Pope: Synodal and Lenten journeys require effort, sacrifice and focusing on God

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking out new paths to take with Jesus and for avoiding the traps of stagnation or impromptu experimentation, Pope Francis said.

“Jesus is himself the way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey of Lent and in the journey of the synod, the Church does nothing other than enter ever more deeply and fully into the mystery of Christ the Savior,” the pope said in his message for Lent, which began on Feb. 22 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Released by the Vatican on Feb. 17, the text of the pope’s message focused on seeing Lenten penance and the synodal experience both as arduous journeys that lead to the wondrous experience of Christ’s divine light and splendor.

“Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross,” he said.

The Gospel accounts of the transfiguration of Christ offer an illustration of this, he said.

Jesus led three of his disciples to Mount Tabor to pray after they failed to understand and accept the reality of his coming passion and death on the cross. On the mountaintop they witnessed his face shine “like the sun” (Lk 17:2) and his clothes become “white as light” (Lk 17:2), and they heard a voice from a cloud proclaiming Jesus as the “beloved Son” (Lk 17:5) of God.

“The disciples’ experience on Mount Tabor was further enriched when, alongside the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared, signifying the best feeling.

LOS ANGELES (OSV News)—A 65-year-old Hispanic man was taken into custody on the morning of Feb. 20 by Los Angeles County Sheriff’s deputies as the prime suspect in the murder of Auxiliary Bishop David G. O’Connell of Los Angeles.

LA County Sheriff Robert G. Luna announced at a news conference on Monday afternoon local time at the Los Angeles County Hall of Justice in downtown LA that citizen tips led to the 8:15 a.m. arrest of Carlos Medina, the husband of a housekeeper who had worked at Bishop O’Connell’s home in Hacienda Heights, after an all-night search.

Bishop O’Connell, a native of Ireland who spent most of his 43 years as a priest serving in LA’s inner city, was found dead in his home on the afternoon of Feb. 18.

Emotional sheriff details arrest of suspect in shooting death of Bishop O’Connell; motive remains unclear

By John Shaughnessy

BLOOMINGTON—One of the best parts of meeting Ella Spoonmore and Alexandra “Alex” Daley is seeing their eyes light up with joy when these 10-year-old girls talk about how close they are as friends.

Then there are their laughs, their smiles and their animated looks of delight when they rave about their favorite foods—pasta and French fries for Alex, pizza and macaroni and cheese for Ella, with both of them praising the deliciousness of dill pickles.

“That’s something we share. And we always fight over pickles,” Alex says, her smile mirrored by Ella’s.

10-year-old friends lead children’s ‘army’ and earn national honor for helping others

By John Shaughnessy

The smiles of Alexandra “Alex” Daley, left, and Ella Spoonmore show their close friendship, a friendship that has helped the two fifth-grade students at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington lead drives that have collected nearly 10,000 pounds of food in the past two years to help families in southern Indiana. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)
Pope from ‘ends of the earth’ brings new style to Rome

(March 13, 2023, is the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis’ election to the papacy. The Criterion will be publishing articles in the coming weeks marking this milestone.)

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Right from the beginning of his election to the papacy, Pope Francis presented a whole new style of being pontiff.

The way he spoke to the vast crowd after his election on March 13, 2013, was familial and down-to-earth, beginning with, “Brothers and sisters, good evening,” and ending with “We’ll talk to each other soon!” and “Have a good night and sleep well!”

He repeatedly referred to himself as “bishop of Rome,” which eventually ended up being his sole title in the “Grotto Pontifical,” the Vatican yearbook, and would be another sign of his vision for renewal by promoting a more collegial and decentralized Church.

And his invitation to the crowd on the day he was elected—“Let’s begin this journey, brothers and sisters, with fraternity, love, trust and prayer,” and “may it be fruitful for evangelization”—was a clear signal of a new style of governance, he said, one of that of synodality, with all brothers and sisters in the faith walking, praying and evangelizing together.

That first night also gave a glimpse into how Pope Francis would lead the universal Church. In that inaugural unbarred situation of having a retired pope in the hills. He led everyone in prayer “for our Bishop Emeritus Benedict XVI.”

Many of his most unexpected choices on how he would live as pope were offered as a kind of stripped-down, do not just as I say, especially to his brother bishops around the world. He chose to live in the Vatican’s house next to the papal apartments of the Apostolic Palace; he has used an annual penance celebration at the Vatican to publicly confess; he responds to many people who write to him with a letter, note or phone call; he meets regularly with various groups; he has gone in person to pay a bill, to pick up a new pair of glasses and to visit the elderly;

The election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, marked the first time a Jesuit was made pontiff. He was the first pope to come from the Americas, born of immigrant parents. He has gone in person to pay a bill, to pick up a new pair of glasses and to visit the elderly.

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The election of the Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, presented the Lenten message at a Vatican news conference.

