WASHINGTON (CNS)—The Catholic Church’s opposition to abortion “is a response of love for both mothers and their children in the womb,” said the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee in a statement issued to mark the Jan. 22 anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision making abortion legal in all 50 states.

“The Church’s teaching proclaims a message of life, reminding us that every life is a sacred gift from God from the moment of conception until natural death,” said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori.

In November, the archbishop began a three-year term as the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The archbishop’s Jan. 21 statement came as thousands of pro-life supporters gathered to “stand for the rights of the unborn” at the 49th annual March for Life on the National Mall in Washington.

“Equality Begins in the Womb” was the theme of this year’s event, which always includes a rally with dozens of speakers on the Mall, followed by a march to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The March for Life Defense and Education Fund, which sponsors the annual event, and many pro-life groups said they were hopeful this year’s rally would mark a pivotal turning point for abortion in the U.S. Many expect the Supreme Court’s ruling on a Mississippi law banning most abortions after 15 weeks will lead to limiting Roe or overturning it.

“Strive to transform people’s hearts, not just laws, Archbishop Thompson says at pro-life Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

History might have been made with this year’s Indiana March for Life events on Jan. 23 and 24 as being the last with nationally legalized abortion.

With the potential for a positive outcome of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization case later this year, “Many talk about these days as being the closest we’ve been to overturning Roe v. Wade,” Archbishop Charles C. Thompson told the roughly 700 people present for a Mass celebrated at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Jan. 24.

Indiana March for Life and rally draw nearly 1,000 hopeful for the end of Roe v. Wade

By Natalie Hoefer

When students from Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School in Madison learned their trip to the National March for Life in Washington was canceled this year, “They were disappointed,” said Chemaign Drumm, the school’s retreat and pro-life coordinator.

Instead, they came to Indianapolis for the Indiana March for Life events on Jan. 23 and 24—and their disappointment evaporated.

“They were blown away at the number of people, the chanting and walking through the streets of Indy. And being right in the thick of the crowd and next to the speakers at the rally really solidified their support for life,” said Drumm.

Indeed, a spirit of hope resonated each year at the Indiana March for Life.

But there was an additional sense of enthusiasm at this year’s event on Jan. 24, attended by nearly 1,000 pro-life advocates who came from throughout central and southern Indiana, as well as cities in the Indiana dioceses of Evansville, Fort Wayne-South Bend and Lafayette.

It was brought about by the prospect of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization later this year that could overturn the Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion. The 1973 ruling has led to the death of more than 62 million unborn babies.

Marc Tuttle, executive director of Right to Life Indianapolis that sponsored the march and rally, spoke assuredly to the crowd of the 1973 decision’s reversal.

“When Roe v. Wade is overturned—and it’s not ‘if’, but See RALLY page 11A
The seventh annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference will take place from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 26 in the auditorium of East Central High School, 1 Trojan Place, in St. Leon. Sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, “E6” in the conference’s title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up “the armor of God” in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

The conference this year will feature speakers Matthew Kelly and Gus Lloyd. Kelly, a native of Australia, is a husband and father of five children. He is also a writer and Catholic speaker who has been heard by more than 5 million people in more than 50 countries. Kelly is the founder of the Cincinnati-based Dynamic Catholic Institute. Lloyd is the host of “Seize the Day,” a morning radio show on Sirius XM’s The Catholic Channel. He is also the author of several books on the Catholic faith and speaks at conferences and parishes across the country.

“Both of our speakers are well known and well equipped to help men to be saints—the best version of themselves,” said Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor with Matthew Kelly and Gus Lloyd.

In addition to presentations by the speakers, the conference will cover Mass, the availability of the sacrament of penance throughout the day and prayer between the sessions. Lunch will also be provided for attendees.

Like last year, this year’s E6 Catholic Conference will also be available via livestream.

“Anyone can register and view it with their family, friends, men’s group or entire parish, for only $10 per group,” said conference organizer Joe Yunger, a member of All Saints Parish. “An email will be sent with a live stream link a few days before the conference, which will make it easy for anyone to tune in and be a part of it.”

For more information on the livestream option, visit www.efcatholicmensconference.com/virtual-event.

To attend in person, the registration fee for men 25 years and older is $40. For men under 25, the cost is $25. Clergy and religious may attend at no cost.

Father Meyer said the relevance of the conference for Catholic men is all the more clear considering the challenges they face in today’s society.

“Continuing to come out of and still live in a COVID culture requires men to be bold in their faith,” he said. “Isolation, depression and frustration are on the rise—men need each other and the Lords, and they need to be strong in these difficult times. They also need in-person events to be brothers.”

The E6 Catholic Men’s conference is a platform to listen to the world’s greatest Catholic speakers live,” said Yunger, “to meet like-minded men and women near and far to help those affected by Ukraine’s escalation Russian troops mass on the border of the eastern European country ahead of a possible invasion.

“People near the front line often lack the basics—clean water, food, clothes, medicine,” they said.

They compared the Russian buildup of troops to King Herod’s thirst for power and hegemony.

“This is a question of life and death, as nostalgia for an empire lost has led to senseless slaughter and immense suffering throughout Ukraine,” said the January 22 signed statement by all five Ukrainian Catholic bishops in the United States.

“The war in Ukraine is real. It kills, maims and destroys daily. An escalated Russian invasion will generate additional millions of refugees, more dead and injured, more tears and pain. Still, the people of Ukraine courageously endure. As they stand with a gun to their head, they ask for our solidarity,” they said.

In a statement on Jan. 24, Catholic bishops in Ukraine and Poland cited former popes, papal encyclicals and the Catechism of the Catholic Church to show Catholic teaching that war is never the answer to problems.

The E6 Catholic Men’s conference will make it easy for anyone to tune in a few days before the conference, which will be sent with a live stream link a few days before the conference, which will make it easy for anyone to tune in and be a part of it.”

For more information about the E6 Catholic Men’s Conference, including registration and visit www.efcatholicmensconference.com.

In remembrance of the tragic anniversary of Roe v. Wade, 1973, a nationwide day of prayer and remembrance for those affected by a woman’s right to choose and women and men in continued from page 1A

Lori

“Rerum novarum” is a social encyclical by a previous pontiff outlining on behalf of the Church, if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. More are ways to make a report.

Visitors to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who have contracted with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes said.

The archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator Department of the Conference for Catholic men and women of goodwill, the Catholic Church in the U.S. “recognizes the National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children,” observed every Jan. 22, Archbishop Lori said.

He, too, pointed to the Mississippi case.

“Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization and invited all Catholics and other people of goodwill to fast and pray on this day, and frequently between now and June, when we anticipate a decision on Dobbs.”

“We pray that this important case might reverse Roe and its unjust abortion license,” Archbishop Lori said.

“We cannot build a truly just society and remain complacent when faced with the massive impact of Roe v. Wade, which lasts for 60 million lives since 1973,” he said. “May we pray, fast and work for the day when the gift of every human life is protected in law and welcomed in love.”

Archbishop Lori was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Jan. 20 opening Mass of the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Early on Jan. 21, Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley of Boston likewise was the principal celebrant and homilist for the vigil’s closing Mass, and many who attended left the basilica to head to the National Mall for the March for Life.

Ukrainian Catholic leaders express concern over effects of possible Russian invasion

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Ukrainian Catholic leaders expressed concern Thursday, Feb. 24, that a Russian invasion may generate additional millions of refugees, more dead and injured, more tears and pain.

“People near the front line often lack the basics—clean water, food, clothes, medicine,” they said.

They compared the Russian buildup of troops to King Herod’s thirst for power and hegemony.

“This is a question of life and death, as nostalgia for an empire lost has led to senseless slaughter and immense suffering throughout Ukraine,” said
ICC advocates at Statehouse for families in deepest poverty

By Victoria Arthur

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is out front on a number of bills at the Statehouse that would affect individuals and families considered among the poorest of the poor in the state.

Leaders of the ICC—the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana—support some of the proposed legislation while opposing other bills, in line with the long history of Catholic social teaching with respect to the most vulnerable.

“These of these bills would benefit families in the greatest need and help lift them out of poverty, while we have serious concerns that others may have the opposite effect,” said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC. “We always want to stand with the most economically disadvantaged among us, especially our children.”

The ICC strongly supports House Bill 1361, a bipartisan measure that would transfer oversight of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF is a federal government program that provides grants to the states to administer cash assistance payments to families in deepest poverty.

But those families often face barriers in receiving that help because of outdated state guidelines, according to Rep. Chuck Goodrich (R-Noblesville), the primary author of House Bill 1361. That includes a current asset limit of $1,000 for families qualifying for TANF to continue receiving those temporary benefits, which have a lifetime cap of 24 months for adults.

The measure that Goodrich calls “hand-up legislation” would increase that asset limit to $10,000—and would exempt $20,000 of total equity value of the family’s motor vehicles from eligibility guidelines. Because these families need reliable transportation for getting to and from work and child care services, this provision is critical, according to the ICC, other advocates and co-authors of the legislation.

“This bill allows people to better themselves and stay on the program until they are in a position to no longer need assistance,” said Rep. Cherish Pryor (D-Indianapolis), among the co-authors of House Bill 1361 and a longtime collaborator with Rep. Goodrich on TANF-related legislation.

The bill passed unanimously on Jan. 20 in the House committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs and is now awaiting action by the full House of Representatives.

A broader TANF-related bill backed by the ICC and other advocates for the poor, including the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute, was awaiting a committee hearing at press time. Senate Bill 327 marks the latest attempt to update major provisions of the TANF program in Indiana, which has seen substantive change in more than three decades.

As in previous years, Sen. Jon Ford (R-Terre Haute) is leading the charge to modernize TANF in Indiana by pushing for the first monthly increase in cash payments in 34 years and dramatically expanding eligibility for the program.

For those in deepest poverty, TANF’s cash assistance payments are a lifeline. But those monthly payments—$288 for a family of three, for example—have not been increased since they were set by state law three decades ago.

Moreover, only a fraction of the poorest families in Indiana currently receive even those modest benefits from the federal program because of outdated eligibility guidelines—another issue that Senate Bill 327 is designed to address. Indiana’s eligibility level for TANF is the fourth-lowest in the United States, behind Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama. To be eligible for TANF, the maximum income of a Hoosier family must be less than 17 percent of the federal poverty level. Indiana set its income requirements to qualify for TANF in the mid-1990s, when welfare reform was signed into law by then-President Bill Clinton. Those eligibility guidelines have not been adjusted for inflation since then.

While the ICC and its allies continue to advocate for these long-awaited changes, they are working to oppose another TANF-related measure. House Bill 1410 would transfer oversight of the mandatory job search guideline for TANF eligibility to the state level from the local level, where it is currently administered.

ICC leaders argue that local agencies providing support services for families in deep poverty are best equipped to understand each family’s unique needs and circumstances and, therefore, are in the best position to oversee and monitor their job search activities.

“We want to be clear that we are not opposed to the concept of the applicant job search requirement, as the Church greatly values the dignity and transformative power of work,” said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC. “Our primary concern is based on the Church’s understanding of subsidiarity, which means that decisions should be made at the lowest competent level, especially when decisions affect the poor and most vulnerable.”

Jessica Fraser, an advocate for the poor who has worked on TANF-related issues for 10 years, shared similar concerns with legislators about House Bill 1410.

“This bill doesn’t really change policy,” said Fraser, director of the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute, formerly the Indiana Institute for Working Families. “But it changes the state’s ability to be flexible when people are going through tough times.”

To follow this and other priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacatholic.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)
We must build a civilization of love to overcome abortion in our culture

“It is a poverty that a child must die so that you may live as you wish.”
—St. Teresa of Calcutta

We recently marked the 49th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s tragic Roe v. Wade decision, which on Jan. 22, 1973, legalized abortion on demand across the United States. And despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the national March for Life took place in Washington on Jan. 22, with thousands “marching for life.”

The March for Life took place in Washington on Jan. 22, with thousands “marching for life.”

As people who respect all human life—of love to overcome abortion in our culture—men, women and young and old, Catholic and Protestant, and people of other faith traditions and walks of life braved the frigid 20-degree temperatures to be voices for the unborn.

Pro-life organizers had anticipated that as many as 50,000 people would attend this year, and although no official statistics were available as The Criterion went to press, many news outlets reported “tens of thousands” marched for life.

The Indiana March for Life on Jan. 24 drew an estimated 10,000 participants. And like those who took part in the march in our nation’s capital, the energy and enthusiasm of those who marched through the downtown streets of Indianapolis was palpable. Holding signs, praying and chanting pro-life messages, the group let their heartfelt efforts for life.

We must remind those who are performing abortions, in the onetoone setting being knocked off course by selfish motives

We post-Roe v. Wade world we pray for will allow not 2,363 abortions per day in the U.S. or the nearly 1 million abortions performed in our country each year. “Most of those abortions are performed on unmarried women in poverty,” Cardinal O’Malley noted.

