Archbishop hopes eucharistic revival will lead to conversion in individuals, society

By Sean Gallagher

On June 19, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and Catholics across central and southern Indiana will begin the archdiocese’s participation in the three-year National Eucharistic Revival. The day will include the celebration of two Masses at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, a festival of faith, family and service, a eucharistic procession in the heart of the city and a holy hour ending with Benediction.

It will all take place on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, traditionally known as Corpus Christi.

In a recent interview with The Criterion, Archbishop Thompson reflected on the important place of the Eucharist in his own life, his hopes that the revival will deepen the faith and ministries of the Church in central Indiana, and how he is looking forward to the National Eucharistic Congress to be held in Indianapolis in July of 2024.

Bringing back God to the center

The archbishop’s hopes for the revival stretch beyond the Church to the broader society.

The eucharistic procession on June 19 will go down Illinois Street into the center of downtown Indianapolis. Two years ago, that same street saw tremendous violence, destruction and social unrest following the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer.

Archbishop Thompson spoke about how the eucharistic procession can be a visible way to bring God back to the center of society, which has been

See REVIVAL, page 8

You’re the dad I never dared to dream of

Faith, a couple’s love and extended family help guide a Ukrainian to his true home

By John Shaughnessy

The phone call was a parent’s nightmare, waking Thomas Wright at three in the morning in Indianapolis.

As Wright heard the fear in the voice of the young person calling from Ukraine—one he regards as a son—he also heard the sound of explosions in the background as the Russians began their invasion of the country in February.

“I’m in a panic because there’s nothing you can do,” recalls Thomas about that phone call from then-19-year-old Anton Bezborodov. “It’s the most helpless feeling in the world.”

Yet that helpless feeling soon turned into a plan of action for Thomas and his wife Beth.

Members of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, they immediately sent a request for prayers for Anton’s safety to their friends and to the extended family that they have created by hosting 44 foreign exchange students for the past

See UKRAINE, page 14

After 72 years, new Catholic says Church ‘is what I longed for all my life’

(Editors’ note: This is the fourth and final article in a series chronicling the journey of four people who were received into the full communion of the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass on April 16.)

By Natalie Hoefer

At 72, Gayle Griffiths isn’t sure what took her so long to come home to the Catholic faith.

“I guess I wasn’t ready yet or God had other things to teach me,” she says. “I just wish I hadn’t wasted so much time!”

See NEW CATHOLIC, page 16
Fifteen men to be ordained permanent deacons on June 25

**Criterion staff report**

It was 14 years ago that 25 men from central and southern Indiana were ordained as the first class of permanent deacons in the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

In the time since, the deaconate has become an ordinary part of the life of the Church in the archdiocese, with 16 more ordained in 2012 and 21 men ordained in 2017. Permanent deacons ordained in other dioceses have also moved to the archdiocese and ministered in some parishes.

On June 25, 15 men will be ordained as the archdiocese’s fourth class of permanent deacons in a Mass beginning at 10 a.m. at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson will serve as the principal celebrant at the liturgy.

After they are ordained, there will be 70 deacons serving in the archdiocese, including two who have retired and four ordained elsewhere who are now ministering in central and southern Indiana.

Seating will be available for the Mass for the general public. It can also be viewed online live at www.archindy.org/streaming.

The deacon candidates to be ordained have completed four years of formation and participated in an intensive year-long application process before that. As archdiocesan director of permanent deacon formation, Deacon Kerry Blandford has overseen the preparation of the 15 deacon candidates to be ordained on June 25.

“Having journeyed with these men for the past five years has been a blessing,” he said. “Given the impact of COVID-19, there is a different and in some ways more challenging formation. They persevered and met those challenges and will do the same as they move into active ministry. They will be a blessing to the Church.”

Deacon Michael East looks forward to assisting the new deacons in their life and ministry.

“I am here to help them make a smooth transition into the ministry of permanent deacon while maintaining their role as husband and father to their respective families,” said Deacon East, who serves as archdiocesan director of deacons. “They are coming to ministry during very trying times with COVID-19 and all the unrest that is affecting our communities. At the same time, it can provide many opportunities for their ministry.”

Memorial Mass for Father William Munshower set for June 25 at cathedral

A memorial Mass for the late Father William Munshower will be celebrated at 2 p.m. on June 25 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is scheduled to be the principal celebrant.

Father Munshower was 88 and a retired archdiocesan priest who died on April 14, 2020, during the early portion of the coronavirus pandemic. Public celebration of the sacraments was suspended at the time.

The June 25 Mass is intended as a way for Father Munshower’s friends, loved ones and former parishioners to come together in prayer and gratitude for his priestly life and ministry.

All are invited to an open house with food and refreshments afterward hosted by his family at the Northside Event Center, 1300 E. 7th St., in Indianapolis from 4-7 p.m.

Rachel’s Vineyard retreat offered in Indianapolis area on July 29-31 for those grieving after abortion

A Rachel’s Vineyard post-abortion healing retreat will take place in the greater Indianapolis area on July 29-31. The location will be disclosed upon registration.

The retreat is for women and men who have known regret, sorrow, guilt or shame after abortion. Supported by the sacraments, the goal of the retreat is to help provide insight, comfort and healing.

The weekend combines Scripture meditations, spiritual exercises and discussions in a guided process that leads to the heart of God’s love and compassion.

The cost is $175, although scholarships are available. No one will be turned away due to financial difficulties.

For information about Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats, go to www.rachelsvineyard.org. Registration is required by July 24. To register or for more information on the upcoming retreat, call 317-452-0054 or send an e-mail to projectrachel@archindy.org. Inquiries, registration and participation are strictly confidential.

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“Each of us must choose the path of peace and open our hearts to the love that God has for his children,” said a joint statement on June 13 by the two prelates. “O Sacred Heart of Jesus, touch our hearts and make them like your own.”

They made the comments as committee chairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Dolan leads the Committee on Religious Liberty and Archbishop Lori is chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The two prelates noted the pace of attacks had stepped up since a draft version of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito’s opinion in the case Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Services was leaked in May. As The Criterion went to press on June 14, the final ruling had yet to be released.

The leaked draft suggested the Supreme Court could overturn Roe v. Wade, the court’s 1973 decision which legalized abortion nationwide, in its highly anticipated ruling in an abortion case from Mississippi that bans most abortions after 15 weeks.

Since then, Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Lori said “charities that support pregnant mothers in need have been firebombed, and pro-life organizations have been attacked almost daily and terrorized.”

“And even the lives of Supreme Court justices have been directly threatened,” they said, referring to the June 8 arrest of a man outside Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s home in Chevy Chase, Md., a Washington suburb. The man, police said, had planned to kill Kavanaugh but ultimately decided against it.

He was identified as Nicholas John Roske, a 26-year-old from California, who was carrying a gun, a knife, zip ties and burglary tools. Roske was arrested after he called 911 to turn himself in. He told police he planned to break into Kavanaugh’s house and kill him and then planned to kill himself. He has been charged with attempted murder.

“For two years now, Catholic churches have been attacked and vandalized at an alarming rate. In July of 2020, we strained to understand this violence,” Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Lori noted in their statement. The U.S. bishops in May 2020 started tracking violence directed against Catholic churches. The number of such attacks hit the 100 mark last October.

In May of this year, a pro-life pregnancy center in Madison, Wis., was set afire. A group calling itself Jane’s Revenge took credit for the act. In early June, a second such center in a Buffalo, N.Y., suburb was subject to an overnight attack. Scrawled with spray paint on the center’s outside wall was “Jane was here.” However, no group has claimed responsibility.