Lent is a time for Catholics to “work on ourselves” and understand that a “change of mentality—conversion and the communal nature of human life are blessed labors, on which depends that something wonderful and surprising for this broken world,” the cardinal said.

If we want a Lent of charity, if we believe that prayer and fasting have real effects on the world,” he said, “we must broaden the idea of almsgiving to something larger, namely the biblical idea of restitution.

“The path is the mission. And the mission is charity, which calls into question an organization of the world and the Church that may seem unchanged, but is changeable, because it is the outcome of decisions, of freedom,” he said.

When asked about the role of fasting as a form of penance, Cardinal Czerny said fasting also has a positive side in that it is a form of “liberation and a gesture of solidarity with those who have nothing to eat.”

“Because we eat too much, and perhaps, irresponsibly, so fasting reorients us toward the poor, eating and drinking that is more in tune with our vocation” as followers of Christ, he said.

The cardinal also said the dicastery would be releasing materials the pope’s message each week during the 40-day period of Lent to help parishes live their own “transfiguration” in a more practical way.

People are encouraged to follow the #Lent2023 campaign on the dicastery’s Twitter and Instagram accounts and download new materials each week from its website: humandevelopment.va/on.html.

SYNOD

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NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in The Criterion? E-mail: criterion@archindy.org

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March 1 – 12:15 p.m. Mass and Lay Ecclesiastical Minister Formation gathering at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

March 2-4 The Way Forward Ecclesial Conference at Boston College, Boston, Mass.

March 7 – 10:30 a.m. Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 7 – 7 p.m. Confirmation for youths of St. Christopher Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

March 10 – 10 a.m. Visit to St. Charles Borromeo School, Bloomington

Cathedral

Visit to St. Charles Borromeo School, Bloomington

02/24/23
Legislature shuts door on renters suffering from landlord negligence

By Victoria Arthur

The Statehouse has again proven to be an inhospitable place for those seeking to ensure safe and livable conditions for Hoosier renters, but advocates including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) vow to press on for change.

Days after a tenants’ rights rally at the Statehouse earlier this month that spotlighted unlivable situations for countless Indiana apartment residents, lawmakers suddenly halted Senate Bill 202, a bipartisan measure designed to hold landlords accountable for providing their tenants with decent living conditions. Instead, the bill was sent to a summer study committee with no guarantee of further action.

“I’m frustrated, because this is justice delayed for hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers who are experiencing negligent behaviors from unresponsive corporate landlords, specifically out-of-state landlords,” Qaddoura said.

Qaddoura met the same fate last year. He had been staunchly opposed by lobbyists representing the corporate landlords. However, the bill set for Feb. 15, the Senate Judiciary Committee cancelled the proceedings into a court-ordered escrow account. It’s an injustice.”

“The working poor—who often devote between 50% to 80% of their monthly incomes to housing expenses—are especially vulnerable to these situations and have few alternatives, Espada noted.

Espada had been scheduled to testify in favor of Senate Bill 202 on the same day the bill was stripped and replaced by summer study committee topics. She and other advocates appeared the following day at a press conference sponsored by the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition to present the testimony they would have given and to call on the legislature to take further action.

“The General Assembly has a duty to all Hoosiers to address these issues,” Espada said, adding that “landlords who operate in good faith have nothing to fear from Senate Bill 202.”

Representers rate more than one-third of Hoosier households, but Indiana is one of only five states that do not have strong protections for renters, according to Qaddoura and coalition members who supported his legislation.

Every week, we receive calls from Hoosiers living in sometimes deplorable conditions,” said Amy Nelson, executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, who also brought her prepared Senate testimony to the Feb. 16 press conference. “This is a statewide problem and an overwhelming burden. These are people who pay their rent, but their landlords won’t make needed repairs despite being asked over and over again. And for an increasing number, they can’t even find their landlords because it’s some out-of-state company and it’s hard to determine even whom to contact. What are people to do?”

Qaddoura attributes the legislature’s lack of urgency on these issues to what he believes is a misconception about the more than 800,000 people in Indiana who are renters instead of homeowners.

“My concern with the General Assembly, aside from their inaction, is that there is a stigma in our state that tenants do not deserve rights or protections,” Qaddoura said. “It seems that the General Assembly has forgotten that these tenants are property tax payers, just like homeowners. They pay their property taxes through their rental payments.

“These are people who decided to live in an apartment who maybe cannot afford home ownership, or maybe they decided to live there because it’s their lifestyle,” he continued. “My point is that they are humans, they are full citizens, and they deserve protections under state law.”

Qaddoura is dismayed to see his legislation once again relegated to a summer study committee, and advocates including the ICC are equally frustrated.

“Where is what is to study?” Espada said. “We know this is a problem.”

Meanwhile, the ICC did see success this month on another matter of concern to vulnerable Hoosiers. Along with other advocates for the ICC, Espada stood in opposition to House Bill 1547, which would raise interest rates for certain subprime loans and create a new loan product in the subprime market. The bill has now stalled and does not appear to have a path forward in this session.

