Priests and their dogs: A bond of joy that brings extra smiles to parish members, too

First of two parts

By John Shaughnessy

With his tail wagging and his head bopping back and forth in the rhythmic joy of being a dog, Raphael quickly gets smiles and pats of affection from the people who have come to the food pantry at St. Michael Parish in the southern Indiana community of Bradford.

In the 10 months since he was rescued by Father Aaron Pfaff, the dog who is named after one of the archangels has made such a connection with the people who come in need of extra food that they bring him snacks and treats.

That connection has also fed a different kind of need for Raphael, who had a damaged tail and a broken tooth—and who had lived in a cage in a basement—before Father Pfaff found him outside a Cincinnati animal shelter and gave him a home in more ways than one in the parish. Ever since, the huge English Mastiff breed dog has been making the most of his second chance.

“He’s on a mission to build trust in people,” Father Pfaff says. “He seems to build a lot of relationships with children, guests of the food pantry and adults. People see a big, gentle spirit. In his own way, he’s teaching us kindness and generosity. He’s a real welcoming presence.”

That description fits a number of dogs who have found homes with priests across the archdiocese, welcoming parishioners, connecting with school children and sometimes even helping to deepen people’s faith.

“I wouldn’t give her up for the world”

When he decided to get a dog, Father Adam Ahern had just returned to the archdiocese after serving in 2019-20 as a chaplain in the Indiana Army National Guard—his unit having been deployed to a camp in Kuwait where he had traveled across the Middle East to minister to U.S. soldiers facing intense, life-threatening situations throughout the region.

Father Adam Ahern calls Bella, his 2-year-old German Shepherd, “a great blessing in my priesthood and a gift from God.” (Submitted photo)

That goal is becoming a reality.

“Father Ahern tells me how happy Bella is,” said Father Pfaff. “She has given him a new lease on life and a new lease on gratitude.”

For the people of St. Michael Parish, Bella is a big, furry reminder that “our world urgently needs peace; it needs to recover harmony.”

“I am visiting you in the course of the senseless and tragic war that broke out with the invasion of Ukraine, even as other conflicts and threats of conflict continue to imperil our times,” the pope said on Sept. 13 in a speech to the country’s civil authorities, representatives of civic groups and members of the diplomatic corps.

“I have come to echo the plea of all those who cry out for peace, which is the essential path to development for our globalized world,” he said.

After a nearly seven-hour flight from Rome, Pope Francis arrived in the capital city, Nur-Sultan, where he attended the Sept. 14-15 Congress of World and Traditional Religions. As he arrived in Kazakh airspace, his plane was escorted by fighter jets.

Arriving at the presidential palace, Pope Francis, who continues to suffer from knee pain, remained seated while Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev stood next to him as an honor guard played the national anthems of Vatican City State and Kazakhstan.

Welcoming the pope, President Tokayev thanked him for his “tireless and dedicated efforts in the name of the human family around the world” at a “critical juncture in human history.”

As Islamophobia, antisemitism and Christian persecutions continue to rise, the president said, “humanity could really go one way or the other if we are not vigilant.”

“I believe it is high time for moderates from different cultures and religions to pool their wisdom and energy to unite
Seminaries begin implementing new Program of Priestly Formation

By Sean Gallagher

The basic mission of seminaries across the U.S. is to form men to be effective parish priests. These seminaries, including Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, follow documents of the Second Vatican Council in carrying out this mission. But societies and cultures around the world have changed greatly in the 60 years since the council began in 1962.

In response to these changes, the Church regularly updates its norms for priestly formation so that those who are ordained are best positioned to share the Gospel in parish communities. Starting this fall, seminaries across the U.S., including Bishop Bruté and Saint Meinrad Seminaries, are beginning to implement a new edition of the Program of Priestly Formation (PPF). It was developed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) with guidance from the Vatican.

For several years, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has served on the bishops’ committee that oversees the development of the new PPF. It has taken several years to bring it to completion because of the many levels of review it has undergone. Other bishops’ committees have had their own versions of suggested edits, as has the entire body of the USCCB. Then, drafts of the document were sent for review to the Vatican.

“It’s clear that the Holy See is concerned about priestly formation across the world, which it should be,” said Archbishop Thompson. “We have to make sure that we’re doing good, solid formation of holy priests for the sake of the Church, for the well-being of all involved, for good preaching, for proper collection of the sacraments, for pastoral care, for proper administration, for every aspect of the Church.”

Father Eric Augenstein, archdiocesan director of seminarians, spoke with The Criterion about these changes, emphasizing that the new PPF overall focuses on the principles of “gradualism and integration.”

“Gradualism is the concept that seminary formation happens gradually over a period of time,” he said. “And you go deeper over time. It’s not something that can happen quickly.

“Integration has to do with the integration of the four dimensions of priestly formation—human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual formation.”

In the past, a seminarian was at his priestly formation was simply described by the year he was in and where he was at, such as “first year college” or “third theology.”

Terminology introduced by the new PPF emphasizes the goal of each stage of priestly formation. There are four stages of formation in the new PPF: propaedeutic, discipleship, configuration and vocational synthesis. The four dimensions of priestly formation in the new PPF are those included in previous editions: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

“The goal of priestly formation is to form men who are in the likeness of Jesus Christ for service in the Church and the world,” Father Augenstein said.

“It flows from a personal relationship with Jesus. Priestly formation is really founded in discipleship, becoming first a disciple of Jesus Christ. Then, you are able to serve the people, you can be configured to Christ the priest.”

The propaedeutic stage is for one year and applies to men entering into their first year of college seminary, or the first year of priestly formation for those who have earned a degree’s degree but did not attend a college seminary.

During that year, the focus is on the human and spiritual dimensions of formation. Those in college seminaries may take a limited number of general education courses. But the only classes related to the Catholic faith they can take are basic level Scripture or catechesis courses.

“The development of the propaedeutic stage, said Father Augenstein, is, in part, a response to deficiencies in catechesis some new seminarians may have experienced as children or teenagers.

“It’s trying to make sure that all of our seminarians have a basic understanding of what the Church teaches and believes, recognizing that, when they come into seminary, they’re inconsistent in their background in the faith,” said Father Augenstein of the propaedeutic stage.

Saint Meinrad launched its version of it in August. It includes four archdiocesan seminarians.

“The propaedeutic year offers someone to be really grounded in his faith and personal spiritual life before moving into the other dimensions of formation,” said Benedictine Father Denis Robinson, rector of Saint Meinrad.

“The men in the propaedeutic program at Saint Meinrad largely live in a community apart from the rest of the seminarians with its own chapel and dining hall. ’They’re not doing the same things day after day that the other men are doing,’ said Father Denis. ’While they will have some ministry experience, that’s not the focus of their formation. It’s not a pastoral or even an intellectual focus. It’s a spiritual and human focus.’

While Bishop Bruté will not begin its propaedeutic stage until next year, Father Andrew Syberg, the seminary’s vice rector, says human and spiritual formation offered for many years at the archdiocesan college seminary has anticipated the changes of the new PPF.

“We hammer human formation over and over and over until we’re blue in the face, until the seminarians say, ’Yes. We’ve got it. Human formation.’ ” said Father Syberg. “The propaedeutic year really focuses in like a laser on human and spiritual formation.”

Father Augenstein looks forward to the possible positive impact of the introduction of the propaedeutic stage on the encouragement of priestly vocations. He noted that it may “help ease the minds of hearts of those who are discerning the priesthood but are still unsure.

It provides a setting and a structure to help formation,” he said.

