis events, a Sanctity of Life Sunday event will take place in Terre Haute at the Vigo County Courthouse at 3rd Street and Wabash Avenue from 2:30-3 p.m. on Jan. 23. Signs will be provided for this prayerful, solemn observance. Parking may be available behind the Vigo County Court House. For more information, call Tom McRoe 812-841-0060.

“Awareness of the loss stings mightily,” he continued. “But we can only feel the loss as pain because of the extraordinary magnitude of the gifts we have been given in our lives. How richly blessed we are!” He said his family’s home was not burned to teach them a lesson, but it did give them the chance to experience God’s comfort through Mary’s intercession.

Greany is convinced no one can take away his family’s faith and their trust that the Holy Family is “looking out for us.” “They love us, and they care,” he wrote, adding: “They pray for us. And they pray for the world in these dark times we live in.”
Regardless of COVID, challenges, let faith be central to all you do in 2022

If you’re a creature of habit, like many others, you have begun 2022 with new hopes and prayers of what the year ahead will bring. Many of us were undoubtedly eager to put 2021 into our rearview mirror.

Go back 12 months, and that same sentiment was evident for much of the population around the world, putting the final, uncertain days of 2020 dominated by the emergence of COVID-19 into the history books as we entered 2021.

Sadly, what we have learned during the past two years, among other things, is that with new variants of COVID, we come new challenges and even more deaths. Vaccines, boosters and ever-changing mandates have also become the norm in many parts of the world, including in the U.S.

What’s frustrating for many of us as well is how various cities and municipalities have different guidelines for how to handle all the challenges that a pandemic brings. And those differences extend to places of employment and school districts, too.

Some workplaces are requiring its employees to be fully vaccinated. Schools in some parts of the U.S. have gone back to a virtual model, where students are at home on an iPad, trying to understand and learn virtual day’s lessons, absent from a classroom where teachers and classmates are with them.

In some cases, athletic events and public gatherings are being postponed or cancelled because the latest COVID variant has caused an outbreak.

We again wonder: Is this the new “normal”? Will we continue to be forced to adjust our way of living at the drop of a hat? As was shared in a recent homily during the Christmas season, some in secular society continue to focus on honor, power, pleasure and wealth in their day-to-day lives despite the pandemic.

As Catholic Christians, one constant that we must embrace is our faith. We must continue to strive for the wisdom and grace to see things from God’s perspective.

While many persevered through the past two years, we now also better understand how faith must be central to all we say and do. And we must continue to be people of hope.

Christian hope grants those who suffer the assurance that God does not abandon his people in their time of need. Pope Francis said on Dec. 31, 2021: “Problems do not vanish, difficulties and worries are not lacking, but we are not alone; the Father ‘sent forth his Son to redeem us from the slavery of sin and to restore our dignity as children,’ the pope said during an evening prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican to mark the end of 2021.

One way to live as Catholics in 2022 and beyond is to let prayer, Scripture and the sacraments become more integral to whom we are. We can use these opportunities to embrace our Lord even more.

Why not fine-tune your routine by attending Mass more than once a week or receiving the sacrament of reconciliation on a more consistent basis, possibly once a month? How about reflecting on Scripture in your daily routine? And making more prayer time central to your day?

We, as Catholics, are called to put our faith into action. We also understand we say “yes” to God by our actions. As we begin another year, we must realize the challenges we will face are opportunities for growth.

If we examine our lives, we see God has used someone to lead us to Jesus. Despite ongoing challenges, we are going to lead people to Jesus in 2022 or away from him?

As you reflect at the end of each day, ask yourself: Do I know Jesus better today than I did yesterday? Did I lead someone to him or away from him?

As we read in Scripture: “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).

Let us pray we never forget that in our ongoing conversion.

And as the Lord’s faithful servants, despite the ongoing COVID crisis and all other challenges that await us, may we remember light always triumphs over darkness.

—Mike Krokos

Reflection/Daniel Conway

Remembering Bill Bruns

On Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, William R. (Bill) Bruns II, a former editor of The Criterion and executive director of the Communications Secretariat for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, passed peacefully to the Lord following a long illness. He was 77 years old, and although he had been retired for many years, he remained active as an editor and an advisor to his many close friends in pastoral ministry.

Bruns, as his friends liked to call him, worked many things. He was a loving husband and father, a devout post-Vatican II Catholic who staunchly defended the Council against both ultra-liberal and ultra-conservative interpretations, a strict grammarian who fought an uphill battle against sloppy, imprecise writing, and he was a dear friend. He was occasionally grouchy, but always tender in his affections and merciful toward writers (like me) who sinned against the style guide approved for use in Catholic publications.

Although he would not like me to say this, I considered Bill Bruns to be a “saint next door” as Pope Francis defines this term. “Their lives may not always have been perfect,” the pope says, “yet even amid their failures and failings they kept moving forward and proved pleasing to the Lord.”

Yes, he could be gruff, even intolerant, when confronted with sloppiness, silliness or sentimentality, but no one served his archdiocese more faithfully and no one was more loyal to his friends than Bill Bruns.

In an interview in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, Pope Francis said, “I’m thinking at this time of the saints who live next door. They are heroes—doctors, volunteers, religious sisters, priests, shop workers—all performing their duty so that society can continue functioning.” As far as I’m concerned, we should add “editors” to the pope’s list of saints next door, and put Bill Bruns at the top of that list!

By the time the pandemic struck, causing churches to close and faithful churchgoers to stay home, Bill was among the most vulnerable at-risk people due to his age and health issues. As a result, he and his loving wife Sallie remained in strict isolation, not leaving their home except to go to doctors’ appointments.

A mutual friend and former colleague, Pamela Storms-Breret, and I visited Bill and Sallie twice during this difficult time. Twice, I brought sandwiches and we ate them (maintaining a safe distance of 6 feet from each other) on folding chairs in their family garage. The second time, after all were fully vaccinated, we were able to eat indoors.

In spite of Bill’s many health problems, he remained “sharp as a whet,” deeply interested in the well-beings of others, and keenly interested in all matters affecting the Church he loved.

No one who knew Bill well would say that he was a saint in the constitutional sense of the term. Having worked on the team that prepared the case for the canonization of Simon William Gabriel Bruté de Rémur, a French missionary in the United States and the first bishop of the Diocese of Vincennes (which later became the Archdiocese of Indianapolis), Bill was keenly aware of the holiness and pastoral protection required for official sanctity. But what Pope Francis urges us to keep in mind is that the call to holiness is universal. That means we are all invited to become everyday saints.

