At funeral, Pope Francis remembers Benedict’s ‘wisdom, tenderness, devotion’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI “spread and testified to” the Gospel his entire life, Pope Francis told tens of thousands of people gathered on Jan. 5 for his predecessor’s funeral Mass.

“Like the women at the tomb, we too have come with the fragrance of gratitude and the balm of hope, in order to show him once more the love that is undying. We want to do this with the same wisdom, tenderness and devotion that he bestowed upon us over the years,” Pope Francis said in his homily.

The Mass in St. Peter’s Square was the first time in more than 200 years that a pope celebrated the funeral of his predecessor. Pope Pius VII had celebrated the funeral of Pius VI in 1802 when his remains were returned to Rome after he died in exile in France in 1799.

Pope Benedict, who retired in 2013, had requested his funeral be simple; the only heads of state invited to lead delegations were those of Italy and his native Germany.

However, many dignitaries—including Queen Sofia of Spain and King Philippe of Belgium—and presidents and government ministers representing more than a dozen nations were in attendance, as were most of the ambassadors to the Holy See.

Members of the College of Cardinals sat on one side of the casket, while on the other side sat special guests, including the late pope’s closest collaborators and representatives of the Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant and U.S. evangelical communities. Jewish and Muslim organizations also sent delegations.

Archdiocesan Catholics gather to pray and show gratitude for the life of Pope Benedict XVI

By Sean Gallagher and John Shaughnessy

As Pope Benedict XVI was laid to rest in the crypt of St. Peter’s Basilica on Jan. 5, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson praised him as “a great teacher” for the Church and the world during a Mass for the Dead at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

“If Pope Francis is the great evangelizer, Pope Benedict was the great catechist, the great teacher,” the archbishop said during the Mass that was attended by several hundred people, including priests, deacons, religious and lay people from the archdiocese.

Among those praying and giving thanks for Pope Benedict were 14 students from Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis.

“The cathedral is just so beautiful, and the Mass was beautiful, so it was fitting to be here,” said Samuel Duncan, a sophomore and a member of the College of Cardinals, blesses the remains of Pope Benedict XVI with incense as Pope Francis looks on in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Jan. 5. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)
Indiana March for Life vigil, Mass, march and rally plans set for Jan. 22-23

**Circuit staff report**

The diocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, in conjunction with the Diocese of Lafayette and Right to Life Indianapolis, has announced the plans for the solemn Roe v. Wade observance events in Indianapolis on Jan. 22-23.

The events begin with a Vigil for Life co-sponsored by the archdiocese and the Lafayette Diocese at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, 10655 Haversick Road, in Carmel, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 2-4 p.m. on Jan. 22. Mark Hublar of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, a member of the Diocese of Lafayette and Right to Life and Dignity, in conjunction with the archdiocese and the archdiocese’s stewardship results, parish and diocesan operating results, parish and diocese and the archdiocese, will announce the plans for the solemn Roe v. Wade observance events in Indianapolis on Jan. 22-23.

The march will begin at noon starting from West Georgia Street next to St. John the Evangelist Church. It will proceed to the soldiers and sailors monument (Monument Circle) then to the south of the State Capitol Building at 200 W. Washington Street. There, a rally will take place featuring pro-life speakers. For information on parking for individuals or buses for the Mass, march and rally, go to cmt.by/INMarch4Lifefeb23.

An RSVP is not needed but is requested to help with planning. To RSVP, go to cmt.by/4M4L-2023RSVP.

If bringing a large group or for more questions or information, contact Brie Anne Varick, director of the archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity, at 317-236-1543 or bvarick@archindy.org.

Brie Anne Varick

The Indiana March for Life and rally, both sponsored by Right to Life of Indianapolis, will take place after the Mass. The march will begin at noon starting from West Georgia Street next to St. John the Evangelist Church. It will proceed to the soldiers and sailors monument (Monument Circle) then to the south of the State Capitol Building at 200 W. Washington Street. There, a rally will take place featuring pro-life speakers. For information on parking for individuals or buses for the Mass, march and rally, go to cmt.by/INMarch4Lifefeb23.

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National March for Life steps into a post-Roe world

**Washington (OSV News)**—As the March for Life prepares to hold its annual event later this month, the national organization is taking its first steps into a post-Roe landscape.

The March for Life first took place in Washington, D.C., in 1974 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion nationwide the previous year. Pro-life advocates have gathered in Washington to march each year since then to protest the ruling, with a smaller-in-scale event during the COVID-19 pandemic. But the Supreme Court’s June 2022 ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization that overturned Roe led some to question whether the national march would continue as a protest up Constitution Avenue ending at the high court itself.

Jeanne Mancini, March for Life president, told OSV News there was a “discernment process” about how the March would proceed, but it was clear they would continue the annual event.

“In a way, it was almost not a question because we have become the largest, longest-running human rights demonstration worldwide,” Mancini said.

“And the idea of shutting that down, while the human rights abuse of abortion is still sadly wildly rampant in the United States, just would make no sense.

While the national event was tied to Roe, Mancini said, “the deeper foundation of the March for Life and its reason for being is in march in opposition to the human rights abuse of abortion and to witness to the beautiful, inherent dignity of unborn children and their mothers.”

While some changes were considered, Mancini said, such as potentially holding the march at different time of year, march organizers ultimately decided that “we’re right where we are.”

“The 2023 March for Life’s theme is a nod to the pro-life movement’s new landscape: “Next Steps: Marching in a Post-Roe America.”

Speakers at the 2023 March for Life event, scheduled for Jan. 20, will include actor Jonathan Roumie, known for his role as Jesus in the biblical television drama “The Chosen,” as well as the musical group We Are Messengers.

Mancini said the march’s next steps include “the need to continue changing hearts and minds,” as well as enacting legislation and other advocacy work at both the state and the federal levels, and increasing the safety net for families that are facing an unexpected pregnancy.

“We really have our work cut out for us,” Mancini said.

Mancini pointed to another Supreme Court decision, Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)—which declared segregated racial segregation legal under the U.S. Constitution—as an example of an egregious ruling the high court overturned decades later in Brown v. Board of Education (1954). Even then, she said, the hard work remained to be done for racial integration following that decision.

“It puts some perspective on where we are with our human rights abuses and how it does take time to change culture,” Mancini said.

The Dobbs ruling sent the issue of legal abortion back to the U.S. states to decide upon—a possibility the March for Life prepared for prior to the Dobbs case by launching individual state marches. But abortion remains a national issue as well, Mancini said.
Pope baptizes local infants, urges parents to teach them to pray

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Telling parents and godparents to teach their little ones to pray from the time they are small, Pope Francis baptized 13 babies in the Sistine Chapel as his older brothers and sisters looked on—or got away and ran around.

With his knee apparently improving, Pope Francis walked with a cane from his seat to a lectern to give his homily standing—something he has not done at a public Mass for months—and rolled up his sleeves and stood at the font as he poured water over the heads of the infants, children of Vatican employees.

The annual baptism Mass in the Sistine Chapel is celebrated on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which the Vatican and Italy celebrated on Jan. 8 this year.

Pope Francis began his homily by thanking the parents for deciding to have their children baptized and asking them to remind the children throughout their lives of the date of their baptism since “it is like a birthday because baptism is a rebirth to the Christian life.

“May they remember and thank God for this grace of having become Christians,” he said.

Baptism is the beginning of a journey, he said, and it is up to parents and godparents to support the children as they take their steps along the way.

The first task, he said, is to teach the children to pray. “By their time they are very small, starting with showing them how to make the sign of the cross and how to say ‘God be with you,’” he said.

“Prayer will be what gives them strength throughout their lives—in good times to thank God and in the difficult times to find strength,” the pope said.

“It’s the first thing you must teach: how to pray.”

They also should teach children to pray to Mary, who “is the mother, our mother,” the pope said. “They say that when someone is mad at the Lord or has distanced himself from him, Mary is always nearby to show the path to return.”

As he does every year, Pope Francis also reassured the parents, telling them not to worry if the babies cry during Mass or need to be fed or fuss because they are too hot or too cold. “Make them comfortable; everyone should be comfortable,” he said.

Later, reciting the Angelus at midday with visitors in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis focused on the meaning of the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and he quoted the late Pope Benedict XVI in doing so.

In his homily on the feast day in 2018, Pope Francis said, “Benedict XVI affirmed that ‘God desired to save us by going to the bottom of this abyss himself so that every person, even those who have fallen so low that they can no longer perceive heaven, may find God’s hand to cling to and rise from the darkness to see again the light for which he or she was made.’”