In the front row, Father Andrew Syberg, left, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and Father Joseph Moriarty pose with seminarians on Aug. 21 on the grounds of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis at the start of a new year of priestly formation at the archdiocesan-operated seminary. (Saul Elbein photo)
A program to connect parishes creates a lifeline of hope and faith

By John Shaughnessy

David Siler has never forgotten the words of a teacher in Haiti shared with him and others as they made a mission trip to a small, impoverished parish in that country.

“The teacher told Siler and the others in the group from St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, ‘When we see your smiling faces here, it brings us great hope.’”

That connection has also led to great results for both parishes.

“Our twinning relationship has been our parish’s opportunity to directly and significantly respond to the call of Jesus to serve ‘the least among us.’” Siler says.

The spiritual benefits for all of us who have traveled to Haiti have been profound, which in turn has an impact on our entire parish.

“And our support in Haiti allows 480 children to get an education, and 480 children to get a good meal four days per week—thanks to our eventual partnership with our neighboring parish in Indianapolis, Christ the King. And we helped a Catholic priest have the means to live among his parishioners. We raised the funds to build a rectory.”

Ten years after Siler helped establish that life-changing connection between the parishes of St. Matthew and St. Mary Who Unites Knots, he’s now on a mission to create even more “twinning” connections between parishes in the United States and more than 325 parishes in Haiti and Latin America.

On Aug. 15, he became the new executive director of the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas (PTPA), an organization that oversees the relationships between Catholic churches in the United States and more than 325 parishes in Haiti and Latin America.

Siler will work to build more twinning relationships between parishes in the United States and these countries.

“The pastor that my own parish in Indianapolis and visit our church and school. He spends time in our classrooms, teaching our students what life is like in Haiti and helping them to understand the impact of their prayers and support.”

“Our St. Matthew students do a fundraiser each year that allows a pastor in Haiti, Pere Max, to throw a Christmas celebration for his 480 students. We’ve even had a few young students, when having their own birthday celebration, invite their friends to make a donation to Haiti instead of a gift for themselves.”

Q. Has the interaction between the two parishes contributed to interaction between the two schools?

A. “We have been blessed to have our Haitian students travel to Indianapolis and visit our church and school. He spends time in our classrooms, teaching our students what life is like in Haiti and helping them to understand the impact of their prayers and support.”

Q. You have participated in mission trips to St. Matthew’s twin parish in Haiti. For more information about the parish twinning program, contact Siler at dsiler@ptpausa.org. †

A. “I have been privileged to see the very face of God, and the mark that this has left on my heart and soul is immeasurable. I have developed a love and a passion for serving our friends in Haiti. I’ve also had the privilege of accompanying many of our twin parish, and their reactions vary widely.

“Many travelers, upon seeing the profound poverty and life challenges they that could never before imagine, are moved so deeply that they want to remain involved in nurturing our relationship with our sister parish. Even if your heart is only partially open, it is impossible for you not to be touched deeply by the faith and joy of the people in Haiti and Latin America, in spite of their struggles.”

Q. What are some of your goals for the PTPA?

A. “In my first year, I intend to connect with every parish in the U.S. that has a twin in Haiti and Latin America. We currently have 293 such parishes twinning with a parish in Haiti and 35 twinned in Latin America. I want to learn about the work they are doing, their successes and their challenges so that PTPA can seek ways to help them meet their challenges and replicate their successes broadly.”

“Every parish twin relationship is unique, yet at the same time there are many aspects that we all have in common—such as the need for water, a means to clean the water, education of children and church facility needs. It is my goal to make our parishes aware of others working in Haiti and Latin America and connect them so that they can form collaborations and partnerships.

“I also hope to find more parishes in the U.S. that want to begin a twinning relationship, as we currently have a list of about 100 parishes requesting a twin in Haiti and nearly that many throughout Latin America.”

Q. How many parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have twinning relationships with parishes in Haiti and Latin America?

A. “I am very proud to report that we have 11 parishes in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who have a twin parish. And the state of Indiana has more twin parishes than any other state in the country, with a total of 46 parishes.”

Q. What guidance would you give a parish wanting to start a twinning relationship?

A. “This leap of faith. It will be the best decision your parish has ever made. Parishioners, the parish as a whole and your twin parish will be enriched in ways that you cannot imagine.”

(For more information about the parish twinning program, contact Siler at 317-431-3635 or dsiler@ptpausa.org.) †

New website lists central and southern Indiana resources for moms in need

The archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity and Catholic Charities-Social Concerns Ministry have created a new website, walkingwithmomindy.org, to list resources located in central and southern Indiana for pregnant and parenting moms.

The site has three sections: Resources for Moms, Healing Resources and Parish Resources.

The Resources for Moms section currently has 14 categories. Each lists national and state programs first, then local resources alphabetically by location in the archdiocese.

The Healing Resources page currently lists eight options ranging from websites to local programs, to counselors, podcasts, books and more.

“The Parish Resources section currently includes prayers and prayer guides for leaders of parish ministries that help moms in need.

The number of resources in each section—and potentially new sections to increase as more information is gathered—will be posted on the coordinators of the site.

If there a resource you know of that helps pregnant and parenting moms that is not currently listed on the site? Send the information to Brie Anne Varick, coordinator of the Office of Human Life and Dignity, at bvarick@ archindy.org for vetting.”

The criterion staff report

During a mission trip, David Siler shares a moment of joy with children who are students at the school of St. Mary Who Unites Knots Parish in Haiti, the twinning parish of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, where Siler is a member. (Submitted photo)

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Pope tells WYD pilgrims to follow Mary’s example of encounter, service and love

The Blessed Mother is at the heart of Pope Francis’ message for young people preparing to attend World Youth Day (WYD) in Portugal next year. And his words offer a blueprint for them in their mission to live out their vocations as disciples of Christ.

“Mary is an example of a young person who wastes no time on seeking attention or the approval of others—as often happens when we depend on our ‘likes’ on social media. She sets out to find the most genuine of all ‘connections’: the one that comes from encounter, sharing, love and service,” the pope said in his message for WYD, which will be held on Aug. 1-6, 2023, in Lisbon, Portugal.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the postponement of the Lisbon gathering in 2020 and 2021. “For the hoped young Catholics would gather in Lisbon, Portugal, and that ‘in these troubled times, when our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war, Mary shows to all of us, and especially to you, young people like herself, the path of proximity and service’,” Pope Francis wrote.

The theme the Holy Father chose for two WYD celebrations—one on a local level on Nov. 20, the feast of Christ the King; the other for the world gathering in Lisbon next summer—is “Mary arose and went haste” (Lk 1:39) to visit her cousin Elizabeth. “Only thus will we bridge distances—between generations, social classes, ethnic and other groups—and even put an end to wars. Young people always represent the hope for new unity within our fragmented and divided human family.”

Young people’s continuous message, like “the great message entrusted to the Church,” must be Jesus, he continued. “Yes, Jesus himself, in his infinite love for each of us, his salvation and the new life he has bestowed upon us. Mary is our model; she shows us how to welcome this immense gift into our lives, to share it with others, and thus to bring Christ, his compassionate love and his generous service to our deeply wounded humanity.”

We pray that next year’s WYD bears much fruit and that young people always carry Jesus within their hearts and bring him to all those whom they meet. —Mike Krokos

Elizabeth II’s life a reminder of the role of family in instilling timeless values

Although Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain held no political authority like monarchs of old or like today’s governmental leaders, her decision Sept. 8 drew immediate heartfelt reactions from people low and high around the world. That was because, more than simply as the head of state of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth II had shown herself from before her 70-year reign began in 1952 to be a true image of the people of the British Commonwealth spread around the world.