We must remind those who are considering abortion that adoption is a loving option.

Cardinal O’Malley called it ironic that “2 million Americans each year try to adopt children, and only 20,000 U.S. babies are given up [for adoption]. At the same time, a million babies are being aborted. It’s tragic.”

He added, “Only a huge educational effort will be able to change the cultural prejudices that exist. Adoption needs to be more user-friendly; it needs to be more transparent, and it needs to be celebrated,” adding that adoptive parents can find a role model in St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.

“Changing the laws is important, but building a civilization of love is what will ultimately overcome abortion in our culture,” Cardinal O’Malley said.

Promoting the social gospel, human rights and economic justice are needed, he added, “to build a civilization of love—or there will be no civilization at all.”

—Mike Krokos

Letters to the Editor

Pope’s vaccine message reminds us of moral issue to care for our neighbor

Thank you for publishing on the front page of the Jan. 14 issue of The Criterion the recent words of Pope Francis on the urgent need for a “reality check” against baseless information and for increased efforts so everyone has access to vaccines, medicines and diagnostic tools.

He urged the importance of evening as many people as possible to fight the epidemic, which he called “a grave moment in the life of humanity.”

I hope this will be of help to those who have hesitated about vaccines for religious reasons. The moral issue here is care for our neighbor, as each of us has an obligation to help combat the scourge which has resulted in so much suffering and loss of life.

Ellen Healey

Indianapolis

Reader: Don’t let your ‘true north’ get knocked off course by selfish motives

I enjoyed Father Eugene Hemrick’s column in the Jan. 14 edition of The Criterion about the importance of our collective moral compass.

I said much today of moral malfunctions are a result of our compasses’ ‘true north’ setting being knocked off and replaced by our ‘true self’ and selfish, self-centered, “me first” world.

In a modern, rich, luxurious and enabled society, truth as a thing, as an absolute, gets replaced by my set, my version, my opinion.

Nowhere has this been more obvious than in and during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many people have held to the idea that COVID-19 was and is “fake news,” and that they “had the right to” simply ignore it, and that if they did, this ignoring equates with immorality.

As Father Nettles movie about a comet hitting Earth exemplified this same point, as millions worldwide thought an impending comet strike. The Duke of Earth was a subject of pop opinion and vote.

I say “scientism” rather than “science” because there is an almost religious commitment to the creed defined by the experts—and a corresponding resolution to stamp out heresies.

I hope we all have the time and willingness to reset our own compasses, and replace opinions, versions, spin jobs and the ‘me first’ world of science and putting others first: all of which will point to and lead us individually and collectively back to the true north of God.

—Corylus

COVID-19 and scientism

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, I was puzzled about how our reactions to it divided along party lines. There is no obvious reason why Democrats should fear sickness and death more than Republicans. But the U.S. Constitution has persisted, indeed hardened: there is something clearly else going on.

One possible cause is that a pandemic invites government intervention, overturning Democrats are fond of. We’ve seen more of that from President Joe Biden, blue-state governors and big-city mayors than from their Republican counterparts.

Another reason for our division is not political, though I missed it for a long time because it aligns with party affiliation. It has to do with beliefs about science.

The cognoscenti say that those who object to vaccines, masks, quarantines, tests, crowd controls and school closings fail to “follow the science.” Mainstream media see those objectors as mouth-breathing rubics who lack the wit or the education to know what’s good for them.

This is unfair. There is much we don’t know about the progress of the infection or the efficacy of our responses. We used to worry about doorknobs and surfaces; now we don’t. We’ve gone back and forth about masks.

It now seems that the vaccines, although they prevent severe outcomes from infection, are much less effective at preventing transmission of the omicron variant than they were the delta variant. It is also true that science is helpful, but there is a kind of science on the secular left that helps us disown our disunion on this subject. And it’s better aligned with religion than with politics. The division is not confined to public health policy. We see it in disputes over climate change and gender identity and abortion.

In each of these cases, the adherents of scientism argue that experts in the field have fully comprehended some matter of social concern.

For COVID-19, it’s the infectious disease experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For climate change, it’s the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and EPA Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Gender identity is the concern of the NIH and the American Psychiatric Association. In recognizing a constitutional right to abortion in Roe v. Wade, Justice Harry A. Blackmun was former counsel for the Mayo Clinic, mentioned the word “physician” 48 times.

I use the word “scientism” rather than “science” because there is an almost religious commitment to the creed defined by the experts—and a corresponding resolution to stamp out heresies.

Last year, President Biden’s press secretary said the White House was working with Facebook to prevent disinformation about vaccines. Google and YouTube banned ads from videos contradicting “well-established scientific consensus” about the causes of climate change. Amazon pulled Ryan Anderson’s book about transgenderism.

As with other varieties of religious commitment, scientism commits us to a moral code we’re not just mistaken if you don’t follow the directions of the experts; you’re a bad person. Hence the phenomenon of Gates and Greta Thunberg’s denunciation of the “injustice” of climate change.

But it’s really not a morality, but telling us anything about moral responsibility. Its tools are logic and empirical measurement. It can assess when and how many MRI babies work, and how fast the omicron variant spreads.

But it has no way to solve moral equations like when to stop a pandemic against the importance of visiting the sick, going to church, educating your children, respecting your grandmother.

Exponents tend to picture the world with their own specialty in the foreground. My nephews tell me not to drink lest I get kidney stones. He forgets that I need calcium and vitamin D for bones and teeth. He doesn’t know that I suffer from the same cognitive bias in dealing with COVID-19.

Minimizing the risk of infection is not our only challenge in life.

—John Garvey is president of The Catholic University of America in Washington. Follow him on Twitter @CatholicPres.) †
El amor busca el bien del otro y desea la cercanía de Dios con nosotros y de los demás como signos de la verdadera unidad con Dios y con toda la humanidad. "Para que todos sean uno. Padre, así como tú estás en mí y yo en ti, así que ellos sean en uno..." (Jn 17:21).

Nos preguntamos: ¿Buscamos acercarnos a los demás con el corazón y el espíritu de amor de Jesús? ¿Podemos reconocer la cercanía de Dios en los demás? ¿Somos capaces de discernir la presencia de Dios en todos y en cada uno de ellos? Y en cómo pretendemos que los demás nos vean y nos acerquemos a ellos.

Let's ask St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, to intercede for us. May the twin characteristics of love be manifest in our daily lives, and may we recognize true love in ourselves and in others as signs of God's closeness to us and of his desire for what is truly good for us.

And let's pray together in the words used in today's Mass from the collect for the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, Jan. 28: "O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas outstanding in his zeal for holiness and his study of sacred doctrine, grant us, we pray, that we may understand what he taught and imitate what he accomplished.†

El amor busca el bien del otro y desea la cercanía de Dios con nosotros y de toda la humanidad. "Para que todos sean uno. Padre, así como tú estás en mí y yo en ti, así que ellos sean en uno..." (Jn 17:21).

Nos preguntamos: ¿Buscamos acercarnos a los demás con el corazón y el espíritu de amor de Jesús? ¿Podemos reconocer la cercanía de Dios en los demás? ¿Somos capaces de discernir la presencia de Dios en todos y en cada uno de ellos? Y en cómo pretendemos que los demás nos vean y nos acerquemos a ellos.

Let's ask St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, to intercede for us. May the twin characteristics of love be manifest in our daily lives, and may we recognize true love in ourselves and in others as signs of God's closeness to us and of his desire for what is truly good for us.

And let's pray together in the words used in today's Mass from the collect for the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, Jan. 28: "O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas outstanding in his zeal for holiness and his study of sacred doctrine, grant us, we pray, that we may understand what he taught and imitate what he accomplished.†

El amor busca el bien del otro y desea la cercanía de Dios con nosotros y de toda la humanidad. "Para que todos sean uno. Padre, así como tú estás en mí y yo en ti, así que ellos sean en uno..." (Jn 17:21).

Nos preguntamos: ¿Buscamos acercarnos a los demás con el corazón y el espíritu de amor de Jesús? ¿Podemos reconocer la cercanía de Dios en los demás? ¿Somos capaces de discernir la presencia de Dios en todos y en cada uno de ellos? Y en cómo pretendemos que los demás nos vean y nos acerquemos a ellos.

Let's ask St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, to intercede for us. May the twin characteristics of love be manifest in our daily lives, and may we recognize true love in ourselves and in others as signs of God's closeness to us and of his desire for what is truly good for us.

And let's pray together in the words used in today's Mass from the collect for the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, Jan. 28: "O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas outstanding in his zeal for holiness and his study of sacred doctrine, grant us, we pray, that we may understand what he taught and imitate what he accomplished.†
April 2
Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis
First Friday Mass, 5 p.m., Father Michael Block (Lafayette Diocese) celebrating, optional tour of center to follow.

April 3
Mount Saint Francis Center, 1 Sisters Providence Spirituality & Retreat Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis (Diocese of Indianapolis)
Taize Prayer at the Woods, 7:8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence, virtual option available at www.Taize.org. Information: 812-535-2062 or epowens@spsmw.org.

April 2, 3, 9, 13
March 26, 27
Group Lectio via Zoom, 7 p.m., second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, Benedictine Sister Jill Marie Reuber, facilitator, sponsored by Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Ind. (Diocese of Evansville). Information: vietnam@thedome.org.

April 2
February 12, March 12
Providing Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Moms Volunteering Opportunities, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., age 12-18, assisted with retired Providence Sisters. Information and registration: 812-855-2092 or gspow@spsmw.org or www.providencecc.org/events.

April 2
February 16, March 16

April 2
March 17, 19
Mount Saint Francis Center, 1 Sisters Providence Spirituality & Retreat Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis (Diocese of Indianapolis)
An optional two-day retreat, "One Hour with Me" will be offered at Mount Saint Francis, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Feb. 26.

April 6-13
March 26
Mount Saint Francis Center, 1 Sisters Providence Spirituality & Retreat Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis (Diocese of Indianapolis)
Advance care planning conference to take place near Indianapolis on Feb. 12

"A Loving Gift: Advanced Care Planning Conference" will take place just north of Indianapolis in the social hall at St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road, in Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Feb. 12, with doors opening at 9:30 a.m. Having health care and end-of-life discussions with loved ones is difficult and often ignored. Advance Care Planning (ACP) provides an opportunity to discuss, exploring and sharing your desired health care choices with others. ACP promotes making decisions based on ethical perspectives, including medical choices, decisions based on the medical issues, goals of health care, faith and personal values. The workshop will examine topics such as: exploring who will speak for you if you are unable; designating a health care representative who can make decisions for you; and most importantly, deciding how you want to live your life as it nears its end is just a few of the critical questions that need answering while you are able.

Speakers and topics include:
• Father James Farrell, sacramental minister at St. Rita and Holy Angels parishes, both in Indianapolis, addressing the topic from a pastoral point of view.
• Elliott Bedford, director of Ethics Integration for Ascension St. Vincent in Central and Southern Indiana, examining the ethical perspective while preserving human dignity.
• Carol Applegate, lawyer, discussing the legal aspects of ACP in terms of life care planning and legal documentation.
• Jan Gaddis, faith community nurse for Franciscan Health, presenting on the clinical perspectives, including medical decision forms and what they mean.

The panel discussion will be followed by time for questions and answers, and light refreshments will be served.
The conference is free, but seating is limited to 100 and registration is required.
To register go to bit.ly/ACP-graceplanning.
For more information, call 317-669-1973 or email tmacleodp@gmail.com.

April 6-13
March 26
Mount Saint Francis Center, 1 Sisters Providence Spirituality & Retreat Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis (Diocese of Indianapolis)
Reader’s guide for Life & Let Them Live, by Jim and Jodi Erlenbaugh.

The documentary Transmission: What is the Rush to Reassess Gender? will be viewed and discussed in St. John Parish Hall on the first floor of the PanAm building across from St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., in Indianapolis, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Feb. 11.

The documentary is part of a pro-life film series sponsored by Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary and Saint John the Evangelist parishes, both in Indianapolis.

A panel discussion will follow the viewing of the documentary.
All are welcome. There is no need to register, and the event is free, although workshops will be available.
For more information, call 317-407-6881 or e-mail smydek@gmail.com.

April 7
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 520 Stevens St., Evansville. Faithful Citizens Rosary, 10-4:15 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: faithfulcitizen2016@gmail.com.

April 9
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.

April 9
March 26
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.
Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $35 per day, includes room, continental breakfast, lunch and use of the common areas and grounds, overnight stays available for additional $24 per day, additional $9. Registration: cutt.ly/Fatimaretreats.
Dear Friends in Christ,

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis takes great pride in its long history of Catholic formation and education. Catholic Schools Week provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the blessing of Catholic schools in individual lives, families and communities throughout central and southern Indiana. Within its 39 counties, the archdiocese boasts of 68 Catholic grade and high schools as well as two Catholic seminaries and two Catholic universities.