“Not of everything a saint says is considered holy,” as Pope Francis noted, “not everything he or she does is authentic or perfect,” the pope says. “What we need to contemplate is the totality of their life, their entire journey of growth in holiness, the reflection of Jesus Christ that emerges when we contemplate them as men and women.”

The totality of life that Bill Bruns lived—as a husband and father, as a friend and co-worker, and as a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ—deserves contemplation and commendation.

And, as Pope Francis says, “If we become aware of this miracle of the next-door saints, if we can follow their tracks, the miracle will end well, for the good of all.”

The miracle of next-door saints is real. It was made manifest in the life of an ordinary man, William R. Bruns II, who lived an extraordinary life of love and service to his family, friends and his Church. We miss you, Bill Bruns. May you rest in peace.

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.)

Letters to the Editor

Reader: Wearing masks, social distancing must be re instituted, including during Mass

The hospitalizations and serious cases of COVID in central Indiana are rapidly growing again as we face winter weather and the advancing delta and omicron variants.

Many hospitals are above capacity. In our archdiocese and across the state, health care facilities respond quickly to protect the human lives we so value by helping to arrest the spread of the virus and its terrible effects.

Our parishes, where many people gather, must reinstitute more stringent practices, including mask and social distancing rules, as were in place during prior months.

Pope Francis has urged all people to get vaccinated as an act of love. That applies to other measures necessary to help protect ourselves and others including wearing a mask and social distancing in public gatherings, including while at Mass.

It is indeed an act of love.

Eric Boes

Indianapolis

Reader: Column, stories on National Eucharistic Congress and Synod of Bishops are greatly appreciated

Thank you for featuring the column “Several social atoms and molecules” by Father Ted Pacholczyk in the Dec. 3 issue of The Criterion. His essay offers clarity and understanding of the Church’s teaching.

It is a piece that should be sent to all teachers of religion in the archdiocese.

Also, thank you for the story concerning the exaltation of the bishops in the U.S. about the eucharistic revival, which will culminate in a Eucharistic Congress hosted by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on July 17-21, 2024. Will we also be reading about their excitement for the Synod of Bishops that will occur in October of 2023 as Pope Francis urges?

I hope so because I question how the two can be separated.

James Hellman

Terre Haute

Editorial

Pope Francis wears a mask for protection from COVID-19 as he participates in an evening prayer service at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 31, 2021. The traditional service Thursday’s is to give thanks for the past year. (L’Osservatore Romano/CNS/Reuters)

Despite COVID, challenges, let faith be central to all you do in 2022
Sacrament of baptism brings us new life in Christ

El sacramento del bautismo nos trae una nueva vida en Cristo

En la lectura del Evangelio de la masa de esta domingo, en la que celebramos el Bautismo del Señor, se nos dice que ocurrió un gran milagro después de que Juan bautizara a Jesús. Según san Lucas:

“Yo los bautizo con aguas—les respondió Juan a todos—pero está por llegar uno más poderoso que yo, a quien ni siquiera merezco desatarle la correa de sus sandalias. Él los bautizará con el Espíritu Santo y con fuego. … Después de este, el cielo se abrirá, y el Espíritu Santo bajó sobre él en forma de paloma. Y se oyó una voz del cielo que decía: ‘Tú eres mi Hijo amado; estoy muy satisfecho contigo.’” (Lc 3:16, 21-22).

El milagro que Jesús recibió cuando se sometió a este bautismo fue la bendición de su padre y el poder del Espíritu Santo. A partir de ese momento, cuando Jesús hablaba y actuaba, cuando curaba, enseñaba o amonestaba a sus seguidores, lo hacía en plena conformidad con su Padre y el Espíritu Santo.

El sacramento del bautismo es la repetición de este milagro en la vida de cada cristiano que se entrega para renacer en Cristo. La Trinidad está presente cada vez que se recibe el sacramento del bautismo porque cada bautismo es una nueva creación, es morir al pecado y a la vida finita, y renacer en el Espíritu. Cada bautismo es un acto realizado por la Santísima Trinidad porque cada vez que una persona renace en Cristo por el poder del Espíritu Santo, Dios Padre se “compadece” y se alegra con el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo en agradecimiento por esta nueva vida.

La primera lectura del profeta Isaías habla del Mesías, pero también se dirige al pueblo de Israel:

“Así dice el Señor: Este es mi siervo, a quien sostengo, mi escogido, en quien me deleito: sobre él he puesto mi Espíritu, y llevará justicia a las naciones.” (Is 42:1-4, 7)

Los cristianos creemos que estas palabras de la profecía se han cumplido en Cristo, pero también las leemos a la luz de las responsabilidades bautismales que cada uno de nosotros ha aceptado como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo.

Cada cristiano bautizado está llamado a “implantar la justicia en la tierra,” y a “abrir los ojos de los ciegos, [a] librar de la cárcel a los presos, y del calabozo a los que habitan en tinieblas.” Estamos llamados a “ser Cristo” para los demás, con humildad, ternura y misericordia.

El nuevo nacimiento que hemos recibido los cristianos bautizados es lo que san Pablo denomina “el lavamiento de la regeneración y de la renovación por el Espíritu Santo” (Ti 3:5). Se nos ha concedido este don “no por nuestras propias obras de justicia, sino por su misericordia” (Ti 3:5). Hemos de ser instrumentos de “la bondad y el amor de Dios nuestro Salvador … para que, justificados por su gracia, lleguemos a ser herederos que abrigan la esperanza de recibir la vida eterna” (Ti 3:4, 7).

Al comenzar un nuevo año de gracia, somos conscientes del gran don (y de la enorme responsabilidad) que nos ha otorgado el sacramento del bautismo. Recemos para que tengamos el valor de ser predicadores, santones y testimonios de la vida de Cristo. En muchos países, los gobiernos han dado pasos para que los cristianos puedan celebrar nuestras promesas bautismales; que nos acerquemos a Dios y al próximo como padres de nuestro Padre celestial y que caminemos juntos en el camino siguiendo las huellas de Jesús y guiados por el Espíritu Santo. ¡Un bendecido Año Nuevo para todos!†
January 11, Feb. 18, March 8
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

January 24-28
Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis.

January 27
Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove.

January 9

January 10-13
Mount Saint Meinrad Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

January 11

January 12
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

January 13
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

January 14-17
Mount Saint Meinrad Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

January 14-15

January 15-16

January 16

January 17

January 18-21
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

January 19
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

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January 29
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January 30
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 4
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 5
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 6
Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 7-9
Mount Saint Meinrad Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 10

February 11-13
Mount Saint Meinrad Center for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

February 14
Mount Saint Francis Convent for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

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February 29
Mount Saint Francis Convent for Spirituality, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Mt. St. Francis.