When she turned 21 in 1947, knowing that she would succeed her father King George VI as monarch, she said in a speech to the British people, “I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which all Belong.” She fulfilled that promise in the long life with which she was blessed; not just in words, but also in the loving care for her people that she showed in so many actions. In this, Elizabeth built on the strong foundation of service and solidarity she had been given in her parents. She was a teenager when Great Britain was under massive attack from the air in the early years of World War II.

The royal family could have sought refuge in Canada or in any other country of the commonwealth far away from the fighting. But her parents were determined to remain with their suffering people and not abandon them in their time of need. So, though only a young 25 when she began her reign in 1952, Elizabeth had received a baptism of fire for leadership in the harrowing years of the war.

Other aspects of life that shaped her leadership were her strong Christian faith and her dedication to her family, which she received so well from her parents. Selfless leadership rooted in family and faith—these are timeless qualities that many of the people of the United Kingdom and many others in western society increasingly devalued or outright abandoned. The second half of the 20th century and into the 21st century. But while changes swirled around her in society and in her own family, Elizabeth remained steadfast in those values that had served her and her people so well for so long.

Her son, the new King Charles III, who has experienced his own self- reflection, must also recall the example on the morning of his father in his first speech as monarch when he said, “As the queen herself did with such unsuraving devotion, I too now solemnly pledge myself, throughout the remaining time God grants me, to uphold the constitutional principles at the heart of our nation.”

May Charles take at his word to bring Christ, his compassionate love and generosity firsthand. And, please God, may this blessing continue to all of our families so that they, with the help of your grace, usher in your eternal kingdom of peace.

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Letters to the Editor

A challenge to tithe and experience God’s love and generosity firsthand

After reading Richard Eiremen’s column regarding tithing in the July 15 issue of The Criterion, I felt compelled to write and express my whole-hearted agreement with his sentiment. My husband and I have consistently decided to tithe our parish and charities throughout our marriage, but I don’t think we ever reached a 10% benchmark. Several years ago, my job status changed, and I was unemployed; needless to say, quite a shock and upset to us. Our situation has brought us to the point that allowed us to donate to our parish and family.

A local synod report is a reminder we must enhance transparency

It was gratifying to read in the Aug. 12 edition of The Criterion a description of the archdiocesan participation in the plan of Pope Francis that the archdiocese and people of God be heard from all over the world. This is in preparation for a Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2023. My understanding of full access to the full report at archindy.org/synod.

I look forward to substantial reporting in the future on the progress of the synod, which will be a major event in Church history.

Although the archdiocesan report, it was stated at the same level we had pledged earlier in the year. We decided that we would donate 10% of our funds came to us, tax refunds, unemployed benefits, salary, etc. to our parish. Although I returned to work and we regained our financial security, we have continued with this practice into our retirement.

We have also had found that “God will not be outdone in generosity” and have experienced his generosity repeatedly. We have been blessed in many ways! We, too, would like to challenge others to tithe and experience God’s love and generosity firsthand.

Donna J. Lecher
Greensburg

The activities of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council were described frequently in the diocesan newspaper, The Criterion every week, but do not recall such information. I visited the archdiocesan website and only read about the Synod report twice—one in December 2020 and again in April 2015. A listing of the current Synod members and why the Synod portion of its minutes may exist somewhere but were not easily accessible on the website.

Collaborative decision of lay participation in the life of the Church would enhance the transparency which should be an integral part of our faith lives.

Ellen Healey
Indiana
La corresponsabilidad exige que le retribuyamos a Dios todo lo que nos ha dado.

"El que es honrado en lo poco también lo será en lo mucho; y el que no es integro en lo poco tampoco lo será en lo mucho" (Lc 16:10).

La lectura del Evangelio de este fin de semana (Lc 16:1-13), el vigésimo quinto domingo del tiempo ordinario, habla sobre la corresponsabilidad y nos da una idea de la forma en que Dios trata a los que despilfarran los muchos dones que nos ha dado.

Muy a menudo, cuando oímos la palabra "corresponsabilidad," pensamos en dar nuestro tiempo, talentos y tesoro a nuestra parroquia, a la arquidiócesis o a otras organizaciones benéficas y, por supuesto, esto es una parte importante de nuestra responsabilidad como administradores de los dones de Dios. Pero la auténtica corresponsabilidad cristiana significa algo más que dar limosna o compartir nuestro tiempo y talentos. Como se ilustra en la parábola que cuenta Jesús en el Evangelio de este domingo, la buena corresponsabilidad también supone ser fiables, generosos y la voluntad de perdonar aquellos que han cometido errores en su responsabilidad de cuidar los dones que Dios nos ha encomendado.

La primera lectura del libro del profeta Amós (Am 8:4-7) también se refiere a la fiabilidad, o a la falta de ella, de los responsables del bienestar económico del pueblo de Dios. Dando voz a la ira y la decepción del Señor, el profeta dice: "Orgán esto, los que pístean a los necesitados y extierran a los pobres de la tierra. Ustedes dicen: ¡Cuándo pasará la fiesta de luna nueva para que podamos vender grano, o el día de reajo para que pongamos a la venta el trigo?" (Am 8:4-6). El profeta nos advierte que el Señor se acordará de nuestra irresponsabilidad y nos pedirá cuentas por la forma en que manejamos nuestros asuntos y tratamos a los demás, especialmente a los pobres y vulnerables.

La selección de este domingo del Evangelio de san Lucas conduce con dichos que nos resaltan conocidos, pero que no siempre se entienden bien: "Y si con lo sieno no han sido honrados, ¿quién les dará a ustedes los bienes de la tierra, y la herencia de los justos? Si el siervo no es fiel en lo que recibió de su señor, no será fiel en lo que recibiremos como dones procedentes de Dios." (Lc 16:10).

Si no somos buenos administradores de las cosas que pertenecen a otros, ¿quién nos confiará dones a nosotros? Y no podemos dedicarnos a vivir de dos formas distintas al mismo tiempo o acabaremos desesperadamente en conflicto.

En traducciones antiguas del Nuevo Testamento en ocasiones se utilizaba la palabra hebrea mammon (españolizada como mamón) para describir dinero o riqueza. En la Edad Media, mammon se representaba a menudo como un falso dios o una personificación del mal. Jesús no desprecia el dinero, ni lo considera algo malo en sí mismo. Es el amor al dinero, el dinero en sí lo que constituye la raíz de todos los males. Como nos enseña san Pablo: "La avaricia, en efecto, es la raíz de todos los males y, arraigados por ella, algunos han perdido la fe y ahora son presa de múltiples remordimientos." (1 Tim 6:10).

Cuando sustituimos el amor que estamos llamados a sentir únicamente por Dios y lo trasladamos a la riqueza o las cosas materiales, estamos adorando al falso dios Mammon. Y cuando perseguimos ciegamente las cosas que el dinero nos consiente, incluso el poder, la fama o la gratificación sexual realmente nos cegamos por el poder seductor del dinero y somos "presa de múltiples remordimientos." Como dice claramente Jesús, no podemos servir a la vez a Dios y a Mammon (la riqueza).

Para ser servidores dignos de confianza de los dones que hemos recibido de Dios, debemos reconocer que no se nos pedirá cuentas por la forma en que gastamos nuestros derechos y los compartimos generosamente con los demás. Esto es una forma de vida que Jesús nos llama a vivir, y es incompatible con los estilos de vida que ponen la riqueza y los privilegios por encima de todo. De hecho, sencillamente no se puede servir a Dios como administradores responsables y, al mismo tiempo, vivir como personas egoístas cuya principal preocupación es lo que el dinero nos comprará.