The national theme for Catholic Schools Week—Faith, Excellence, Service—highlights the transformational mission of Catholic schools; namely, a holistic concept of developing the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical character of each student through ongoing formation and education.

The focus of Catholic schools, both inside and outside the classroom, includes the formation of the heart as well as the education of the mind. The development of morals and faith leading to Christ-centered witness in worship and service, as referenced in our theme, is central to this mission. Our concern is for every aspect of the person, but especially with salvation of the soul.

We take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to all those who make our Catholic schools what they are for us. Special thanks to all those serving in our schools—presidents, principals, faculty, staff, coaches and volunteers—as well as the tremendous team that makes up our archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools. The greatest ambassadors of our Catholic schools, of course, are our students and their families.

Your witness of faith, in both word and action, is the most inspiring means of highlighting the value of Catholic schools.

Ultimately, as the crucifix in every classroom is meant to remind us, we must always keep before us that our Catholic schools exist to carry forth the mission of Jesus Christ in proclaiming the kingdom of God at hand and bringing about the good news of salvation. All for the glory of God, we have much to celebrate!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Catholic schools: Sharing the mission of Jesus Christ and celebrating an education that transforms the heart, mind and soul
A surprising choice leads a family to a school and a faith-filled community that they cherish

By John Shaughnessy

When LaDarius Mathis finished his time of service in the U.S. Army, he and his wife Vanessa were at a point where they could choose wherever they wanted their family to live. The choice they made—and the reason they made it—could surprise many people.

After all, they could have returned to the Dallas, Texas, area where they had both grown up and still have families they live there.

They could have also chosen from some of the scenic areas which had been part of their lives during the nine years LaDarius served in the Army—including Colorado, New Mexico and Virginia.

Instead, they chose based on this reason: “We have nearly two years when LaDarius served at Camp Atterbury in Indiana—from 2014-16—the couple and their children felt so completely at home at Our Lady of the Greenwood School that they hated to leave when LaDarius was required to move to an Army base in Colorado. Longing to return to that Catholic community, they did just that in 2019.”

“Everyone welcomed us with open arms the first time we moved here. I got the warm and fuzzies then, and my heart has always been here ever since,” Vanessa says. “When we moved back here, we almost pinched ourselves. ‘Is this real? Did we make this happen?’”

Her happiness includes being the social studies teacher for middle school students at Our Lady of the Greenwood, where three of their four children attend. Bryce is in the eighth grade, Christian the first grade, and Madison a soon-to-be kindergartner of their eldest child LaDarius, a graduate of Our Lady of the Greenwood, is a freshman at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

“His is my dream job,” says Vanessa, who also coaches boys’ basketball and volleyball at the school. “I get to be with my kids, and there are awesome kids here. This is why we moved back—because of this school. My daughter loves the movie Frozen. As Olaf said in Frozen, ‘I’m living the dream.’

A substantial part of the dream for her and her husband is to get to teach in a Catholic school and her children get to receive a Catholic education.

“Our kids have always gone to Catholic schools,” she says. “I’ve always liked the discipline that’s being instilled. There’s an accountability, the fact that they can go to Mass and see everybody go to Mass as part of the school. With going to Mass being a routine part of life for them, I hope that will carry over into their adult life.”

She also savors being able to talk to her students about God.

“When we talk about God, we can have an open conversation about God,” she says. “Kids this age have doubts. They have so many outside forces from the secular world. It’s so cool that we can have these conversations about God, that we can talk about their doubts. If I don’t have the answers, I can talk to them about their doubts and how to move forward.”

That approach dovetails with another role she has at the school—as a member of the Jesus Squad. It’s a group of tutors who work regularly with the parish’s pastor, Father Todd Goodson, to enhance the Catholic identity of the school.

“How can we truly live by our Catholic faith?” she says, summarizing the question that guides the group. “We meet with Father Todd to talk about the needs of the students. I think it’s pretty cool that I’m on the Jesus Squad.”

The school community feels blessed that Vanessa is part of the staff, says principal Kent Clady.

“She’s just a natural,” he says. “I love that she treats the kids as she treats her own children. She teaches them as a teacher, but loves them as a mom. She holds them to the same expectations she has for her own children, and I love that about her. She’s a gift to us, for sure.

“I’m glad God brought her and her family back to us. They could have gone anywhere in the United States as a family. They decided they wanted to be here. We’re glad they are.”

So is the Mathis family.

“We feel blessed to be here,” Vanessa says. “This place feels like home. We’re loving it.”

Mentor program adds joy to the present and hope for the future

By John Shaughnessy

The dreams of Logan and Sebastian have created a bond between them, right down to the smiles and laughs they share in making a batch of greenish-blue slime together.

At 18, Logan Cucuz is a freshman at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis, and Sebastian, a sixth-grade student at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis, through the College Mentors for Kids program.

The smiles show that the bond has formed between Logan Cucuz, a freshman at Marian University in Indianapolis, and Sebastian, a sixth-grade student at Holy Angels School in Indianapolis, through the College Mentors for Kids program. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

The program gives kids the opportunity to bond with a college student that shares the same cultural and religious background. The mentor and mentee spend time together at college, doing homework and fun activities.

Logan is a nursing major, so Sebastian often asks him to go over medical concepts. Sebastian is a great support to Logan, who is focusing on being a basketball player.

Logan is already focused on his future path.

“I’m a nursing major,” he says. “I’d like to go into pediatrics. I like to work with kids, coming down to their level and helping them reach their goals.”

Sebastian shares that he’s one of four children who live with his mom. He also mentions that at this point in his life he wants to be a video game programmer or a graphic designer.

“Logan is already focused on his future path. When the opportunity to be paired with a college student, do fun bonding project, but the excitement the scholars that are involved in College Mentors have when Thursday rolls around is unmatched.”

For Sebastian, his mentor has helped him to work on his college path. He has learned how to take different classes and different courses.

Being on a college campus with college students that come from all over the state and country provides them with inspiration and motivation to want to do well in school, go onto a good high school and then college or technical school.

“We have many programs here at Holy Angels for our scholars to participate in, but the excitement the scholars that are involved in College Mentors have when Thursday rolls around is unmatched.”

At the same time, the program has created “a love of Holy Angels” for many of the Marian students involved in it, Armitage says.

“Some come back to volunteer in our after-care program, some come back to assist in classrooms, some decide to be tutors during the school week,” the principal says.

“College Mentors has been an integral piece to the transformation of Holy Angels over the past four years. It is beneficial to the Marian students, to our school, to our community and most importantly to the lives of our scholars.”

The program also gives the grade-school student and the college student the opportunity to smile and laugh together, to bond, says Anna Johannigman, the vice president of the Marian chapter of College Mentors for Kids and a member of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg.

“It’s really great to see that relationship forms between the two,” Johannigman says. “I think the mentors gain a sense of being able to have that connection with a child. Everyone has a mentor in their life. To have the ability to encourage someone is special.”

Vanessa and LaDarius Mathis have found a home for their family at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. Here, the couple poses for a family photo with their children, LaDarius, Jr., left, Madison, Christian and Bryce. (thumbnail photo)
Relying on his faith in a time of fear brings a student closer to God, his school community and the purpose for his life

By John Shaughnessy

Patrick Van Gheem recalls as it one of the toughest times of his life, a time when he turned to God and the community of Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis for help.

“I don’t talk about it too much, but there are moments at which I relied on my faith,” says Patrick, a senior at Cardinal Ritter. “Born prematurely, one of my brothers remained in the newborn intensive care unit for weeks.

“In those moments, it became quite real for me to go to school knowing that he was still fighting for his life at that moment. The worst part was knowing that the outcome of whether he would recover or stay in the hospital was out of my control. But the best part was knowing that my brother was in the care of two groups of people I trusted very greatly: health care professionals and, of course, God and the saints in heaven.

“This moment gave me comfort in my faith, knowing that God was there for me every day. I saw it in the community of Ritter, praying for my brother. I relied on my faith in that moment, and I am glad to say God came through. My brother is alive and well now.”

Patrick believes his faith will continue to serve him as he strives to pursue a career as a doctor.

Catholic teaching “is to not give up. To be able to study and persist. When the patient is unwell, the doctors will not give up.”

By John Shaughnessy

An even though Tyrone Davis isn’t Catholic, he still embraces the difference that a Catholic education has made in the formative years of his life.

“I believe that knowing that Catholic education is very important because it teaches you important moral virtues such as honesty, respect and compassion,” says Tyrone, a senior at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville.

“Every day, I learn more about a Catholic, with my mom being Eastern Orthodox. However, going to Catholic schools most of my life has taught me humility and how to care, love and respect toward other people, because you never know what the next person might be going through at home. They might have a hard life, so going out of your way to show kindness can go a long way.”

“Even though I have not led to many people who share my faith, but to learn how to use faith to reach out to others.”

“In addition to having theology classes, each class really focuses on bringing in items of faith and connecting it to certain lessons, which has encouraged me to see how my faith can play a role in such various different matters. I have become very actively involved in the campus ministry program at Bishop Chatard this year.”

By Brian Disney

Superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese

Catholic schools in the archdiocese provide an exemplary academic education, but they also provide so much more. Based on the foundation of Jesus Christ in his church, our Catholic schools are a vibrant ministry of the Catholic Church where children are taught to excel in their lives on Earth and to live eternally with God in Heaven. As an outstanding organization, the people in our schools—teachers, staff members, parents, students and families—live out this mission every day.

Our Catholic schools excel on every academic level, including state and national assessments, graduation rates and college acceptance rates. Our graduates become leaders in government, business, education, technology, engineering and so much more. Our schools are recognized for teaching critical thinking and instilling strong values. Catholic schools are appreciated for the value they bring to students, families and communities.

The outstanding academic education in our Catholic schools is infused with Gospel values. Guided by our Catholic identity and mission, we believe in the full potential of each of our students. Therefore, we intentionally focus on the growth and development of the whole human person: spiritual, physical, mental and social.

Our primary task is to form Catholic men and women and to show non-Catholics the beauty of living for and with Christ. Through learning to learn and understand the voice of God by utilizing their gifts to make the world a better place and to build up the kingdom of God. Our Catholic schools maintain their purpose through constant reference to the Gospel and frequent encounters with Christ. Our Catholic faith is the basis for all these successes.

This high-quality education would not be possible without our amazing educators who live the mission of Catholic schools every day. I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit almost half of our schools during this school year. On these visits, I have observed our teachers and staffs living this quote of St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body now on Earth but yours, nor feet but yours. Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good.”

Our Catholic schools are places to encounter Christ in the sacraments and in the employees, students and families.

Our teachers and staffs are of utmost importance in developing the distinctive mission of our Catholic schools. Our pastors and priests serve as the spiritual leaders of their school communities. Our school leaders provide educational and spiritual growth opportunities for students and staff members. Our teachers are full of Christian wisdom, have strong knowledge of their academic content, have a love for young people and are committed to guiding students to the heart of Christ. Our support staffs and volunteers in the office and cafeteria are welcoming voices and faces committed to service. The entire school community shares the vision of a whole-child educational experience built on the foundations of Christ and the Gospel. Our Catholic school educators are the hands, feet and eyes of Christ every day. If you are interested in your child being formed and taught in one of our amazing Catholic schools, please contact your local school office.

If you would like to work in this wonderful and supportive environment, contact our schools or visit the archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Education webpage, occ.archindy.org.

If you would like to thank your Catholic school educators for their Christian witness and work, send them a card, donate to the school or parish in their name, and pray for them.
First-time Catholic school teachers describe their experience as ‘positive’ and ‘wonderful’

By Natalie Hoefler

Richard Pangburn has a long commute from his home near Starlight to his job in Bedford. The drive takes nearly an hour-and-a-half. But the member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Starlight doesn’t mind.

“I wake up so excited to come to work,” he says. “And I’m willing to make the drive because I love this job so much!”

Pangburn teaches middle school English and social studies at St. Vincent de Paul School in Bedford. It’s his first professional job, having graduated from Indiana University in Bloomington last May.

He went to public schools, but “always loved my faith and felt a deep connection to it,” says Pangburn. “So when the opportunity to teach at St. Vincent de Paul came up, I was very excited to take it.”

So far, he calls his experience teaching at the Catholic school “absolutely wonderful.”

“I love the community. I love the kids. I love how the school’s purpose is not just education, but also showing good morals.

“As teachers, we act out the morals and teachings that Christ has given us by being examples of how we’re supposed to act and behave. It’s about reminding [students] what they’re supposed to do and encouraging them when they’re leaning out those ideals.”

Pangburn says the approach works.