Pope Francis told the crowd in the square, “The Lord is always there, not ready to punish us, but with his hand outstretched to help us rise up.”

Too often, the pope said, people think that God administers justice like human beings do. “Those who do wrong pay, and in this way compensate for the wrong they have done.”

But, he said, “God’s justice, as the Scripture teaches, is much greater: it does not have as its end the condemnation of the guilty, but their salvation and rebirth, making them righteous.”

God’s justice, he said, “comes from love, from the depths of compassion and mercy that are the very heart of God, the Father who is moved when we are oppressed by evil and fall under the weight of sins and fragility.”

Jesus came into the world “to take on our shoulders the sin of the world and to descend into the waters of the abyss, death, so as to rescue us from drowning,” the pope said.

Father John Hartzer served in parishes across central and southern Indiana

By Sean Gallagher

Father John Hartzer, a retired archdiocesan priest, died on Dec. 21, 2022, in Scottsdale, Ariz., where he had been in retirement with family members for several years. He was 93.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. at St. Lawrence Church, 542 Walnut St., in Lawrenceburg. Burial will follow at the priest circle at Greendale Cemetery in Greendale.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is scheduled to be the homilist.

Father Landwerlen was a friend of Father Hartzer, who was commonly known as Father Jack, for nearly 40 years. They were in seminary together at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad for about nine years and were brother priests in the archdiocese for 68 years.

“We called him ‘Smiling Jack,’” Father Landwerlen recalled, “because he always had a smile on his face. I think this is the way he treated everybody.”

Father Hartzer took that positive outlook on faith and life to parishes across central and southern Indiana.

“He liked to be with people,” Father Landwerlen said. “When he retired, he would go back and build at different parishes. He was always willing to come and do priestly work even after he retired.”

Father Landwerlen had a simple message in summing up his friend’s legacy as an archdiocesan priest for nearly 70 years.

“He was a good and holy man who tried to serve the Lord and serve people as well as he could.” Father Landwerlen said. “He was a fun-loving guy who loved people and loved God.”

John Edward Hartzer was born on May 7, 1929, in Indianapolis to the late Edward and Hilda Hartzer. He grew up as a member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis.

After attending Cathedral High School in Indianapolis for three years, Father Hartzer became an archdiocesan seminarian and received priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophy there.


His first pastoral assignment was as assistant pastor of the former Holy Trinity Parish in Indianapolis, where he served from 1954-63.

Father Hartzer then served as associate pastor of St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville from 1963-69 and St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis from 1969-72.

In 1972, he was assigned as co-pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, serving there until 1981. From 1981-93, Father Hartzer ministered as pastor of the former Holy Family Parish in Richmond (now part of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish there).

His last pastoral assignment was as pastor of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, where he served from 1993 until being granted permission to retire in 2004.

Memorial contributions may be sent to St. Lawrence Parish, 542 Walnut St., Lawrenceburg, IN 47025.
A time to play, a time to pray

It is a powerful thing when people come together in prayer. It is even more powerful when that number grows exponentially throughout an entire nation and its communities that number in the hundreds, thousands and more.

By now, most of you have heard the story of Damar Hamlin, the Buffalo Bills’ football player who was critically injured during a Monday night football game on Jan. 2 against the Cincinnati Bengals. Hamlin’s injury, which occurred after making what appeared to be a routine tackle, was so serious that the safety went into cardiac arrest while laying on the field. CPR had to be performed to resuscitate him.

Both teams were so visibly shaken by the sight of a teammate and opponent on the field lifeless that many players cried. Others immediately began praying for the fallen Hamlin.

The remainder of the game was eventually postponed that night, then cancelled by the NFL. Nearly every player—both active and retired—who has discussed the incident said it reminded them there are more important things in life than a game.

What has followed since is a remarkable witness of faith. Players, fans and people from all walks of life have been praying for Hamlin.

Social media has become a lifeline of communication for all who wanted to offer petitions for the seriously injured player. The NFL posted an image of Hamlin’s team number “3” with the words “Pray for Damar” across its social media accounts.

The University of Cincinnati Medical Center, where the player was transported after his injury, became a place where people came to pray for the Bills player and leave cards, notes and other remembrances to let Hamlin know he was in their thoughts and prayers.

One of the most powerful acts took place on ESPN when football analyst and former Indianapolis Colts quarterback Dan Orlovsky offered a prayer live on television. “Maybe this is not the right thing to do,” Orlovsky said before praying. “It’s just on my heart that I want to pray for Damar Hamlin right now.”

“God, we come to you in these moments that we don’t understand, that are hard, because we believe that you’re God, and coming to you and praying to you has impact. We’re sad, we’re angry, we want answers, but some things are

Be Our Guest/Gretchen R. Crowe
What Pope Benedict XVI taught us about dying well

What does it mean to die well? The end, it’s inevitable for all of us. When we don’t know. How, we don’t know. Where, we don’t know. But we know it’s coming. St. John Vianney, the French cure d’Ars, once said: “If we were required to die twice, we could jot down one death. But man dies once only, and upon this death depends his eternity.”

In other words, while walking this journey on Earth, we must never take our eyes off the ultimate reward—life with God—and we must never lose sight of what it takes to get there. We do, after all, only get one death. One supposes this must have been a constant consideration in recent years of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who retired to a life of solitude and prayer in 2013 at age 85. What was there left to do but to prepare to die well?

His preparations, though, had been lifelong. In his spiritual testament dated more than 16 years before his death, Benedict reflected on his life, and on those whom he had encountered, with gratitude. He gave thanks to God. He asked for the forgiveness of those he may have wronged. He asked for our prayers. And he took one last opportunity to point people to the truth. “Stand firm in the faith! Do not be confused!” he urged. “For 60 years now, I have accompanied the path of theology, especially biblical studies, and have seen seemingly unmistakable things collapse with the changing generations, which turned out to be mere hypotheses. … I have seen, and see, how, out of the tangle of hypotheses, the reasonableness of faith has emerged and is emerging anew. Jesus Christ is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and in all his shortcomings, is truly His Body.”

In his final statement on Earth, Pope Benedict was determined to do what he did best: demonstrate how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He led with gratitude, sought reconciliation with his fellow man, underscored the importance of prayer, and taught the faith.

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“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (Jn 1:29).

After many weeks of special liturgical celebrations—from the First Sunday of Advent through the Christmas season, and culminating in last Sunday’s observance of the Epiphany of the Lord and this past Monday’s celebration of the Lord’s Baptism, this weekend we return to Ordinary Time. The readings for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time call our attention to the mission that Jesus received from his heavenly Father through the grace of the Holy Spirit: to redeem us from our sins.

The Gospel reading from St. John highlights the witness of St. John the Baptist who saw Jesus coming toward him and said:

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me: ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’” (Jn 1:27-33).

Jesus is the Lamb of God. John is not. John is a prophetic witness sent by God to baptize with water in order to reveal someone greater than himself.

John admits that he didn’t know who would come after him, but he was told by God to look for the one who received the Holy Spirit “like a dove from heaven.” (Jn 1:26). This is the miraculous sign that took place when Jesus was baptized by John. As the Christian philosopher Peter Kreeft has observed, “When Jesus was baptized, the water did not do anything to him, but he did something to the water: he gave it the power to cleanse our sins when we are baptized. John could not do that.”

On this sacred occasion, at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are manifested as one God. Together they endorse the mission entrusted to the Son to give himself, unreservedly and sacrificially, as the Lamb of God who saves humanity, and all of creation, from the power of sin and death.

The first reading for this Sunday proclaims: “I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” (Is 49:6).

Here the prophet Isaiah assigns to the entire people of Israel the mission that Jesus accepts from his Father: to proclaim the good news and to serve as a light of revelation to all nations. What the Jewish people could not accomplish by their own power, God makes possible by sending “the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” (Jn 1:33), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

As St. Paul tells the Christian community in Corinth, “We have all been sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy in his name” (1 Cor 1:2).

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. By God’s grace, the baptism that Christians receive has the power to set us free from the permanent, devastating consequences of sin. While we may experience the permanent, devastating consequences of sin remain all too visible in our world and in our daily lives, the Spirit of God cleanses us with water and with fire—transferring the sins of the world, and our sins, to the Lamb of God who bears all our burdens and atones for all our transgressions.

We begin this observance of Ordinary Time by recalling one of the most important teachings of our Christian faith. Namely, that we are sinners who have been redeemed by the love and mercy of our triune God. We should thank St. John the Baptist, the last and greatest of all the prophets, for this vivid reminder that we cannot save ourselves. We must surrender our will and our lives to one who is greater by far than we can ever hope to be.