While supporters positioned the legislation as an alternative to unregulated online and out-of-state lenders charging Hoosiers exorbitant interest rates, the ICC maintained that another high-interest loan product was not the answer. Alexander Mingus, the associate director of the ICC, testified against the bill at the Statehouse and noted that people seeking loans in this market are typically low-income individuals with poor credit or no credit.

As with all proposed legislation, the ICC decides to support or oppose measures based on the long history of Catholic social teaching.

“There is such a depth in the Church’s teaching on the preferential option for the poor,” Mingus said. “We always stand with the most vulnerable in our society.”

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

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachi Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)
Hearing the heartbeats of God in the sacrament of penance

Feb. 22 was Ash Wednesday, and this weekend we will celebrate the first Sunday of Lent. The Church gives us this holy season to help us identify the spiritual sicknesses that affect all of us to some degree or another because of original sin.

During Lent, the readings at Mass, our prayer, the penitential practices we are called to observe (fasting and abstinence) and the good works we are invited to perform (almsgiving) all help us to admit our sinfulness and, with God’s help, to change from a self-centered way of life to lives of generous service.

As described by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord’s resurrection at Easter. During Lent, we seek the Lord more intimately through Sacred Scripture, we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting. We are called not only to abstain from luxuries during Lent, but to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ’s will more faithfully.

Lent is the time of year when the Church encourages us to do a thorough examination of our spiritual health and then to take whatever steps are necessary to let the healing power of Jesus make us whole again.

The 40 days of Lent provide a structure for diagnosing the symptoms and the root causes of our sinfulness. During this special time of year, the Church encourages us to take advantage of the healing power of the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance, to admit our selfishness and sin (confession), to experience a change of heart (conversion), to deny ourselves (penance) and to change the way we live (healing).

Through this great sacrament, we allow Jesus to enter into our hearts and cleanse us of all the impurities—large and small—that have built up over time. We present ourselves to him for the examination of our spiritual health and then to take whatever steps are necessary to let the healing power of Jesus make us whole again.

St. John of the Cross, a great spiritual writer who founded the Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere, Canada, which today serves the poor in six countries: “During these 40 days are set aside every year for us to let go of the old and to enter into the new, because God is merciful. Now we can pass over from the old life that we led before Lent into the new life after … Lent is you and I, like St. John the well-beloved, putting our head on the bosom of Christ and hearing the heartbeats of God (John 13:21-25). When you hear the heartbeats of God, you change. We try to listen well to those heartbeats during Lent, so that we may not only repent and make our peace with God, but forgive all who have hurt us.

There is no better way to “hear the heartbeats of God” than by receiving the sacrament of penance. A great confession paves the way to curing our soul’s sickness. It helps us to admit our sinfulness, to do penance and to resolve to sin no more. As we begin this Lenten journey, let’s take advantage of the great gift we have been given in the sacrament of penance.

Our Lady of Lourdes

On Saturday, Feb. 11, I felt blessed and inspired by attending an early Mass on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes that coincides with the World Day of the Sick.

That afternoon at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Beech Grove, a memorial Mass for 4,111 aborted babies of God was celebrated. The scriptural readings, the homilies and the prayers at both Masses were so meaningful.

Mary our Blessed Mother was a young woman. Though initially confused by a heavenly message, she accepted her role as Mother of God. She would for all time serve the poor in six countries: “Frees me from the past and looks to the future.”

Letter to the Editor

Reader: Masses remind us of God’s love and divine purpose for each of us

On Saturday, Feb. 11, I felt blessed and inspired by attending an early Mass on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes that coincides with the World Day of the Sick.

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Mary our Blessed Mother was a young woman. Though initially confused by a heavenly message, she accepted her role as Mother of God. She would for all time encourage all people to be drawn to her Son.
This Lent, ask for God’s grace to overcome life’s temptations

In the Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Lent (Mt 4:1-11), St. Matthew tells us that Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit “to be tempted by the devil” (Mt 4:1). Why would the Spirit of God deliberately draw Jesus into a situation that would be uncomfortable, at best, and, at worst, dangerous to his physical and spiritual health? We are rightly offended by the idea that the devil would be so bold and disrespectful that he would presume to tempt the Son of God. Who does Satan think he is, and what gives him the idea that he has any chance at all to succeed in persuading Jesus to betray his Father and his mission on Earth? We know that Jesus was hungry, weak and very tired after fasting and being exposed to the elements for 40 days. When the devil offered him comfort, security and earthly power, Jesus was not at his best—humanly speaking. And yet, he resisted forcefully, reminding Satan that God’s only Son was drawn into this situation because of our first parents’ sin. For, if by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:17) Jesus is led into the desert by the Holy Spirit for our sakes—to confront the Evil One in the form of a serpent—“the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made” (Gen 3:1).