“You can really see how effective we are in how the kids behave,” he says. “Even in homeroom, we take an hour every Friday to read and discuss Scripture.”

Unlike Pangburn, Marsh Mott has a varied background in teaching. She has taught at a charter school and at a school for children with behavioral issues.

But the new kindergarten teacher for St. Patrick School in Terre Haute says teaching for the Catholic school has been her best experience yet.

She had a good impression of the school even before starting as a teacher there last fall.

“I have a friend who works here and two friends who have kids who go here who always talk about there being such a positive environment here where kids both learn about faith and academics,” said Mott.

“I like seeing kids grow in both areas.”

She has found St. Patrick School to be “very positive and more nurturing than public schools.

There, you go to the principal’s office or get detention [for misbehaving]. Here, it’s more, ‘Let’s talk through this,’ and making that relationship with Jesus real or get detention [for misbehaving]. Here, it’s more, ‘Let’s talk through this,’ and making that relationship with Jesus real.

Mott notes that the school’s teachers educate the students in math, reading, social studies, science and more.

“But we also teach them to have positive relationships in a holy way, and teach them those skills they can use every year in grade school and high school and beyond school.”

Richard Pangburn teaches a middle school social studies class at St. Vincent de Paul School in Bedford. (Submitted photo)

St. Mark Catholic School

St. Roch Catholic School

Saint Rose of Lima Catholic School

CENTRAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ST. ROCH CATHOLIC SCHOOL

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2022 Catholic Schools Week Supplement

CELEBRATES THE SOUTH DEANERY
SCHOOLS AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION

- The Roncalli Class of 2021 earned over $30.9 million in college scholarships.
- The Roncalli Class of 2021 completed 45,369 hours of community service during their four years at Roncalli, which averages over 194 hours per senior.
- In the past 26 years, Roncalli students have collected more than 2.2 million canned food items for the poor.
- Roncalli offers 22 Advanced Placement courses with eligibility for college credit.
- Roncalli is the home to 18 Indiana Academic All Stars since the program’s inception in 1987.
- Over 130 students are served by our comprehensive special services program STARS, which address the needs of students with learning, language and other barriers.

Now accepting applications for the 2022-2023 school year. RONCALLI.ORG

Over 130 students are served by our comprehensive special services program STARS, which address the needs of students with learning, language and other barriers.
A football coach shares his game plan of faith with his players, striving to lead them to a relationship with God

By John Shaughnessy

Mark Bridges has this one great hope for the boys he coaches. It goes beyond his desire as a U.S. Marine Corps veteran to teach them the values of respect and discipline. It even goes beyond the challenge of taking youths from four parishes who don’t know each other and transforming them into a team that’s united and cares about each other.

His one great hope for his players is—well, here’s a story that will explain it.

It’s the story of one of his players during his 21 years of coaching football in the archdiocese’s Catholic Youth Organization.

In his two years of playing for Bridges, the boy learned that his coach strives to make sharing his faith with his players as his main focus, from having them lead prayers after every practice to his Saturday post-practice ritual of reading the Bible with them and telling them stories of biblical figures.

During his second season of playing for Bridges, the boy was going through a tough time in his life. “Sometimes when he would get upset, we’d have these conversations,” Bridges says. “He told me he was going to buy a Bible so he can get closer to God. I asked his parents if I could have the honor of buying him his first Bible. They said I could. He would sit next to me when we did the readings on Saturdays.

“When the boys leave, what I want for them is to have a relationship with God that is going to last them a lot longer than their time playing football. I have had seven or eight players ask me to be their confirmation sponsor. To think a football coach can actually do this makes me explode. I’m so blessed to have had him coach my son for two years. His mentorship is going to last forever with my son.”

Gino is just as enthusiastic about his coach, describing the Saturday morning Bible sessions as “one of my favorite times.”

“He instills faith in football, which I love,” says the eighth-grade student at Nativity School. “He taught me so much about the Bible in the past two years. He explains it in a way that kids can get. One of his favorite verses is Proverbs 14:23, ‘All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.’ It basically means you have to work hard for everything you get.

“A lot of people say he’s one of the biggest influences in their lives. He’s a really great guy, a really great coach.”

As a coach, Bridges and his assistants—Marty Sedgwick, Pat Soller and Ryan Benich—stress the importance of improving every day to their players. “At the first practice, the coaches notice that the boys’ own faith has deepened because of coaching the boys and researching the Bible passages and biblical stories that he shares with them. ‘It’s helped my faith explode. I’m so blessed to have this opportunity’ said 32 years to his wife Mary and has two adult daughters, Alexis and Einka.

“We tell the boys that we say prayer as a conversation with God. They do a phenomenal job. We ask for special intentions. At the beginning of the year, it’s one or two intentions. By the end of the year, everybody has multiple intentions. I get goose bumps from it. I tell them, ‘I love you guys, I love your faith’.”

Bridges says his own faith has deepened because of coaching the boys and researching the Bible passages and biblical stories that he shares with them. “It’s helped my faith explode. I’m so blessed to have this opportunity.”
The story of a fork and what it holds for high school seniors regarding their future

As strange as it may seem, a story about a fork captivated high school seniors from across the archdiocese, giving them a sense of the promising future that awaits them.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson shared the story during his homily at the annual Archdiocesan High School Senior Mass on Dec. 1 at St. Malachy Church in Brownsburg.

The story involves a woman who was meeting with a priest to plan her funeral. The woman told the priest about all the details she had made, including the readings and the music she wanted for her funeral Mass. Then she hesitated before she asked the priest about the last detail she wanted.

“She finally said, ‘It’s going to sound odd, but I have one more request,’” the archbishop told the nearly 1,000 seniors from 11 Catholic high schools across central and southern Indiana. “He said, ‘What’s that?’ She said, ‘I want a small fork placed in my coffin.’ He said, ‘May I ask why?’

“She said, ‘When I was a little girl, when we would go to nice restaurants, you would have the salad fork and the regular dinner fork, and there would be the knife and the spoon. Then above the plate, there would be this small fork. I learned over time that when I saw that small fork, there was going to be dessert. Every time I got to the small fork, there was going to be dessert. When I saw that small fork, the best was yet to come.’ After pausing for a moment to let the story sink in, Archbishop Thompson told the seniors, ‘The best in your lives is yet to come. We as Catholics, as Christians, as people of God, as much as we hope, God is going to provide us with an abundance beyond what we can possibly imagine. The best is yet to come.’

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson greets a student after the annual Archdiocesan High School Senior Mass on Dec. 1, 2021, at St. Malachy Church in Brownsburg. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Thomas Sciccia, Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Providence, Providence Cristo Rey, Roncalli and Seton Catholic.

After the Mass, several students shared that the archbishop’s homily touched them.

“I really liked the story about the woman and the fork,” said Tyler Wuestefeld, a senior at Oldenburg Academy in Oldenburg and a member of St. Michael Parish in Brookville. “It really spoke to me that the best is really to come.”

“I really liked the story he talked about the mountaintop,” said Mercedes Benjamin, a senior at Our Lady of Providence and a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, both in Clarksville. “Senior year is one of our mountains, but there are better things to come in life and through God. Our goal in life is to reach heaven, and we should always keep that in mind.”

“I really liked that while it may seem we are at the top now, we have other things waiting for us,” said Alyssa Wansteth, a senior at Oldenburg Academy and a member of St. Louis Parish in Batesville. “There’s nothing here on Earth that will be our high point more than eternal life.”

By John Shaughnessy

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week

NEW ALBANY DEANEY SCHOOLS

New Albany Deanery Catholic School System

Our Lady of Providence H.S., Clarksville
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, New Albany School, Clarksville
St. Anthony of Padua School, Clarksville
Sacred Heart Catholic School, Jeffersonville
Holy Family School, New Albany
St. Joseph Catholic School, Corydon
St. John Paul II Catholic School, Sellersburg
St. Mary of the Knobs Catholic School, Floyds Knobs

2022 Catholic Schools Week Supplement

Page 6B The Criterion Friday, January 28, 2022
Catholic schools help students discover God’s call to pursue vocations to the priesthood and religious life

By Sean Gallagher

Catholic elementary and high schools aren’t seminaries or houses of religious orders. But they are communities where seeds of vocations are planted and nurtured.

Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana have done just that for decades.

In the Indianapolis South Deanery, three young men had their faith deepened in parish grade schools and at Roncalli High School and are now being formed for service in the Church—two as archdiocesan seminarians, one in the Congregation of Holy Cross.

‘The archdiocese is my home’

Seminarian Khang Thu grew up in a Catholic family in Myanmar in southern Asia. When he was 11, he and his family were resettled in Indianapolis as refugees fleeing religious persecution in their native country.

They were given a warm welcome by the members of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish on Indianapolis’ south side.

“When we arrived, we didn’t have anything,” Thu said. “It was my parish community that offered my family help by taking us to a food pantry, bringing us furniture and clothing.

Thu and his two older siblings felt this support, especially at St. Mark the Evangelist School and at nearby Roncalli High School.

“It’s one of the foundations of my faith,” he said. “My teachers helped me,” he said. “My classmates helped me with classwork. Their stories show how Catholic schools can play a crucial role in helping young people hear God’s call for service to the faithful both across central and southern Indiana and around the world.”

Serving in Bangladesh has deepened his relationship with God, he said. “I needed to learn to have that trust before I could discern in a real way God’s particular call for my life,” he said.

Touring the foundation stones of his vocation and ministry that have taken Brother Jimmy around the world were laid in part at Our Lady of the Greenwood School in Greenwood and at Roncalli.

In an e-mail sent from Bangladesh to The Criterion, Brother Jimmy said that these school communities “laid the groundwork for a relationship with God.”

Brother Jimmy is ministering with his order in parishes in eastern Bangladesh, near the Myanmar border.

“Many of the families I have gotten to know while in Bangladesh cannot afford to send their students to a Catholic school, or the ones they can afford have very limited space,” he said. “We [in the U.S.] need to continue to be attentive to those who otherwise could not receive such an education. I pray that we will all share the responsibility of helping families who desire to educate their children through our schools.”

Lighting the way to a vocation

Catholic education has been a family affair for most of seminarian Sam Henke’s life.

“The archdiocese is my home,” he said. “St. Mark was where I grew up. It’s where my community is. If I became a priest, God would will it, and I would be happy to give back the reason I decided to become a seminarian for the archdiocese.”

Brother Jimmy said, “Some things never change.” †
Food program helps feed students in need—and nourishes volunteers who make it happen

Kathy Laudick always keeps two groups of people in mind as she coordinates the program that helps feed 225 grade-school children who might not otherwise have enough food to eat during the weekends. Her first focus is naturally on the students who benefit from the Weekend Meals program, students in five Indianapolis Catholic schools who can’t always count on having a meal—let alone a nutritious one—waiting for them at home. Laudick also thinks of the children’s parents.

“The parents are working hard and making choices to help their children succeed by sending them to a Catholic school, and I like that,” says Laudick, a mother of three grown children and a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. “We were fortunate to make a Catholic education possible for our children, and I like helping to do that for other families, too.”

There’s also another reason Laudick leads the program.

“I was not raised Catholic,” she says, sharing how she entered into the full communion of the Catholic Church after she and her husband Jim had their first child. “I felt I needed to be a full participant in our faith. The Church provides us with a grounding and a centering and rounded up wonderful people to help. These are people committed to the program through all of 2022.

“It’s fabulous,” says Elizabeth Ewing, the school nutrition program manager for the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies in the archdiocese. “Kathy has rounded up wonderful people to help. These are people who are giving of their time and talent.”

One of the four volunteers on this day, Patty Schipp, sees the positive impact the program has on the children.

“They like to work,” says Schipp, a member of St. Pius X Parish. “If they’re not focused on their food, they can have a better focus on their emotional and social well-being,” says Schipp, who was a member of St. Matthew the Apostle School in Indianapolis.

“This is a God thing for me. I really enjoy working with children. I was a teacher for 30 years. I need to do this and want to do this. Plus, it really gives you an opportunity to meet other people in our faith community who I wouldn’t otherwise get to know.”

Schipp made that connection with Terry Buckman as they worked together filling the sacks. Buckman dedicated herself to working life to Catholic schools in the archdiocese, including 15 years as the head of student support at St. Matthew the Apostle School in Indianapolis.

“When I was at St. Matthew, I had students I’d tutor after school for free,” Buckman says. “I made a bond with a young boy from Mexico. His mom was a single mom. At Christmas, I’d buy a turkey or a gift card for them. I felt that was my calling, and I wanted to continue to do that.”

“My heart goes out to kids who just aren’t fortunate, not because of anything they’ve done but because of circumstances in life. I’m blessed to have the time and resources to help people.”

That’s also the approach of JoAn Reed and Theresa Desautels, two St. Pius X members who are regular volunteers.