St. John the Baptist tells us that he has “seen and testified.” (Jn 1:34) that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the world’s sin. We are invited this Sunday, and throughout the new year, to “behold the Lamb of God” and to give ourselves unreservedly to the liberating power of his divine love.

La lectura del Evangelio según San Juan destaca el testimonio de san Juan Bautista quien, al ver a Jesús, dijo: “Yo no lo conocía, pero el que me envió a bautizar con agua me dijo: ‘Aquél sobre quien veas que el Espíritu descendie, y que permanece sobre él, es el que bautiza con el Espíritu Santo.’ “ (Jn 1:33).

San Juan admite que no sabía quién vendría después de él, pero Dios le dijo que buscara al que recibiera el Espíritu Santo como una paloma que desciende del cielo. Esta es la señal milagrosa que tuvo lugar cuando Jesús fue bautizado por Juan Bautista.

Tal como señaló el filósofo cristiano Peter Kreeft: “Cuando Jesús fue bautizado, el agua no le hizo nada a él, sino que él le hizo algo al agua: le dio el poder de limpiar nuestros pecados cuando recibimos el bautismo. Juan no podía hacer eso.”

En esta sagrada ocasión, al comienzo del Ministerio Público de Jesús, la Santísima Trinidad (Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo) se manifiesta como un solo Dios. Juntos avalan la misión confiada al Hijo de entregarse, sin reservas y con sacrificio, como Cordero de Dios que salva a la humanidad, y a toda la creación, del poder del pecado y de la muerte.

La primera lectura de este domingo proclama: “He fue puesto también como luz de las naciones, para que seas mi salvación hasta los confines de la tierra.” (Is 49:6).

Aquí el profeta Isaías asigna a todo el pueblo de Israel la misión que Jesús acepta de su Padre: proclamar la Buena Nueva y servir de luz reveladora a todas las naciones. Lo que el pueblo judío no pudo lograr por su cuenta, Dios lo hace posible al enviar al “que bautiza con el Espíritu Santo” (Jn 1:33), el Cordero de Dios que quita el pecado del mundo.

Como dice san Pablo a la comunidad cristiana de Corinto: “[hemos] sido santificados en Cristo Jesús y llamados a ser santos” (1 Cor 1:2).

La santificación es obra del Espíritu Santo. Por la gracia de Dios, el bautismo que recibimos los cristianos tiene el poder de liberarnos de las consecuencias permanentes y devastadoras del pecado y del mal. Y mientras los efectos del pecado siguen siendo demasiado visibles en nuestro mundo y en nuestra vida cotidiana, el Espíritu de Dios no deja de limpiar y liberar, sin transigir, los pecados del mundo, y los nuestros, al Cordero de Dios, que lleva todas nuestras cargas y expíase todas nuestras transgresiones.

Comenzamos esta celebración del tiempo ordinario recordando una de las enseñanzas más importantes de nuestra fe cristiana, a saber, que somos pecadores que hemos sido redimidos por el amor y la misericordia de nuestro Dios trino. Debemos agradecer a san Juan Bautista, el último y más grande de todos los profetas, por este vivido recordatorio de que no podemos salvarnos por cuenta propia. Debemos entregar nuestra voluntad y nuestra vida a alguien que es mucho más grande de lo que nosotros podemos llegar a ser.

San Juan Bautista nos dice que lo ha visto y ha dado testimonio de que Jesús es el Cordero de Dios que quita el pecado del mundo. Este testimonio y durante todo el nuevo año, estamos invitados a contemplar al Cordero de Dios y a entregarnos sin reservas al poder liberador de su amor divino.

“Esté es el Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo.” (Jn 1:29).

Después de muchas semanas de celebraciones litúrgicas especiales—desde el primer domingo de Adviento hasta la época de Navidad—que culminaron el domingo pasado con la celebración de la Epifanía del Señor y el lunes con la celebración del Bautismo del Señor, este fin de semana volvemos al tiempo ordinario. Las lecturas del segundo domingo del tiempo ordinario ponen de relieve la misión que Jesús recibió de su Padre celestial por la gracia del Espíritu Santo: redimirnos de nuestros pecados.

La lectura del Evangelio según San Juan destaca el testimonio de san Juan Bautista quien, al ver a Jesús, dijo: “Yo no lo conocía, pero el que me envió a bautizar con agua me dijo: ‘Aquél sobre quien veas que el Espíritu descendie, y que permanece sobre él, es el que bautiza con el Espíritu Santo.’ “ (Jn 1:33).

San Juan admite que no sabía quién vendría después de él, pero Dios le dijo que buscara al que recibiera el Espíritu Santo como una paloma que desciende del cielo. Esta es la señal milagrosa que tuvo lugar cuando Jesús fue bautizado por Juan Bautista.

Tal como señaló el filósofo cristiano Peter Kreeft: “Cuando Jesús fue bautizado, el agua no le hizo nada a él, sino que él le hizo algo al agua: le dio el poder de limpiar nuestros pecados cuando recibimos el bautismo. Juan no podía hacer eso.”

En esta sagrada ocasión, al comienzo del ministerio público de Jesús, la Santísima Trinidad (Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo) se manifiesta como un solo Dios. Juntos avalan la misión confiada al Hijo de entregarse, sin reservas y con sacrificio, como Cordero de Dios que salva a la humanidad, y a toda la creación, del poder del pecado y de la muerte.

La primera lectura de este domingo proclama: “He fue puesto también como luz de las naciones, para que seas mi salvación hasta los confines de la tierra.” (Is 49:6).

Aquí el profeta Isaías asigna a todo el pueblo de Israel la misión que Jesús acepta de su Padre: proclamar la Buena Nueva y servir de luz reveladora a todas las naciones. Lo que el pueblo judío no pudo lograr por su cuenta, Dios lo hace posible al enviar al “que bautiza con el Espíritu Santo” (Jn 1:33), el Cordero de Dios que quita el pecado del mundo.

Como dice san Pablo a la comunidad cristiana de Corinto: “[hemos] sido santificados en Cristo Jesús y llamados a ser santos” (1 Cor 1:2).

La santificación es obra del Espíritu Santo. Por la gracia de Dios, el bautismo que recibimos los cristianos tiene el poder de liberarnos de las consecuencias permanentes y devastadoras del pecado y del mal. Y mientras los efectos del pecado siguen siendo demasiado visibles en nuestro mundo y en nuestra vida cotidiana, el Espíritu de Dios no deja de limpiar y liberar, sin transigir, los pecados del mundo, y los nuestros, al Cordero de Dios, que lleva todas nuestras cargas y expíase todas nuestras transgresiones.

Comenzamos esta celebración del tiempo ordinario recordando una de las enseñanzas más importantes de nuestra fe cristiana, a saber, que somos pecadores que hemos sido redimidos por el amor y la misericordia de nuestro Dios trino. Debemos agradecer a san Juan Bautista, el último y más grande de todos los profetas, por este vivido recordatorio de que no podemos salvarnos por cuenta propia. Debemos entregar nuestra voluntad y nuestra vida a alguien que es mucho más grande de lo que nosotros podemos llegar a ser.

San Juan Bautista nos dice que lo ha visto y ha dado testimonio de que Jesús es el Cordero de Dios que quita el pecado del mundo. Este testimonio y durante todo el nuevo año, estamos invitados a contemplar al Cordero de Dios y a entregarnos sin reservas al poder liberador de su amor divino.

Vivamos la vida sobre la base del amor y la misericordia de Cristo.

Christ, the Cornerstone

Live your life on the foundation of Christ’s love and mercy

Cristo, la piedra angular

Live your life on the foundation of Christ’s love and mercy

Cristo, la piedra angular
Vocations essay contest submissions sought from students in grades 7-12

The Serra Club of Indianapolis’ annual John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest is under way. It is open to any Catholic student in grades 7-12 in parochial, public or home school systems in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

The theme for this year’s contest focuses on saints and their devotion to the Eucharist. In one way or another, all the saints had a great devotion to the Eucharist. Moreover, only with the help of the Eucharist did any saint fulfill his or her vocation. Participants are asked to pick a particular saint and describe that saint’s relationship with the Eucharist—how did their devotion to the Eucharist enable them to fulfill their vocation? How does this saint’s love of the Eucharist inspire you?

For more details on this year’s contest and to download the sample essay submission, visit www.archindy.org/events.

Wedding Anniversaries

John and Mary (Breidenstein) Jaffe, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 13. The couple was married at St. Mary University Church in Mount Pleasant, Mich., on Jan. 13, 1971. They have three children: Amanda Kesseneich, Jason and John Jaffe, Jr. The couple also has 10 grandchildren.