March 1
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Colts player helps kick off ‘Thank a Coach’ plan to aid CYO

By John Snuggness

Now in his ninth year as a professional football player with the Indianapolis Colts, Jack Doyle reaches out time and time again to praise the coach who first developed his love for the sport—and the approach he always strives to bring to each game.

Looking back to his early days of playing in the archdiocese’s Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) for Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, Doyle wrote this tribute: “Coach Joe Cathcart was my first football coach. He instilled in me a love for this game I have been blessed to play at the collegiate levels—who have made a tremendous honor Catholic coaches—from the grade school through the high school. I believe that you have made a tremendous difference in people’s lives.

The “Thank a Coach” program is also a fundraising effort by the CYO to help raise funds for the organization which has been hit hard financially by the pandemic, according to its executive director, Bruce Scifres.

“Our hope is that a lot of coaches receive many words of thanks for making a difference in the lives of young people,” Scifres says. “The fact that this might help push back some of the financial strain needed revenue is just icing on the cake. Raising funds is crucial to uphold our mission to provide quality youth programs around the archdiocese.”

Through the “Thank a Coach” program, a person can make a $25 donation and write a message of thanks to their favorite coach that will be shared on the organization’s website.

Doyle and his sister Kelly, who played for Cathcart made a combined contribution of more than $25,000 to CYO in honor of their coach who died in 2018 at the age of 56. The tribute touched the Cathcart family.

“Jack always had the spirit of teaching kids and he loved teaching kids,” David says. “And all that I carry with me today and hope to share with my kids as I begin my professional career as a player in the NFL is the respect I have for my coach and the men they’ve become.”

Cathcart coached teams at the third- and fourth-grade level from 1961 to 2017, mostly at Holy Spirit Parish and also at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

“He loved the game of football, he loved giving back and he loved teaching kids,” David says. “And all that came through in how he coached the game.”

Scifres hopes that other parishes across the archdiocese will be motivated to make similar contributions “to recognize beloved coaches from their side of town.” At the same time, he appreciates all donations.

A former CYO athlete made a $100 donation in honor of the late Phil Wilhelm, adding this tribute to the man who coached at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. “Phil was my eighth-grade football coach. He was a great coach and friend for all his life. He did so much for me, Our Lady of Lourdes, and the CYO.”

A married couple saluted Karen Parker of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis with a $25 donation and this message: “Thank you for founding and leading the chess team at IHM. Your selfless dedication and leadership resulted in two championships in four years of CYO chess, along with many students who learned the game, always play smart and exhibit good sportsmanship.”

Scifres has also joined in the tributes to coaches, making one to Bill Sylvester Sr., who coached him in football at Butler University in Indianapolis from 1975 to 1978.

“Bill made a devoted fan of me,” Scifres says about Sylvester. “I was in awe of his ethic. I inspired him to make us the best of our God-given gifts. He wanted us to make our parents proud and make God proud. It was similar to the influence Sylvester had on him. Scifres had a reputation for impacting the lives of his players beyond the field during his long tenure as the head football coach of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis from 1990 to 1996.

“I believe that other than a young person’s parents, a youth coach has the opportunity to influence and impact young lives in a very powerful way,” he says. “Countless life lessons can be learned through athletics—work ethic, loyalty, teamwork, fortitude, a sense of honor, a cause bigger than themselves. There are very few things that teach those life lessons like athletics—especially when there’s a coach who has the goal of instilling those life lessons.”

“One of my all-time favorite sayings is, ‘A good coach will improve a player’s game. A great coach will improve a player’s life.’”

(To learn more about the “Thank a Coach” program and to make a donation and a tribute to a favorite coach, visit the CYO’s website, www.cyoarchindy.org.)
We pray before we start the chops,” Huber said. “If we have chops in the evening, we’ll pray Evening Prayer together as a group, or Daytime Prayer if we have chops in the morning. We’re constantly calling to mind the families that we’re serving.”

**Teresa Shephard**

Teresa Shephard and her 6-year-old daughter are one of those families served by Project Warm. They live in rural Perry County and heat their home partly with firewood. She appreciates the wood provided by Project Warm, but she also values the witness of the Christian charity given by the seminarians.

“They’re wonderful people,” Shephard said. “It’s like visiting with your neighbors. They’re good home folk. They work hard packing the wood, you know, willing to help out, with good manners, good workers. You don’t get that anymore.”

Also, Project Warm helps seminarians prepare for ministry to people like her. “It shows these guys what life’s really like,” Shephard said. “They have to know it’s like this, what people are really going through in order to help them. If they’re not out there getting their hands dirty themselves, if they’re not putting themselves in our place, how are they going to help people?”

Benedictine Father Anthony Vinson, pastor of St. Meinrad Parish in St. Meinrad and St. Boniface Parish in Fulda, has led Project Warm since 2004. He prays the “teal to serve” that he sees in the seminarians who volunteer for the project. Many of them want to get dirty and have taken to heart what Pope Francis said, that they should “smell like their sheep.”

Father Anthony B."That is huge.”

At the same time, he noted that it can take time and experience for seminarians to know the sometimes-fine nuances of serving people living in rural areas.

Father Anthony recalled a seminarian who was frustrated at the father of a family who returned home after hunting, carrying a gun and a bag, while seminarians were working hard unloading and stacking firewood. The Benedictine priest who has ministered in rural Spencer County for 12 years knew that many of the families the seminarians saw often hunt to provide for their families.

“Looked at him and said, ‘Did you ask what was in the bag?‘ That was their dinner,” Father Anthony said. “Next time that you’re out there, get to know them.’”

Huber has enjoyed getting to know the families served by Project Warm through the years, and is happy to see how the initiative is beginning to open doors for those in need to receive help in other ways.

“The more you go to the same houses, the more you can build relationships up and the more you might be able to ask if they need something else,” he said. “There are carpenters in the parishes that are more than willing to help. That’s starting to be a piece of the puzzle this year.”

**Pope Francis**

Francis insisted peace is a gift from God that requires human action. For peace is possible if we are attentive to the least, by promoting justice, for courage to forgive, thus extinguishing the fire of hatred.”

Pope Francis said he could not look at Mary holding the baby Jesus, her heart without thinking of “young mothers and their children fleeing wars and famine or waiting in refugee camps,” as there are many of them.

Contemplating Mary who lays Jesus in the manger, makes him accessible to everyone, let’s remember that the world can change, and everyone’s life can improve only if we make efforts to mend the threads of a world torn apart by war and violence.”