“I try to do this a couple times a month,” Desautels says. “I know the kids need it, and the food is healthy.”

Reed adds, “It’s hard to imagine children not having enough to eat. This has to be just a relief to their parents, that it takes the stress off them, that they’re children aren’t hungry over the weekends.”

Laudick views the Weekend Meals program as another example of the difference that these Catholic schools are making in the lives of their students.

“I believe education is so important and so key to providing an opportunity for success in life,” she says. “These schools are meeting the whole needs of the child—academically, nutritionally and providing a faith education. This is our faith in action.”

Scecina Memorial High School
Scecina.org/admissions
You Can Go Anywhere From Here.

Senior appreciates the role models she has known, the roots she has been given

By John Shaughnessy

Seniors in high school are always considered as the role models for other students. It’s a responsibility that Cierra Berry takes seriously because of the role models who have influenced her at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis—her teachers.

“Scecina teachers not only care about their students’ education, they also care about each of their students as their own,” Cierra says. “The teachers are doing their part by serving as Christians. Coming to school every day and seeing the teachers do their service expresses how important service is in the Catholic faith. I couldn’t ask for a better education than the one that Scecina Memorial and Our Lady of Lourdes School have provided for me.”

She especially appreciates how her Catholic education has shaped her life and her faith.

“I will forever consider myself a child of God and express my faith in my everyday life, because that is what Father Thomas Scecina did. ’Giving that little extra’ is his motto that we live by at Scecina.”

“Learning from a young age to love myself because God loves me has helped me through many rough times and has made me recognize the true definition of love. I appreciate how important it is to express that to others every day.”

Cierra embraces her future beyond Scecina because she knows she can count on the foundation of her four years there.

“Knowing that I will always have a large, loving community of people behind me in good times and bad times is reassuring. One example this year especially was having the stands full to cheer on our football team in Semi-State. The fact that so many people were willing to come out, in the freezing cold, to cheer on their school showed the Catholic unity that Scecina embodies.”

“Scecina is my family and will forever be my root.”

By John Shaughnessy

Activities and sports: Soccer, Tennis, Student Ambassadors, and Key Club

College and career: Plans to attend Ball State University or the University of Indianapolis to study business
Principals learn how to strengthen the unique mission and faith-filled essence of Catholic schools in the archdiocese

By Sean Gallagher

RUSHVILLE—A school is just a school, whether it’s public or religious. They all have the basic same goal in educating children. They all use the same basic means to achieve this purpose.

Father Ronald Nuzzi, a priest of the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, has heard this message again and again from people involved in education during his decades of ministry forming leaders of Catholic schools across the country.

But he’s convinced it’s not true, that there is a “distinctiveness in the Catholic educational tradition.”

“The Catholic school is not just a school with Catholic seasoning sprinkled over the top, or in the frosting on the cake,” Father Nuzzi said in a recent interview with The Criterion.

Instead, he proposed, a Catholic school “is first and foremost a faith community. It’s a place where the faith is lived, practiced and experienced. And the educational processes are the ways that it’s done. It’s primarily a place to come to learn and grow in the faith. All the other subjects are sort of at the disposal of that. It’s a distinctive thing.”

This alternative to the message commonly believed in education circles in the U.S. is what Father Nuzzi is sharing with principals of Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana in a series of four workshops sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools during the 2021-22 academic year titled “On the Road to Irresistibility: Selected Documents on Catholic Education.”

Father Nuzzi is a professor emeritus of the Institute for Educational Initiatives at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana. He has developed graduate programs at three Catholic universities that train educators to be principals in Catholic schools.

Father Nuzzi hopes the four workshops he’ll lead, plus discussion groups among parish school principals in Catholic schools.

At the same time, she also knows that her school plays an important role in helping its Catholic students be more anchored in their faith.

“I want them to be able to leave here and continue practicing their faith and passing it on, because they don’t go to Catholic schools after here,” Wells said. “They go to public schools. So, it has to make a huge impact while they’re here.”

Part of strengthening the faith of today’s Catholic students at St. Mary is honoring the school’s traditions, which date back more than 150 years.

“It’s really important for us to go back a little bit and learn about our history so that we can keep it going—whether it’s the traditions or teachings,” Wells said. “It’s important for us to learn how they are incorporated into a Catholic school.”


got to Catholic Schools Week. Check out our schools during Catholic Schools Week January 30-February 5.
Celebrating the Joy, Faith and Hope of a Catholic Education
Voucher program benefits ‘the whole family’

By Natalie Hofer

For Rick and Ellen Taylor, sending their six children to Holy Name of Jesus School in Beech Grove wasn’t a financial burden. They received a discount since Ellen was—and still is—a teacher there. When it was time for their oldest son to go to high school, however, Rick was not sold on sending the family to a Catholic high school. As a non-Catholic, he doubted a faith-based education was better than a public school one. But when the Taylors went to the open house at Roncalli High School on the south side of Indianapolis, “They knocked my socks off,” he said. “I left saying, ‘Yeah, he’s going to Roncalli.’”

With the help of Indiana’s school choice voucher system, the Taylors were also able to send their next oldest son there. But when it came to their remaining four children, they weren’t sure they could afford Roncalli, even with the voucher program. To do so would mean a four-fold financial hit for four consecutive years—the Taylor’s four remaining children are quadruplets. So, when “the quads” graduated from Holy Name, the Taylors decided they would send them to the local public high school.

“They were like fish out of water,” says Rick. “It was a whole different world to them. They missed the camaraderie of Catholic school.”

And the Taylors knew the four children were missing out on what Rick calls “a superior education” at Roncalli. After two weeks, Rick recalls, “We called [the school] and said, ‘What can you do to help us out?’”

“The person who handles vouchers there was a tremendous help. The paperwork was easy, and we never looked back.”

As a pre-kindergarten teacher at Holy Name, Ellen also sees the effects of the state’s On My Way Pre-K voucher program.

“The voucher program has increased our enrollment by a great deal,” says Ellen, who is also a member of the school’s parish, Holy Name of Jesus. “I have a full class of 24 pre-K kids, and there’s a waiting list to get in.

“And they’re not all Catholic. If you can bring in more non-Catholic kids, that gives you more opportunity to share the faith.”

As for the quadruplets, they will graduate from Roncalli this spring. As a 1991 graduate of the school, Ellen is proud all of six her children will be alumni. “There’s just a sense of community and family there,” she says.

Nick and Jennifer Vermillion feel the same way about Our Lady of the Greenwood School in Greenwood. Thanks to the Indiana school choice voucher program, their three children are able to attend the school.

“It’s a whole family atmosphere,” Jennifer says about the school. “We love that they bring God into every single day there, and not just in religion class.”

Nick, who was welcomed into the full communion of the Church 16 years ago and worships with his family at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, calls the parochial school’s education “top notch.”

“As far as academics go, I’ve always been floored with what [the students are] working on versus my public education when I was a kid,” he says. “[Our kids] are doing things some of their peers haven’t even touched on in public school.”

The Vermillions say sending their three children to a Catholic school would be “impossible” without the voucher system. “My husband and I both as adults changed careers,” says Jennifer. “I went to nursing school and he went to pharmacy school. The amount of debt from furthering our own education, it was a struggle to be able to pay for their education along with taking care of our financial obligations.”

Applying for the voucher “was really easy, and the school was so helpful,” she says. “It didn’t take me longer than 20 to 30 minutes to get everything put together and sent off.”

“I am ecstatic that it’s there,” Nick says of the voucher program. “I’m also very thankful that they don’t just look at your income. For paper us for our looks really great, but when you factor out all the expenses for student loan payments and mortgage payments—after we paid for Catholic education before [using the voucher system], we barely had enough money to rub together. This really takes a lot of stress off us financially.”

Jennifer adds that the voucher system has “benefited the whole family. Their children are learning ‘how to see God in everything, and we don’t feel like we have to pick up extra shifts just to make ends meet,” she says.

“We’re able to take the time we need mentally and emotionally to be home and spend time with our family.”

(For more information on the Indiana school choice voucher program, see page 13B.)

School choice expansion is a game-changer for families wanting a Catholic education for their children

By John Shaugnessey

John Elcesser considers the expansion of Indiana’s school choice program in 2021 as a game-changer—dramatically increasing the number of Hoosier families who will become eligible for vouchers that will help them choose education for their children. Regarding families who view a Catholic school as the best option for their children, Elcesser says the expansion of the program will help parents who believe they can’t afford Catholic education for their children, and it will also benefit parents who struggle and sacrifice to provide a Catholic education for their children.

“We believe there are probably quite a few families that may have wanted or even dreamed of getting a Catholic school education, but just probably didn’t think it was affordable. Now it probably is,” says Elcesser, the executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA), which represents the state’s more than 400 non-public schools, including Indiana’s 175 Catholic schools.

“There are also families who are continuing to struggle to make that tuition payment, working multiple jobs. And this is going to help them as well.”

Elcesser, for example, notes that under the new state guidelines, “a family of four can make up to $147,075 and still be eligible for a voucher,” as all eligible students will receive a 90% voucher, which represents 90% of the state’s tuition support for a local public school.

The important point, Elcesser stresses, is that the expanded program helps families choose where they want their child to be educated.

“The State of Indiana believes, our organization believes, and our schools believe that every family—no matter where their ZIP code is or their financial circumstances—should be able to send their children to the school that’s the right fit for them,” Elcesser says. “For us in the Catholic sector, it aligns with our Catholic social teaching. We believe in the preferential option for the poor. We also believe that parents are our children’s primary educators. They should be making the decision about what school is the best fit for them, whether that be traditionally public, whether that be charter, whether that be a non-public—faith-based or secular.”

The recent expansion of Indiana’s school choice program comes 10 years after the program started in the state, which is considered at the forefront of the effort to allow families to choose where they want their children to attend school.

There are 26 other states and the District of Columbia that have some sort of choice program,” Elcesser notes. “Indiana is in the 10 years of Indiana’s program, about 273,000 children have benefited from it, by getting a Choice Scholarship that can be applied to tuition at the non-public school of their choice, he says. And more than $1 billion has been awarded to families to make that choice a reality.

“It’s hard to believe the number of families whose lives have been significantly impacted by these programs,” Elcesser says. Now, he adds, many more families will have that opportunity, thanks to the expansion of the program.

(To apply for a voucher, contact the participating nonpublic school of your choice. For more information, visit the Institute for Quality Education’s website, www.myschooloptions.org.)
What are Tax Credit Scholarships?
The Indiana Tax Credit Scholarship Program provides scholarship support to families who want to enroll their children in the Catholic school of their choice. Qualifying students in grades K-12 can receive a minimum of a $500 Tax Credit Scholarship.

Who qualifies for a Tax Credit Scholarship?
• A student whose family meets the income eligibility guidelines for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Income Program (see chart), AND
• A student who is enrolled in an eligible Catholic school.

Why should I apply now?
If your family qualifies for assistance, but you do not apply when your child first enters school, you may lose the opportunity for a Voucher or Tax Credit Scholarship for the next 12-13 years. Eligible Students enrolled in a Catholic school CAN receive a Tax Credit Scholarship, making them eligible for a Voucher the following year.

How do I apply?
1. To see how much tuition assistance you are eligible for, first register at your Catholic school of choice.
2. To apply for funding, visit www.i4qed.org/sgo.

Additional local scholarships may also be available. Contact your local Catholic school.

What is an Indiana School Voucher?
A Voucher is a state-funded scholarship that helps cover the cost of tuition at a private school. Qualifying students in grades K-12 can receive up to 90% of the local per-student state funding amount.

Who qualifies for a Voucher?
• A student received a Choice Scholarship in a preceding school year, including a school year that does not immediately precede the current school year.
• A student received a Tax Credit Scholarship from an approved SGO during any previous school year.
• A student has a disability that requires special education services, a documented IEP or ISP.
• A student would be required to attend an “F” rated public school based on residence for the coming school year.
• A student was enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in a public school, including a charter school, in Indiana for prior two semesters.
• A student has a sibling who received a Choice Scholarship or Tax Credit Scholarship at any time in their K-12 education.
• A student received and used an Early Education Grant to attend Pre-K at an eligible Choice School and the child is remaining at that school for Kindergarten.
• A student is in foster care.

Why should I apply now?
If your family qualifies for assistance, but you do not apply when your child first enters school, you may lose the opportunity for a Voucher or Tax Credit Scholarship for the next 12-13 years. Eligible Students enrolled in a Catholic school CAN receive a Tax Credit Scholarship, making them eligible for a Voucher the following year.

How do I apply for an Indiana school Voucher?
1. To see how much tuition assistance you are eligible for, first register at your Catholic school of choice.
2. To apply for funding, visit www.doe.in.gov/choice.