Jerry and Janet (Biehle) St. John, members of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 13. The couple was married at St. Mary Church in North Vernon on Jan. 13, 1971. They have four children: Charlene and Clift St. John. The couple also has five grandchildren.

Lenten Retreat: 8 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun., Father Jeffrey Goeckeler facilitating, $200 includes private accommodations, meals, snacks and program material, register by Feb. 15. Registration: frm.retreatportal.com/events, 800-558-7681 or looneyc@archindy.org.

March 4
Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 2214 Main St., Oldenburg. Grieving Our Losses, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Franciscan Sister Olga Wittke, clinical psychologist and chaplain, will facilitate, $30, $45 with CEU. Information, registration: 812-334-5970, stjohn@archindy.org.
The new FDA rules still require an in-person requirement for its dispersal.

In a chemical abortion, at retail, that struck

decision last year in

Dobbs v. Jackson

comes in the wake of the Supreme Court’s

will allow retail pharmacies to offer

“This week’s action by the FDA not

Pro-Life Activities, said in a statement.

This trip took place amid the newly announced expansion of Title 42, a federal public health rule enforced by the Trump administration during the COVID-19 pandemic that permits immigration officials to block migrants at the border seeking asylum from entry. Set to end last December, the U.S. Supreme Court in an emergency order on Dec. 27 decided to keep Title 42 in effect indefinitely. The court will render a final ruling later this year, it will hear oral arguments on the matter in February.

Under an expansion of Title 42 under Biden, the rule bars migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela from entering the U.S. while providing some legal paths for them to seek entry to this country. These restrictions were recently strengthened by the FDA, applying for entry or “parole” in their own country, arriving by air at their own expense with a valid passport, and having a sponsor to support them in the U.S. economically.

“State lawmakers and Congress must

children, not loosen safety standards

safeguards to protect women and their

by the drug, mentioning the Catholic

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, said: “The Biden administration has once again proved that it values abortion industry profits over women’s safety and unborn children’s lives.

“Abortion activists want to turn every post office and pharmacy into an abortion business, and the Biden FDA is a willing participant—

Dannenfelser said that some pro-life governors “understand this threat, which is why many states have enacted safeguards to protect women and their unborn children.

State lawmakers and Congress must stand as a bulwark against the Biden administration’s pro-abortion extremism,” Dannenfelser added. “We hope to see

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Catechist leaders reflect on Pope Benedict’s witness of faith

By Sean Gallagher

Exploring the depths of the faith and explaining it for people living in a growing secular culture were at the heart of the more than 70 years of ordained ministry of Pope Benedict XVI, who died on Dec. 31 nearly 10 years after he stepped down as bishop of Rome.

Three leaders in catechesis across central and southern Indiana spoke with The Criterion about how the late pontiff shaped their lives of faith and their ministry to pass it on to others.

Broadened views on ‘God’s Rottweiler’

Ute Eble was born in Munich, Germany, when then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was the archbishop of the Bavarian city. But she was still a young child when his ministry took him to Rome to serve as prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

“My parents and I were involved in the Catholic Church. Everyone in Munich knew who Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was,” said Eble, of her experience of the late pope growing up in Germany. “I did know about him being called ‘God’s Rottweiler,’ so admittedly, the pride of having a German pope was tinged with some suspicion,” recalled Eble, who serves as director of religious education of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

She moved to the U.S. with her American husband and ministered as a coordinator of religious education at an Army installation in Hawaii before coming to Indianapolis.

Her study of the faith through Catholic Distance University helped broaden her perspective on Pope Benedict.

“It was surprising that the ‘Rottweiler’s’ first encyclical was telling us about love,” said Eble of Pope Benedict’s 2005 encyclical letter “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”). “I’ve come to appreciate him in his writings as someone who authentically, out of love for God and others, wants everyone to get to know and follow Christ.”

Pope Benedict was instrumental in the development of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which, as Cardinal Ratzinger, he did in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“My first copy actually fell apart, and my second one has so many highlights and notes from my studies that it has become very precious to me,” she said.

Eble sees a strong emphasis on catechesis in the Church at present as being a legacy of Pope Benedict.

“He wrote in Deus Caritas Est: ‘Being Christian is not the result of an eventual conversion, but involves a transformation of the heart at every moment of day and night, in ways that are both personal and collective.’ That’s a very important message,” she said. “I think Pope Benedict’s approach to the faith was very much shaped by his personal faith journey.”

Eble is grateful for Pope Benedict’s ministry to pass it on to others.

“While still a young man, he saw moral relativism pushed to an extreme in the atrocities of the Holocaust,” Ogorek said. “As a solution to misunderstanding of the moral teaching, Pope Benedict offered an affirmative orthodoxy that helps us navigate the choppy seas of culture, fostering—among other benefits—a strong sense of solidarity and a robust desire for the common good.”

The breadth of Pope Benedict’s writings and example of pastoral leadership continues to help form Ogorek in his ministry. “Pope Benedict helped me grasp the importance of both sharing the deposit of faith and guarding it,” he said. “His collaboration with St. John Paul the Great gave me an example of how a person in a supporting role can provide substantial help to a leader. … Pope Benedict was a gentleman and a scholar—who models how to speak the truth in love.”

Ogorek also reflected on the importance of Pope Benedict’s pointing out the dangers of relativism.

“Acknowledging the dictatorship of relativism, as Pope Benedict put it, is essential for an accurate understanding of how we reach out to the marginalized and accompany folks at various points in their faith journey,” he said. “The continuity between his areas of emphasis and those of Pope Francis help us share the faith in truly pastoral and genuinely helpful ways.”

Speaking on the truth in love

Ken Ogorek has served as archdiocesan director of catechesis since 2007. He was involved in catechetical ministry for 10 years before that in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Pope Benedict has been influential in his life of faith and in his efforts to pass on the faith to parish catechetical leaders in the archdiocese and elsewhere.

“He defied the stereotype that folks who are concerned about doctrinal accuracy are somehow less focused on God’s love,” Ogorek said. “Pope Benedict witnessed for us the ‘both/and’ of guarding the deposit of faith and the faith precisely so our loving relationship with the Almighty is enriched and authentic.”

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The late pope’s interest in offering an alternative to relativism, Ogorek said, was rooted in his life as a youth in Nazi Germany.

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The hands of the late Pope Benedict XVI wearing the ring he wore before and after serving as pope and holding a rosary and crucifix are seen on Jan. 3, as his body lies in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. (CNS screen grab/Vatican Media)
Archdiocesan seminarians attend funeral of Pope Benedict XVI

By Sean Gallagher

Archdiocesan seminarian Khang Thu (left), and Samuel Rosko stand on Jan. 3 at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican after praying before the mortal remains of Pope Benedict XVI. (Submitted photo)

Archdiocesan seminarian Samuel Rosko, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, stands on Jan. 5 in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican prior to the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI. (Submitted photo)

Panelists say late pope will be remembered as great theologian, thinker

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Pope Benedict XVI will be remembered as one of the Catholic Church’s greatest theologians, a former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See in Jan. 5 online roundtable on the late pope’s legacy. "[He] was a theologian who had an unusual ability to communicate to all sorts of audiences, and I think that will last for as long as the Church looks at learned and faithful men to help us understand the times we live in," said Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard Law School professor emerita who represented the U.S. before the Holy See from 2006-09.

The late pope’s legacy also encompasses the years before he became pope, she added, in particular his role as a Church decades ago in his radio talks of 1969 and 1970.

"He constantly wanted to go back to Germany, and Woytyla [St. John Paul II] wouldn’t let him—he just quarreled his job with extraordinary ability," Maier added. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict was an embodiment of virtue and his teachings and witness are very important for us to look to. May he pray for us before the Father."

For more information on a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.†
**A Pilgrimage of Faith/Daniel Conway**

Pope’s death leads to a solemn, simple pilgrimage of respect

(Edited note: Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee. He travelled to Rome and Vatican City to report on the funeral of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and to pay my respects to Joseph Ratzinger, who has been my spiritual father for nearly 50 years.

We had been told that, as the former pope respited, the funeral will be “voluminous and simple.” This is the way, in a way, a summary of Joseph Ratzinger’s life and teachings. Solitude (reverence) is the only suggestion the pope gave to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis where I serve as a member of the editorial committee. I am deeply grateful for the many years he has been my spiritual father. It not only opened my mind to Christ in a new way, but also taught me the importance of holiness and the value of suffering.

I must be honest to witness firsthand the grace and love that was evident in his life and teaching that have been given through that grace and love. It was a grace that transformed the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, to be more focused on the needs of the people of God. It was a grace that transformed the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, to be more focused on the needs of the people of God.