Attacks and vandalism of other pregnancy care centers have also happened in recent weeks in Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon and Texas.

“We urge our elected officials to take a strong stand against this violence, and our law enforcement authorities to increase their vigilance in protecting those who are in increased danger,” Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Lori said. “We thank those who have already done so, and we encourage them to continue.”

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The son of Ruth E. Whitfield, the oldest victim of the racially motivated mass shooting at a Buffalo, N.Y., grocery store, told a rally in Washington on June 11 that the nation must “replace the hate.”

“Joe was my dad,” Raymond Whitfield told the rally. “He was a proud veteran, a devout Catholic, and a loving husband and father. Joe was a hero. He loved his country. And he loved his church.”

In early June, a gunman identified as Robert Bowers, a 46-year-old white man, went on a four-hour shooting rampage on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh. The gunman had been convicted of fraud in 2009 and of bank robbery in 2010. He has been charged with 29 counts of murder, 28 counts of attempted murder, and 13 counts of assault.

On June 14, the final draft version of the Supreme Court’s opinion was leaked. The leaked draft suggested the Supreme Court could overturn Roe v. Wade, the court’s 1973 decision which legalized abortion nationwide. The leaked draft, which was leaked on May 3, was first reported by Politico.

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We must continue Church’s mission of supporting life and dignity for all.

We believe it is providential that as we await the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the Catholic Church in the U.S. next week is set to mark this year’s observance of Religious Freedom Week. (As The Criterion went to press on June 14, there was still no decision in the Dobbs case.)

Sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Religious Freedom Week “is an opportunity to reflect on the timeless theme its. Its theme this year is ‘Life and Dignity for All.’

The observance begins on June 22, the feast day of SS. Thomas More and John Fisher, both English martyrs who fought religious persecution. The week ends on June 29, the feast of SS. Peter and Paul.

The Dobbs case involves a Mississippi law that prohibits abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy. An initial draft of a Supreme Court majority opinion in the case that leaked to the press May 2 indicated the court may be set to overturn its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion nationwide. Tensions have been high on both sides of the debate ever since.

In a press release marking Religious Freedom Week, the USCCB said it “is especially mindful of the debates around our country about abortion. The Catholic Church plays a crucial role in bearing witness to the Gospel and serving all who will be affected by these discussions and their outcomes.”

If the leaked document holds true—which we pray will indeed be the case—the court also is expected to overturn its 1989 Casey decision, which legalized abortion nationwide. Tensions have been high on both sides of the debate ever since.

If the final ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization overturns Roe and Casey, the issue of abortion would be returned to the states.

Sadly, states like California and Colorado are already working on legislation to legalize abortion up to birth. The California Catholic Conference “vehemently opposes amending the state’s constitution to ‘enshrine the most extreme forms of abortion.’”

State Constitutional Amendment 10 language introduced on June 8 “is so broad and unrestricted that it would encourage and protect every form of abortion, which most Californians oppose,” the conference said.

As written, the amendment—which will be on the state’s November ballot—“will legalize and protect abortion up to the point near prior to delivery,” according to the conference.

Colorado legislators passed the Reproductive Health Equity Act, considered one of the nation’s most permissive abortion measures. Gov. Jared Polis quickly signed it into law on April 4. It permits on-demand abortion for a full 40-weeks of pregnancy, allows abortion based on discrimination of sex, race or children with disabilities such as Down syndrome; and removes the requirement that parents of minors be notified of their child’s abortion in response. Colorado’s bishops in a June 6 open letter asked Catholic legislators “who live or worship in the state” and voted for Colorado’s Reproductive Health Equity Act “to voluntarily refrain from receiving holy communion.”

They urged this action “until public repentance takes place and sacramental absolution is received in confession.”

“The burden from their decision does not rest upon the shoulders of priests, deacons or lay extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist,” they wrote. “It rests upon the consciences and souls of those politicians who have chosen to support this evil and unjust law.”

Regardless of the Supreme Court’s ruling, “to build a culture of life and dignity for all,” the Catholic Church “must support women and children,” the USCCB press release added.

While some critics say the Church does little or nothing to help pregnant mothers and their babies, we must make it paramount to remind them that this is false.

Catholics across the country, joining with other pro-life advocates, have assisted pregnant mothers and their children both before and after birth.

In 2020, the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities launched the “Walking with Moms in Need” nationwide initiative to build on these efforts. Its aim is “to engage every Catholic parish in providing a safety net to ensure that pregnant and parenting mothers have the resources, love and support they need to nurture the lives of their children.”

In starting the initiative, bishops said they want to ensure “our Catholic parishes are places of welcome for women facing challenging pregnancies or who find it difficult to care for their children after birth, so that any mother needing assistance will receive life- affirming support and be connected to appropriate programs and resources where she can get help.”

Among the initiative’s goals is to help Catholics “recognize the needs of pregnant and parenting moms in their communities, enabling parishioners to know these mothers, to listen to them, and to help them obtain the necessities of life for themselves and their children.”

“Life and Dignity for All” is a staple of the Church’s mission. We pray God uses this ongoing legal fight to open minds and change hearts so society will soon work to protect all human life—from conception to natural death.

—Mike Krokos

Editorial

Be Our Guest
Greg Erlanson

A tale of two weddings

How do we attract people to our church? How do we invite people to “come and see”? These are questions being asked with greater urgency these days.

“Come, you homes,” that is those with no religious affiliation, are growing in number, while too many Catholics are walking away from any sort of consistent practice.

A great deal of effort and money is spent developing tools to encourage and inspire Catholics to go forth and evangelize. Some of this goes to diocesan organisations that eschew news for catechetical and inspirational stories. Some of it goes to programs and retreats, social media campaigns and videos.

All of this may be helpful, but it struck me recently that possibilities may be elusorier than ever. Call this a tale of two weddings.

Two good friends of mine, married but neither Catholic, attended my sister’s recent wedding Mass. She very intentionally wanted it to be a beautiful and engaging liturgy because she knew there would be many Protestants and non-Catholics attending with her.

The songs were unusual and beautifully sung. The readings were powerful. Best of all, the pastor who celebrated the Mass exuded a sense of welcome and joy. His homily was both pastoral and rooted in the Scripture readings.

After the wedding, my friends were enthusiastic not just about the ceremony, but about the Mass and the priest. A mountain of stereotypes was washed away by an experience that made the priest’s goal was realized, to her great delight.

Ah, but fast forward one month and the same couple attended another wedding. It was the opposite in almost every way, to hear them tell the story. But the priest was what really stood out. They homily chose to highlight what he called the five stages of marriage.

First came infatuation. He told the couple that was the stage they were in now as they sat beside the altar. Next came disillusionment. He warned. Then misery. Then resignation. And finally, assuming one last thing, acceptance.

I do not know if the priest intended this as so sort of point of information or if he simply had too many scaring experiences in the confessional. The damage was the same in either case. The bottom line is that those hidden secrets or to repell them rather than invite them is a monumental failure.

It is easy today to be overwhelmed by negativity, to let our pessimism get the best of us, to let our divisions dominate. At our worst we are unable to believe or reject or shun than to embrace and celebrate our faith.

That is not what Christ had in mind when he gave us the Great Commission to go forth and baptize the world. It is not possible to see in us and our parishes what a treasure it is that we believe we have found, then we deserve our empty churches.