Pre-K vouchers are available in all counties throughout Indiana. For more information, log onto www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/4932.htm.
By John Shaughnessy

In his 41 years as a Catholic educator, Rob Rash has dealt with questions and challenges from parents, teachers and principals. But the most challenging question he’s ever had to answer came from a small girl in the first grade.

The question came during recess as Rash was having a tough day during the time he was principal at St. Simon the Apostle School in Indianapolis.

The little girl looked up at him and asked, “Do you like your job?”

“On that particular day, I did not,” Rash recalls. “It had been a very demanding day, and she must have sensed my struggle. I replied to her, ‘Some days I do, and some days I don’t.’ That was the first time I articulated the demands of being a school leader. Fortunately, she followed with an additional question.”

The little girl asked, “What is it about your job you like?”

Rash immediately responded, “You.”

Rash has shared that story often in meetings with new principals since he became an assistant superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese in 2005. For Rash—who is retiring on Feb. 4 at the age of 65—that story captures many of the important qualities that he associates with Catholic education, especially the educators who provide it.

“Teachers and principals love children first and foremost,” he says. “I wish all could see how hard principals work. How much they care about the school community. I often say that no one sees the miracles that occur in our schools each day.”

Rash has dealt with questions and challenges from parents, teachers and principals. But the greatest wisdom here: ‘Seek to understand rather than to be understood.’ As an assistant superintendent, Rash has worked closely with school administrators through the years, helping them navigate through issues that range from comical to challenging. He refers to school principals as the pillars of Catholic education, citing how they serve our schools with great dedication.

“He was very pleased to hear that he later graduated from college and obtained a master’s degree,” Rash says. “Years later, his mom would say that her son went on to great things because I would not let him leave our school. ‘Believing in what you do and believing in the potential in children is a very powerful thing.’”

A valuable piece of advice from St. Francis of Assisi has also guided Rash during his 41 years in Catholic education: as a teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Indianapolis, as a principal at both St. Simon and Our Lady of Lourdes, and as an assistant superintendent.

“Whether doing recess duty or resolving conflicts between adults, you have to listen to the truth of each side,” he says. “I have always advised principals to ‘listen to the truth’ behind the conflict. St. Francis had the greatest wisdom here: ‘Seek to understand rather than to be understood.’”

“Seek to understand behind the truth. What each side is really asking for. As a principal, if you have the truth, you are in a much better position to make a decision.”

As an assistant superintendent, Rash has worked closely with school administrators through the years, helping them navigate through issues that range from comical to challenging. He refers to school principals as the pillars of Catholic education, citing how they serve our schools with great dedication.

“It is the most difficult and rewarding job I can think of,” he says. “I wish all could see how hard principals work. How much they care about the school community. I often say that no one sees the miracles that occur in our schools each day.”

Rash is also known for his dedication—and humor—by his colleagues in the archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Schools.

“Rob makes us laugh every day. It is a joy to work with him,” says Brian Disney, who is in his first year as the archdiocese’s superintendent of Catholic schools.

See RASH, page 16B
The gift of a Catholic education draws three school leaders back home to a faith community that changed their lives

By John Shaughnessy

The friendships that are made in Catholic schools often stay strong later in life. So do people’s bonds to the Catholic schools where they made those friends.

Then there is the special connection that binds Father Christopher Craig, Philip Kahn and Curt Gardner.

All three are graduates of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison. And all three have returned in leadership roles at their alma mater. Kahn is the president of the school. Gardner is its principal. And Father Craig serves as its chaplain while also being the pastor of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison and Most Sorrowful Mother of God Parish in Vevay.

All three also share the gift of how their Catholic education grew up touched their lives and eventually led them back home.

A perfect fit

The childhood memories has stayed with Philip Kahn, reminding him of the difference a community can make to a person and a family struggling through a devastating time in their lives.

That heartbreaking time for Kahn and his family happened when he was a young child at Pope John XXIII School in Madison.

“My father passed away when I was 8 years old,” Kahn recalls. “My three sisters and my mother were in a very difficult situation, but once my mother decided to stay in Madison and keep us in school, it was amazing to get all the support and love from the schools. “I truly felt like the schools and our community watched over our families and took care of us. I have been eternally grateful and know that it is one of the main reasons I feel as though my Catholic faith is so strong today. Equally strong is his continuing commitment as an adult to both Pope John XXIII School and nearby Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School—the combined Prince of Peace Catholic Schools that Kahn oversees as their president. Kahn has served in that role since 2009, a year when he and his wife Tania faced a turning point in their family’s life. At the time the president’s position became open, Kahn “really enjoyed” living in Indianapolis and family’s life. At the time the president’s position became open, Kahn “really enjoyed” living in Indianapolis and family’s life.

“Part of that perfect fit for Kahn includes the joy he gets from watching the growth of the students at both schools. “As the president of the schools, I get to see it from a unique perspective. I don’t always see them on a daily basis, but I get to have an impact through many of the activities inside and outside of the classroom. I love seeing them grow and mature over the five, 10, 14 years that they are in the schools. They start out as little kids in preschool or kindergarten most of the time, but grow into such fine young men and women. It makes us all very proud to see the impact we can have.”

Another area that I truly enjoy is working with our alumni. I love to see them come back for a visit or a reunion and hear all the stories that are still being told after so many years. We are truly a small family that gets to follow how our alumni have a great impact all over the world.”

The impact of a Catholic education is needed more than ever in today’s world, he says. “So many children are growing up with more challenges. Grandparents are raising more kids, single-parent households, there’s the internet and cell phones. Our world can be crazy in so many ways. It’s important to help students form a strong faith in their early years along with wonderful academics.”

He knows the difference that combination made in his own life. “I truly feel that I am very lucky to be the president of Shawe and Pope John. I am glad to give back to the schools that gave me so much growing up.”

A special gift

Father Christopher Craig had just returned from sharing one of the most intimate moments with a family. Minutes earlier, he had been praying with see SHAWE page 16b

Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison has been blessed to have three of its graduates return to their alma mater in leadership roles: principal Gardner, left, chaplain Father Christopher Craig and president Philip Kahn. (Photo courtesy of Laura A. Gardner)

By John Shaughnessy

The gift of a Catholic education draws three school leaders back home to a faith community that changed their lives

By John Shaughnessy

The friendships that are made in Catholic schools often stay strong later in life. So do people’s bonds to the Catholic schools where they made those friends.

Then there is the special connection that binds Father Christopher Craig, Philip Kahn and Curt Gardner.

All three are graduates of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison. And all three have returned in leadership roles at their alma mater. Kahn is the president of the school. Gardner is its principal. And Father Craig serves as its chaplain while also being the pastor of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison and Most Sorrowful Mother of God Parish in Vevay.

All three also share the gift of how their Catholic education grew up touched their lives and eventually led them back home.

A perfect fit

The childhood memories has stayed with Philip Kahn, reminding him of the difference a community can make to a person and a family struggling through a devastating time in their lives.

That heartbreaking time for Kahn and his family happened when he was a young child at Pope John XXIII School in Madison.

“My father passed away when I was 8 years old,” Kahn recalls. “My three sisters and my mother were in a very difficult situation, but once my mother decided to stay in Madison and keep us in school, it was amazing to get all the support and love from the schools. “I truly felt like the schools and our community watched over our families and took care of us. I have been eternally grateful and know that it is one of the main reasons I feel as though my Catholic faith is so strong today. Equally strong is his continuing commitment as an adult to both Pope John XXIII School and nearby Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School—the combined Prince of Peace Catholic Schools that Kahn oversees as their president. Kahn has served in that role since 2009, a year when he and his wife Tania faced a turning point in their family’s life. At the time the president’s position became open, Kahn “really enjoyed” living in Indianapolis and family’s life.

“Part of that perfect fit for Kahn includes the joy he gets from watching the growth of the students at both schools. “As the president of the schools, I get to see it from a unique perspective. I don’t always see them on a daily basis, but I get to have an impact through many of the activities inside and outside of the classroom. I love seeing them grow and mature over the five, 10, 14 years that they are in the schools. They start out as little kids in preschool or kindergarten most of the time, but grow into such fine young men and women. It makes us all very proud to see the impact we can have.”

Another area that I truly enjoy is working with our alumni. I love to see them come back for a visit or a reunion and hear all the stories that are still being told after so many years. We are truly a small family that gets to follow how our alumni have a great impact all over the world.”

The impact of a Catholic education is needed more than ever in today’s world, he says. “So many children are growing up with more challenges. Grandparents are raising more kids, single-parent households, there’s the internet and cell phones. Our world can be crazy in so many ways. It’s important to help students form a strong faith in their early years along with wonderful academics.”

He knows the difference that combination made in his own life. “I truly feel that I am very lucky to be the president of Shawe and Pope John. I am glad to give back to the schools that gave me so much growing up.”

A special gift

Father Christopher Craig had just returned from sharing one of the most intimate moments with a family. Minutes earlier, he had been praying with see SHAWE page 16b

Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison has been blessed to have three of its graduates return to their alma mater in leadership roles: principal Gardner, left, chaplain Father Christopher Craig and president Philip Kahn. (Photo courtesy of Laura A. Gardner)

By John Shaughnessy

The gift of a Catholic education draws three school leaders back home to a faith community that changed their lives

By John Shaughnessy

The friendships that are made in Catholic schools often stay strong later in life. So do people’s bonds to the Catholic schools where they made those friends.

Then there is the special connection that binds Father Christopher Craig, Philip Kahn and Curt Gardner.

All three are graduates of Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison. And all three have returned in leadership roles at their alma mater. Kahn is the president of the school. Gardner is its principal. And Father Craig serves as its chaplain while also being the pastor of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison and Most Sorrowful Mother of God Parish in Vevay.

All three also share the gift of how their Catholic education grew up touched their lives and eventually led them back home.

A perfect fit

The childhood memories has stayed with Philip Kahn, reminding him of the difference a community can make to a person and a family struggling through a devastating time in their lives.

That heartbreaking time for Kahn and his family happened when he was a young child at Pope John XXIII School in Madison.

“My father passed away when I was 8 years old,” Kahn recalls. “My three sisters and my mother were in a very difficult situation, but once my mother decided to stay in Madison and keep us in school, it was amazing to get all the support and love from the schools. “I truly felt like the schools and our community watched over our families and took care of us. I have been eternally grateful and know that it is one of the main reasons I feel as though my Catholic faith is so strong today. Equally strong is his continuing commitment as an adult to both Pope John XXIII School and nearby Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School—the combined Prince of Peace Catholic Schools that Kahn oversees as their president. Kahn has served in that role since 2009, a year when he and his wife Tania faced a turning point in their family’s life. At the time the president’s position became open, Kahn “really enjoyed” living in Indianapolis and family’s life.

“Part of that perfect fit for Kahn includes the joy he gets from watching the growth of the students at both schools. “As the president of the schools, I get to see it from a unique perspective. I don’t always see them on a daily basis, but I get to have an impact through many of the activities inside and outside of the classroom. I love seeing them grow and mature over the five, 10, 14 years that they are in the schools. They start out as little kids in preschool or kindergarten most of the time, but grow into such fine young men and women. It makes us all very proud to see the impact we can have.”

Another area that I truly enjoy is working with our alumni. I love to see them come back for a visit or a reunion and hear all the stories that are still being told after so many years. We are truly a small family that gets to follow how our alumni have a great impact all over the world.”

The impact of a Catholic education is needed more than ever in today’s world, he says. “So many children are growing up with more challenges. Grandparents are raising more kids, single-parent households, there’s the internet and cell phones. Our world can be crazy in so many ways. It’s important to help students form a strong faith in their early years along with wonderful academics.”

He knows the difference that combination made in his own life. “I truly feel that I am very lucky to be the president of Shawe and Pope John. I am glad to give back to the schools that gave me so much growing up.”

A special gift

Father Christopher Craig had just returned from sharing one of the most intimate moments with a family. Minutes earlier, he had been praying with see SHAWE page 16b

Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison has been blessed to have three of its graduates return to their alma mater in leadership roles: principal Gardner, left, chaplain Father Christopher Craig and president Philip Kahn. (Photo courtesy of Laura A. Gardner)
At the same time, Rob is very dedicated. The first time we were working on an issue, he came in the next morning and shared some wonderful insights. He started with, “I couldn’t sleep so I have been up since three in the morning thinking about this.”

“Has he greatly aided my transition? Rob knows every principal, pastor and school. Whenever something crosses across my desk, Rob helps me to understand the situation by sharing details about the people involved. He has a tremendous amount of institutional knowledge that will sorely be missed.”

Disney and assistant superintendent Michelle Radomsky both cited one more defining quality about Rash—the way he focuses on what is best for students.

“As an educator, Rob exhibits a genuine love for students,” Radomsky says. “He said he always enjoyed handling student discipline—not something most people like—because he was able to really talk to the child and try to learn about what motivated the action. That speaks right to what I like most about Rob as a person. He is reflective, caring and he wants what is best for each person he encounters. And when you speak to Rob, he always listens.”