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We mark the end of his life and the beginning of his eternal reward with a sense of peace and joy. We pray that God will grant him eternal rest and may he rest in peace with the saints in glory. Amen.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s final hours

By Daniel Conway

Special to The Criterion

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Pope Francis, and for the Mass and Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, was the principal celebrant at the altar. Some 120 cardinals, another 400 bishops and 3,700 priests concelebrated. The vestments and stoles were red in keeping with the color of mourning for deceased popes.

Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, who turns 91 on Jan. 13, was allowed to leave China to attend the funeral of Pope Benedict, who had made him a cardinal in 2006. The retired cardinal was arrested in May and fined in November together with five others on charges of failing to properly register a now-defunct fund to help anti-government protesters. More than 1,000 journalists, photographers and camera operators from around the world were accredited to cover the funeral in St. Peter’s Square.

An estimated 50,000 people filled the square for the Mass, and a number of visitors told Catholic News Service (CNS) that banners and flags were being confiscated by security upon entry. Of the few flags and banners that did make it past security was a white cloth with “Santo Sustro” ("Saintly Noon") written in red and a “Thank you, Pope Benedict” written in light blue in German.

Just as Pope Benedict dedicated his pontificate to directing the faithful’s focus to the person of Christ, Pope Francis dedicated his homily to Christ’s loving devotion and suffering witness as the “invitation and the program of life that he quietly inspires in us” rather than on a summary of his predecessor’s life.

Pope Francis spoke of Jesus’ grateful, prayerful and sustained devotion to God’s will and how Jesus’ final words on the cross, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,” summed up his entire life, “a ceaseless self-entrustment into the hands of his Father.”

His ways were hands of forgiveness and compassion, healing and mercy, anointing and blessing, which led him also to entrust himself to the hands of his brothers and sisters, “he said.

“Father into your hands I commend my spirit,” the pope said, is the plan for life that Jesus quietly invites and inspires people to follow.

However, he said, the path requires sustained and prayerful devotion that is “silently shaped and refined amid the challenges and resistance that every pastor must face in exercising obedience to the Lord’s command to feed his flock.

Like the Master, a shepherd bears the burden of interceding and the strain of anointing people, especially in situations where goodness must struggle to prevail and the dignity of our brothers and sisters is threatened,” the pope said.

“The Lord quietly bestows the spirit of meekness that is ready to understand, accept, hope and risk, not broadcasting any misunderstandings that might result. It is the source of an unseen and elusive fruitfulness, born of his knowing the One in whom he has placed such trust.”

Feeding means loving, and loving also means being ready to suffer. Loving means giving the sheep what is truly good, the nourishment of God’s truth, of God’s word, the nourishment of his presence,” Pope Francis said, quoting his predecessor’s homily marking the start of his pontificate on April 24, 2005.

“Holding fast to the Lord’s last words and to the witness of his entire life, we too, as an ecclesial community, want to follow in his steps and to commit our brother into the hands of the Father,” said Pope Benedict. “May those merciful hands find his lamp alight with the oil of the Gospel that he spread and testified to for his entire life.

“God’s faithful people, gathered here, now accompany and entrust to him the life of the one who was their pastor,” the pope said. “Together, we want to say, ‘Father, into your hands we commend his spirit.”

“Benedict, faithful friend of the Bridegroom, may your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever?” he concluded, as the crowd prayed in silence.

Among the people in the crowd was Georg Bruckmaier, who traveled nearly 10 hours by car to come to the funeral from his home in Bavaria, not far from where the late pope was born.

Wearing a Bavarian flag around his back, he told CNS, “There are a lot of Bavarians here today. I’ve seen people I know from university. I wanted to be here for the atmosphere.

“People felt very close to him, because he is a Bavarian, so this is a really big event to be here,” Bruckmaier said, adding that being able to pay his last respects before the pope’s remains in St. Peter’s Basilica “is a different thing than seeing it on television. It’s something I won’t forget in my whole life.”

Fiona-Louise Devlin told CNS she and her companions were wearing scarves from the late pope’s visit to Scotland in 2010. She said they traveled to Rome from Scotland specifically for the funeral, hoping their flight the day the pope passed away.

“He’s the pope of our generation. Like, how so many people say that John Paul II was their pope, he was mine. I’ve traveled around the world to go to celebrations that he’s been a part of, so I wanted to be here for this,” she said.

As the day began, the thick morning fog obscuring the cupola slowly began to lift as 12 laymen emerged from the basilica carrying the pope’s casket. The crowd applauded as the cypress casket was brought into the square and placed before the altar.

The pope’s master of liturgical ceremonies, Msgr. Diego Giovanni Ravelli, and Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the late pope’s longtime personal secretary, together placed an opened Book of the Gospels on the casket. The simple casket was decorated with his coat of arms as archbishop of Munich and Freising, Germany, which depicts a shell, a Moor and a bear loaded with a pack on his back. The Bible readings at the Mass were proclaimed in Spanish, English and Italian, and the prayers of the faithful at the Mass were recited in German, French, Arabic, Portuguese and Italian.

The prayers included petitions for “Pope Emeritus Benedict, who has fallen asleep in the Lord: may the eternal Shepherd receive him into his kingdom of light and peace,” followed by a prayer “For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and for all the pastors of the Church: may they proclaim fearlessly, in word and deed, Christ’s victory over evil and death.”

The other prayers were for justice and peace in the world, for those suffering from poverty and other forms of need, and for those gathered at the funeral.

At the pope’s funeral, like any Catholic funeral, Communion was followed by the “final commendation and farewell,” asking that “Pope Emeritus Benedict” be delivered from death and “may sing God’s praises in the heavenly Jerusalem.”

Pope Francis prayed that God have mercy on his predecessor, who was “a fearless preacher of your word and a faithful minister of the divine mysteries.”

While the funeral was based on the model of a papal funeral, two key elements normally part of a papal funeral following the farewell prayer were missing: there were no prayers offered by representatives of the Diocese of Rome and of the Eastern Catholic Churches, since those prayers are specific to the death of a reigning pope, who is bishop of the Diocese of Rome and is in communion with the leaders of the Eastern Churches.

A bell tolled solemnly and the assembly applauded for several minutes—with somechanting “Benedetto”—as the pallbearers carried the casket toward St. Peter’s Basilica.

Pope Francis blessed the casket and laid his right hand on it in prayer, then bowed slightly in reverence before温度的镜头 that was taken immediately in the crypt of St. Peter’s Basilica, in the same tomb that held the remains of St. Pope John Paul II before his beatification.

The evening before the funeral Mass, a small assembly of cardinals, officials of St. Peter’s Basilica and members of the late pope’s household gathered in St. Peter’s Basilica to witness Pope Benedict’s body being placed into a cypress casket and closed. The ceremony took place on Jan. 4 after about 195,000 people had paid their respects to the pope during three days of public viewing.

The “nossa,” a document rolled up and placed in a tube, was placed in the casket with the body. In addition to containing his biography, the legal document, written in Latin, also attested to his death and burial. Medals and coins minted during his pontificate also were placed in the casket.

Archbishop Gänswein and Msgr. Ravelli extended a white silk cloth over the deceased pope’s face. The pope was wearing a mitre and the chasuble he wore for Mass at World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008. Between his clasped hands were a rosary and a small crucifix.

After the funeral Mass, the pope’s casket was taken to the chapel in the crypt of St. Peter’s Basilica where he was to be buried.

Although the burial was private, images supplied by Vatican Media showed Cardinal Re leading prayers and blessing the remains during the burial rite attended by a small number of senior cardinals, the retired pope’s closest aides and others.

The cypress casket was wrapped with red ribbon, which was affixed to the wood with red wax seals, then placed inside a zincasket soldered shut and put inside a larger casket made of oak. The tops of both the zinc and oak caskets were decorated with a simple cross, a bronze plaque with the pope’s name and dates of birth, papacy and death, and his papal coat of arms. His tomb is located between the only two women ever to their quarters, Zen, and the his predecessors, who was “a fearless preacher of your word and a faithful minister of the divine mysteries.”
of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield. “Just hearing people speak of Pope Benedict is really telling of how he was in life—a man of a lot of faith and love.”

Anthony Basso, a theology teacher at Ritter, brought the students to the Mass. The teacher has long admired Pope Benedict.

“Over the years, I’ve read many of his books, homilies, encyclicals and other writings, and his thought has shaped not only my faith but my career and vocation,” Basso said.