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

Be Our Guest
Gary Taylor

Recognizing, reckoning and resting in the real presence of the divine Trinity

In this hungry and hungry world, every first communion is being invited to participate in a “pastoral and missionary effort which cannot leave things as they presently are.” The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its disciplines are being initiated into a permanent mission to be in a state of apostolices and evangelization that is perpetually recapitulating, renewing, refreshing and resurrecting for Jesus in the Eucharist, which is the central sacrament of the Catholic Church.

The faithful remnants are to organize their communities as “enthusiastic eucharistic missionaries” filled with the flame of divine charity for those around them. Missionaries “wholly engaged in the Church’s life and activity” are to prepare and empower the faithful remnants from around the country to go out to the peripheries of their communities as “enthusiastic eucharistic missionaries” filled with the flame of divine charity for those around them.

The entire mystical body is to begin now in preparing themselves to participate and perpetually pass this eternal pilgrimage to realize, recognize and rest in the peaceful power and presence of the divine Trinity in every moment.

(Gary Taylor is a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Goodlettsville.)

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful. The editors reserve the right to select and edit letters to fit the space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content. Letters must be signed, but for serious inquiries we will publish your address. Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
**La Eucaristía es la esencia de nuestra relación con Jesús**

El domingo 19 de junio nuestra Iglesia celebra la Solemnidad del Santísimo Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo (Corpus Christi). Este año, bajo el auspicio de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos, aprovechamos esta alegre solemnidad para lanzar un Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional que se celebrará desde 2022 hasta 2025. Hacia el final de esta ambiciosa experiencia de tres años, habrá un Congreso Eucarístico Nacional que se celebrará aquí en Indiana. 2024. ¿Qué enorme bendición para nuestro país, así como para nuestra Arquidiócesis! En Indianapolis inauguraremos el Renacimiento Eucarístico con un evento especial el 19 de junio que incluirá dos misas, un Festival de Faith, Family and Service, un ambiente eucarístico al aire libre y una Hora Santa. Los actos se realizan en el centro de Indianapolis, en la Catedral San Pedro y San Pablo, el Centro Católico Edward T. O’Meara y la Iglesia de San Juan Evangelista. Los animamos a que participen en cualquier porción de los eventos del día que se ajuste a su horario: ya sea físicamente o a través de internet, ya sea durante una parte del día o todo el día, acompañándonos a celebrar la presencia real de nuestro Señor en la Santa Eucaristía.

Como escribió en mi carta pastoral del pasado Adviento, titulada “Estamos unidos en el culto a Dios en la Santa Mesa”: “En esta vida, no hay mejor manera de fomentar una relación [intima] con Cristo y con la Iglesia que a través del don y el misterio de la Santa Mesa Eucarística, y de la fructífera celebración de la Misa. En efecto, la Eucaristía es la esencia de nuestra relación con Jesús, que es el Camino, la Verdad y la Vida. Por lo tanto, estamos llamados a celebrar el don del sacramento de la Eucaristía en la misa hasta que Jesús vuelva y se glorifique. Y al hacerlo, nos colocamos junto a los ángeles y los santos en la alegre espera del regreso de Nuestro Señor.”

El objetivo de este Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional es “renovar la Iglesia al respecto de la relación con Nuestro Señor Jesucristo en la santa Eucaristía.” Este renacimiento se producirá en tres fases: El primer año se centrará en la renovación a nivel diocesano; el segundo año se centrará en la renovación en la parroquia; y el tercero abordará la renovación en curso a todos los niveles en el país, con énfasis en la misión de salir de la mesa eucarística a celebrar la presencia real de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo en los hogares en nuestras comunidades y entre las naciones. El Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional que inauguramos este domingo es también una respuesta a la soga que se estrecha sobre la mesa y la necesidad de cambiar las cosas para que se reconozca el amor de Jesús a su Iglesia. Tan importante como nunca antes ha sido más intensa la necesidad de renovar de la fe y la devoción a la presencia real de Cristo en la Eucaristía. Hoy en día vivimos la creciente secularización de nuestra cultura que desprecia muchos de los valores tradicionales de la sociedad. Se está convirtiendo cada vez más en una cultura de la muerte en la que presenciamos el menosprecio de la vida humana en todos los puntos del espectro vital. Los crímenes contra la vida humana inocente—desde el asesinato de niños no nacidos hasta la violencia sin sentido en nuestras escuelas, pasando por los asesinatos en las calles y los horrores de la guerra—siguen ocupando los titulares de las noticias y rompiéndonos el corazón. Hoy más que nunca necesitamos la gracia de la Eucaristía para unirnos en la oración y en la acción, y para restablecer la paz de Cristo en nuestros corazones y hogares, en nuestras comunidades y entre las naciones.

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Indianapolis.

**Retreats and Programs**

**for a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to archindy.org/retreats**

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**June 19**

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. Masses and Eucharistic Procession for the Opening Week of Eucharistic Revival: 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Corpus Christi Masses celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, eucharistic procession following 3 p.m. Mass, and a visit to St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. Eucharistic Holy Hour for Opening of Eucharistic Revival: 5:45-6:30 p.m., benediction Holy Hour for Opening of Eucharistic Revival: 6:30 p.m. Information: eucharisticrevivalindy.org.

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**June 20**

St. Thea Bowman Catholic Women Monthly Prayer Gathering, via Zoom, third Monday of each month, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, 7 p.m. Join meeting: caretlf@archindy.org, meeting ID 810 3567 8695 or dial-in at 301-715-8592. Information: Peartelle Springer, pspringer@ archindy.org or 317-236-1474.

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**June 24-25**

Christ the King Parish, 5884 N. Cridenden Ave., Indianapolis. Summer Social, 6 p.m.-midnight, live music. Fri.: Bigger is Better, Sat.: Klassic Wham Project, kid’s area, food, beer and wine. Admission Information: 317-255-3666.

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**June 25**

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Faithful Citizens Rosary Walk, 10-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: Faithful citzens2016@gmail.com.

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**July 3-7**

St. Ambrose Parish, 525 S. Chestnut St., Seymour Parish Festival, 11 a.m.-10 p.m., raffle, 50/50 raffle, kids’ games, craft booths, starting at 11 a.m.: tacos, hot dogs, ice cream, fried chicken dinners starting at 4 p.m., free admission. Information: 812-522-3504.

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**July 6**

MCL Conference Center, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, 5-30 p.m., Catholic Seniors Charitable and Social singles—separated, widowed or divorce—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605.

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**July 7-9**

Holy Spirit Parish, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. Holy Spirit Festival Thurs. 6 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 1 p.m.-midnight, live music, midway rides, food, beverages, bingo, Monte Carlo, Texas Hold ‘Em, silent auction, nummber sale, parking shuttle available at 7:45 a.m. Washington St., free wrist bands provided to parishioners after Masses, non-parishioners $10 in festival tickets admission, children, children under 12 free. Information: holy@ofsfestival.org or pentagon@ofsfestival.org or 317-585-8400.

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**July 12**

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Taize Prayer at the Woods. Summer of Eucharistic Revival Sung Eucharistic adoration until 9 p.m., Mass 5:45 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7305, mmaro@ archindy.org.

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**July 22-24**

In recent weeks, Pope Francis has been reflecting on the topic that older people play in carrying out the Church’s mission.

The Wednesday, June 1, the Holy Father’s general audience included the latest installment in his catechesis on old age. Using a verse from sacred Scripture, “Forsake me not when my strength is spent” (Ps 71:9), the pope said:

“The beautiful prayer of the elderly man that we find in Psalm 71 encourages us to meditate on the strong tension that dwells in the condition of old age, when the memory of labors overcome and blessings received is just to the test of faith and hope.