La corresponsabilidad nos enseña a "buscar primero el reino de Dios" (Mt 6:33) con la confianza de que todo lo que necesitamos para amar a Dios y al prójimo lo recibiremos como dones procedentes de la Divina Providencia. Se nos invita, y nos seña da, a ser administradores confiables de la abundante generosidad de Dios y solo podremos llevar a cabo con éxito esta impresionante responsabilidad si nos desprendemos de toda preocupación inapropiada por el dinero y lo material.

Pelas la gracia de ser buenos corresponsables de todo lo que Dios nos ha dado.
Right to Life Indianapolis dinner on Oct. 6 will feature president of Charlotte Lozier Institute

Right to Life Indianapolis will hold its annual “Celebrate Life” dinner at Marriott Indianapolis Downtown, 350 Washington St., in Indianapolis, at 6 p.m. on Oct. 6. This year’s event will feature a keynote address by Chuck Donovan, president of the Charlotte Lozier Institute. The institute promotes deeper public understanding of the value of human life, motherhood and fatherhood, and seeks to identify policies and practices that will protect life and serve both women’s health and family well-being.

Donovan, a University of Notre Dame graduate, has served as legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, helped to lead the Family Research Council for nearly two decades and most recently has been Senior Research Fellow in Religion and Civil Society at the Heritage Foundation.

He has written several books, had articles published in leading newspapers and magazines, and has been a guest on national TV and radio shows.

The event has played key roles in the development of public policy regarding financial assistance for adoption, compassionate alternatives to abortion, the child tax credit, marriage penalty relief and rights of the unborn.

Registration begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and award presentations at 6:45 p.m. The keynote address starts at 8 p.m. The cost is $75 per person, $55 for table of 10 and $45 for a student table of 10.

To register, an event sponsor or for more information, go to celeberatelifeidinner.com, call 317-582-1526 or e-mail life@rtlindy.org.

Wedding Anniversaries

GARY and VIRGINIA (MCGIFFEN) WILD, members of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 15 at Our Lady of the Most Holy and Undivided Virgin Mary Catholic Church.

The couple was married in St. John the Baptist Church in Vincennes, Ind. (Diocese of Evansville), on Sept. 15, 1962.

They have four children: Catherine, David, Mark and Michael Wild. The couple also has six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

JOHN and VIKKI (BOOHER) RISCH, members of St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 16. The couple was married in St. Gabriel Parish in Indianapolis on Sept. 16, 1972.

They have two children: Angela Redmond and Brian Risch.
Elderly, infirm pope preaches about the challenges, blessings of old age.

On July 26, at the beginning of his pastoral journey to Canada, Pope Francis reflected on the challenges and blessings of old age. By his own reckoning, the Holy Father is an old man at age 85, and as his use of either a wheelchair or a cane demonstrates, he is suffering from an infirmity that greatly reduces his mobility.

While celebrating Mass on the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus, the Holy Father said:

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


The Pope insists that he is not ready to resign. But he also refuses to rule it out as a possibility. No pope is ready to resign. But he also refuses to resign because Pope Francis met with many of the indigenous peoples who either were personally abused by Church members or who represented family or others who suffered at the hands of overzealous, rigid proselytizers. But for the elderly, infirm pope this trip was also physically exhausting.

On his return flight to Rome, Pope Francis commented to journalists that he would either have to cut back on traveling or resign as pope. That set off a frenzy of media speculation that, as usual, missed the point.

“Jesús de Nazaret con sus palabras, con sus acciones, y en su persona, revela el tesoro que hemos recibido de quienes nos han precedido.”


Pope Francis believes that a bright future is available to us “if, with God’s help, we do not sever the bond that joins us with those who have gone before us, and if we foster dialogue with those who will come after us.”

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

El Papa anciano y enfermo predica sobre los retos y las bendiciones de la vejez.

The Criterion Friday, September 16, 2022

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“We had dogs when I was growing up,” Father Ahern says. “Coming back from Kuwait, I knew I’d be on my own in the rectory, and I wanted to see what it would be like to have a dog as an adult.”

The connection he has with Bella, a 2-year-old German Shepherd, has been even better than he hoped. “I wouldn’t give her up for the world at this point,” he says.

With a laugh, Father Ahern shares a few stories of how children and adults react when they see the priest and the dog together, often focusing more on Bella.

In the nearly two years he led St. Michael Parish in Charlestown in the New Albany Deanery, Father Ahern made frequent visits with Bella to the parish’s early childhood development center where the 3- and 4-year-old children would joyfully chase after the dog, and she would respond playfully. After such visits, the children would sometimes draw pictures of those experiences.

“When they drew pictures of Father Adam, they would draw pictures of Bella, too,” Father Ahern says. “Some would just draw pictures of Bella.”

In July, when Father Ahern became pastor of the Jeffersonville parishes of St. Augustine and Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, there was a huge sign welcoming both him and Bella.

“I’m introducing myself to the parishes right now. I’ve lost count of the number of people who have told me, ‘I know you’re a good person because you’re a dog person’,” he says.

He laughs again as he shares that reaction, but he turns serious when he talks about Bella, who gave a home when she was 8 weeks old and has now grown into “a 65-pound terror of rabbits and squirrels” whose human pleasure in life is playing ball with Father Ahern.

“There are times when being a priest is difficult, when the weight of the world is on your shoulders,” he says. “When you come home from a difficult funeral or a long day at the office, the presence of another creature in the rectory makes a difference—the joy she has in seeing you come back.”

Father Aaron Pfaff and Raphael have formed a close connection since the pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bradford rescued the English Mastiff breed dog 10 months ago. (Submitted photo)

“When I was at St. Michael, there was a chapel in the rectory. When I couldn’t find Bella, nine times out of 10 she was in the chapel. It was always a reminder that I need to go in there and spend more time there myself.”

“There’s a definite tone of love in his voice when Father Ahern says about his connection with Bella, ‘It’s been a great blessing in my priesthood and a gift from God.’”

The unconditional love of dogs

When 86-year-old Father Thomas Stepanski settles down to take a nap each day, he can always count on his two boxers named Rocky and Riley to join him for that hour in bed.

“They’re real companions,” he says, his voice touched with a combination of joy and love. “And they get along really well. They’re like brother and sister.”

Now in his 60th year as a priest, Father Stepanski has never had dogs in his life until 11 years ago when his friend and caretaker, Rich DeLong, suggested the idea to him.

Father Stepanski and DeLong had been friends who took walks together after the priest retired as the pastor of Mary, Queen of Peace Parish in Danville, but their bond became stronger after Father Stepanski had a heart attack and needed a quintuple-bypass surgery, according to DeLong. And with Father Stepanski not having family nearby, DeLong became a caretaker for his friend. DeLong also thought having dogs would enhance his friend’s life.


The priest’s first two dogs, Tara and Toric, meant so much to him that there is a memorial in his house to them, including their pictures and their collars.

Rocky and Riley, both rescue dogs, soon came into the life of Father Stepanski, who still attends Mass at Mary, Queen of Peace and continues to live in Danville, saying, “It’s a nice small town.”

“I can’t get around too much,” Father Stepanski says. “The spirit is good, but the body isn’t. That’s why it’s nice to have the dogs. When Rich has to go away, it’s nice to have companions who look after me.”

“Dogs are a blessing. I would always encourage people to have them.”

Father Pfaff adds to that thought when he talks about Raphael and the other dogs he has rescued through the years.

“Dogs teach us a lot about faith, about relationships, about God,” Father Pfaff says. “Raphael is consistent in wanting to give and receive love, no matter what happens in the world and in our lives.”

“He has a way of keeping me in the moment and other-focused. It’s similar to the way God calls us to be grounded, focused and present—to be aware of others.”

“The more I live with dogs, the more I realize how far I have to come as a human.”