“Without succumbing to the temptation to prematurely canonize those we admire, I truly think of him as a doctor of the Church. Archbishop Thompson expressed this well at the memorial Mass when he said, “If Pope Francis is the great evangelizer, Pope Benedict was the great catechist, the great teacher.”

Earlier in the morning, an all-school Mass commemorating Pope Benedict was celebrated at Cardinal Ritter High School, but Basso also wanted to give a group of student leaders the opportunity to celebrate the pope’s life as part of the broader, larger Church.

“It was a blessing to see so many people, so many people of different religious orders,” Basso said after the Mass at the cathedral. “It struck right to the heart of wanting them to feel connected to the universal Church.”

That sentiment was echoed by Abi Villarias, a senior at Cardinal Ritter and a member of St. Malachi Parish in Brownsburg.

“The Mass was very beautiful and very moving,” she said. “I don’t know too much about him, but I know that he was a very kind soul. And I’m sorry that he passed away.”

Stella Campbell, a senior at Cardinal Ritter and a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, was also thankful for the chance to come to the Mass for Pope Benedict.

“It’s just so cool to come here and worship with everyone,” said Stella. “Just how Pope Benedict lived his life, it was so cool to be part of this celebration. He was always pointing people toward Christ.”

That perspective on Pope Benedict was shared by Archbishop Thompson after the Mass in an interview with The Criterion.

“This primary focus was on the person of Jesus Christ,” said the archbishop. “He sought to bring others to a personal encounter with the Lord through all his efforts as priest, bishop, cardinal and pope. Like St. John the Baptist, he never lost sight that he was a mere voice to the living Word of God.”

“Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has provided the Church, indeed the whole world, with a great witness of courage, humility and generosity of service.”

Brian Burns, who attended the Mass, is being led to a closer encounter with Christ as he prepares to be received into the full communion of the Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish.

“I’m just reading up on him now,” Burns said about Pope Benedict. “I’m sorry to lose such a great soul.”

Dick Gallamore, a longtime religion teacher at St. Roch School in Indianapolis, shared in that sorrow.

“I wanted to be here to be respectful of the pope,” Gallamore said. “Since he had the title of pope, he’s important to me and many other Catholics.”

Although Pope Benedict’s long and fruitful life of ministry and service to the Gospel has come to an end, Archbishop Thompson is convinced that his witness to Christ will continue to shape the life of the Church well into the future.

“The Church will bear the fruits of his great intellect, writings and witness for decades to come,” Archbishop Thompson said. “For that, whether we realize it or not at this point, Catholics and people of all faith are indebted to his incredible fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Church.”

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(For more photos from the Mass for the Dead for Pope Benedict XVI on Jan. 5 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, visit CriterionOnline.com.)
Monks of Saint Meinrad see Benedictine qualities in late pontiff

By Sean Gallagher

After the death of Pope Benedict XVI was announced on Dec. 31, 2022, the Benedictine monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad did what they have done when a pontiff dies since their monastery was founded in 1854. They tolled a bell in their Archabbe Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln once for each year of his pontificate and then pealed all six of its bells for two minutes. Although this is a tradition carried out for all pontiffs, Pope Benedict had a special meaning for the monks of Saint Meinrad since his papal name honors St. Benedict, the sixth-century founder of the Benedictine order.

St. Benedict dedicated a long chapter in his Rule to reflecting on the importance of humility in the life of monks. Benedictine Archabbot Kurt Stasiak saw the humility of the late pontiff as a prime Benedictine quality in his ministry.

“He was a brilliant scholar but always used his scholarship to serve the Church, not to promote himself,” Archabbot Kurt said in an interview with The Criterion. “At the same time, here was a man who I believe had a keen sense of his own weaknesses and inadequacies.”

Quoting a phrase from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians, Archabbot Kurt said that he believed Pope Benedict “genuinely considered himself an ‘earth vessel,’ unworthy in himself to hold his position but dedicated to fulfilling it as best as he could, always relying upon God’s grace.”

In his homily during a Jan. 5 memorial Mass for Pope Benedict at the Archabbe Church, Archabbot Kurt reflected on Pope Benedict’s humility in light of the example of his predecessor, St. John Paul II, both of whom said they were valuable witnesses for the Church.

“Pope John Paul II reigned for 26 years, the last handful of which involved a constant struggle with Parkinson’s disease,” Archabbot Kurt said. “He would not give up. What an example of perseverance and determination.

“Pope Benedict’s leadership lasted almost eight years. He gave it everything he could. And when he could no longer give … he handed back to the master the talents he had been entrusted with, and he handed them back with interest.

“What an example of confidence and trust. Humble confidence and gracious trust in the Lord.”

Benedictine Father Paul Nord is an instructor of Scripture at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. Father Paul said. “Like St. Benedict, Pope Benedict’s witness to Christ Jesus planted seeds of faith that will bear fruit long after his death.”

Benedictine Father Paul Nord is a monk of Saint Meinrad who was a graduate student in Rome while Pope Benedict was serving as the city’s bishop.

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On the day of his election in 2005, Pope Benedict described himself as “a simple and humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.” Those words came to mind often for Father Paul when he lived in Rome during the late pope’s pontificate.

“Every Ash Wednesday, Pope Benedict would visit our Benedictine monastery at Sant’Anselmo,” Father Paul recalled. “Celebrating the eucharistic liturgy, his bearing combined gentle humility and careful labor. He celebrated the liturgy with precision and deep reverence. “Up close, Pope Benedict carried himself as a ‘simple and humble laborer’ who tranquilly trusted in Christ’s grace to help him fulfill the papal ministry.”

“Pope Benedict prayed and worked tirelessly for what he described as a ‘new springtime for Christianity’ in Europe,” Father Paul said. “Like St. Benedict, Pope Benedict’s witness to Christ Jesus planted seeds of faith that will bear fruit long after his death.”

As Benedictines, our daily common liturgy is the glue that holds our community together as we seek Christ together.” Father Paul said in an interview with The Criterion. “Likewise for Pope Benedict, his daily celebration of the eucharistic liturgy nourished his priestly vocation and Christian faith. Pope Benedict was a world-class theologian whose every word was inspired by his daily encounter with Christ in the liturgy.

The priest also noted how Pope Paul VI had named St. Benedict as a patron saint of Europe for the vital role Benedictine monks played in its evangelization beginning 1,500 years ago.

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In her reflection on the late pope, she quoted from his 2005 encyclical ‘Deus Caritas Est’ (‘God Is Love’): “The communion of Christ’s Church, and given him for us, even unto death, inspire us to live no longer for ourselves but for him, and, with him, for others.”

She also remembered that many of the pope’s writings and teachings drew one man back to the Church, or structure—led me back to the faith and into my vocation of married and parenting life,” said Skaggs, who now worships with his family at St. Matthew Cathedral Parish in South Bend, Ind., in the Foxx, a U.S. senator from Indiana, told Catholic News Service he “appreciated the pope’s approach to human dignity”

June 17, 2008, photo from World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney, Australia, Trina Trusty and Father Jonathan Meyer hold up four fingers indicating their fourth attendance at a WYD gathering. The late Pope Benedict XVI was present for WYD 2005, 2008 and 2011. (Jay Paul)

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Basso reflected further on Pope Benedict after his death. “I had many photos developed, and I had gotten this wonderful one of him looking right toward us. I had it printed as an 8x10 and framed it. Pope Benedict with his head raised has been in our home for many years as his photo sat among our family wedding and grandchildren photos.

“The entire pilgrimage was wonderful,” Mary said. “But the highlight was being so close to our holy, saintly pope who I came to know and love.”

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In the spring of 2005, Anthony Basso was in his first year as a theology teacher at Cardinal Ritter High School in Indianapolis. He recalled eating lunch in his classroom while watching coverage of the second day of the conclave. He chose a new pope after the death of Pope John Paul II.

He remembered watching as “the third wave of smoke started to creep out of the Sistine Chapel,” he said.

“One of the senior boys passed by and asked if he could watch for a minute. He stood in the doorway as I sat in one of the student desks, our eyes fixed on the screen. It wasn’t long before the pealing bells confirmed that indeed a pope had been chosen.”

Pope Francis had entered the long Hall of Blessings above St. Peter’s Basilica to sign a document (Pacem in Terris) written during his papal visit to Hiroshima, Japan, in November 2019, shifting the Church’s line which previously had only defined as immoral the use of atomic weapons.

“There is a need to change the way of thinking and move toward an integral disarmament, since no peace is possible where instruments of death are proliferating,” he told the ambassadors.

In recalling the various ongoing conflicts in the world, Pope Francis condemned the “third world war” fought in pieces around the world, which “involve only certain areas of the planet directly, but in fact involve them all.”