Unlike Jesus in the desert, the first man and the first woman gave into temptation and disobeyed the Lord’s command. Their sins, and the sins of all humankind, are the reason God became man in the first place. Their weakness, and the weaknesses of their children, are the cause of Christ’s suffering and death on a cross. As St. Paul teaches in this Sunday’s second reading (Rom 5:12-19), the same Jesus who calms but firmly rejects the temptations of the devil is the one who is responsible for righting the wrongs that came into the world because of our first parents’ sin. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:17)

In the Gospel reading, the first reading for this Sunday (Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7) reminds us that our first parents, who were given every possible advantage, were tempted by the devil. “The serpent enticed them” (Gn 3:1). It enticed them with the promise that they would not die. God said, “The only thing that would make them die is the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gn 2:17). The devil tempted them by promising them that they would be like God, knowing good and evil, and be able to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil. This is the same temptation that we face today. We are tempted to think that we are God, knowing good and evil, and are able to decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil. We are tempted to think that we have the power to decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil.

What we can learn from our Lord’s experience is that we do not have to be fearful in the face of temptation. If we place our trust in God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and if we believe that God will deliver us from evil, we can be calm like Jesus was when he encountered Satan in the desert. It’s true that we don’t have Jesus’ wisdom or strength when we are faced with temptation, but we do have the certain knowledge that comes from faith that the final victory over sin and evil has already been won. If we stumble and give in to temptation, we need not worry that all will be lost. We only have to confess, resolve to sin no more, do penance, and all will be well.

As we continue our Lenten journey, let’s ask for the grace to face temptation without giving in. Let’s pray that by our prayer, fasting and almsgiving we will be better prepared to come to the desert. And let us pray that our acceptance of the cross of Christ will deliver us from all evil.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON

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The Criterion Friday, February 24, 2023

Cristo, la piedra angular

Pudimos dar la gracia de Dios para superar las tentaciones de la vida en esta Cuaresma

En la lectura del Evangelio del primer domingo de Cuaresma (Mt 4:1-11), san Mateo nos cuenta que el Espíritu Santo llevó a Jesús al desierto “para ser tentado por el diablo” (Mt 4:1). ¿Por qué el Espíritu de Dios atraería deliberadamente a Jesús a una situación que sería incómoda, en el mejor de los casos, o, en el peor, peligrosa para su salud física y espiritual?

Con toda razón nos ofende la idea de que el demonio sea tan osado e irrespetuoso que se atreve a tentar al hijo de Dios. ¿Quién se cree Satanás y qué le hace pensar que tiene alguna posibilidad de convencer a Jesús de traicionar a su Padre y su misión en la Tierra?

Sabemos que Jesús estaba hambriento, débil y muy cansado después de ayunar y estar expuesto al desierto por 40 días. Cuando el diablo le ofreció consuelo, seguridad y poder terrenal, Jesús no estaba en su mejor momento—humanamente hablando. Y, sin embargo, resistió fuertemente, recordando a Satanás que Dios el Padre lo había llevado a su Tierra para probarlo y que Dios, nuestro Creador, nos da la vida como un regalo.

¿Qué nos enseña Jesús de esta experiencia en el desierto, la primera tentación? La experiencia de nuestro Señor es que la victoria decisiva que obtendrá, de una vez por todas, el Viernes Santo. Al pasar por el sufrimiento y la muerte de Cristo en la cruz, ganó la victoria final. Por eso la experiencia de Jesús en el desierto, el primer hombre y la primera mujer, son la causa del sufrimiento y la muerte de Cristo en la cruz.

Como enseña san Pablo en la segunda lectura de este domingo (Rom 5:12-19), el mismo Jesús que rechaza con calma los tentaciones, nos enseña que el pecado y el mal ya ha sido ganado. Si ponemos nuestra confianza en Dios Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo, y si creemos que nos librará del mal, podemos estar tranquilos como lo estaban Jesús cuando se encontró con Satanás en el desierto. ¿Es cierto que no tenemos la sabiduría ni la fuerza de Jesús cuando nos enfrentamos a la tentación, pero sí tenemos el conocimiento certero que proviene de la fe de que la victoria final sobre el pecado y el mal se ha ganado? Si tropezamos y cedemos a la tentación, no debemos preocuparnos de que todo esté perdido, sino debemos confesarlos, proponernos no pecar más, hacer penitencia, y todo pasará.

El Espíritu Santo lleva a Jesús al desierto por nosotros, para que nos enfrentemos al Maligno y presur corra el poder del Mal y nos ayudará a superar las tentaciones. Al continuar nuestro camino, debemos recordar que, con nuestra oración, ayuno y limosna, estemos preparados mejor para enfrentarnos al demonio. Y recemos para que nuestra aceptación de la cruz de Cristo nos libre de todo mal...
Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events

March 10-12 Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove.

March 14 Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove.

March 15 St. Meinrad Archabbey Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove.