In his retirement, Father Thomas Stepanski has found a lot of comfort and joy in his two dogs, Riley and Rocky. (Submitted photo)

people behind the ideas of peace, social harmony and mutual support,” he said.

Tokayev said the pope’s presence at the interreligious meeting would ensure “harmony and mutual support,” he said.

“Together with a commitment to freedom also recognizes basic human rights, the pope said, praising the country’s abolition of the death penalty “in the name of each human being’s right to hope.”

The pope lauded Kazakhstan’s commitment to peace and expressed his appreciation for the country’s “decisive repudiation of nuclear weapons” as well as its environmental policies that invest in clean sources of energy.

“Together with a commitment to interreligious dialogue, these are concrete seeds of hope sown in the common soil of humanity,” Pope Francis said. “It is up to us to cultivate those seeds for the sake of coming generations, for the young, whose desires must be seriously considered as we make decisions affecting the present and the future.”

“Dogs are a blessing. I would always encourage people to have them.”

In his retirement, Father Thomas Stepanski has found a lot of comfort and joy in his two dogs, Riley and Rocky. (Submitted photo)
Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society Council president Paul Ainslie shows off a bedroom of the organization’s future transitional home for unsheltered men in Indianapolis. Each of the facility’s 13 bedrooms will include a bed, desk, closet, dresser, window for natural light and a bathroom with shower. (Photos by Natalie Hoder)

SHELTER

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On Aug. 22, SVdP Indianapolis released a statement announcing its purchase of the St. Elizabeth/Coleman Center in Indianapolis for conversion into the Love Your Neighbor Center, a transitional housing facility with space for 13 unsheltered men. The men, identified from among those served by the organization, will live there for 6-9 months. During that time, they will participate in the SVdP Changing Lives Forever (CLF) program, learn job and life skills and utilize resources, with the end goal of obtaining permanent housing.

The hope is to finish necessary renovations to the facility in time for a late 2022 or early 2023 opening. “We’ve been trying to help unsheltered people for years and years,” said Ainslie. “This [initiative] really steps up our game to provide 24/7 help and a one-way ticket off the street and to a better life.”

‘Learn their story to know how to help them’

Ainslie identified the need to “walk the homeless well” after identifying who they were and connecting with their story. “They’re individuals worthy of dignity and respect.”

The Love Your Neighbor Center honors those rights. In addition to a bed, desk, closet and dresser, each of the 13 residential rooms has a window for natural light, WiFi and a private bathroom with a shower, as well as a lock on the door “so people can have their individual privacy,” said Ainslie.

To develop a realistic, workable program, Ainslie, Zubler and others visited similar SVdP facilities in Dayton and Louisville.

“They’re two similar but slightly different models, and it helped shape what we would like to accomplish,” said Zubler.

With an annual budget between $500,000 and $600,000, the Love Your Neighbor Center will have five full-time staff members, including a program director, case workers, kitchen staff and more.

But the facility and services will operate primarily through volunteers, said Zubler.

“We rely on the help of thousands to do all St. Vincent de Paul does in our community,” he said. “That will be no different with this facility.”

Similar mission in serving the poor and vulnerable

The property, located at 2500 Churchman Ave. on the south side of Indianapolis near Beech Grove, has a long history of serving those in need. The Daughters of Isabella purchased it in 1921 and built the St. Elizabeth Home for unwed, unschooled pregnant women, adding adoption services in 1929.

In 2004, the organization merged with Coleman Adoption Services to become St. Elizabeth/Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services. It closed the maternity home in 2007 due to rising costs but continued to use the home’s office space to provide adoption services, international adoption home studies and post-placement supervision.

St. Elizabeth/Coleman became an agency of Catholic Charities Indianapolis in 2008, maintaining its services and location while the residential facility served through 2017 as housing for archdiocesan interns.

“Weith the residential housing facility empty for five years, it was more and more challenging to financially support,” said David Bethuram, archdiocesan Catholic Charities Secretariat executive director. “So, the decision was made to sell the property to another non-profit with a similar mission in serving the poor and vulnerable.”

The transitional housing program for unsheltered men fulfilled that desire, and the property fulfilled the program’s needs. SVdP Indianapolis purchased the property from the archdiocese in May. St. Elizabeth/Coleman will continue to operate on the property while searching for a new location, said Bethuram.

“Our services will not change,” he noted. “St. Elizabeth/Coleman will continue to provide lifelong support and services to birth mothers, children and families.”

St. Vincent de Paul will continue the agency’s service of distributing clothes and baby items locally to pregnant and parenting mothers.

Distributing clothes and other items is “something St. Vincent de Paul already does, something we know how to do,” said Zubler. “So, we will continue that [service] and probably expand it.”

“They’re not walking out alone’

There are other SVdP Indianapolis ministries Zubler sees adding to the list of services provided through the Love Your Neighbor Center, including a self-serve food pantry similar to the one the organization runs on the east side of Indianapolis.

“There is space [at the transitional home] that would allow a food pantry with room for storage and industrial-size refrigerators and freezers,” he said. “There’s a real food gap need within that community—we’ve been told by that by multiple sources.”

Zubler also envisions the possibility of running a small resale shop at the facility, similar to the organization’s Madison Avenue location.

In addition to helping the local community, “Both [a resale shop] and a food pantry can function as vocational incubators for the transitional home’s residents, because they give folks an opportunity to understand operations and responsibilities associated with employment and volunteer services,” he said.

Other ideas Zubler hopes to implement at the center include hosting community dinners, offering the facility’s conference space for use and inviting neighbors to participate in the CLF program.

“We want our doors to be open to the community around us,” he said. “We’re already met with several neighborhood associations and religious organizations within the surrounding community, including Holy Name [of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove] and other denominations. We feel a cooperation with neighborhood associations, community centers, religious organizations and other non-profits will allow us to work together to identify need gaps.”

Zubler dreams big when considering the facility’s 7.4 acres. A campus with multiple family housing units and comprehensive services “could help us meet the needs of unsheltered families, including immigrants and refugees,” he said.

But the current focus is on getting the transitional housing program for unsheltered men established.

“It really fits the mission and values of St. Vincent de Paul,” said Zubler. “It’s a holistic approach that provides person-to-person service to those in need and helps them recover their own dignity by teaching them to be self-sufficient.”

“We don’t want to be housing people so much as housing people. And we will continue to be there to help them and walk with them, so when they walk out the door, they know they’re not walking out alone.”

(For more information on the Love Your Neighbor Center and services or to inquire about job opportunities there, go to www.svdpindy.org/about/love-your-neighbor-center.)
MANCHESTER, England (CNS)—

Catholics in the U.K. paid tribute to Queen Elizabeth II following her death on Sept. 8 and the end of a reign that lasted more than 70 years.

Pope Francis sent a telegram addressed “To His Majesty the King, Charles III,” her son who immediately ascended to the throne.

“I willingly join all who mourn her loss in praying for the late queen’s eternal rest and in paying tribute to her life of unstinting service to the good of the nation and the Commonwealth, her example of devotion to duty, her steadfast witness of faith in Jesus Christ and her firm hope in his promises,” Pope Francis said.

The British sovereign died “peacefully” at Balmoral, the royal residence in Scotland, surrounded by members of her family. She was 96.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster, president of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, paid tribute using many of the queen’s own words.

“One 21 April 1947, on her 21st birthday, Princess Elizabeth said, ‘I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.’” Cardinal Nichols said: “This faith, so often and so eloquently proclaimed in her public messages, has been an inspiration to me, and I am sure to many. The wisdom, stability and service which she consistently embodied, often in circumstances of extreme difficulty, are a shining legacy and testament to her faith.”