The pope specifically discussed the war in Ukraine and called for an “immediate end” to the “senseless conflict.”

Joseph Donnino, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See who previously served as a U.S. senator from Indiana, told Catholic News Service he “appreciated the pope’s words on the war in Ukraine, especially his comments pointing out that Russia’s indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are crimes against God and humanity.

The United States has unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in the face of Russia’s aggression,” the ambassador said.

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VATICAN CITY (CNS)—“Peace requires before all else the defense of life,” which is threatened by the “alleged ‘right of a woman to abortion,’ ” Pope Francis told journalists.

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By Natalie Hoefr

Upon learning of the death of Pope Benedict XVI on Dec. 31, 2022, The Criterion put out a call on social media for reflections regarding the late pope.

Some 25 people responded to the request, including Pope Benedict’s personal secretary, the late pope’s organist and the late pope’s personal secretary, the late pope’s organist and the late pope’s personal secretary.

The reflections are shared below.

His writings ‘led me back to the faith’

Michael Skaggs was a sophomore at Indiana University and worshiped at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. When Larry and Mary Daugherty of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis read in The Criterion about an archdiocesan-led pilgrimage to Rome scheduled for the fall of 2005, they signed up. Pope John Paul II was still shepherd of the Church when they registered.

“In the spring of 2005 when Pope John Paul II died, we were saddened, and I did feel disappointed that we would not see him when we had an audience in St. Peter’s Square on the trip, that it would be the new pope, Pope Benedict XVI,” Mary said.

“His ministry was wonderful,” Mary said. “But the highlight was being so close to our holy, saintly pope who I came to know and love.”

‘Ever the teacher’

Two years before the event in Australia, Trusty got a�

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Inspiration from God ensures our success, keeps us on virtuous path

Joyful Witness/ Kimberly Pohovey

Since I began penning this column three years ago, I can honestly say I have never fallen short of topics and ideas. Before commencing my monthly writing, I sit in silence for a few minutes and ask God to speak through me, to help me discern what he needs to hear my message. And the words always flow naturally.

In fact, usually ideas are percolating in my brain throughout the day, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but when I sat down to write this column, I was stumped.

I thought about this month’s topic, I narrowed it down to this column, I was stumped. Every time I was ready to write, the words were lost. It usually becomes clear to me after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me. Here is the beginning of another year—a time of fresh ideas, positivity and goal-setting, but after praying, it usually becomes clear to me which idea God has chosen for me.

And in that moment, I began to think, “What inspires me?”

And that is the leader who leads with wisdom, mercy and empathy.

Religious who dedicate their entire life’s work to serving the world. A spectacular sunset at the edge of the ocean or the quiet stillness of a freshly fallen snow. Folks with a hard work ethic—like my husband, David Bethuram. Utilizing music that enhances its liturgical experience. People who can live in the moment and fully present to those around them.

I am inspired by parents who, despite being frequently exhausted, still make time to play with their kids. I am inspired by people who face insurmountable medical diagnoses and treatments, but who retain a fighting spirit. I am motivated by folks who cross the finish line in a endurance race. No children inspire with their ability to strike out on their own and experience locations and experiences that I may not have had the courage to try.

In my line of work as a fundraiser for Catholic Charities, I try to create a daily basis by faithful supporters who contribute their God-given blessings to the Church and other charitable causes because they want to improve the lives of others and impact the mission of the Church.

As someone who has lost loved ones, I am inspired by others’ faith in eternal life and their ability to live each day as a gift. As a child of God, I am inspired by all those with whom I cross paths who help me to be the person God created.

All of my examples have a common denominator—they are all God-inspired. I realize that inspiration itself is inspired by God. I think this is important because it helps us to focus on where we turn for inspiration. We can be led by all sorts of things, but I believe it is important to keep our inspiration from God.

In the 2023 commencements, I think it fitting that, as we focus our energies on this year’s goals, resolutions and accomplishments, we remember to ask the Lord to help us inspire to achieve that all we undertake. I can’t help but believe we will be even more successful if we rely on God’s inspiration. Ironically, I came to the end of this column and thought, “Hmmm, God was inspiring all along to write about inspiration.”

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the author of many and planned gifts for the archdiocese.)

Our Work of Charity/David Bethuram

Catholic Charities programs are committed to changing lives

As a good student from an upper-middle-class family, Peter never expected to find himself living in the streets.

But when he began drinking at the age of 16, alcohol began to consume his life. As he began college, he soon dropped out due to his addiction.

A few years later, at the age of 21, he began attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and got his addiction under control. He went back to college and was finally ready to see what he could do with his life. But false starts, relapse and addiction returned.

Peter decided he needed a fresh start and moved to Indiana. He attempted to transfer his law license but was still facing obstacles. After being arrested for shoplifting, his application for an Indiana law license was suspended and his plans were ruined. He knew sobriety was his need help.

Peter had visited Catholic Charities before for help with food, clothing and other necessities. While he was in for food one day, a Catholic Charities caseworker suggested that he begin attending AA meetings again, and with the help of his caseworker, he secured a job and stable housing.

He began attending AA meetings again, and with the help of his caseworker, he secured a job and stable housing. After working for more than a year, he fell back into addiction and lost his job. For the next two years, he was in and out of shelters.

Peter knew he needed to make a permanent change in his life. He remembered how the staff at Catholic Charities had seen him as an individual and went out of their way to help him succeed, so he went to Catholic Charities for help again. We provided bus tickets, food, clothing for interviews, job hunting assistance and the necessities we knew he needed to gain stability once again.

Our Catholic Charities mental health program serves as part of an interdisciplinary team with other community programs specifically working with those who have addiction.

Our expertise is in the behavioral health counseling area and treating mental health problems which lead to or exacerbate complex comorbidities, which supports clients who are in recovery.

When a person is truly ready to change, Catholic Charities will provide everything you need to change your life,” said Peter. “They saw me as an individual and not just another number or allotment. If I could show that I was taking the steps to get a job, they would get me what I needed to succeed and soften the blow to potential employers about me being homeless.

Peter added, “Catholic Charities staff members have been great, positive role models” who have been a crucial part of him achieving stability in his life. He now attends church multiple times a week, is back in AA meetings and was able to secure a job working in construction.

He recently moved out of a shelter and into a rented room and hopes to hold his current job for the next year to demonstrate reliability. Eventually, he wants to utilize his law degree in some capacity and is hopeful for the future.

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. You can contact him at dbethuram@archindy.org)
The Book of Isaiah furnishes this weekend’s first reading for Mass. Relief and joy uplifted the atmosphere. Hopes centered upon a bright future. After the humiliation, uncertainty and anguish of being conquered by Babylonia and generations of exile in Babylon for many, God’s people were entering a new day of return to their homeland and hopefully to lives of prosperity and security.

Lest anyone think this fortunate turn of events was the mere outcome of changing politics or luck, the prophet eloquently taught us. He died for us. Finding Jesus, he taught us. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love. He died for us. Finding Jesus, we are in his love.
Cardinal Ratzinger brings the reader on a deep dive into the Apostles’ Creed, including its scriptural inspirations both Old Testament and New, coming up for air regularly in order to relate the declaration of faith to the reality of our lived experiences. It is a book that leaves the reader instructed, inspired and edified refreshed.

Another good choice is in the Beginning…: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall. As with so many Ratzingerian works, the title tells you that Benedict was not afraid to go large in his thinking. This book is a collection of four homilies and a concluding essay wherein Ratzinger takes us through the creation stories of Genesis. “[All creation] comes from one power, from God’s eternal Reason, which became in the Word the power of creation. . . . This is the living God, and this same power which created the Earth and all the creation stories of Genesis. “ [All creation] comes from one power, from God’s eternal Reason, which became in the Word the power of creation. . . . This is the living God, and this same power which created the Earth and all the...
The lasting legacy of Pope Benedict XVI’s service to the Church

By Russell Shaw

OSV News

(OSS News)—On Dec. 31, 2022, the Vatican announced the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who left a lasting legacy over the course of his lifelong service of the Church and who, in 2013, became the first Roman pontiff in 68 years to resign the papacy.

At his general audience on Dec. 28, 2022, Pope Francis announced that Pope Benedict was “very sick” and requested that the faithful pray for his health, and “ask the Lord to console him and sustain him in his witness for the Church until the very end.”

After spending more than 20 years as a prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during the papacy of Pope St. John Paul II, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger succeeded John Paul as pope following the Polish pontiff’s death in 2005. Cardinal Ratzinger became the 166th pope to take the name Benedict. He reigned as the successor of St. Peter until his resignation on Feb. 28, 2013.