In his reflections, the 85-year-old Argentinean native speaks of the “strong tension” that older people feel, and the challenges that confront them as their faith and hope are put to test by “the weakness that accompanies the passage through the fragility and vulnerability of advanced age.”

Aging is a process that effects every aspect of human life. As the pope observes, “the Psalmist—an elderly man who addresses the Lord—explicitly mentions the fact that this process becomes an opportunity for abandonment, i.e., of perception, and for prevarication and arrogance, which at times prey upon the elderly.”

In his personal experience, the Holy Father appears to cry out: “It is true! In this throwaway society, this throwaway culture, elderly people are cast aside and suffer these things.

Pope Francis is critical of our contemporary culture, which seems to be obsessed with youth, and which seeks to marginalize the elderly members of society. He specifically cites the neglect and indifference that older people must endure: “Often, we read in the newspapers or hear news of elderly people who are unscrupulously tricked out of their savings, or are left without protection or abandoned without care; or offended by forms of contempt and intimidated into renouncing their rights. Such cruelty also occurs within families. This is not right, but it happens in families, too. The elderly who are rejected, abandoned in rest homes, without their children coming to visit them, or they go a few times a year. The elderly person is placed in the corner of existence.”

Pope Francis argues forcefully that all members of society have a serious moral obligation to care for the elderly: “How is it that modern civilization, so advanced and efficient, is so uncomfortable with sickness and old age?”

The pope says, “we understand that the ambivalence of today’s society with regard to old age is not a problem of occasional emergencies, but a feature of that throwaway culture that poisons the world we live in.”

A society that does not reverence and care for its elderly members is in serious trouble. “How is it that modern civilization, so advanced and efficient, is so uncomfortable with sickness and old age?” the pope asks. “How is it that we hide illness, it hides old age? And how is it that politics, which is so committed to defining the limits of life and survival, is at the same time insensitive to the dignity of a loving coexistence with the old and the sick.”

The way we treat our older members defines who we are as a culture. We either love and respect those who have gone before us, or we abandon them— and ourselves—to the cruel indifference of the culture of death.

The irony, of course, is that we all age, and if we are blessed with a long life, we too become ahd and infirm in mind, body or spirit (sometimes all three). As the Holy Father reminds us:

“Remember that you too will become elderly. Old age comes for everyone. And treat the elderly today as you would wish to be treated in your old age. They are the memory of the family, the memory of humanity, the memory of the country. Protect the elderly, who are wisdom.

Pope Francis concludes his reflections with prayer. “May the Lord grant the elderly who are part of the Church the generosity of this invitation and of this pronouncement. May this trust in the Lord spread to us. And this, for the good of all, for them.”

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

“Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire persona reveals the mercy of God.”

–Pope Francis, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesus de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”

–Papa Francisco, “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)
wounded in so many ways. “We push God to the side and then we wonder why the violence, the chaos, the eucharistic conversion needs to deepen and grow, why the wounds are not healing,” he said. “Until we bring God back to the center of all of that, those wounds aren’t going to heal. We’re not going to reconcile.”

“So that Eucharist is a reminder for us as Catholics first and to others that God has to be at the core, at the center of all of this. Christ came to bring that deeply personal encounter with God to us through his own body, blood, soul and divinity. The Eucharist is the presence of God at the very heart of the lives where we believe, as Catholics, all things come together!”

“It’s all about Christ”
The seeds of this broad vision for the transformative effect that the Eucharist can have on individuals and society were planted in the heart of Archbishop Thompson as he grew up in a deeply Catholic part of rural central Kentucky.

“I have vivid memories of my first Communion,” he recalled. “They lined us according to size. It was me, all the girls then the rest of the guys. I was the smallest of the group.” Later as a college student and then a seminarian, the Eucharist continued to be at the heart of his life of faith.

“When I was discerning in the seminary, the Eucharist was at the center of that discernment,” he said, “what it meant to receive the body and blood of Christ, the privilege that that was and continues to be to receive that nourishment and strength provided by the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ.”

That centeredness in the Eucharist continued after he was ordained a priest and has only intensified in his last 11 years serving as a bishop.

“We have 126 parishes and 68 schools,” Archbishop Thompson said. “I go to all of those different places and celebrate Mass, connecting with the people.”

“I can’t do that on my own. And the world can’t provide that. It comes from the grace of God alone. And the world can’t provide that. It comes from the grace of God alone. And the Mass, as we say, is the source and summit of all of that.”

With the hope that more Catholics will grow in thankfulness through the revival, Archbishop Thompson also hopes that the many ministries of the Church in central and southern Indiana that are already rooted in the Eucharist will only grow deeper.

“This revival can deepen our appreciation and awareness of the Eucharist and enrich those ministries and services,” he said. “They can be ignited by this reconsacrification of the faith and hope of God’s grace and presence in the Eucharist. It nourishes and sustains us as Catholics to go out as beacons of hope, as ministers of healing, as instruments of peace and joy to the rest of the world.”

“Heightening the richness”
Archbishop Thompson looks forward to himself and Catholics across the archdiocese beginning this journey of eucharistic conversion.

He expressed appreciation for the work of organizers across central and southern Indiana.

“I like the approach that they have taken,” he said.

“We’re providing liturgies and trying to heighten all of the ethnic communities within the community. We have a greater fabric of ethnicities in our archdiocese—Latinos, Vietnamese, Koreans, the Burmese, different countries of Africa, Indians. All of these different groups.

“Heightening the richness of those different ethnicities, cultures, languages and customs—that’s part of the beauty of the Church.”

He also noted that, with two Masses, a service project, a eucharistic procession and a holy hour ending with Benediction, there are many ways that archdiocesan Catholics can “tap into” the start of the eucharistic revival.

Archbishop Thompson is looking forward to helping children who have recently received their first Communion join in the eucharistic procession.

He said they can be an example to many older Catholics who have had the Eucharist nourish their faith over the years, through many ups and downs and into eternal life itself.

“These first Communicants are just beginning that journey,” Archbishop Thompson said. “They’re beginning to have that sustenance as they grow. Hopefully, they will deepen their love and appreciation for this gift.

“Sometimes as we go through life, we can get caught up in the busyness of life. We can be reminded by looking through their eyes and seeing their faces how exciting and joyful the Eucharist can be.”

At the start of the third year of the eucharistic revival in July 2024, the archdiocese will host the first National Eucharistic Congress in nearly 50 years in Indianapolis. Tens of thousands of Catholics from across the country are expected to attend.

Archbishop Thompson said that the next two years will be a time when Catholics across central and southern Indiana can prepare spiritually for this historic event.

“If we’ve celebrated well as an archdiocese and in our parishes, it’d be natural it should bring us together in something even bigger,” he said. “We’ll pray and focus on this all along in the archdiocese and in our parishes to have a greater understanding and appreciation of who we are as a Church nationally and universally.

“It’s a great honor for the archdiocese and the city of Indianapolis to be chosen.”

Archbishop Thompson noted that great speakers from around the world will come to the Congress for audiences of many ages.

“Regardless of who will be here or not be here, it’s all about Jesus Christ,” Archbishop Thompson said. “It’s about his presence among us in his body, blood, soul and divinity that enables us to continue his mission of giving thanks, which is what the Eucharist is all about.