Rash said he learned that approach to students during his first year of teaching in Catholic education—1981—at Our Lady of Lourdes School.

“What stands out was the overall commitment to the students and families by the staff and administration,” he recalls. “When dealing with the students, it was obvious that the faculty and staff cared about the whole child.”

A life-changing introduction, a memorable ride

His time at Lourdes also included another defining influence in his life. His teaching partner introduced him to the woman who is now his wife of 34 years, Patty. The couple has two, now-grown children, Katie and John.

A guitarist who plays in a band, Rash shared his love for music with his children and other students at Scecina during the years he volunteered with their after-school Rock Band program.

This program gives some kids an avenue to express themselves, he says. “Watching kids learn songs, learn their instruments and then perform was a privilege. Seeing the potential and talent in these kids was a highlight for me. Sometimes we are just along for the ride.”

Rash views his ride as a Catholic educator for 41 years as a good and memorable one. In parting, he shares one piece of advice to his fellow parents.

“My advice to parents is that the partnership between school and home should be built on trust,” he says. “Parents can rest assured that the school administration, teachers and staff are all dedicated to the welfare of their child.”

The welfare of children will continue to be part of Rash’s life in retirement.

He and Patty will increase their volunteer efforts at Miracle Place, a neighborhood ministry on the near-eastside of Indianapolis that provides numerous services for low-income residents, with a special emphasis on children and senior citizens.

He also plans to serve in the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, a program in which trained volunteers serve as advocates for abused or neglected children as they go through the judicial or child welfare system.

“My hope is to help families in crisis,” he says. “Children need their parents, and I hope it provides some comfort for parents in those moments, communities step up to do God’s work in this world.”

“Children need advocates. Being in education for 41 years, I have been able to walk next to a lot of people who were struggling in various ways, and it is those moments that really stand out to me as what it means to be in a Catholic school community.”

Gardner also embraced Father John Meyer as a role model, remembering the impact the priest had as he served the Madison Catholic community from 1990 to 2011.

“He was in Madison for much of my youth,” Gardner says. “So much of what led me to think of service and service to my faith was the influence that he was to me. He was such a great example of Christ’s love. He served our community, our schools and my family with such joy that I as I grew to understand Christ’s love, I always saw it as a thing of great joy.”

Now, he tries to be an example of Christ’s love to students and their families, both in moments of joy and hardship.

“He was so impactful to many of our students that they would do anything for him and would sacrifice anything for him,” he says. “So, the school students should know how to grow God’s grace in this world. Catholic education is about service and sacrifice to others. We are called to love. Equally importantly, at our best, we teach kids that love is not just a feeling but actions of love, of service and sacrifice to others.

“It is through these actions that we teach our students how to be in the world, how to be leaders and servants,” he says. “It is through these actions that we teach our students how to be in the world, how to be leaders and servants.”

“These school helped my parents to teach me how to be a leader and gave me opportunities to lead;” says Gardner, a 1998 graduate of Shawe. “They helped me feel, as I went out into the world, that I had a safety net that made it OK for me to take risks and gave me the freedom to fail so that I might one day succeed.

“It never would have worked without the partnership between school and home. When that partnership is in place, then Catholic schools are still doing these things for students today.”

Visit during our Open House
For Catholic Schools Week
Wednesday, Feb. 2, 12-2PM
Or call to schedule a tour anytime.

VISIT US IN DOWNTOWN INDIANAPOLIS AT 508 STEVENS STREET
LumenChristiSchool.org 317-632-3174
A year of celebrating the fun and friendships of the Catholic Youth Organization
HAPPY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
FROM CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL

“With eyes of faith consider the greatness of your mission and the wonderful amount of good which you can accomplish.”

- Blessed Basil Moreau C.S.C., Founder, Congregation of Holy Cross

VISIT CATHEDRAL!
SCHEDULE A TOUR AT GOCATHEDRAL.COM/VISIT.
CHECK OUT OUR SUMMER CAMP OFFERINGS AT CAMPCATHEDRAL.COM.
‘Blessed are the meek’ may be most misunderstood of beatitudes

By Sr. Mary Lea Hill, F.S.P.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land” (Mt 5:5). The beatitudes are perhaps the most beautiful and compelling part of the Gospel. They are poetic and inspiring, and yet also enigmatic and confusing. Among the various characteristics praised in the beatitudes, the most misunderstood is likely meekness. For the most part, we get the gist of poverty of spirit, of mourning, of the pursuit of justice, of mercy, of purity of heart, of peacemaking and even, to some extent, being persecuted for doing what is right. Aspiring to meekness, however, isn’t on many bucket lists.

And how vague a reward is it to inherit the land? The way we think of meekness is often in terms of weakness, a certain mousiness, a stand down or stay put. This is not biblical meekness as displayed by Jesus, which is a certain composure, a gentleless of spirit.

To grasp this well, we look more closely at Jesus who put aside the power and privilege of divinity to take on our humanity. He could have simply appeared on the human scene as a triumphant Messiah, but that would have done little for us. We would have been redeemed, yes, of course, but you and I would have learned nothing about the tragedy of sin and the merciful love of God. We needed to see the story played out in our humanity by a man like us.

God became man—the magnificence of God took on human flesh to dwell among us. He came as a child, lived our ordinary daily life, shared our toil and died our death in a supreme act of meekness. He who cured the paralytic and raised the dead could certainly have made short work of his enemies, but his was a mission of mercy—another name for true meekness.

Children are often thought of as meek, but true meekness is defined by self-control. It speaks of what we possess. We like to invent superheroes and assume their persona to experience their own natural weakness. How unaware it seems we are that Jesus Christ already went there and did that as one of us. Best of all, he enables us to live in his image, to possess his power by our incorporation into him at baptism. A part of this Christ-power is meekness. Bullying at all levels of society can be countered by meekness. Rather than lashing out at irritation or insult, the meek rely on a positive energy that steels the nerves and soothes the spirit.

Meekness is complete engagement, calmness, strength and self-control. The meek appreciate who they themselves are. This means not just mastery over the strong inclinations, like anger and greed, but also over our weaker inclinations like discontent and dissipation. As I explain in my book, Blessed Are the Stressed: Secrets to a Happy Heart from a Crabby Mystic, meekness is more like the martial art of the soul, the black belt of the spiritual life. When we are meek and humble of heart, as Jesus said of himself (Mt 11:29), we are flexing those unseen muscles of the human spirit. We are in possession of ourselves.

This brings us to reflect on the second part of this beatitude that assures us that if we are meek, we shall inherit the land. I prefer to speak of inheriting the “Earth” because in Genesis we see God bring forth the first man from the Earth. Then at the end of life we will be consigned to the Earth. The Ash Wednesday liturgy reminds us, “remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This realization will keep our heart humble and our spirit meek.

Most of us will at some time inherit at least a patch of Earth, or a few of the goods of the Earth. We may even receive a monetary inheritance. And we know that an inheritance must be claimed. We need to come forward and say, “Yes, that’s mine, and so that’s mine!”

In the Old Testament, to say we will inherit the Earth refers to the promised land. In the New Testament, it is the kingdom of the righteous. The Church fathers claim that our body is that Earth. “We shall inherit our own body”—strange to say since we already possess our body. But we must admit that we are on a constant quest for self-possession, to discover our identity, who we are and how to be our best self. So, we need to act in integrity, build up our spirit like an athlete who possesses bodily control and coordination.

We inherit the Christlikeness that is meant to be ours by our baptism into Christ. You are our inheritance, O Lord. And this isn’t a once and forever state of being—the beatitude speaks in ongoing terms—the meek will possess, but like all virtue we have to work at it and keep up the good fight until our Earth becomes the new heavens and the new Earth.

(Rosanne Barbier prays during Mass on Nov. 21, 2021, at Our Lady of Victory Church in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, N.Y. True meekness is defined by self-control; it speaks of what we possess. (CNYS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz))
Don't look back unless you want to right wrongs

Last February, I wrote a column for this space and began it as follows: “Well, it is now September 1, 2021. January, the first month of the year, has 31 days, and is well underway. I figure the two-faced Roman God Janus is who always incites me to look both forward and backward. After our experiences of 2020 and 2021, we may not all want to look back, but the events of this past month have caused us to wonder what 2021 was starting off.”

When I wrote the column, we had just experienced the insurrection on the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. We recently experienced the first anniversary of the insurrection, and many consider an attack on democracy. On that occasion, President Joe Biden spoke to the nation with great passion and courage, but ordinary folks were fed up with all the talk and wanted to see action. Last fall, speaking on the 6-month anniversary of the insurrection, Garland has said that the actions taken so far are insufficient, and he is going to take over to make sure that all is done that can be done to bring to justice all those who participated in the insurrection.

The circumstances of any crime are most often complicated by what the perpetrator understood to be the realities of the situation. If actions are based on false information, as some of the rioters did, then who bears the responsibility? Many of those we minister to in prison speak to us of the factors that go into an event, and we can probably make headway looking at what the perpetrators believed. Often we hear that they were not kids, or not born on the street. We must understand all the factors that go into deciding to commit an act, and how a perpetrator would proceed. For this reason, I think it is possible to observe the events and try to understand the reality of anything but deception and turmoil. Some of our past and current leaders are responding to the Jan 6. protests by saying to those they call “patriots” who were doing nothing more than trying to “right a wrong.” It is possible that some of our currently incarcerated sisters and brothers acted out of frustration with the systems that lead them to extreme actions. Let’s work together to right the wrongs we can.

(Benedictine Father Jeremy King is a member of the archdiocese’s Corrections Advisory Committee, and is a frequent contributor to the Indianapolis (IN) diocesan paper, The Criterion.)

Perspectives

Generations of a family team up to pass on the faith

On a recent Saturday morning, my son Victor squared off in a CYO basketball game against a distant cousin of his, Andrew, and his friend. Andrew is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. Victor is a member of a team sponsored by Lumen Christi Catholic Church, also in Indianapolis. Having my son together with a member of his extended family brought my paternal grandfather to mind. Why? Because Victor is named after him.

Grandpa had a love of basketball just like my son. About 100 years ago, Grandpa and four of his brothers made up the “Gallagher Brothers” basketball team that played competitive basketball and traveled the country. I was happy recently to receive a photo of them. There were all wearing their jerseys and Gloves. On that occasion, I was prompted to write this column.

Having been an assistant coach for some years now for my son Victor, I have observed, studied, and thought about his game. He was a dedicated Massgoer, who also went to confession weekly. Grandpa led me in praying the rosary as a child when that devotion was unfamiliar to me.

I have a great deal of paternal pride in seeing my son take to the court, watching him playing against the legendary John Wooden, the famed college basketball coach who grew up not far from him in Morgan County.

But I do know much more about how important basketball is in my family. When I was a boy, my grandfather was playing against the legendary John Wooden, the famed college basketball coach who grew up not far from him in Morgan County.

I have a great deal of paternal pride in seeing my son take to the court, watching him playing against the legendary John Wooden, the famed college basketball coach who grew up not far from him in Morgan County.

I have a great deal of paternal pride in seeing my son take to the court, watching him playing against the legendary John Wooden, the famed college basketball coach who grew up not far from him in Morgan County.

I have a great deal of paternal pride in seeing my son take to the court, watching him playing against the legendary John Wooden, the famed college basketball coach who grew up not far from him in Morgan County.
The Book of Jeremiah provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. This book is regarded as one of the major book is regarded as one of the major

As occurred with most of the prophets, his prophecies drew sharp rebukes. He even was accused of blasphemy, a crime that had death as its punishment in the Hebrew code of law. (It was this statute that centuries later led some to demand the crucifixion of Jesus.)

Despite the ordeals created by these rebukes and accusations, Jeremiah never relented in proclaiming fidelity to God as a personal and national imperative. He proclaimed that he was on a mission from God in very precise, challenging words.

In this weekend’s reading, Jeremiah recalls the day when God called him to the mission of prophecy. He gives the period of time, the reign of King Josiah, who ruled the Kingdom of Judah from 640 to 609 BC. God told Jeremiah to be bold and predicted the controversial response to Jeremiah’s prophesying, urging the prophet not to be daunted by unfriendly or angry reactions.

As its second reading for this weekend, the Church offers a passage from Hosea 11:1-4. In this reading, Hosea speaks of his son, Israel, as being a child who is taken care of and protected, but who then turns away and is punished. The reading concludes with a call to love children and treat them as one’s own.

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, January 30, 2022

- Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19
- 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

The last reading, Jesus, as the story clearly states, came to the synagogue in Nazareth. In earlier verses, not part of this weekend’s reading, Jesus stood to read a section of the Book of Isaiah in which Isaiah recalled his own calling to be a prophet. Isaiah gave details as to what this calling meant. It meant that he was God’s spokesman, sent by God to bring liberty to the oppressed, hope to the poor, and sight to the blind.