Pope Francis contrasted the amazement and enthusiasm of the shepherds with the quiet, pensive reaction of Mary. “The shepherds tell everyone about what they had seen,” he said. “The story told by the shepherds, and their own amazement, remind us of the beginnings of the Church, when everything seems easy and straightforward.”

“Mary’s pensivevisuality, the other hand, is the expression of a maturity, adult faith,” he said. “Hers is “not a newborn faith, but a faith that now gives birth, for the seed of truth is born of trials and testing.”

“Mary lives in the world” in a dark stable in Bethlehem, he said, “Marian faith, the faithful, who is the only one who knows things, pondering them in her heart.”

And through faith, he said, “in her mother’s heart. Mary comes to realize that the glory of the Most High appears humble; she welcomes the plan of salvation whereby God must lie in a manger. She sees the divine child frail and shivering, and she accepts the wondrous divine interplay between grandeur and littleness.”

Mary, like most mothers, knew how to “hold together the various threads of life,” the glorious and the worrisome, the pope said. “We need such people, capable of weaving the threads of communion in place of the barbed wire of conflict and division.”

From his homily at the Mass, Pope Francis pleaded for an end to violence against women.

“Enough,” he said. “To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took our humanity.”

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Departing from his prepared text, Pope Francis said the Church itself is “mother and woman,” and while women could and should have greater positions in the Church, they are “secondary” to the role all Catholic women have of giving life, including figuratively, and in combining dreams and aspirations with concrete reality, without drifting into abstractism and sterile pragmatism.

“At the beginning of the New Year,” he said, “let us place ourselves under the protection of this woman, the mother of God, who is also our mother. May she help us to keep and ponder all things, unafraid of trials and with the joyful certainty that the Lord is faithful and can transform every cross into a resurrection.”

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YOU’RE INVITED!
Friday, February 25, 2022 | 6 pm
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This event would not be possible without our Event Chairs Kevin and Theresa O’Brien from St. Luke Parish, Indianapolis, and Honorary Chairs Carl and Mary Kay Wolford from Holy Family Parish, New Albany.

We will also be honoring MSGR. PAUL KOETTER, Pastor Emeritus at Holy Spirit Catholic Church on the East side of Indianapolis. We hope you can join us in honoring him for his many years of faithful service to communities all throughout our archdiocese.

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Music by The Doo (Bring Your Dancing Shoes!) | Amazing Auction Items | Honoring Msgr. Paul Koetter
The Best Emcee - Rafael Sanchez (WRTV6) | Hear from Archbishop Thompson
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Even the Holy Family felt stress, pope says during Angelus

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on families, but with extra patience and faith, bonds can grow stronger, Pope Francis wrote in a letter released on the feast of the Holy Family.

"Marriage, as a vocation, calls you to steer a tiny boat—wave-tossed yet sturdy, thanks to the reality of the sacrament—across a sometimes stormy sea," he told couples in the letter published on Dec. 26.

Like the disciples who were founders on the Sea of Galilee, couples must keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, he said. "Only in this way, will you find peace, overcome conflicts and discover solutions to many of your problems. Those problems, of course, will not disappear, but you will be able to see them from a different perspective."

Reciting the midday Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square on Dec. 26, Pope Francis said he had written the letter as a "Christmas gift" to married couples during the celebration of the "Amoris Laetitia Family" Year, a year dedicated to re-reading his 2016 exhortation on marriage and family life.

In his Angelus talk, the pope commented on the day’s Gospel reading about a 12-year-old Jesus staying behind in Jerusalem and making Mary and Joseph frantic.

"In the Gospel, we see that even in the Holy Family things did not all go well: There were unexpected problems, anxiety, suffering. The Holy Family of holy cards does not exist," he said.

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the temple and ask him why he worried them so, he tells them, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?" (Lk. 2:49).

Mary and Joseph do not understand, the pope said. "They need time to learn to know their son. That’s the way it is with us as well. Each day, a family needs to learn how to listen to each other to understand, to share, to walk together, to face conflicts and difficulties."

In his letter to families, like in “Amoris Laetitia,” Pope Francis paid tribute to the strength and tenacity of couples as they face real difficulties together on the journey of life.

Like Abraham, called by God to set out to an unknown land, he wrote, with the pandemic, "we, too, have experienced uncertainty, loneliness, the loss of loved ones; we, too, have been forced to leave behind our certainties, our ‘comfort zones,’ our familiar ways of doing things and our ambitions, and to work for the welfare of our families and that of society as a whole, which also depends on us and our actions.“

The pandemic lockdowns, quarantines and periods of isolation "meant that there was more time to be together, and this proved a unique opportunity for strengthening communication within families," the pope said. But that also demanded patience.

"It is not easy to be together all day long, when everyone has to work, study, recreate and rest in the same house," he said.

When nerves are frayed, the pope said, try to put the needs of others first and re-read the hymn to love from 1 Corinthians 13: "so that it can inspire your decisions and your actions" and "the time you spend together, far from being a penance, will be become a refuge amid the storms."

Pope Francis also told married couples, "Don’t be ashamed to kneel together before Jesus in the Eucharist, in order to find a few moments of peace and to look at each other with tenderness and goodness."

And, for couples whose problems were exacerbated by the pandemic and led to a breakup, Pope Francis said, "I would like them, too, to sense my closeness and my affection."

But he urged them to be civil to one another, especially in front of their children so that the pain of seeing their parents separate is not made worse by seeing them constantly fighting.

"Children are always a gift," the pope wrote. "They are thirsty for love, gratitude, esteem and trust." Parents must pass on to their children "the joy of realizing that they are God’s children, children of a Father who has always loved them tenderly and who takes them by the hand each new day," he said.

"As they come to know this, your children will grow in faith and trust in God." Addressing engaged couples, Pope Francis said he knows the pandemic has been especially hard for those trying to plan a future together. "In your journey toward marriage," he told them, "always trust in God’s providence, however limited your means, since at times, difficulties can bring out resources we did not even think we had. Do not hesitate to rely on your families and friends, on the ecclesiastical community, on your parish, to help you prepare for marriage and family life by learning from those who have already advanced along the path on which you are now setting out.

The 85-year-old pope also expressed his affection to grandparents, especially those who are feeling isolated or alone. "He urged families to make greater efforts to be with them or at least be in touch with them."

Pope prays Christmas will bring yearning for peace and dialogue

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Before giving his Christmas blessing from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica to the people of Rome and the world, Pope Francis drew attention to the many places around the globe and within human hearts in need of Jesus, the prince of peace.

"In the cold of the night, he stretches out his tiny arms toward us: He is in need of everything, yet he comes to give everything," the pope told people gathered in a rain-washed St. Peter’s Square.