“When we’re rooted in gratitude, our lives are richer,” he said. “We have a more positive outlook on every aspect of our lives. Even in difficult and challenging times, that eucharistic centeredness of gratitude can be a great comfort and blessing to us, and through us to the lives of other people.”

“Like right now, with so much violence, inflation and all the chaos and injustices that go on in our world. We need that eucharistic-centered grace and strength of Christ.”

In his broad hopes for the eucharistic revival, Archbishop Thompson doesn’t lose sight of how it can lead to the conversion of individual hearts, including his own.

“We all have room to grow and deepen our relationship with God and one another in and through Christ,” he said. “I hope it does that for everybody. I hope it does that for me. I know I can better appreciate the gift of the Eucharist in my life and areas in my own life where I need healing, growth and conversion. God’s grace alone will provide. I can’t do that on my own. And the world can’t provide that. It comes from the grace of God alone. And the Mass, as we say, is the source and summit of all of that.”

The holy hour will take place at the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Eucharistic Congress in nearly 50 years in Indianapolis. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Members of men’s and women’s religious communities in the archdiocese are invited to be present in the church by 5:30 p.m. to welcome the arrival of the Blessed Sacrament.

The holy hour will feature meditative music by Vox Sacra, the archdiocese’s schola, and periods of silence.

Benediction will take place at 6:30 p.m. The regular Sunday evening Mass of St. John the Evangelist Parish will begin at 7 p.m.

**Shuttles**
Free shuttle rides will be available every 15 minutes from 2-7 p.m. to and from the Illinois Street entrance of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Eucharistic Congress and the Indiana Convention Center, which is adjacent to St. John the Evangelist Church.
Meet our future deacons

On June 25, the fourth class of permanent deacons for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will be ordained at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. There are 15 men from across central and southern Indiana who will be ordained.

This week’s issue of The Criterion completes a series of profiles of these men.

Who are the important role models in your life of faith?
My parents were my first role models. An example of their quiet caring for others was caring for more than 300 frail elderly women in the course of 20 years. Their steady habits of giving back gave me an example of compassion and service to others, especially during my military service. I knew several Catholic chaplains who showed friendship and guidance. One of these priests became a lifelong friend. I learned from him that priests are human and have needs of friendship. I’ve sought to offer friendship and care to my pastors in thanks to God for such a gift. Finally, I will never forget the image of St. Pope John Paul II demonstrating perseverence and devotion in the face of pain while leaning on his crosier.

Why do you feel that God is calling you to become a deacon?
I do the work that I am and what I do will inspire a positive attraction to God for both immediate and extended family. Personally, I expect spiritual growth and fulfillment in working with people in need.

How do you hope to serve through your life and ministry as a deacon?
I believe that I can serve those in need as effectively as my parents were with foster children. I also hope to offer the kind of support to my priests and fellow deacons that my military chaplain friend gave me.

People learn about who we really are quietly listen to them without judgment. People learn about who we really are when we playfully listen to them without judgment. I think how I behave and how I relate to others will be even more important in a pastoral situation.

What are your favorite Scripture verses, saints, prayers and devotions?
I am drawn to the many Marian prayers, especially the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, which is among my favorite prayers.

Deacons often minister, formally or informally, to others in the workplace. How have you experienced that already and what do you anticipate doing in the future?
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What are your favorite daily readings? The Criterion  Friday, June 17, 2022

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Adoration, Communion helps people to know their vocation

By Talia Siscou
Special to The Criterion

(Editor’s note: The Indianapolis Serra Club’s annual John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest awards prizes each spring to winning essays in grades 7-12 in the archdiocese. Please note this year there were no entries from the 11th grade.)

“If we but paused for a moment to consider attentively what takes place in this Sacrament, I am sure that the thought of Christ’s love for us would transform the coldness of our hearts into a fire of love and gratitude.”

This inspiring quote from St. Angela of Foligno perfectly describes how the Eucharist can transform our hearts and turn us into the loving saints we are all called to be. Being in the presence of and receiving the Eucharist can direct each and every one of our hearts to obtain God’s perfect plan for our lives.

One way the Eucharist can direct our lives is through eucharistic adoration. When we set apart time to spend alone with God, we can truly seek his voice and direction. Being in the presence of God helps us all to truly understand the meaning of our life and how God specifically made each one of us to do his will.

The more time we dedicate to listen to God, the easier it is to discern our vocation and help us reach our fullest potential in life. Not only can we just be in the presence of the Eucharist, we can actually receive the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist, we are the closest we can be to God. We become one with him.

This is one of the best ways to change our hearts. By allowing him to unite with us, Jesus can guide our hearts and minds and transform us into the people he made us to be.

The Eucharist has impacted my life in a positive way. It continues to help me grow in my faith by guiding me to be the best version of myself. When I spent time in adoration during my confirmation retreat, I found myself enlightened and found clarity about my problems. I found peace. This is a pattern I recognize every time I go to eucharistic adoration. Being in the presence of Jesus through the Eucharist has helped me keep my focus on God even through the most challenging parts of my life. I also have the opportunity to become closer to God through receiving the Eucharist at Mass. Receiving the Eucharist has helped me to give my worries and anxiety to God. Every time I receive the Eucharist, I feel guidance that God gives me through my words, actions and thoughts.

Receiving the Eucharist has opened my eyes to the many ways God may be calling me to serve. God may be calling me to pursue a medical profession, to serve the poor, or to become a priest. God may be calling me to serve. God may be calling me to serve. God may be calling me to serve.

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The Holy Spirit speaks, not of himself, but “he announces Jesus and reveals the Father. And we also notice that the Father, who possesses everything because he is the origin of all things, gives to the Son everything he possesses,” the pope said. The Holy Trinity “is open generosity, one open to the other.”

Celebrating the Holy Trinity should lead to “a revolution in our way of life” because it “provoques us to live with others and for others,” Pope Francis said.

SAVE THE DATE!
St. Vincent de Paul Love Your Neighbor Gala
(Formerly Struttin’ Our Stuff)
Saturday, August 27, 2022, 5:30pm - Northside Events & Social Club
Reunite with friends and interact with some of our Changing Lives Forever graduates.
Enjoy cocktails, dinner, silent and live auction, heads & tails, and much, much more.
Visit www.svdpindy.org/gala for more information.

Kayla McMillan
Project Rachel
Experience Hope and Healing After Abortion
Upcoming Retreat in the Greater Bloomington Area

Rachel’s Vineyard Healing Retreat: July 29-31, 2022
For Confidential Help Contact
317-452-0054 or projectrachel@archindy.org
for more information and to register

All Calls and Locations Are Confidential.

A Special Word to Those Who Have Had an Abortion...
Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope...
If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance.
The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace...

-Saint John Paul II, The Gospel Life
St. Joseph shows fathers the way to place their trust in God

By Matt Palmer

"Trust me."

If there’s one comical mistake I’ve made over and over again as a father, it’s saying those words to my children out loud.

I still carry the guilt of the time I handed a “sweet” chicken leg to my daughter only to find out it was spicy. Don’t get me started about the time I told our oldest children that the roller coaster with the 80-foot drop was going to be “fun” and that “they were going to love it.”

At the conclusion of both of those moments, there was a child or two standing in front of me with tears rolling down their cheeks.

“You said it was going to be fun!” Parenthood is a test, and I constantly feel like I’m failing it as if I was an imposter.

That said, the wonderful thing about being a parent is that children surprise you with their hope. Getting a hug or being a parent is that children surprise us with their hope.