Then, continuing in the passage proclaimed this weekend, Jesus declared that this prophecy has now been fulfilled. In other words, Jesus spoke as the long-awaited spokesman of God. The audience was outraged, especially when Jesus recalled an incident, mentioned in the Old Testament, in which God showed mercy upon gentiles. This mention of divine favor for anyone outside the chosen people infuriated the audience in the synagogue so much that they tried to murder Jesus. He, of course, escaped.

Reflection

The Church remembers the great feasts of Christmas, the Epiphany and that of the Baptism of the Lord. In early January when it celebrated the mercy of God that came to us in the person of Jesus. Now, building upon this idea of God’s mercy, the Church this weekend presents these readings.

As the Gospel made clear, God’s love excludes no one, but all must do their part in receiving divine mercy. We ourselves must love others, with love as pure and unselfish as that described by St. Paul. Granted, it is more easily said than done. Reactions to Jeremiah and to Jesus remind us that human insights are limited and self-centred. We can be bitter and angry in our selfishness and short-sightedness.

God supplies us with what we cannot find or create on our own, eternal life but also genuine wisdom. Thus, God sent Jeremiah. Thus, God sent Jesus to us. ✝

Jesús Megete

By C.S. L. Kiniks

I was an outcast, a cast-off, just an afterthought if at all never related always humiliated why why why

I have been lied to and hurt, too scared and made to feel weak hopeless and helpless why why why

I have found that it doesn’t matter trying to figure out the reasons people harm and cause pain because the only one who really understands and is always there is all that I need

Jesus gets me
Jesus gets me
Jesus gets me

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Church condemns witchcraft in the various forms it is manifested

Q in a recent homily, our priest brought us various forms of evil that exist in the world. Among them, he mentioned witchcraft.

My father was troubled by this and told the rest of our family after Mass that “real witchcraft,” like that practiced by the Wiccans, is not inherently evil since they don’t believe in Satan. So, I’m wondering: What is the true nature of witchcraft, and are Wiccans and similar groups just misunderstood and not harmful? (Virginia)

Among the definitions of witchcraft offered by Merriam-Webster is the following: “rituals and practices that incorporate belief in magic and that are associated especially with neo-pagan traditions and religions [such as Wicca].” Commonly, witchcraft involves a pact imploiting evil spirits for their assistance. Several passages in the Scriptures warn against such practices. In the Old Testament, the Book of Deuteronomy says: “Let there not be found among you anyone who ... practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or who casts spells, consults ghosts and spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead.” (De 18:9-11).

My Journey to God

(C.S. L. Kiniks is a member of St. Matthew’s Parish in Brownburg.

Photo: Altar server Megan Pennington holds the processional crucifix before a Mass celebrating the 100th anniversary of St. Anthony Church in Okmulgee, Okla., on July 27, 2008. (CNS photo/Dave Crenshaw, Eastern Oklahoma Catholic)
Things most Catholics wish they knew better about their faith

Ken’s 12-Pack/Ken Ogorek

“Joe is a person of deep Catholic faith and commitment to public service, and I am confident that he will serve in this important new role with vision and integrity,” said Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame. Donnelly’s alma mater.

For our purposes, Archbishop Buechlein’s report provides not so much deficiencies to be dwelled on, but rather areas of Church teaching that are included in this 12-part monthly series of Criterion columns. What are some key doctrinal and moral teaching topics covered by Catholic Church that might not have been taught so well when adult Catholics of today were children? Why is it important that Catholics of all ages enjoy clarity on these items that God, in his great love for us, has chosen to reveal?

Each month, starting in February, we’ll identify one item from the deficiency list. We’ll share a bit of clear teaching on this area of our Catholic faith—including how the doctrinal or moral teaching relates to our life today.

What are some examples of these Church teachings that many adult Catholics wish they knew better? A prime instance of fuzziness contributing to confusion lays in the Christian view of the human person—or lack thereof. When we’re unclear on who and what a human person is—and is not—chaos can ensue regarding morality, economics and politics and to name a few key aspects of our life together in society.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson considers clarity on the Christian view of the human person so important that his first pastoral letter to the faithful of his archdiocese addressed this very topic. “We are One in Christ: A Pastoral Letter on Fundamentals of Christian Anthropology” can be found at www.archindy.org/pastoral2018. A link to a study guide is available at the top of the page.

So sit back and prepare to have your thirst for knowledge quenched by Ken’s 12-Pack. I look forward to these monthly opportunities to connect with many faithful Criterion readers.

Donnelly is confirmed as U.S. ambassador to the Vatican

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Catholic lawyer Joe Donnelly of Indiana is the new U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. The U.S. Senate confirmed Donnelly, a former member of the House of Representatives and the Senate, in a voice vote on Jan. 20.

The early, great Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein was happy to see the Catechism of the Catholic Church become available in the mid-1990s. He spearheaded an effort to evaluate religion textbook series in light of this new catechism for the universal Church—the sure norm for determining doctrinal accuracy and completeness.

Through his involvement with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Buechlein helped coordinate an evaluation of several elementary textbook series—resources that hadn’t changed much in their doctrinal content for 20 years or so. While the goal of this evaluation process was mainly future-oriented—wanting to ensure that doctrinal content in catechetical materials met the standard provided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church—aft after a half dozen or so of the most widely used catechetical series were evaluated, a clear pattern of doctrinal deficiencies emerged.

In a landmark report to his brother bishops, Archbishop Buechlein in June 1997 validated the concerns about fuzziness that had been expressed by proponents of authentic catechetical renewal. His report can be read at catt.

It’s important to note that folks involved with faith formation from the late 1980s through the early 1990s weren’t intentionally trying to do catechism poorly, in hindsight we can identify 10 areas of doctrinal deficiency in the religious upbringing of most people who are parents—and grandparents—today.

The late, great Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein spearheaded an effort to evaluate religion textbook series in light of this new catechism for the universal Church—the sure norm for determining doctrinal accuracy and completeness.
Investing with Faith/ Jim Maslar

Retired priest’s charitable gift to the Church happened ‘by accident’

Father John Gris, a retired priest ordained in 1964, spends most of his time praying and hearing confessions. At 86, he jokes, “That’s about it now.” But that’s not exactly true because even though his years of active ministry are behind him, Father John is still actively supporting the mission of the Church here in central and southern Indiana through a charitable gift annuity he began decades ago.

Ironically, Father John observes, he found out about charitable gift annuities by accident—literally.

When he was a young priest, he injured himself in three separate incidents and suffered two broken arms and a broken leg. “I’m on my last legs,” he notes with a chuckle. Because the accidents made Father John realize that he needed to save money so that he’d be able to take care of himself.

In those years, priests had to do a lot more on their own and received less financial support from the archdiocese than they do now. To him, Catholic charitable gift annuities offered a way for him to give to the Church out of his surplus, but also receive a benefit when he would need it most.

That’s what’s unique about a charitable gift annuity: it provides lifetime income that benefits both the donor and the charity. A donor makes a one-time gift of cash, securities or other appreciated assets to a chosen charity and names up to two annuitants (those who will receive the income—typically, the donor and/or a loved one).

In return for the gift, the charity agrees to make fixed payments quarterly, semiannually or annually to the annuitants for life. The amount of the payment is determined by the annuitant’s age when the annuity is set up and the amount of the gift. The older the annuitant, the higher the rate. Payments are fixed, but also guaranteed because they are backed by the Catholic Community Foundation’s entire assets and not just the donor’s gift. The charity receives the balance of the invested funds upon the annuitant’s death.

The joy of both giving and receiving lies at the heart of our Catholic faith. Father John knows that his financial gift is going somewhere that’s needed and doing good. “I believe that everything belongs to God. We acquire things to use and to share. We don’t live in this world alone,” he notes. “That’s what’s important about giving to others. Everything comes from God and not from us—even the air we breathe. We take of it, and we give back.”

Giving isn’t just for the rich. In fact, Father John recalls the inspiration he’s drawn during 58 years of priestly ministry to and from his community. “Some people have some really tough times. I’ve seen people who are very poor still contribute something. They trusted God to open his life to them in ways that almost embarrassed me. Seeing their sacrifices inspired me. If I’m a priest, I thought, I need to do something for others, too.”

For Father John, a charitable gift annuity was an opportunity to live according to God’s will and be considerate of others. “We can’t live alone. It’s a gift to be open to others. Planned giving is a practical way to be open to the needs of others.”

Of course, giving flows from gratitude. As Father John observes, “We cannot undo God. The generosity of God is in everything that exists. I see this as I get older. Everything is for our good. We have to think of God every day. The first waking moment in the morning, give thanks for life. God has been generous with me, and I want to be as generous as I can.”

Jim Maslar is a Catholic philanthropic advisor for the archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation (CCF). Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. To learn more about charitable gift annuities that support the mission of Christ in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, e-mail ccf@archindy.org or call 317-236-1482.

---

CLASSIFIED DIRECTORY

Call 317-236-1585 TO ADVERTISE IN The Criterion

Bishop Chatard High School Executive Director of Finance/Controller

Bishop Chatard High School is seeking a finance professional to assume the responsibilities of the Executive Director of Finance/Controller. The ideal candidate would possess an accounting degree (required) as well as a Certified Public Accountant (preferred). The Executive Director would report to the school President and serve on the school leadership team.

General Responsibilities include:

• Ensuring that the financial plan supports the Catholic identity and mission of the school;

• Establishing financial procedures in consultation with the President and school leadership to ensure the achievement of the financial objectives of the school;

• Preparing reports according to generally accepted accounting principles for the administration and Board of Regents.

The job description can be found on the Bishop Chatard website at www.bishopchatard.org/about/employment. Applicants are asked to email a resume and letter of interest to mmalnery@BishopChatard.org by 5 p.m. on February 11, 2022.
when—we as a state will respond,” he told the crowd. His message was echoed by Mary Carmen Zahrajsek, Indiana Regional Coordinator for Students for Life of America. She referred to the possible reversal of Roe v. Wade as “not the beginning of the end [of the fight to end abortion], but the end of the beginning.”

“...we are not going to change the culture at these events [or] through our elected officials. It’s going to be neighbor to neighbor, church to church, with our fellow Americans. Culture is upstream of politics.”

In addition to supportive cheers, signs are another way that participants in the march and rally express their views. “My sign says ‘Black Babies Matter,’ ” said Elianna Watson, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis who attends Hamilton Heights High School in Arcadia, Ind. “During this current time, we hear about BLM [Black Lives Matter] and other groups talking about equal rights for African Americans. But then you realize that the majority of abortion clinics are in minority areas, and the majority of abortions are African American children.”

According to www.congress.gov, 30% of all aborted children are Black. “About 13% of America’s population are Blacks,” Elianna continued, a fact verified at www.census.gov. “It would have been way higher than that if so many Black children hadn’t been killed.”

The march and rally were a show in ecumenical solidarity. “We’ve been coming ever since the first Indiana March for Life in 2018, said Rev. Adrian Piazza of Christ Lutheran Church in Noblesville, Ind. “Many members of our church, which is part of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, are outspoken against abortion. It’s cold, but it’s a good day. We’re glad to be here!”

Pastor Micah Beckwith of Life Church in Noblesville welcomed the marchers to the rally, and a stirring call to unity by Reverend Benjamin Thompson of Progressive Life Ministries Assembly of God in Indianapolis drew cheers from the crowd. After the rally, all were invited to the offices of Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita for cookies and hot coffee—a welcomed offer given the wind chill in the low 20s.

“We wanted to do this in appreciation of all the effort it takes to come out here and to make voices heard on behalf of pro-life,” said Indiana Solicitor General Thomas Fisher. “That’s a very important issue for this office and the state as a whole. We want to meet the people who are also enthusiastic about the position the state takes. It’s a very exciting time to be pro-life.”

The Shawe Memorial students jumped at the chance for a warm drink and snacks. It was the end of a wonderful experience for them, said Drumm. “We wanted to do this in appreciation of all the effort it takes to come out here and to make voices heard on behalf of pro-life,” said Indiana Solicitor General Thomas Fisher. “That’s a very important issue for this office and the state as a whole. We want to meet the people who are also enthusiastic about the position the state takes. It’s a very exciting time to be pro-life.”

The Shawe Memorial students jumped at the chance for a warm drink and snacks. It was the end of a wonderful experience for them, said Drumm. “They were excited to see that it truly is a movement that is bigger than them,” she said. “It made it real for them. They were tired but truly happy at the end of the trip.”

Mary Carmen Zahrajsek, Indiana Regional Coordinator for Students for Life of America, leads pro-life advocates in a volley of chants during a rally outside the Indiana Statehouse after the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 24. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)