He also offered prayers “for His Majesty the King, as he assumes his new office, even as he mourns his mother. God save the king.”

Bishop Hugh Gibbert, president of the Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, praised Queen Elizabeth for her life of “outstanding and dedicated public service.”

“She fulfilled that declaration. Her determination to remain active to the end of her long life has been an example of Christian leadership, which demonstrated her great stoicism and commitment to duty and was undoubtedly a source of stability and continuity in times of great change,” he said. “Scotland’s Catholic bishops will remember her in our prayers and pray for all those who mourn her loss.”

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Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury said: “As we grieve together, we know that, in losing our beloved queen, we have lost the person whose steadfast loyalty, service and humility has helped us make sense of who we are through decades of extraordinary change in our world, nation and society.

Queen Elizabeth died 17 months after the death of her husband, Philip, who died in April 2021 at age 99. Her 73-year marriage to Philip was the longest of any royal marriage to receive Prime Minister Liz Truss in Scotland on Sept. 6, when she was also last photographed.

Fourteen prime ministers served during her reign, beginning with Sir Winston Churchill. Truss was the 15th to greet her in that office.

During her reign, Queen Elizabeth met with four popes—Francis Benedict XVI, John Paul II and John XXIII, and as princess she met Pope Pius XII.

She served as a constitutional monarch—the British head of state and Commonwealth—the supreme governor of the Church of England and head of the British armed forces.

In her private life, she was a mother of four children, a grandmother of eight and a great-grandmother of 11 children.

Following her death, King Charles said in a statement: “The death of my beloved mother, Her Majesty the Queen, is a moment of the greatest sadness for me and all members of my family.

“We mourn profoundly the passing of a cherished sovereign and a much-loved mother. I know her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.”
Faith

By Effie Caldarola

Jeannine Marie Pitas, a Catholic writer and poet, is a Renaissance woman whose many and varied endeavors are all informed by her faith.

Part of that Catholic viewpoint is looking at the world’s challenges and seeing, not hopelessness, but opportunity for a Christian response.

The author of a collection of poetry, Things Seen and Unseen, Pitas earned a doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Toronto, teaches literature, writing and Spanish at the college level, has written for several Catholic publications and has one rather unique passion to which many give little thought: She translates Spanish publications into English.

“I see translation as a major part of my vocation,” the 39-year-old writer told Catholic News Service (CNS). A very small percentage of what is published in the U.S. is actually translated from other languages, she said, meaning that English speakers miss much of the thought and giftedness of literature from other languages and cultures.

This creates, said Pitas, “an imbalance of power.” A rough analogy might be American movies, which are seen all over the world. But in the U.S., foreign movies are often subtitled and have limited viewings. “I’m very passionate about advocating for authors being brought into the English market,” she said.

Pitas was shortlisted for the 2018 National Translation Award for her translation of I Remember Nightfall by Uruguayan poet Marosa di Giorgio.

This summer, Pitas is in the process of moving from her teaching position at the University of Duquesne in Iowa to St. Vincent College, a private Benedictine school, in Latrobe, Pa. An only child, Pitas will be hours closer to her parents, who still live in her native Buffalo, N.Y.

In addition to her teaching duties at St. Vincent, the move gives her the opportunity to assist with co-editing at Eulalia Press, an independent publisher of literary translations that is housed at the college.

How does her Catholicism inspire her life and work?

“There’s so much I love about being Catholic,” Pitas told CNS.

She sees the main Catholic message as Jesus’ direction to love our neighbor,

which was a restating and reaffirmation of the ancient Jewish teaching: “It’s why I love Holy Thursday,” she said, with its emphasis on Christ washing the feet of his Apostles.

Pitas said she loves the rituals of Catholicism, the liturgical year that often coincides with pre-Christian observances. For example, the feast of All Souls comes in the fall, when ancient cultures made time to remember their dead since fall in an agricultural world was seen as a time of dying. “It was a time of thinning between the living and the dead,” she said.

Pitas has spent time with Catholic Worker communities, and she said they make retreats to mark the solstices. When the world was based on a farming lifestyle, she said, there was more of an understanding of the “rhythms of life,” which the Church’s liturgical calendar helps promote. In today’s culture, a sense of that has been diminished.

Pitas volunteered at an urban Catholic Worker house from 2016 to 2018. Although she didn’t live at the Worker house, she has opened her own home to those in need.

“The first person who stayed with me was a young immigrant. I was their legal guardian for two years,” she said. Another person stayed for six months, and she offered a third person temporary housing for a year.

“I realize not everyone can do that,” she said of her willingness to share her home with strangers, “but I like companionship.”

Anyone, however, can offer hospitality in some form, said Pitas. Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, told us that welcoming the stranger doesn’t come just from a subculture or a house, she said.

The world faces “huge problems,” said Pitas, from environmental destruction to conflicts in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria, income inequality and food shortages.

“Christians have a wonderful opportunity to respond to the signs of our times,” she said.

“We have a strong responsibility to respond from a faith perspective. What would Jesus be saying? What would he be wanting us to do? Pitas said she loves the luminous mysteries of the rosary, introduced by St. John Paul II, because they speak to Jesus’ ministry on Earth.

“And I love the beatitudes, with their message of mercy. We’re in a social climate right now where there isn’t much mercy.”

Pitas is currently working on a book project focusing on the political divide in the U.S. as seen through the Catholic Church. “I’ve experienced the political divide with my own family,” she said.

Pitas, who went through Catholic school pre-K through 12th grade, said she hopes her book will explore how individuals raised with similar values have nevertheless come to a divide, and how people bridge this divide and find common ground.

Pitas said that Catholic writers “can feel marginalized. The publishing world can seem very secular, and the young generation is seen as ‘least religious.’”

But, she added, there’s “a real spiritual hunger and it’s connected to a cry for justice. That’s a cry for all Catholics—not just writers—to respond with faith and love.”

Learn more about Pitas at jeanninemariekpitas.com.

(©Effie Caldarola is a columnist for Catholic News Service.)
Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Andrew Motyka

As Catholics, we have a long tradition of praying for the dead. All of us have lost loved ones, and one of the most sacred acts we can perform for our loved ones is to pray for them when they have died.

It is a difficult practice for many of us in the modern age because praying for the dead makes us face the fact that we will have to think about death, and even about our own death. This is scary, and we often just ignore it. However, because we have a path through Jesus to eternal life in him, we should not ignore it. We should love the purification he offers us.

Anyone who has attended a Catholic funeral has probably heard the reading from the Book of Wisdom: “The souls of the just are in the hand of God.” (Wis 3:1) This is a beautiful articulation from the Book of Wisdom, “The souls of the just are in the hand of God.”

In this harvest season, as we consider the work of the Church as catechists, we pray for each other. We pray for our faith and our love for God’s word. We pray for our spiritual life, catechesis is essential to nurture our faith and for God’s word.

I believe in the importance of having a personal prayer practice before a patient’s surgery or death, no matter the conscious state of the patient. As a Catholic, I have a long tradition of praying for the dead. All of us have lost loved ones, and one of the most sacred acts we can perform for our loved ones is to pray for them when they have died.

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The first reading for Mass this weekend is from the Book of Amos. This prophet, regarded as one of the minor prophets, was from Tekoa, a rural area of Judea. Amos was a shepherd. He knew well the religious traditions of his ancestors. He also had a sense of justice occurring beyond his own environment, even events happening faraway in other lands. This awareness of his own religious heritage and of life beyond his own situation gave his book of only nine chapters a special quality.

Money dominates this reading’s message. The passage mentions ancient units of currency, such as the shekel, in circulation at the time. Most importantly, it is highly critical of any quest to gather great sums of money, putting ethics and all other considerations aside.