I remember looking at our oldest child as she was placed bawling on a weight scale. Her beauty was overwhelming, as was the reality of the task at hand. How would I, a person beset by doubts, help steer the future of this blank slate of a human being?

St. Augustine once said, “Father, I am seeking: I am hesitant and uncertain, but will you, O God, watch over each step of mine and guide me.”

Christian fathers walk in the shadow of St. Joseph. If you think about it, Joseph had a life plan. God had a different one. His relationship with the Creator is one built on trust. Jesus, the only begotten son of God, was raised by a simple carpenter who obeyed the Lord’s wishes.

Joseph did as the Lord asked. If we think our task is challenging, imagine caring for the well-being of the little voices, steps or laughter. Candidly, it’s a hard notion to keep in mind in the moment and these children to make a difference in this world. The least I can do is be a little like Joseph and trust others and, most important, God.

Even though we don’t hear his response, we can all feel Joseph’s blood pressure rising. As an adult, my anxiety manifests itself more around my children’s safety than anything else. If I’ve lost track of them, even for 30 seconds, my heart starts beating harder.

While they are not present, I imagine caring for the well-being of the little voices, steps or laughter. Candidly, it’s a hard notion to keep in mind in the moment and these children to make a difference in this world. The least I can do is be a little like Joseph and trust others and, most important, God.

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Jesus responds: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49). A father from Ukraine holding a child helps lead a decade of the rosary during a prayer service with Pope Francis in front of a statue of Mary, Queen of Peace, at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on May 31.

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Never have I related more to Joseph and Mary than when they lost him in Jerusalem. When they reunited, as chronicled in Luke 2:41-51, Mary asks, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (Lk 2:48).

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Jesus, of course, was in the Temple talking with the teachers and asking questions about God the Father. His Father.

Even though we don’t hear his response, we can all feel Joseph’s blood pressure rising. As an adult, my anxiety manifests itself more around my children’s safety than anything else. If I’ve lost track of them, even for 30 seconds, my heart starts beating harder.

While they are not present, I imagine caring for the well-being of the little voices, steps or laughter. Candidly, it’s a hard notion to keep in mind in the moment and these children to make a difference in this world. The least I can do is be a little like Joseph and trust others and, most important, God.
Celebrating the sacraments with persons with disabilities

I recently got a call from one of our wonderful parish catechetical leaders about a young lady who had just moved to our archdiocese and was preparing to receive her first holy Communion. The family is quite new to the archdiocese and a great but very short attention span, so the family was not sure that she would be able to sit through an hour and a half of discussion options that might be available to her, including perhaps preparing for a daily Mass, or possibly even at their home.

Over the summer, families and individuals may be pondering the possibility of looking ahead to preparing for the sacraments of initiation for the first time. There is a new tool available that might be able to help, including perhaps preparing for a daily Mass, or possibly even at their home.

This could sound like you, starting this month there is a new tool available from the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD), an online course designed as a resource for the archdiocese and for those who are preparing children or adults with disabilities to receive the sacraments of initiation—with an additional module devoted to the sacrament of reconciliation. Each of the eight modules contains written, audio and video components to explore the topic, as well as an opportunity for weekly reflection.

First, considering the sacrament of baptism from the perspective of Scripture; secondly, a mini-lecture which explores the topic of the perspective of Church teaching and liturgical practices, as well as personal experience; and finally a podcast, which includes practical considerations for preparing someone with a developmental ability to receive the sacrament.

The podcasts feature interviews with people like Dr. Timothy O’Malley of the University of Notre Dame, self-advocate Meghan Cook and Money, Catholic writer, speaker and mother of a daughter with disabilities.

The course was written by Michele Chronister, who is a national expert on the topic of faith and disability. She has spoken at events across the country and authored the book, Handbook for Adaptive Catechesis. She has passed the information to leaders to teach the faith to persons with disabilities in a way that upholds the complexity and richness of the faith tradition.

The following post about the course, Chronister stated: “Providing access to preparation for and reception of the sacraments with disabilities is not just some service we provide for them. When persons with disabilities do receive the resources, their encounter with God strengthens and builds up the Church. We need them. “But also, God lange deeply for them and deeper union with them, as he does with all of us. And he desires sanctity for those with disabilities, just as he does for those without disabilities. He wants to make us saints.”

I was honored to be a part of helping this course come to fruition and am excited to share it with our parishes and families. I am even more excited to share that, as an NCPD affiliate, all of our parish members receive a discount on the cost of the course through the end of August. I am confident that this will be a tremendous resource for you. You can find out more about the course, including excepts and a course outline, at www.ncpd.org.

That All May Be One/

Erin Jeffries is the coordinator of Ministry to Persons with Special Needs for Archdiocese of Indianapolis. She can be reached at erinjeffries@archindy.org or 317-236-1448. Find out more about NCPD’s initiatives and upcoming events by visiting www.archindy.org/specialneeds or www.archindy.org/deaf .

July 28 marks the fifth anniversary of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson’s installation as the seventh archbishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

During the liturgical celebration of a bishop’s installation, civic and religious leaders come forward to greet him. In 2017, Archbishop Thompson was greeted by several local Christian denominational leaders (“judicatories”) and leaders of other religions.

These first encounters have led to relationship building.

Following the examples of Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein and then-Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, Archbishop Thompson has embraced the method of meeting with Christian judicatories in Indianapolis, which has a long history.

It was begun by the former Church Federation of Greater Indiana, which began meeting at the Interchurch Center on West 42nd Street. That center, conceived during the ecumenical fervor of the 1960s, still houses many Christian denominational headquarters.

As he approached his anniversary, I asked Archbishop Thompson for his reflections on the ecumenical and interreligious role of a bishop.

Encountering the various judicatories and other faith leaders at his installation, he said, “reminded me that a bishop has to be an ecumenical leader, reaching out beyond his own denomination. The body of Christ is more than Roman Catholic. We are to strive for that unity that is lost.”

He also noted that the archbishop “is to be present to non-Christians as well.” He added, “I come from a diocese [Archdiocese of Louisville] with long ties to interdenominational and ecumenical relationships... In the Diocese of Evansville, as bishop I found the same. Such relationships have carried through my priestly years as a bishop.”

Reflecting upon the monthly judicatory gatherings, the archbishop said, “I see great value in these meetings. Pope Francis has so encouraged us to come to know each other’s faith and to continue strong relationships.”

These meetings “allow us to walk with each other, to listen to one another, to know how the Spirit is working among us and through us. At times, it seems like baby steps [toward unity].”

The great process, the archbishop noted, begins “through getting to know each other, finding respect for one another. We learn about each other’s families and the leadership challenges and stress we are each facing.”

“Sometimes, one of us has a particular situation or event from which we all can learn... This allows us to see the scenes and develop mutual respect.”

“There are differences among and between us at times. We don’t always agree on an approach to an issue;”
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, June 19, 2022

- Genesis 14:18-20
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- Luke 9:11-17

This weekend, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, or Corpus Christi, as it has been traditionally known. In all its celebrations, the Church has a twofold purpose. The first purpose, of course, is to call us to be joyful in the reality acknowledged by the feast. The second purpose is to teach us.

So, this weekend the Church calls us to celebrate the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the feast of the holy Eucharist, which the Church proclaims as its precious treasure, given to us by the merciful God. The Church asks us to reflect.

The first reading for this weekend is from Genesis. Like other books of the Old Testament, Genesis is more than mere history or statements of prophecy. Rather, each in its own way reveals the truth that God is the Creator. After Creation, and indeed after human sin, God did not leave humanity to its own fate.