"On this festive day, let us implore him to stir up in the hearts of everyone a yearning for reconciliation and fraternity." Pope Francis said on Dec. 25, 2021 before giving his blessing “urbi et orbi” (“to the city and the world”).

Cardinal Renato Martino, 89, the protodeacon of the Coet and the Pope Francis, announced that the solemn blessing included a plenitude indulgence for the people in the square, everyone watching on television, listening by radio or following on their computers.

Jesus came into the world "like a whisper, like the murmur of a gentle breeze, to fill with wonder the heart of every man and woman who is open to this mystery," the pope said in his Christmas message.

The Word became flesh in order to dialogue with us," he insisted. "God does not desire to carry on a monologue, but a dialogue. For God himself—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is a dialogue, an eternal and infinite communion of love and life.”

But all too often in too many places, dialogue is precisely what is missing, he said, as he offered specific prayers for people struggling to survive amid war or the threat of war, violence, oppression or crushing poverty in Syria, the Holy Land, Yemen, South Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and Ethiopia.

The impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on health care and the economy, but also on the way individuals live and interact, was part of the pope’s prayer as well.

With the pandemic, the pope said, "our capacity for social relationships is sorely tried, there is a growing tendency to withdraw, to do it all by ourselves, to stop making an effort to encounter others and do things together."

"On the international level too, there is the risk of avoiding dialogue, the risk that this complex crisis will lead to taking shortcuts rather than setting out on the longer path of dialogue," he said. "Yet only those paths can lead to the resolution of conflicts and to lasting benefits for all."

Pope Francis said he knows people get weary watching or reading the news, but attention is needed or "we risk not hearing the cry of pain and distress of so many of our brothers and sisters.”

In addition to the "continuing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, the conflict in Afghanistan, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, with even more serious political and social consequences," he said, people should not forget Bethlehem, "the place of Jesus’ birth, which is experiencing hardship also from the economic repercussions of the pandemic, preventing pilgrims from visiting the Holy Land and adversely affecting the life of the people."

And, the pope said, "let us listen to the cry of children arising from Yemen, where an enormous tragedy, overlooked by everyone, has silently gone on for years, causing deaths every day."

In a troubled world, he said, Christmas celebrates hope. "Today, the love that moves the sun and other stars," as Dante says, became flesh. He came in human form, he shared in our plight, and he broke down the wall of our indifference. In the form of a prayer to the newborn Lord, Pope Francis pleaded not only for peace between nations at war, but for all the suffering people in the city and the world and for the suffering Earth itself.

"Eternal Word become flesh," he prayed, "make us attentive to our common home, which is suffering from the carelessness with which we so often treat it. Inspire political leaders to reach effective agreements, so that future generations can live in an environment respectful of life." He prayed for women who have been victims of domestic violence, "which has increased in this time of pandemic," for the consolation of elderly people who are alone and for the serenity and unity of families.

He prayed for the sick, those who care for them and for a greater effort to make COVID-19 vaccines available to all. He prayed for prisoners of war and political prisoners, and for migrants, refugees and displaced people.

"O Christ, born for our sake," Pope Francis prayed, "teach us to walk beside you on the paths of peace.”
Faith Alive!

By Sr. Josephine Garrett, C.S.F.N.

New Year’s celebrations can be a mixed experience.

On the one hand, the holidays have brought us opportunities to be renewed in our relationships with family and friends. On the other hand, secular media can present this sort of “new year, new you” approach that may not really jive with our actual experiences.

We can feel this pressure for Jan. 1 to be a miraculous reset. All the struggles and sufferings of the previous year automatically at midnight lose their impact in our lives.

As we head into 2022, I wonder if this pressure is even more profound. Many of us carry large individual and communal burdens into the new year.

How do we remain open to God’s desire to make all things new and the inherent invitation in a new year to begin anew, and also be realistic about the fact that at the stroke of midnight our struggles will not automatically diminish?

I believe the answer is by looking to the struggles, sufferings and heavy burdens that we are carrying with us over to the struggles, sufferings and heavy burdens that we are carrying with us into the new year.

Some of us are entering 2022 as COVID-19 long-haulers. Some of us are entering 2022 with more pronounced mental health struggles than before. Some of us need to be renewed in our physical health as our bodies manifest the stresses of the past two years.

Some of us carry the painful burdens connected to being Black or brown. American and Catholic, pains that have only increased during the past two years. Some of us, after the pandemic, have reprioritized family life.

Some of us have become disillusioned with the outward trappings of our lives of faith. This grace-filled disillusionment has allowed us to see our sights back on the primacy of the present moment and context in which we find ourselves as the stuff of our sanctification and the stuff of our sanctification and having the authority to bring about God’s justice, love and peace.

Some of us have reached new horizons in our prayer and relationship with God, yet some of us have strayed from prayer and into a life of subtle pride and self-sufficiency, which is the fruit of a life lacking prayer.

Is there a thematic invitation to not only begin anew, but also to strive for the newness that is the promise of the kingdom contained in all that we will carry with us into the new year?

I believe there is. We sometimes struggle with the two-world stance that is required of a Catholic. Catholics must stand with a foot in eternity, connected to being Black or brown, of the past two years. However, they are not separate.

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People pray during Mass on New Year’s Day at Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral in Los Angeles on Jan. 1, 2011. Many people will begin the new year with many trials related to the year just completed. Even in the midst of those hardships, the kingdom of God can be built up with the help of his grace. (CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Vida Nuevo)

Some of us have strayed from prayer and family in Christ.

We cannot place both our feet in one foot in the world, which is full of strife, family dynamics or whatever it is that we need to be renewed in during the year to come—physically, mentally or spiritually—let it be for and about encounter. To aid you in increasing your capacity to show up in the family of God, bringing your whole self as a gift to the family of God, come what may; in the midst of struggles and also joy.

We know that it is only through a sincere gift of ourselves that we will know ourselves, and it is only in this dimension of gift, as Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron once called it, that the family of God, which we long for, will be built up and realized.

The way we begin anew is to, in all things, in all our resolutions, keep our eyes fixed on the glory of the coming of the Lord and the building up of God’s family in Christ.

Sister Thea Bowman once said, “I bring myself, my Black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to become.”

In humility, I would add that because this is my family; this Church is as much my family as the next person’s. We could take many other matters we will carry across the line from 2021 to 2022, and upon reflection, find at their root a matter of the family of God.

Whatever it is you are called to be renewed in the year to come—physically, mentally or spiritually—let it be for and about encounter. To aid you in increasing your capacity to show up in the family of God, bringing your whole self as a gift to the family of God, come what may; in the midst of struggles and also joy.