March 15 Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 128 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis.

March 15 St. Meinrad Archabbey Retreat Center, 8220 McFarland Rd., Bloomington.

March 15 March 17-19 Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22141 Main St., Oldenburg.

March 16 Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22141 Main St., Oldenburg.

March 17-19 St. Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad.

March 18 Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 128 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis.

March 15 Cloverdale Masshouse Church, 135 N. W. Twelfth St., Indianapolis. Mass. 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, www.cathedralcemetery.com

March 16 Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. Mass: 10 a.m. Information: 317-574-8989 or www.cathedralcemetery.com


March 19 Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Bluegrass Jam, 5:30 p.m., free. Information: franciscansusa.org/bluesgrass-jam

March 16 Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22141 Main St., Oldenburg. Catholic Women Monthly Prayer: Card Making, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscans.org/ events


March 18 Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 128 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis.

March 18 St. Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad.

March 17 First Friday Lenten Weekend Retreat with Father James Farrell. 8:30 a.m. Mass, Father Farrell facilitating. $186 includes Sat. breakfast, lunch and homemade endings. Registration: www.march17events.org. Registration: registration@franciscansusa.org

Go
With this legislation, we are protecting or to validate a minor’s perception of, professionals “may not, for the purpose for civil action. medical license revoked and the potential on minors. Violators face having their medical or surgical gender reassignment (OSV v. Kristi Noem, who identify as hormonal or surgical The bill, HB 1080, Noem, who is Republican, has recently “If they are given large doses of Noem’s signature on the bill follows, comparable legislative actions. Earlier that diocesan schools should demonstrate conformity with the student’s biological sex, and that it cannot be changed, but youth people are uniquely vulnerable to attempts otherwise. “It’s particularly important for young people to have a non-interventionist approach,” he said. "Science and common sense tell us that children aren’t mature enough to properly evaluate the serious ramifications of making certain decisions; the decision to undergo dangerous and likely stereilizing gender transition procedures is no exception.” We commend Gov. Noem and the South Dakota Legislature for standing up for the truth by enacting these vital protections for our children,” Sharp said. Catholic dioceses are starting to grapple with pastoral approaches to gender dysphoria. The Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, issued in 2022 new guidelines for transgender youth stating that diocesan schools should demonstrate “conformity with the student’s biological sex as determined from conception and manifest at birth and at the time of the student’s enrollment.” The Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, issued on Jan. 16 new guidance and policies on minor people experiencing gender dysphoria. It called for coherence with the Church’s teaching on the inappropriability of gender from biological sex while emphasizing pastoral compassion for children and adults experiencing an incongruence between their sex and gender. †
Still, the best part of meeting them is learning how they’ve come together to defend their love of food in a wonderful effort that helps others—an effort that has led to national recognition for these two fifth-grade students at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington.

Alex and Ella are among the 11 Catholic school students across the country who recently received this year’s Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision Award from the National Catholic Educational Association. The award recognizes students in elementary and secondary schools who through selfless service, determination, innovation and strong ideals are changing the world while bearing witness to their Catholic faith.

The girls received the honor for leading a student-run organization called “Alexandra’s Army,” which has collected nearly 10,000 pounds of food in the past two years to help feed families in need in southern Indiana.

“Alex and Ella held up a placard outside the clinic, also closed at the time, which read: ‘Praying for life, peace and love. Protect women’s right to choose.'”

When the girls heard about the honor, it took some time for it to sink in.

“I was really excited,” says Alex, the daughter of Skip and Heather Daley. “And then I kind of just sat down for a while because the TV was on. So I thought about it while watching TV.”

“I had just come home after gymnastics practice and my mom was like, ‘I have a surprise for you.’” says Ella, the daughter of Eric and Lindsey Spoonmore. “I wasn’t thinking she was going to get me chocolate. So then, she said, ‘You won the award.’ And I was like, ‘What?!’ I had ice cream after it, so that was good, too.”

A touch of fun and the start of an army

Actually, the award is not something the two friends ever dreamed of receiving. Instead, their focus has always been on giving—a focus that began for Alex when she was 4, going door-to-door in her neighborhood collecting cans of food for the Hoosier Hills Food Bank.

“Randomly one night, when me and my dad were in the kitchen, my dad said ‘Hey, why don’t you do something to help the community somehow?’” Alex recalls. “I was like, ‘Yeah, sure.’ Then he gave me a whole bunch of options. I thought about the food drive because it sounded fun. I did my own food drive for four years, and each year I got more and more food.”

After she collected about 150 pounds when she was 8, her approach and her vision expanded. Alexandra’s Army was born from her idea of inviting friends and recruiting other children to work together to collect food for people in need. Ella joined the effort as the secretary and chairwoman.

“From the beginning, Alexandra’s Army was truly student-led,” notes Kirstin Maxwell, a science teacher at St. Charles Borromeo School. “Alex and Ella administered as she shares how Alex, Ella and their team developed a website to recruit volunteers, contacted businesses for sponsorships and created a video to promote their efforts.”