Instead, God reached out in mercy, sending figures such as Abraham and Melchizedek, mentioned in this reading, to clear the way between God and humankind. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, better known as Jerusalem, was a man of God who was Abraham. They praised God’s mercy in gifts symbolizing their own limitations and the nourishment needed for life itself.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians gives us the second reading. It is a revelation of the Last Supper, using the same words found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The presence of the Eucharist in all these sources tells us how important the first Christians regarded the Last Supper. Celebrating the Eucharist in ancient Corinth tells us how important the Eucharist was to the earliest of Christians.

Finally, the words are unambiguous. Jesus says of the bread, “This is my body,” and of the wine, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor 11:24-25). Straightforward and clear, the words say nothing about similarity or symbol. They are direct definitive statements.

St. Luke’s Gospel supplies the last reading. A great crowd gathered to hear Jesus. Mealtime came. The Apostles had virtually nothing to give the people, only five loaves and two fish. In the highly symbolic use of numbers in days when scientific precision was rarely known, five and two came to mean something powerful and insufficient.

Jesus used gestures also used at the Last Supper. He used gestures in Jewish prayers before meals. He then sent the disciples to distribute the food. All had their fill. After everyone had eaten the food, 12 baskets were needed for the leftovers. To return to the symbolism of numbers, 12 meant overabundance.

Reflection

The Church on this feast calls us to focus our minds on the Holy Eucharist and our hearts on God. In the second reading, from Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Church takes us back to the Last Supper and the beliefs of the Christians who lived only a generation or so after the Last Supper. For them, the reality of the Eucharist was clear. Paul was clear about it. “This is my body” (1 Cor 11:24). “This is my blood” (1 Cor 11:25).

The bread becomes Christ’s body, the wine Christ’s blood. The first reading shows that throughout history God has reached out to people to nourish their starving, fatigued souls.

Finally, the Gospel tells us of God’s immense love. When our souls hunger, God supplies, not in any rationed sense, but lavishly. This outpouring of spiritual nourishment comes in and through Christ, the victim and the victor of Calvary.

God’s love still nourishes us through the Eucharist in the Church, as it was long ago. A vision of my Savior standing before me a circle of forgiveness. He and I alone together in one accord and one mind carried away into His presence. In His hands He held the scars for me. A vision of my Savior standing before me who is living—to honor a departed family member. A vision of my Savior standing before me who is living—to honor a departed family member. A vision of my Savior standing before me who is living—to honor a departed family member. A vision of my Savior standing before me who is living—to honor a departed family member.

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The gift of eternal life for me. The precious blood of the Lamb. The eternal life that we are promised. The inestimable value of the Eucharist, it might also prompt parishioners’ private prayers.

Q

In the Book of Wisdom, (14:1-4 and Wis 4:3) it indicates that children born of a forbidden union will suffer a miserable fate and will do anything. They are illegitimate and cannot live a firm foundation with values that are deeply rooted. I was born out of wedlock. My dad’s family called off the wedding because they didn’t like the area where my mother had grown up. (She was pregnant with me at the time.)

My life ever since has been full of disappointments and misfortune, and I am now incarcerated. With all of my God-given talents, at the age of 33 I have not accomplished anything. The Scripture says that I am doomed. Am I? (Georgia)

A

I have chosen to publish your question not because of any insight I can add, but simply to endorse your suggestion. Every day, people come into our parish office to request Masses. Most often, they are in remembrance of someone recently deceased or for a deeply held family member. With all of their thoughts about it and their prayers. It might also prompt parishioners’ private intentions.

What I do know is that your reading of these verses conflicts with the overall views on this topic in the Scriptures. St. Paul indicates in his Letter to the Ephesians, that our salvation is based on God’s grace through faith, not on the particular circumstances of our birth. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works” (Eph 2:8-9).

And the Gospel of John says that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, whom whoever believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16), which seems to clearly say that no one is excluded from salvation based on how he or she was conceived.

For you to decide that your present situation, your recent failings and your future fate were predetermined 33 years ago is selling yourself short. Why not talk to a chaplain or a counselor who, I am sure, would remind you of your value and your potential?
never had anyone he could truly count on in life. But that ‘Oh, Jesus, this is our boy’ begins with the unexpected way that Anton became part ways that God connects people into a family, a story that two, tension-filled months still brings Thomas to tears and home—with the Wrights in Indianapolis.

Grandfather of two.

Bates and Bruce Bennett.

Tina Montgomery, Beau, John Mother of Debra Cunningham, Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3. 81, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, June 3.

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the arrival, it melted her heart so much that she thought, “Oh, Jesus, this is our boy”.

The problem was getting out of Ukraine. Anton tried

sent him a message, “Are you safe?” Every night, the last

the foreign exchange students

The exchange students have biological parents in their home country. They’re well-taken care of,” Thomas says as tears begin to fall in his eyes. “Anton comes in, and he calls you Dad. I’m the only one in this family that he calls Dad. I’m the only person on Earth that he calls Dad. I did

I told him he needs to get to the west side of the city.”

“We pray that the kids that we’re going to accept as exchange students,” Thomas says. “God puts them in our house, and we soon become aware of why they’re here and why God wants us to be with them. We’re interacting with them on a deeper family level, and we’re helping them to understand God better. We look at it as a way we do ministry.”

Beth nods and adds, “This is exactly what the Catholic Church is teaching, that we are cooperating with God through his work, God doesn’t need our work, but he wants us to participate with him in this work.”

For the Wrights, doing God’s work includes building a family with the young people who invite them into their homes. Still, there was something different about their relationship with Anton.

“Of Jesus, this is our boy”

Growing up in an orphanage in Ukraine, Anton had never had anyone he could truly count on in life. But that all changed when, at the age of 15, he spent four weeks during the Christmas season in 2017 with the Wrights in their Indianapolis home—all part of an international program to give orphans in Ukraine an opportunity to spend the holidays in a loving family. “Anton came to us on the west side of the city.”

That’s the power of that connection was so strong that the Wrights have decided to adopt, but Ukrainian law prevented that possibility because of Anton’s age, Thomas says. So the Wrights have spent the past five years supporting Anton economically and emotionally as he continued his life in Ukraine, paying for his college expenses and phoning him on a regular basis.

Then came the day when the Wrights learned that Anton was asking for help against a background of explosions in the capital city of Kyiv, Ukraine.

“Your’e the dad I never dared to dream of”

Thomas’ voice fills with emotion again as he recalls that February day.

“They’re reporting explosions on the east side of Kyiv,” Thomas says. “I know he lives on the east side of the river. I told him to get to the west side of the city, that he would be safer in Germany, so Anton and I traveled there to stay with the family of another exchange student. He was a writer and a photographer

The Archdeacon of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes.

CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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• 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners
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unsuccessful efforts to get help from the U.S. embassy there. “It hurt to leave him.”

Staying behind in Germany, Anton sent Thomas a text that read, “You’re the dad that I never dared to dream of. I didn’t think there’d be a dad that would love me this much.”

And that’s where the journey seemed to be ending for Anton until Thomas heard about another possibility—a possibility that he believes shows “how the body of Christ works.”

“Well, Thomas was the best words I ever heard,” Thomas says about the sidewalks and the office where he and his colleagues in the Bible study tell him his best man from his wedding knows a guy from this Lutheran ministry who knows a guy in San Diego who is helping Ukrainians come through the Mexican border.”