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For example, what did the pandemic prove to us? That we are painfully interconnected. As Pope Benedict XVI once said, “No one sins alone. No one is saved alone.”

Likewise, cries for social justice during the past two years have been filled with the same message.

Black or brown skin, and the ethnicities and heritages that are paired with that skin, does not lessen the right of the individual to be a full heir of the kingdom of God and to proclaim to the Church, as Servant of God, “I bring myself, my Black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to become.”

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The way we begin anew is to, in all things, in all our resolutions, keep our eyes fixed on the glory of the coming of the Lord and the building up of God’s family in Christ.
What if every parish was a pro-life safe haven?

By Greg Erlandson

My track record as a predictor of Supreme Court abortion decisions took a hit at the end of the last decade when a crystal ball reading that Planned Parenthood v. Casey would overturn Roe v. Wade resonated. As a signed source, Anthony Kennedy, I was quite obviously wrong.

So I’ll be cautious about predicting the future, but the abortion divide will continue in our nation—throughout the world. There will be 50 battlefields, and the abortion divide will continue in our nation for the foreseeable future, with battles being fought in virtually every state house in virtually every state. While abortion’s more vocal supporters and opponents will continue to yell at each other as they did outside the Supreme Court in the days of Anthony Kennedy, there is more than enough evidence that the merits of the Mississippi case, there is much more going on in pro-life circles that are worth attention.

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., who recently stepped down as head of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee, has been working for three years on a program known as Walking with Moms in Need. In working with his brother bishops in November, he described the program as “a paradigm-shifting and innovative solution to better equip pregnant and parenting mothers facing difficulties.”

“Program’s vision,” he said, “is that a pregnant or parenting mother in need can turn to any local Catholic parish and be connected with the necessary assistance and accommodation that she needs.” It is an ambitious vision, one that would reflect Pope Francis’ idea of accompaniment, walking with mothers in need of assistance and support.

It would bring together the pro-life and social justice wings of the Church, which so often should be united. It is the kind of thing that could change the way women and their families are treated. The Church has a long history of service to parishes and churches.

We do this with far more than just a charitable hand, but with the expectation of being given at least one day a week.

While our number one priority is to give pro-life education to the next generation of Catholic young people, there is a need to return to one of our original thrusts in the wake of the Supreme Court abortion decision: that the Church— and you and I in our parishes—will be there for the moms in need. The parish would network with resources, with mentors, with helping agencies.

In an age of scarcity and of a division, the archbishop said, “directly confronts the false, yet popular, narrative that the Catholic Church merely condemns abortion,” but doesn’t help the women.

Whatever the court decides in the spring, the needs of the poor, the pregnant, and the abandoned will remain. Walking with Moms in Need is the kind of grassroots program that could change lives: both of those moms and of the parishioners who help them.

(Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.)

It’s All Good/Patti Lamb

Climb life’s mountains with God as your constant companion

Recently we traveled to Sedona, Ariz.—a place we’ve never visited—to enjoy a few days outside in warmer temperatures. Sedona is known for its numerous hiking trails with breathtaking views. We looked forward to a brief respite from our routine, and I came away with a realization that I hope you’ll find meaningful as we embark on a new year.

On our first hiking day, my husband and I woke up early so that we could check out a particular trail that was highly recommended to hike at sunrise. The kids had just finished a challenging semester at school, so we let them sleep in while we conducted our morning preparation to ensure our family hit the best spots during the vacation.

After watching an exquisite sunrise, my husband guided me to the trail head, and we began hiking. It was just above freezing, but the views of the red rock were mesmerizing, and I commented repeatedly how beautiful it was there. He did have to give me a little encouragement to play “trail truck” a few times, when I couldn’t quite pull myself to the next level of rock.

I excitedly talked with him about hiking “Cathedral Rock.”

I have come to know the Good Shepherd. This Montessori-based method introduces the youngest child to the love of God that can imprint at this age is the divine judge—exactly why many children become fixated on a stern, even scornful, image of God. The beauty of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is that the method first introduces the youngest child to the love of the Good Shepherd who cares for each sheep by name, even if the sheep is lost, and tends his flock with care, even giving them the rules they need to stay safe and healthy.

To watch a child realize that he is one of God’s sheep, to see his eyes light up with joy at the mention of the Good Shepherd who calls him by name, and to witness his growing trust in God who promises to provide all that he needs is a spiritual experience that has been transformative for my parenting and my own faith.

I have come to know the Good Shepherd as an adult, delighting in my own discovery of how many names Scripture offers for the Good Shepherd. I’m always on the lookout for new dawns, I try to pray about what images of God might guide me through the coming months.

For information on the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the Archdiocese of Louisville, contact the archdiocesan office at catechesis@archlou.org.

(Laura Kelly Fanucci is a writer, speaker, and author of several books. Her work appears regularly in Catholic Channel. She lives in Louisiana with her husband and daughters.)
Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord/ Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, January 9, 2022

• Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
• Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

The Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord is very important to the Church’s mission of bringing us to Christ. It reveals both the identity of the Lord and begins the Gospel’s revelation of the Lord’s work of salvation. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. The three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke report this event. St. Luke’s account is read on the feast this year. St. John’s Gospel alludes to John the Baptist’s baptisms in the Jordan and his describing Jesus as the lamb of God. The first reading is one of the four suffering servant songs of Isaiah. Who was this suffering servant? The future Messiah? One of the prophets? The author? Was it a collective reference to the people of Israel? No one knows for certain, but Christian liturgies through the centuries have seen Jesus in the suffering servant songs. So, these poetic passages are prominent in the liturgies of Lent and especially of Good Friday. Certainly, reference to Christ is the message for this feast. In this Scripture, God reveals that a faithful and pure servant will come. He will endure outrage. Many will turn against him. Yet he will be steadfast.

Supplying the second reading is the Acts of the Apostles. After Easter, almost every liturgy contains a reading from the Acts of the Apostles, but this source rarely furnishes readings at Mass in any other time. So, the appearance of Acts on this weekend is unusual. The reading is important. St. Peter’s identity is revealed. He spoke for all the Apostles and was chief among them. He reached out to gentiles by teaching Cornelius, a Roman officer, a foreigner, and pagan. Peter proclaimed Jesus, declaring that the saving ministry of Jesus began with his baptism. Peter’s message clearly was the continuation of the Lord’s message. St. Luke’s Gospel provides the last reading. Luke’s revelation of the baptism highlights the Lord’s divine identity and mission of salvation. In Luke, God announces that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by him to redeem humanity. Jesus fulfilled the plan of God. Certain images are important. In a distant echo of the creation accounts in Genesis, the reading shows that life comes from the water. Jesus emerged from the water to begin the mission of redemption. The faithful must repent. It prefigures Christian baptism.