“The real heart of the initiative was the recruitment and training of their young peers who fist the streets in an endless pursuit,” says. “Not only had Alexandra and Ella written a script to be read by the volunteers, they had even made a video of the do’s and don’ts of knocking on doors and asking for donations.”

As organized and impressive as the effort was, it all started in the midst of a challenging pandemic that had created a food and hunger crisis for a growing number of families throughout Monroe County and its surrounding counties.

“In Indiana, 14% of the population live below the poverty line, and 12% of Hoosiers struggle to put food on the table daily. This means one in six Indiana children are food insecure,” Maxwell notes. “In our region, these statistics would be much higher without the support of groups such as Alexandra’s Army.”

“Our neighboring counties are quite disadvantage and can offer very little services to their residents. Bloomington supplies many services, including food donations, to all the nonprofit organizations in our county, as well as the surrounding counties. The COVID-19 pandemic turned this long-term problem into a crisis situation.”

“Amid this crisis situation and a global pandemic, two girls and their “army” of about 70 children hit the streets to fight hunger and offer hope. In 2021, they collected 4,585 pounds of food. In 2022, their haul increased to 5,011 pounds.”

The best feeling

One of Ella’s and Alex’s favorite parts of Alexandra’s Army is the joy of the food drive. Each child’s haul of food is individually weighed and announced, leading to a round of cheers and applause for each child. Then the total amount of food collected is added, and the cheers and the applause soar again.

“At the end of the day, all the children receive a treat. This year, it was pizza. Yet as much as both girls enjoyed the treats, there’s one reward they savor more.”

“‘What?!’”

The children who form Alexandra’s Army do everything from collecting food donations to serving them—efforts that have led to the collection of nearly 10,000 pounds of food to help families in southern Indiana. (Submitted photo)

“‘I really like the feeling afterward knowing that we’ve really helped a lot of people,'” says Alex as Ella nods in agreement.

“It’s astounding what they’ve done,” says Jake Bruner, associate director of Hoosier Hills Food Bank, which serves about 100 member agencies in southern Indiana that ultimately helps feed about 30,000 people each year.

“I think that’s what we should be doing with our youth today. When I started working here about 13 years ago, one of the concerns I had was that the population of our food pantry volunteers was aging. We need to think about the future of social services and security nets in our communities, and that’s going to start from our youth. One of the most important things about Alexandra’s Army is getting kids involved in volunteering and realizing there’s a need out there.”

Alex and Ella and their fellow members of Alexandra’s Army are already starting to gear up for this year’s food drive, which right now they’re planning to hold in June.

“The girls see their efforts as living the faith-filled education they are receiving at St. Charles.”

“In religion class, we have stories about what Jesus did,” Alex says. “‘We talk about how to help people.’ It’s a good way to understand what we can do,” Ella says. “It’s the moment of Jesus leads the girls to consider what they would say about what they and all the members of Alexandra’s Army are doing to help others.”

“The idea would be very proud of us,” Alex says. Ella adds, “I think he would like it.”

Both girls look at each other and smile. It’s their shared smile that means the most to them. Although, most of all, the joyous feeling of how wonderful it is to have such a close friend.

U.K. priest, lay volunteer acquitted after being charged for silent prayer

BIRMINGHAM, England (OSV News)—A U.K. court has acquitted a Catholic priest and a pregnancy counselor of crimes in connection with the “harassment of abortion clinic clients.”

District Judge David Wain on Feb. 16 dismissed charges against Father Sean Gough and his lay volunteer Vaughan-Spruce in a matter of seconds, in a hearing at Birmingham Magistrates Court.

Vaughan-Spruce, co-founder of March for Life UK, was arrested, searched, detained and charged in December after she was accused of targeting doctors outside a closed British Pregnancy Advisory Services abortion facility and admitted to them that she “hated aborting children.”

Father Gough, a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, was charged that same moment with allegedly holding a placard outside the clinic, also closed at the time, which read: “Praying for End Abortion.”

“The real heart of the initiative was the recruitment and training of their young peers who fist the streets in an endless pursuit,” says. “Not only had Alexandra and Ella written a script to be read by the volunteers, they had even made a video of the do’s and don’ts of knocking on doors and asking for donations.”

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U.K. priest, lay volunteer acquitted after being charged for silent prayer
Compassion, communion resonate in Syria among Christians affected by quake

BEIRUT (OSV News)—“My uncle. Please pray for us.” Jesuit Father Tony Homcy received the WhatsApp text message before dawn on Feb. 6 from his 14-year-old nephew in Aleppo, Syria.

Sleeping at the Jesuit residence in Aleppo, Lebanon, where he was visiting, Father Homcy was not yet aware of the catastrophic 7.8 magnitude earthquake that had struck Turkey and Syria shortly after 4 a.m., severely hitting his native Aleppo.