While the current generation of Catholics will know Pope Benedict through his English-language works, it’s important to note that he would have been entrusted with such a lofty position if it wasn’t for his involvement and importance as a priest-theologian—starting, most notably, with his work for the Second Vatican Council.

Ratzinger’s influences

Pope Benedict XVI’s long, close relationship to the Second Vatican Council had two distinct but by no means unrelated aspects. Partly, it reflected his role as a young theologian at Vatican II. And partly, it arose from his implementation—and especially from his enlightenment—of the council as a landmark in Church history.

In both aspects, Benedict’s decade-long identification with the ecumenical council is a central part of his legacy.

Held in four sessions from 1962 to 1965, Vatican II was the most important event in the life of the Church in the 20th century—and some would say the most important event since the Council of Trent, a reforming council that placed its stamp on the Church for 400 years. Among the goals of the council, an associate professor of theology at the Catholic University of America (CUA) who has written often on Benedict, considers commitment to Church renewal the cause that especially links him and Vatican II. Central to it, Ruddy says, are two complementary driving forces: “aggiornamento”—an updating of the Church in response to the signs of the times—and “resourcement”—a return to the sources of the Church’s traditions.

Fully to understand Benedict, the theologian, it’s necessary to grasp the role played in shaping his theological vision by St. Augustine, who with St. Thomas Aquinas is one of the two most influential thinkers in Church history. Starting in 1981 with his first book, on Augustine’s theology of the Church, it can be seen a half-century later in his first encyclical as Pope, “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”), which reflects what one writer calls Augustine’s “absorption in the idea of love.”

“Being a Christian,” Benedict writes there, “is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person”—Jesus Christ (#1). That realization, central to his theology, is basic to the “passionate desire to know the love of Christ,” which Ruddy and others find in his writing.

Vatican II

Father Joseph Ratzinger was 35 when Cardinal Joseph Frings of Cologne, Germany, chose him to be his peritus (or theological adviser) at the ecumenical council that Pope St. John XXIII, surprising many, had convoked in early 1959, shortly after his election.

Cardinal Frings, president of the German bishops’ conference, was a powerful figure at the council as one of its cardinal-presidents, and his youthful theological fervor propelled him into a heady role as one of the noted theologians working to shape the assembly. This was a group that included such luminaries of the day as Dominican Fathers Yves Congar and Edward Schillebeeckx, Jesuit Fathers Henri de Lubac and Hans Kung and most influential of all during Vatican II—Jesus Father Karl Rahner.

Although the council’s documents were written by many hands, Father Ratzinger had an important part in writing the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (“Dei Verbum”) (“The Light of Nations”—that is, Christ). This was of particular significance in that Lumen Gentium, Vatican II’s theological centerpiece, provided the conceptual basis for other council documents on subjects such as ecumenism, the role of bishops and the role of the laity.

Father Ratzinger’s special contribution was working out the theological underpinnings of “collegiality”—the idea that bishops in communion with the pope make up a single body or “college” responsible for governing and teaching the universal Church. He also drafted the theological section of “Ad Gentes” (“To the Nations”) the “Decree in Missionary Activity,” which declares the Church to be “by its very nature missionary” (#2).

Although he was a team player with his theologian colleagues, the council was in progress, his position appears to have shifted as it neared its end. In his Vatican II history, “The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber,” Society of the Divine Word Father Ralph Witgen writes that Father Ratzinger gave “almost unquestioning support” to Father Rahner’s views while Vatican II was underway, “but as it was drawing to a close, he admitted that he disagreed on various points, and said he would begin to assert himself more after the council was over.”

And so he did.

Finding his voice

Between sessions of the council, he had written articles for a German newspaper discussing developments there. Collected and published in book form under the title Theological Highlights of Vatican II, this material remains an exceptionally clear and informative account from a genuine insider.

In the introduction to the book’s English edition, published in 1966, he touched on a serious problem he already saw taking shape. “We would misunderstand the council’s teaching,” he wrote, “were we to take it as a sudden switchover, a sudden shift from ‘conservatism’ to ‘progressivism.’” Not only that, he added, using the words “conservative” and “progressive” with their political connotations is itself a mistake when speaking of the Church’s renewal. Instead, he insisted, “the measure of the renewal is Christ [and] the objective is precisely that Christ may become understood.”

In 1968, he published one of his best known books, Introduction to Christianity, which Catholic author Robert Royal calls “a brilliant apologetic.” In its preface, Father Ratzinger expresses growing concern about the state of faith, “enveloped today in a greater fog of uncertainty than at almost any earlier period in history.” His aim, therefore, was to help relieve that condition by explaining Christian faith without changing it into the small coal of empty talk painfully laboring to hide a complete spiritual vacuum.

Another stage in the same project came four years later. Progressive theologians for some time had been accustomed to expanding their views in a journal called Conclusio. In 1972, Father Ratzinger joined Father de Lubac and Father Hans von Balthasar in founding a new journal, Communio, as a forum for those interested in theologizing in continuity with the Catholic tradition.

Doctrine of the Church

Upon accepting Pope St. John Paul II’s 1981 invitation to become prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), then-Cardinal Ratzinger became one of the pope’s closest collaborators. As head of the CDF, he was described as the “most influential of all during Vatican II—Jesus Father Karl Rahner. The year 1985 brought publication of The Ratzinger Report, a book-length interview in which the cardinal discussed many of the alterations plaguing the Church. While many readers appreciated his clarity and candor, Church liberals generally saw it as one more black mark against him.

From 1986 to 1992, he headed the commission responsible for writing the new Catechism of the Catholic Church—the first general catechism in 400 years. Some Church liberals, wanting doctrine to remain in flux, opposed the project. But the new catechism was successfully completed and published in 1992, and is now considered one of the enduring achievements of the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II.

See LEGACY, page 20
A successor of St. Peter

Following John Paul’s death in 2005, Cardinal Ratzinger preached the homily at the Mass attended by cardinals preparing to enter the conclave at which they would elect John Paul’s successor. It was then that he spoke of the “dictatorship of relativism” that he saw infecting not only secular society but the Church. A day later, the cardinals elected him pope on the fourth ballot of the conclave.

The hostility and suspicion toward him that his opponents had fomented for years carried over into the new pontificate, with some media predicting the “Panzerkardinal” would be a reactionary, repressive pope. The encyclical “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”) therefore, came as a surprise to many, emphasizing as it did “the love that God lavishes on us and that we, in turn, must share with others.” (#31). CUA’s Ruddy calls it “an attempt to show to a skeptical modernity that God is not the enemy of human flourishing, but its very possibility and fulfillment.”

Among other things, the encyclical cautioned against a monopoly of works of charity by the all-encompassing modern state. Pope Benedict wrote: “There will always be suffering that cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. The state that would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing what the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern” (#28).

A pope of reform

Grounded in his experience growing up in the Catholic culture of Bavaria, Benedict for years had expressed deep interest in and appreciation for the liturgy. In part, this took the form of criticism of liturgical innovations that he viewed as abuses.

Thus, it was no surprise when in 2007 he restored the pre-Vatican II form of the Mass, which had been virtually suppressed after the council. The new forms, introduced with little advance preparation in 1970, would remain the “ordinary” form in the Western Church, but the old form could be used by any priest who wished. Both, he emphasized, were simply different forms of the one Roman Rite of the Mass. Similarly, as pope he continued to promote what he viewed as the correct understanding of Vatican II, with its fullest exposition coming in his 2005 Christmas address to the Roman Curia. Here he blamed difficulties in implementing the council on conflict between competing interpretations of the event that he called “two contrary hermeneutics.” He described them like this:

“He left no doubt that the hermeneutic of reform is the right one. And he quoted Pope St. John XXIII’s address opening the council in 1962 in which John stressed the need to pass on Church doctrine “pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion” while at the same time performing “that work which our era demands of us.” Considered this way, Benedict said, genuine reform in the Church requires “innovation in continuity … [a] combination of continuity and discontinuity.” Where this has happened, he added, “new life developed and new fruit ripened.”

To appreciate Benedict’s approach to Church renewal, Ruddy says, it’s essential to have in view its “strong Christological focus”—as in this from a book called God and the World: “God is no longer just in heaven … he is now also the One who is near us, who has become identified with us, who touches us and is touched by us, the One whom we can receive and who will receive us.”

If he could have his way, this reserved, devout intellectual whom events thrust into a life of high drama and no little controversy would likely be glad to have that stand as his most lasting legacy to the Church.

(Russell Shaw is a contributing editor for Our Sunday Visitor. This story was reprinted with permission of Our Sunday Visitor.)