Another crucial image is that of the sky. God spoke from the sky, a sign of divinity in the Old Testament.

Reflection

In Advent, the Church called us to renewed holiness and grace. The Church joyfully led us to Christmas, the celebration of the Lord’s birth. When we responded in Advent, Christmas was much more than a commemoration. It was a personal event in which faithful hearts and souls truly received Christ and were vivified, healed and freed from the burden of sin and the inevitability of death.

In the great revelation of the Epiphany celebrated last week, the Church continued to tell us about Jesus, the son of Mary and therefore human, but also the Son of God, as the Magi realized.

Now, on this feast, the Church instructs us further about Jesus. He is the instrument of God’s love for us. Doomed by our sins, we find another chance in God. He identifies with us. Union with Jesus is critical, if we wish to be saved. He is God. God forgives us and restores us to eternal life if we accept the Lord.

Practically speaking, Jesus comes to us through Peter and the Apostles, the Lord’s special students, sent to bring salvation to all the world. They still are present in and through the Church.

Daily Readings

Monday, January 10
1 Samuel 1:1-8
Psalm 116:12-19
Mark 1:14-20

Tuesday, January 11
1 Samuel 1:9-20
(Responsory) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8
Mark 1:21-28

Wednesday, January 12
1 Samuel 2:1-10, 19-20
Psalm 40:2, 5, 7-10
Mark 1:29-39

Thursday, January 13
St. Hilary, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 Samuel 4:1-11
Psalm 44:10-11, 14-15, 24-25
Mark 1:40-45

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

No gesture is mandated in praying the Our Father during Mass

What is the proper prayer position for the laity when praying the Our Father at Mass? (Virginia)

The directions flow from the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are remarkably concise. It says: “No position is prescribed in the Roman Missal for an assembly gesture during the Lord’s Prayer.”

The celebrating priest, on the other hand, is instructed that he should maintain the “auspice” position, with his hands outstretched to the side in prayer.

I have always found a certain inconsistency in this: At certain other times in the Mass, the priest is praying on behalf of the congregation—especially during the eucharistic prayer. But with the Our Father, the priest is praying along with the faithful, saying the same words as the rest of the congregation.

In some parishes, congregations tend to hold one another’s hands during the Lord’s Prayer, although there is no direction in the rubrics to do so. That gesture does show the unity of the congregation, but it can also create some uncertainty.

Some people don’t feel comfortable holding hands—especially during the current COVID-19 crisis—and they shouldn’t feel compelled to do so.

Perhaps someday the rubrics will be more specific, but for now I think it best for people to do whatever they sense is appropriate.

For a person who has not been to church or to confession for several years but receives the sacrament of the anointing of the sick before she dies, would that take away mortal sins? (Iowa)

I would say that it depends. If the admiring person is no longer able to confess, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick would take away mortal sin—provided the person has the sorrow for sin that would be required for the worthy reception of the sacrament of penance (“imperfect contrition,” or sorrow for sin for a lesser motive than pure love of God—for example, because of the fear of divine punishment.)

This sacrament is meant to give the sick person the courage and sense of peace to deal with serious illness; but also, as the website of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis says: “A sick person’s sins are forgiven if he or she was not able to go to confession prior to the celebration of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.”

Of course, if the sick person is conscious and alert, the ministering priest should always first offer the opportunity of going to confession.

(Submitted via "Questions may be sent to Fr. Kenneth Doyle at askfatherkenneth@stjohnmarinus.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.)

My Journey to God

Morning Silence

By M. Lynnell Chamberlain

The silence overwhelms me, Immerses me in a way, And so I stop and listen To what the world has to say.

Speaking without words, Sharing without sound, That God isn’t far away, He’s always around.

All I need to see him Is to open my eyes and see. All I need to hear him Is to sit here quietly.

(A M. Lynnell Chamberlain is a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellerville. Photo: A woman in Los Angeles hikes above the early morning fog on May 9, 2020.)


CARNAGHI, Angelo, 95, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Nov. 15. Father of Jan, Jill, Mark and Mike Carnaghi. Brother of Kate McClain. Grandfather of four.


DONOVAN, Patrick M., 72, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Husband of Molly Donovan. Father of Brian, Dan and Kevin Donovan. Brother of Kathiern, Dennis, Jimmy and Timothy. Grandfather of three.


Providence Sister Ann Steven Stouffer served for 44 years in Catholic schools

Providence Sister Ann Steven Stouffer, a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Dec. 9 at Clinton Gardens in Clinton. She was 82.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 23 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.


Sister Ann Steven earned a bachelor’s degree at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master’s degree in Indiana University in Bloomington. During her 62 years as a member of the Providence Sister Franciscan Patricia Zartman discerned religious life after vocation as a wife, mother and educator

Providence Sister Franciscan Patricia Zartman died on Dec. 19 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Ind. She was 92.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 23 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg, Burial followed at Arlington Memorial Gardens in Cincinnati.

Patricia Hankey was born on June 19, 1929, in Cleveland, Ohio. She studied nursing as a young adult and married William Zartman after he had been discharged from the U.S. Navy after World War II. The couple had four children. Patricia later earned a bachelor’s degree in education and taught at St. Ann School in Cincinnati, where her children were educated.

After the children completed their education, were married and started families of their own, Patricia and William Zartman of Fairborn, Ohio, and several grandchildren.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind. 47875-786.

Franciscan Sister Patricia Zartman was born on Feb. 26, 1939, in Wilmington, Del. She entered the Sisters of Providence on Feb. 26, 1960, and professed final vows on Nov. 30, 2002. Sister Patricia ministered in parish and hospital ministry in Cincinnati. She also assisted in the phone room at the motherhouse until 2002 until fully retiring from ministry in 2019.

She is survived by her daughter Patricia Zartman of Cincinnati, her sons Douglas Zartman of Kokomo, Fla., and William Zartman of Fairborn, Ohio, and several grandchildren.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, PO. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47363-0100.
and “Devil’s Bridge,” other highly rated trails that were on our “to-do” list.

But then something happened. I realized how high up I was and saw a ridge that I’d have to navigate with no guard rail. My legs started shaking uncontrollably. The mountain seemed so much that I had to kneel down. I was terrified—in a state of sheer panic. I had to close my eyes. They quivered so much that I had to kneel down. I was still shaking uncontrollably. My knees were still shaking. I thought--we’d be back down to our “to-do” list.