Second earthquake of the broader region of Turkey and Syria on Feb. 20, authorities said, killing six people, two women after the massacre, killing more than 47,000 people and damaged or destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes. The 7.8 magnitude 6.4 earthquake, which hit just as the rescue work from the initial devastating earthquake was beginning, centered across the Lebanese town of Antakya and was felt in Syria, Egypt and Lebanon.

Within a few of the first days, Father Homcy returned first to Homsy, Syria, where he serves as a priest and director of the Jesuit Center Center. “The people are really alive again this story of a horrible tragedy,” the priest said. “It’s not only the devastating earthquake, but, 12 years of war.”

Father Homcy said that people need to share trauma and express themselves more than the Feb. 6 tragedy.

“It was like the earthquake had released to the surface all their emotions and fear,” he said. “They are raw from the war still not healed yet.”

Father Homcy’s 14-year-old nephew, whose father was killed by a bomb in Aleppo in 2016, once again faced “the nightmare of death” all around him. “What was especially striking about the young boy was the death of Melkite Father Emad Daher, who had been the youth minister in Aleppo. Father Emad had been in the earthquake rubble when part of the building near the residence of Archbishop José Homsy was destroyed.”

Such sorrow and shock stirred up existential questions from Father Homcy’s nephew, such as, “Why didn’t stop the earthquake?”

The priest noted that his nephew is representative of the general grief of youth in Syria who have experienced war and now yet another horrific tragedy.

Father Homsy, who are in their 70s, his widowed sister and nephew were not injured and their home is livable.

People ran to the churches, he said, noting “the very first response was there. People remembered that Church is a mother that can hold them.”

During a brief visit to Aleppo, Father Homcy visited his family’s potato farms and many businesses were preparing to sleep. “Every church is a shelter now,” he said.

At the Jesuit center in Homsy, where Father Homcy serves with five Jesuit priests, people immediately mobilized after the earthquake.

Many families, displaced from Aleppo, have sought refuge in Homsy, some two hours away from their destroyed homes, despite transportation difficulties amid already-existing fuel shortages.

“I am so touched by the generosity of the people of Homsy, considered one of the poorest, most damaged” from the war, Father Homcy said.

The center in Homsy quickly filled with clothes, mattresses, blankets and food.

“The response of the people is amazing. It’s very moving for me,” the priest said. “Anything they have, they want to share, giving out of their own needs amid a severe economic crisis, Father Homcy added. Such outreach is happening all over Syria.

“I can see in each one, the widow giving two pennies,” he said referring “to the widow’s mite” ( Mk. 12:41- 44, Lk. 21:1-4), even though the earthquake. 90% of Syrians were living below the poverty line.

“One thing we need to make known: Every single family in Syria is suffering in a severe economic situation,” Father Homcy told OSV News.

In Homsy, the Jesuit field kitchen is currently preparing daily meals for 700 displaced people who came to the city, mostly from Aleppo, double the amount of meals a few days ago. And the needs keep increasing.

“The numbers of displaced are getting higher as basic needs are marked as ‘unsatisfyabile,’ Father Homcy pointed out.

“We cannot blind ourselves to our brothers and sisters who are in need.”

“You are God’s love will translate by acts of charity and love,” he pointed out.

(Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Catholic Church’s overseas relief and development agency, is accepting donations. They can made online by going to the CRS’s website, support.crs.org/donate/earthquakes. Donations can also be mailed to Catholic Relief Services, Turkey Earthquake Relief [include in memo line], P.O. Box 17086, Baltimore, MD 21213-7086.)

Message of condolence from Archbishop Thompson to Archbishop José H. Gomez

Dear Archbishop Gomez:

Peace in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As Bishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, I express deepest sympathy and assurance of prayer for you and the good people throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as you grieve the tragic death of Auxiliary Bishop David O’Connell. No doubt, such a horrendous act stirs up much emotion and triggers many questions.

Please be assured of my thoughts with you in this very difficult time as well as in days, weeks and months ahead while dealing with the impact of this tragedy. Our prayers are especially offered for the mending of wounds, the healing of hearts, the rendering of justice tempered with mercy, and the reconciliation of all involved.

May Bishop David, a good and faithful servant, enter eternal peace gazing on the face of God. May the Holy Spirit console you and all those who mourn in abundance of faith and hope.

Entrusting you and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary, I remain

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Fraternally yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson, +
Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

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In a courtyard at the Jesuit center in Homsy, Syria, volunteers prepare meals for Feb. 17 for people displaced mostly from Aleppo more than 500 miles away as a result of the Feb. 6 earthquake. The Jesuits currently serve daily meals for the displaced, which is double the amount earlier in February, and the needs keep increasing more as displaced people arrive. (OSV News photo/ Courtesy of Jesuit Father Tony Homcy)
Ukrainian Catholics hail President Biden’s surprise visit to Kyiv for bravery, ‘amazing boost of hope’

(OSV News)—U.S. President Joe Biden’s unannounced Feb. 20 visit to Kyiv, calmly walking alongside Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as air raid sirens wailed in the capital, is being hailed as a surprise and a signal to the world, Ukrainian Catholic leaders told OSV News.