Thomas obtained the information and sent it to Anton. On Easter Sunday, Anton messaged Thomas saying, “I want to go to Mexico now!” The Wrights arranged a flight for him. Anton arrived in Mexico on the Thursday after Easter and by that Friday morning, he was going through the immigration process at the United States border with his request for “humanitarian parole.”

When he was asked if he knew anyone living in the United States, Anton wrote, “Thomas Wright.” When he was asked his relationship to Thomas, he wrote, “Host dad.” A short time later, he phoned Thomas, who was teaching a class. “I want it to be Anton calling,” Thomas recalls, the emotion overwhelming him again. “My whole class is living through recalls, the emotion overwhelming him the first time he heard. My students started applauding. I felt like I was finally home.”

Thomas nods and recalls how he felt there’d be a dad that would love me, take me in,” Anton says.

“I was excited to see my family. I felt like I was finally home.”

Thomas recalls the connections that only the Holy Spirit makes possible through the body of Christ.”

“Those were the best words I ever heard. My students started applauding. They were so happy.”

Anton boarded a plane from San Diego that arrived in Indianapolis at 10 p.m. on Friday, April 22.

“I saw him coming toward us,” Thomas says. “We’re shooting, ‘Anton! Anton!’ We gave him a big hug.”

“God has plans beyond our own.”

Thomas tears to laughter when he recalls that within 10 minutes of Anton walking into their home, Anton was opening the refrigerator, looking for something to eat. It was a sign that the fear of that Wednesday phone call had faded, replaced by a feeling of comfort, security and joy.

That feeling continues on this spring evening as Beth, Thomas and Anton sit together at a table in their home. With a lasagna baking in the oven, they all look back in wonder at everything that has happened since February. And they also look forward in hope.

Anton’s entry into the United States on humanitarian parole grants him at least a year in this country—time in which they all hope an immigration lawyer will be able to find a way for Anton to stay permanently.

In the meantime, the Wrights—who will celebrate 25 years of marriage in December—are planning on adopting Anton, even if it’s more from a symbolic standpoint.

“I think it’s a very powerful that he knows we love him, and we are his parents,” Thomas says. “It doesn’t change his immigration status. We have a little time to see what our government does. Possibly, we’ll apply for asylum for him. Right now, as Father’s Day approaches, the focus is on the gifts that they cherish even more this year—the strong bonds of faith and the close bonds of a family that extend around the world.”

“I was really impressed that I could go anywhere and people were willing to help me and take me in,” Anton says.

Beth looks at Anton and says, “What we wanted was to never send him back in the first place. But God has plans beyond our own. God works in ways we don’t necessarily expect, but he’s always working. He builds our family, and that absolutely impacted how this all worked out.”

Thomas nods and recalls how he wrote to a friend in Hungary after Anton was home in Indianapolis. In that letter, Thomas wrote that he had never experienced the blessings and the impact “of the body of Christ as much as I had in the past couple of months.”

That intense feeling of family and faith continues for him, for all of them. “Every day, Christians all over the world were praying for us to bring him home,” Thomas says, looking at Anton. “Christians opened up their homes for him. These were the connections that only the Holy Spirit makes possible through the body of Christ.”

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
NEW CATHOLIC

continued from page 1

Her slow walk to Catholicism included time as a Methodist, years in the New Age movement, three decades practicing Messianic Judaism and time studying the early Christian desert fathers. The journey brought Griffiths to All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. On April 16 at the parish’s St. Martin Campus in Yorkville, Griffiths was received into the full communion of the Church during the Easter Vigil Mass. Her quest for God began as a little girl with her best friend and their desire to be saints.

‘I realized this is who I am’

Griffiths was raised as a Methodist, but admits she “was kind of Catholic at heart when I was young.” She was “greatly influenced” by her best friend Paula, a Catholic “who was deeply devout.”

When Griffiths was sick for two years as a child, “Paula would bring me books about saints, and we would read them—we both wanted to be saints,” she says. “I always loved Jesus, and I fell in love with the Sacred Heart of Jesus image.”

When Griffiths was 16, her family moved to Tucson, Ariz. They never joined a church, and so began her meandering journey “always seeking God.”

Her first venture was in the New Age movement in her 20s and early 30s.

Griffiths then discovered Messianic Judaism, whose members practice the Jewish faith but also believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

“I was a member of the movement for 32 years,” she says. “But there was always something missing. I needed a deeper relationship, and the Messianic Jews have issues with symbols of the cross and don’t practice Communion except during the third cup of the Seder meal at Passover.”

Griffiths was still practicing Messianic Judaism in 2018 when she suffered an injury on the right side of her body. It led to a painful, protracted illness.

“One thing I had a dream where I had to take care of a life-size crucifix before people came to venerate it,” she recalls. “It began to bleed, and I was trying to clean the blood and it fell on me, covering me.”

Griffiths now “always seeks God.”

Griffiths says she was ready to go back to church. So the couple went to an outdoor Mass offered at the time by the parish—and they were “both overcome,” she says. She made an appointment with parish pastor Father Jonathan Meyer “about our next step.”

Griffiths enrolled in the parish’s Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. She started watching the Eternal Word Television Network, read books by Protestant-turned-Catholic author Scott Hahn and books on apologetics—“I want to know answers, and I want to be ready when people ask,” she says.

The one stumbling block in her pursuit was the idea of purgatory.

“Now, I see it as a grace,” says Griffiths. As for the Easter Vigil Mass, “The only thing I can say is I was just on cloud nine—everyone said I was absolutely beaming,” she says. “The whole creation history, all the readings—it was hard not to cry through the whole thing. I was so touched.”

Receiving the Eucharist for the first time “was like receiving my first kiss from my beloved,” she says. “It was grace on grace.”

Griffiths’ natural choice for a confirmation saint was St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a 17th-century nun who promoted the popular Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Griffiths continued to search for God. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and her husband’s poor health to consider, she stopped attending church. At the same time, she felt a call to “go deeper” into her spirituality.

Griffiths was a longtime fan of Catholic musician John Michael Talbot. He also started and leads the Little Portion Hermitage in Berryville, Ark., an association affiliated with the Diocese of Little Rock, Ark. She signed up for his online spirituality course.

“We studied the early desert fathers and Jesus and prayer, and it started drawing me toward Catholicism,” she says. “I realized this is who I am in my heart and soul.”

“This is what I longed for all my life”

During that time, Griffiths took her granddaughter to prayer services at an urgent care facility.

“The nurse asked about my faith, and I told her my husband and I weren’t going to church because of the pandemic,” she recalls. “She said her church had outdoor services. I looked up. It was All Saints, and I discovered it was Catholic.”

Griffiths’ husband Ed was a fallen-away Catholic, but she says he was ready to go back to church.

So Griffiths took her granddaughter to the Easter Vigil Mass on April 16 at St. Martin Church, a campus of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. (Submitted photo by Cindy White)

Heart of Jesus.

“She was perfect for me for a number of reasons,” she says. “I really identified with her because of her great love of Jesus. The Sacred Heart picture has always been part of my walk, even when I was a New Ager.”

Griffiths is now “all in” as a Catholic. She prays the rosary at nearby St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church in Aurora and has joined a Bible study at St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg.

And she worships at Mass as often as she can.

“The Eucharist is huge,” she says emphatically. “That’s the treasure in the field, and I want it. I’ve always been a sacramental type of person—I love the liturgy.”

After 72 years, “I have so much to learn!” says Griffiths. “I’m full of all this wonder, and I have so much to make up for. This is what I longed for all my life—”