The mountain is named “Sugarloaf.” I liked the sound of that. Sugarloaf is more

speed than “Devil’s Bridge.” My knees were still shaking, but it was beautiful up there. After saying a morning prayer, I took a photo. It is to the right. I was in awe of the hues of red and pink, along with the trees that dotted the landscape. It was peacefully quiet. Majestic, really.

I wasn’t brave enough to get a picture on the cliff—apparently the best photo opportunity spot—as others were lining up to do. That day, I climbed my own mountain. (Magazine experienced hikers might call it a “hill.”)

In the new year, my hope is to be present to the people and tasks God has placed on my trail. It’s time for me to stop dreaming of climbing others’ mountains and witnessing their pinnacle views.

Instead, I’m called to focus on God’s will for me and those he has entrusted to my care. When I intentionally

pause to take it all in—I see the beauty on my path, trusting God as my constant companion.

(Patti Lamb, a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

With foreign donation license denied, Missionaries of Charity ration food

KOLKATA, India (CNS)—Since Christmas, the Missionaries of Charity have been strictly rationing the food and noodles they use to feed about 600 beneficiaries at their motherhouse and Shishu Bhavan, a children’s orphanage. On Jan. 2, the breakfast of tea, bread and eggs was cut short by an hour.

“As long as you did it to one of these, my brother, you did it to me,” said a Nazara, a beneficiary of the Missionaries of Charity, as she waited for the nuns to give her the weekly provisions. She lives with her two sick children across the road from the motherhouse, and says she visits the tomb of St. Teresa and prays for the “difficult times to pass.”

Abdul Razak, a 45-year-old beggar, says he hasn’t put outside the motherhouse cut in his rags. He has been staying there since Christmas in hopes of getting his share of food and medicine. A few others like him sit along with him to receive their subsidy from the nuns. Since the pandemic began, they received their daily meal from the motherhouse, but now, “Sisters told us that we might not be able to collect the food any longer,” said the sick man.

The Indian Home Ministry has not approved the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) license of the Missionaries of Charity on the grounds of some “adverse reports.” However, the nuns do not express their disappointment with the central government’s action and continue the routine of prayers and service.

A spokesman for the order said the nuns are looking into the lack of FCRA approval and will appeal the ruling.

But the uncertainty of the fate of foreign donations has started showing in the organization’s everyday operations. Sister Dominic Mary, a member of the Missionaries of Charity from neighboring Orissa state, told Catholic News Service that, “The state government of Orissa has confirmed that their supplies will keep going in these difficult times. . . . If other state governments also support us, maybe this phase will pass.”

Every Friday, Chotto, 5, Abdulla, 7, Sashi, 6, and Gatnaaz, 8, all living by the street with their mother, collect food from the Shishu Bhavan. Their father is blind and lives in a makeshift wooden trolley, begging on the streets. In the winter, their only hopes of survival have been the Missionaries of Charity. They were expecting to receive the woolen blankets that did not arrive after Christmas.

“We might not get it this winter,” said their mother, Roya.

On Fridays and Sundays, the poor line up to get their share of essentials at the motherhouse. The nuns have told them now that it might get difficult for them in the coming days.

In India, about 6,000 nongovernmental organizations—known as NGOs or Oxfam—lost their FCRA licenses on Jan. 1. When a FCRA license is canceled, the organization can appeal to the Home Ministry; with an appeal, the license remains valid for 180 days. Permanent cancellation of the permit then follows.

John Duyal, human rights activist and author, said, “The FCRA curbs are just a way to restrict humanitarian organizations to work independently in India. It is a kind of continued violence that’s played on the streets by goons and by the government through regulations and misinformation against Christians.”

Muslims have suffered similar discrimination.

Employment

Employment

Office Manager / Receptionist

Responsibilities include greeting guests on the phone and in person, assisting guests during their stay, procuring office supplies, payables and receivables, running the bookstore, supervising part-time office staff. Must have excellent organizational and communication skills, great attention to detail, very good computer skills to work a flexible schedule and a heart for the ministry and mission of Fatima Retreat House.

Housekeeping Supervisor

Responsible for maintaining the order and cleanliness of the Retreat House. Applicants must have the ability to lift and carry at least 20-30 pounds and push at least 50 pounds, and be available for a flexible schedule with an occasional evening or Sunday. Must be a self-starter, good communicator, able to work unsupervised and have a heart for the ministry and mission of Fatima Retreat House.

Benefits for both positions include employee/employer paid health insurance, HSA account contributions, life insurance, worker’s compensation insurance, paid holidays and vacation, 401(k) participation with employer match.

Send cover letter, resume and list of references to: Georgene Beiringer, Director, Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House gbbeiringer@archindy.org or call (317) 545-7681, Ext. 105

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Part Time Pastoral Associate, St. Pius X Catholic Church

St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis is seeking a PART TIME Pastoral Associate to join our parish staff.

The Pastoral Associate is a lay minister who collaborates with the Pastor and staff in the overall pastoral care of the parish. This position minister to the sick and dying, nursing homes, coordinates bereavement for our parish, as well as other programs.

Major responsibilities include Pastoral Care and bringing the Eucharist to those sick in hospitals, nursing homes, and home bound, Senior Adult ministry, ministering to the bereaved, coordinating volunteers for outreach ministries, and coordinating the Christ Renews His Parish retreats for both men and women.

Applicant must have previous pastoral or related ministry experience, a basic, working knowledge of Catholic theology and spirituality and some understanding of human psychology and the grief process. It is preferred that the applicant have a Bachelor’s degree in Theology/Pastoral Studies or Pastoral Ministry/Religious Studies.

Please email a cover letter, resume, and list of references to: Sharon Wagner at swagner@spaparish.org.

Youth Minister, St. Pius X Catholic Church

St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis is seeking a FULL TIME Coordinator of Youth Ministry to join our parish staff.

The Coordinator of Youth Ministry is responsible for a comprehensive youth ministry program for junior high and high school, grades 6 through 12. Based on the “Renewing the Vision” document, this ministry fosters both the personal and spiritual growth of the youth, and seeks to draw young people into awareness and participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community and the larger church.

Major responsibilities include the High School Confirmation program, and High School and Middle School Catechesis and programming, as well as collaborating with other youth ministry groups in the parish.

The Youth Ministry is to be an active, visible and active member of the St. Pius community, participating in parish and school activities and events, present and involved in liturgical celebrations, and actively involved and present in the school. Usual work hours will include nights and weekends.

Applicant must be a professed and practicing Catholic with a solid knowledge of the Traditions and teachings of the Church, have a Bachelor’s degree in pastoral ministry, religious education, theology or related field and have previous pastoral ministry experience in parish or campus setting.

Please email a cover letter, resume, and list of references to: Kaitlyn Blanford at kblanford@spaparish.org.

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