Amos insists that a higher standard always exists, bluntly and realistically stating that a reward greater than any money is to be preferred and is available.

For its second reading, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul’s First Letter to Timothy. Early Christian history presents Timothy as a deeply committed pioneer convert to Christianity, who was so close to the apostle Paul that Paul referred to him earlier in this letter as his “true son,” although nothing suggests that Timothy literally was the apostle’s biological child (1 Tim 1:2).

In fact, Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a devout Jewish mother. Since his mother was Jewish, Timothy was Jewish under the laws of Judaism. According to tradition, Timothy was the first bishop of the Church in Ephesus.

In this weekend’s reading, Timothy is asked to pray particularly for rulers and church leaders, such as the bishop of Ephesus.

The reading admonishes that fidelity to God and his law is the only standard.

Reflection

It is easy to be confused trying to understand the world of ancient Jewish economics. They were not altogether like modern finances, although some similarities pertained. The law is better to elevate the employer in theparable recounted by Luke’s Gospel to too high a level of prestige or to accuse or obstruct the manager of fraud.

The bottom line is clear. Some things in life are more important than money. It is the theme of the reading from Amos. The theme reappears in the Gospel.

The central figure in the Gospel is the employer. The manager reduces the debts, even if prompted by his own mishandling of the situation. The employer is merciful, willingly reducing what is due in view of a borrower’s difficulty in paying.

Not without a lesson, however, is the story of the manager and of the debtors’ willingness to join in the fraud. The line between genuine security and peace of mind and grasping for more and more is thin, blurred and easy to cross.

Remember what is important. Pursue that Jan 1, 2017 [and Jan 1, 2024], will not be a holy day of obligation. If holy days are so important, why do some obliged Mass attendance while others do not? Doesn’t this send a message that some of them are not really that critical? Also, for the past two years—even while it has been a holy day of obligation, our church has scheduled only one Mass on Jan 1.

The solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, takes place on Jan. 1 and is sometimes a holy day of obligation. That means that, when it is, Catholics in the United States have a serious responsibility, binding under the pain of sin, to participate at the celebration of the Eucharist on that day.

At Mass recently, I was stunned by a statement the deacon who was preaching the homily. That has made me wonder whether deacons have sole independence when preparing remarks or if the priest exercises oversight. (Location withheld)

Question Corner/By Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Stunned parishioner asks if a pastor pre-screens a deacon’s homily

(,”Your question would you proposed published.”) At Mass recently, I was stunned by a statement the deacon who was preaching the homily. That has made me wonder whether deacons have sole independence when preparing remarks or if the priest exercises oversight.

A on the parish level, the pastor has the ultimate responsibility for the orthodoxy and propriety of what is said from the pulpit. To answer your question directly: A deacon does not have “sole independence” for his remarks.

In practice, though, rarely does this result in the pastor “pre-screening” a deacon’s homily. By the very fact that the deacon’s homilies. By the very fact that the deacon has indicated his confidence that the deacon will handle things maturely and well. Deacons do not pop up suddenly from a congregation on a Sunday morning. Before being ordained, deacons undergo a fairly intensive formation process that includes several years of theological education, psychological evaluation and tutoring in pastoral techniques.

Returning to your question, you would be best advised to bring your concern to your pastor. If he, like you, is “stunned” by what the deacon says, he will surely bring it to the deacon’s attention to avoid future problems. If he deems it necessary, the deacon’s homily might even sit fit to make a correction from the pulpit.

Q Jan 1, 2016 [and 2023], is a holy day of obligation. But our parish calendar shows...
Rest in peace

Please submit to writing to our office by 10 a.m., Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in this newspaper. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections, in which case they are separate obituaries on this page.


BAHENA DE AVALÁ, Antonia, 74, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, July 11. Mother of Estela, Mary, Antonio, Miguel and Ruben Aga, and Candido Bahena and Thomas Hurd. Great-grandmother of one.


BROOKS, Helen, 89, St. Bernard, Lawrence, Aug. 8. Sister of Mary Ann and John Bain. Aunt of several.


DRURY, Lois A. (Stiner), 82, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Aug. 23. Sister of Janie Bell and Anna Selke. Great-grandmother of 15.

HAUGEN, Virginia, 86, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, July 22. Sister of Norman and John Haugen. Great-grandmother of 15.


JAHN, Freda M. (Lori), 81, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Aug. 21. Mother of Kathleen Schneider. Great-grandfather of one.


WATHEEN, Michelle C. (Hufnagel), 64, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Aug. 18. Mother of Katrina Wattheen. Sister of Mary Ann Davenport and John Hufnagel.


Benedictine Rabban Bivins was the first brother to serve as subprior of Saint Meinrad

Deacon Charles Carroll uses Holy water to bless the grave site of Maryknoll Father Vincent Capodanno at St. Peter’s Cemetery in Staten Island, N.Y., on Sept. 4, the 55th anniversary of the priest’s death. Father Capodanno, a native of Staten Island, was killed while ministering as a U.S. Army chaplain to wounded Marines in a battle in Vietnam. Father Capodanno was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1969. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Benedictine Brother Capodanno, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, died on Sept. 6, at the monastery. He was 81.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Sept. 11. Burial followed at the Archabbey Cemetery.

Brother Rabban was a jubilarian of monastic profession, having celebrated 62 years of monastic profession.

Brother Rabban was born on Dec. 11, 1940, in Owensboro, Ky., and was given the name William Joseph at his baptism.

After attending a Catholic grade school and, for three years, a Catholic high school in Owensboro, Brother Rabban entered at Saint Meinrad’s St. Placid Hall to complete his high school education. St. Placid Hall was a school for men discerning a vocation as a brother in the monastery.

Brother Rabban was invested as a novice on April 9, 1959, professed simple vows on May 7, 1960, and perpetual vows on June 19, 1963.

His first assignments in the monastery included working in his shoe shop and in the physical facilities department as assistant house prefect. In 1965, Brother Rabban volunteered for an assignment to Saint Meinrad’s mission in Peru. For the next 14 years, he ministered there as a procurator, superintendent of employees and in general maintenance.

Returning to Saint Meinrad in 1979, Brother Rabban began 11 years of service on the St. Meinrad volunteer fire department, including working as an emergency medical technician. He also worked as a locksmith. From 1996-2007, Brother Rabban served as the monastery’s subprior, after being appointed to that position by then-Abbott Lambert Reilly. He was the first brother in Saint Meinrad’s history to serve in this leadership position. During that time, he also assisted in the monastery’s infirmary and health services.

In 2007, Brother Rabban was appointed the monastery’s almoner and director of community outreach, positions he held until failing health earlier this year necessitated his move into the infirmary.

Brother Rabban is survived by his brother, a sister, two nieces, a nephew and memorial gifts.

Memorial gifts may be sent to Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577.

For their wisdom and well-being. Pray for them. Pray for others.

Second, approach a catechist in your faith community and say, “Thank you.” It does not take much effort or time. A word of gratitude is always the best way to encourage others to move forward in what they are doing.

Buy a book for them, bring a gift certificate, contribute to a fund to buy a test or tea when they catechize. Make an annual or monthly donation to support their meetings and retreats. Support the continuing education of your catechists. Catechists need constant training. Support a continuing education program for catechists in your parish or diocese. Some may be ready to study theology at a local college. Assist them in their studies, and they need scholarships. You can help.

(Hoffinan Osipenko is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.)
There are seven parishes named St. Joseph in the boundaries of the archdioceses. One of them is found in historic Corydon, site of the state’s first capital. Founded in 1896, St. Joseph celebrated its 125th anniversary last year. About 450-500 households comprise the parish. It’s a mix of demographics, says Father Kyle Rodden, the parish’s pastor. “One part of the parish are these devout, related to every family kind of families,” he says. “And then there are these new faces that chose St. Joseph. Some of them commute to Louisville to work, and some of them chose to settle in Corydon from far away, like California and Washington D.C. “Our number of vibrant, young families is growing. Their children, plus families taking advantage of Indiana’s student voucher system, have led to tremendous growth at the parish’s school.” “We were actually just featured in our local paper about our expansion,” says Father Rodden. Twenty years ago, the school discontinued offering seventh- and eighth-grade classes. Last year, it established a seventh-grade class again, and this year it added an eighth-grade class. Plus, the school opened a preschool class for 3-year-olds and a second 4-year-old class. “Our school is our largest ministry,” says Father Rodden. “Our St. Vincent de Paul Society, he says. “In Harrison County, a lot of our families are lower income,” says Father Rodden. “Our St. Vincent de Paul group does a lot of work with their ministry to help the poor. They try to meet every need that comes to the door. They don’t limit what they give—they just ask, ‘How can we help you?’” “Anytime is a good time to come to Corydon, says Father Rodden. With St. Joseph located just two-tenths of a mile from the Corydon State Historical Site, he says “there are always events going on.” “But there are also lots of local cave systems, canoeing, and of course the internationally known Butt Drug pharmacy.” His personal favorite food fare is at 1861 Modern Kitchen, located in an Italianate structure built in 1892. “They have items on the menu you won’t find in any other restaurant in the area,” he says. Father Rodden invites all who come to Corydon to worship at Mass or just to pray at St. Joseph Church. “The doors are open from 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. every day,” he says. “We encourage people to stop by to spend time with the Lord.” St. Joseph Parish is located at 312 E. High Street. For Mass times, call 812-738-2742 or go to www.catholiccommunity.org Early state history, outdoors, wineries and more Worshiping at Mass at St. Joseph can enhance a day or weekend trip taking in the numerous sites to see and things to do in Corydon and Harrison County. As the state’s first capital, Corydon is a treasure trove of history. The Corydon State Historic Site, one of several sites operated by the Indiana State Museum, includes the first state capital building, completed in 1816; the remains of “Constitutional Elm,” under which the state’s first constitution was drafted in June 1816; and several other historic homes and buildings. Go to cuttyharrisoncounty.com for more information. Corydon and Harrison County feature events year-round. There’s a spring wine walk in April, a fall “Paddle Fest” on the Blue River in June, a popcorn festival in July, “Glastrauberti” and a “Real Haunted Happenings” tour in October, a mountain biking event in O’Bannon Woods State Park in November and “A Merry Country Christmas” weekend hayride and lights display in late November through mid-December. Plus, Corydon offers “Extravaganza” craft and vendor fairs three times a year. For more information on these events, go to cutty/harrisonCounty. Outdoorsy folks can enjoy trails year-round at O’Bannon Woods State Park. Squire Boone Caverns is also open all year. They offer cave tours, mining for gemstones, mill-grinding and feeding barnyard animals, and zip-lining is available March-November. Go to squireboonecaverns.com for more information. Finally, wine lovers can enjoy a tour of three local wineries: Best Vineyards Winery, Indian Creek Winery and Turtle Run Winery. Each offers tastings, tours and free outdoor concerts during the warmer months. See cutty/harrisonCountyWineries for more information. "Paddle Fest" on the Blue River in June, a popcorn festival in July, “Glastrauberti” and a “Real Haunted Happenings” tour in October, a mountain biking event in O’Bannon Woods State Park in November and “A Merry Country Christmas” weekend hayride and lights display in late November through mid-December. Plus, Corydon offers “Extravaganza” craft and vendor fairs three times a year. For more information on these events, go to cutty/harrisonCounty. Outdoorsy folks can enjoy trails year-round at O’Bannon Woods State Park. Squire Boone Caverns is also open all year. They offer cave tours, mining for gemstones, mill-grinding and feeding barnyard animals, and zip-lining is available March-November. Go to squireboonecaverns.com for more information. 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Eucharistic procession brings St. Mary students ‘together in our faith’

By Jennifer Lindberg

NORTH VERNON—Principal Lisa Vogel’s heart was overflowing with gratitude on Sept. 7 as she watched students of St. Mary School in North Vernon celebrate Christ in the Eucharist, a public witness of their faith.

Students made banners to carry in a special eucharistic procession to kick off support for the three-year National Eucharistic Revival, which started in June and will culminate in a National Eucharistic Congress on July 21-24, 2024, in Indianapolis, drawing tens of thousands of Catholics from across the country.

The students also participated in an in-school retreat to learn more about the Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a session on lectio divina as a source of prayer and various craft activities to illustrate the Eucharist.

“It brought us all closer to God and helped me love him more,” said Nathan Fewell, an eighth-grader at the school.

Father Jerry Byrd, pastor of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon and St. Ann and St. Joseph parishes, both in Jennings County, led the students in the eucharistic procession that stopped at three altars on the St. Mary school and parish grounds.

St. Mary students take part in a eucharistic procession in front of their school in North Vernon on Sept. 7. (Submitted photo by Jennifer Lindberg)

The procession made a strong impact on the students’ faith.

“It was beautiful and it was so peaceful and our singing was so joyful. It just made our school happy and light up,” said eighth-grader Khylee Barlow.

Another eighth-grade student agreed.

The eucharistic procession was an awesome experience,” said Arcadia Gindhart. “The reason for doing this is absolutely amazing. We were brought together to push through with our beliefs that the consecrated host is truly the body of Christ. This was a new experience, and I’m glad I got to be a part of it. I think it brought us together in our faith.”

Bringing the school closer to God and witnessing the students’ faith touched Vogel’s faith.

“It’s important for me that the students know about the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist,” the school’s principal said. “I am just so proud of them, their participation and their willingness to learn.”

(Jennifer Lindberg is a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.)

Formation

Continued from page 1

do that active discernment, supported by the Church in a community of other men who are discerning the priesthood,” said Father Augenstein. “It recognizes that this is intended to be a year of discernment.”

While Saint Meinrad has begun its implementation of the propaedeutic stage, it is waiting until next year to put the vocational synthesis stage in place.

In the new PPF, seminarians in this stage are ordained transitional deacons and spend six months ministering in parishes before they are ordained priests.

“As a deacon gradually prepares for priestly ministry, in the six months he’ll be at a parish, he’ll be doing baptisms, weddings, funeral rites, visiting the sick and preaching as a gradual transition into priestly ministry,” said Father Augenstein.

This is a significant change from the past when a newly ordained priest enters for the first time into full-scaled parish ministry just weeks after he is ordained.

“When you end seminary and three weeks later you’re a priest in a parish, it’s a big shock to the system,” said Father Augenstein. “Everything is new very quickly. The vocational synthesis stage is designed to ease that transition.”

Archbishop Thompson knows well the ministry just weeks after he is ordained.

“Father Thompson is a graduate of Saint Meinrad and previously served as its formation staff. As archbishop, he closely oversees the priestly formation offered at Bishop Bruté, which is operated by the archdiocese.

He said that both seminaries are positioned well to implement the new PPF because of their history of forming future priests well to be men of prayer rooted in a fruitful spiritual life.

“I think both seminaries do that in a wonderful way,” said Archbishop Thompson, “and I think that’s why those other dimensions fall into place. It’s because of that rootedness that they both give us.”

(For more information on a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit www.HearGodsCall.com. For more information on Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, visit bishopsimonbrute.org. For more information on Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, visit www.saintmeinrad.edu.)

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