Ahead of the first anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Biden arrived in Kyiv at 8 a.m. local time, following an unannounced 4:15 a.m. Eastern time departure the day prior from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

Biden spent more than five hours in Kyiv, meeting with Zelenskyy at Mariinsky Palace and walking to key sites in the city, including St. Michael Cathedral—with air raid sirens sounding, a near constant feature of life for Ukrainians living there.

“We wouldn’t expect that President Biden would come to the capital. Maybe Lviv, as it’s safer, but Kyiv? It’s really an amazing boost of hope and strength for us,” Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia told OSV News. “People were shocked. Some even thought this was an early April fool’s [joke], but it is for real, and somehow we all got the positive feeling that maybe war is finally coming to an end.”

Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia and head of all Ukrainian Catholics in the U.S. told OSV News Biden’s decision to head to Kyiv caught him off guard.

“I was pretty much convinced [Biden] would come to Ukraine, but I was not sure he would go all the way to capital,” Archbishop Gudziak said. “I thought he would meet [with Zelenskyy] somewhere near the Polish border because of security concerns.”

Archbishop Gudziak, who has just returned to the U.S. following his sixth visit to Ukraine during the past year, said Ukrainians are deeply grateful for what he called “outstanding” American support. He said one woman in Bucha—where a mass grave of Ukrainian civilians murdered by Russian troops was discovered in April 2022—urged him to “thank all Americans and President Biden.”

“There’s nothing stronger than presence, and the presence of the president underlines his personal commitment, and that of the U.S. government and people, to freedom and democracy,” Archbishop Gudziak told OSV News. Biden and Zelenskyy laid wreaths at Kyiv’s Wall of Remembrance, which honors Ukrainian soldiers killed since Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014 by annexing Crimea and arming a separatist movement in Ukraine’s Donbas region.

“One year later, Kyiv stands. And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you,” Biden said in an address, according to reporters present.

Biden’s visit was “a very brave move,” Eugene Luciw, president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America’s Philadelphia chapter and a member of Presentation of Our Lord Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Lansdale, Pa., told OSV News. Seeing pictures of Biden—the U.S.’s second Catholic president—and Zelenskyy before St. Michael Orthodox Cathedral was particularly striking, Luciw said.

“I got this feeling, with St. Michael the Archangel, the patron of Kyiv, and with President Biden as a worldly sort of guardian of Ukraine—to have both spiritual and earthly guardians in that image was very moving,” he said.

Luciw also pointed out that St. Michael Cathedral was used as a field hospital during the 2014 Revolution of Dignity (also known as the Maidan Revolution), when scores of Ukrainians were killed and hundreds injured as Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovych, then president of Ukraine, cracked down on thousands of protesters who sought to align Ukraine with the European Union.

“The injured were treated there when hospitals were inaccessible,” said Luciw. “This cathedral has always been symbolic. It stands regardless of how many times Ukraine has been attacked over the centuries. The bells have always rung, warning of an attack coming. The cathedral itself is a bulwark to Ukraine’s defense, with St. Michael as the patron of Kyiv.”

Luciw said Biden’s visit “gave me the feeling that Ukraine is going to win, at a terribly massive cost—but Ukraine is destined to win with all that strength behind it.”

Father Roman Pitula, rector of the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia, said he was struck by the fact the visit coincided with the Feb. 20 memorial of Ukraine’s “Heavenly Hundred”—the 107 protesters killed during the Revolution of Dignity.

With fears that China could move to invade Taiwan in the coming years, Biden’s visit had a message for more than Moscow, said Nicholas Rudnytsky, professor of history and dean of academic services at Manor College in Jenkintown, Pa., a school with deep historical roots in the U.S.-Ukrainian-Catholic community.

“Democracies are undaunted,” Rudnytsky told OSV News. “A free people should not be allowed to be suppressed and dominated by a greater power. Might does not make right in the 21st century. The dogmas of the past need to be buried, and certain fundamental principles and rights we’ve all agreed upon since World War II cannot be violated.”

Archbishop Gudziak agreed, saying he hoped Biden’s visit would “help many Americans refocus on the fact that Ukraine today is the epicenter of global change.”

A victorious Ukraine will ensure that “tyranny and dictators will be humbled,” said the archbishop. “The imperialism and colonialism of not only Putin, but that of other dictators will be undermined.”

With a renewed Russian offensive expected soon, Bishop Sobilo said Biden’s visit “was like a movie scene—and we’re hoping for a happy ending.”

“I hope this visit is the beginning of the end of this war,” said Father Pitula.

Charitable Lead Trust

Give to your favorite Catholic cause and pass on wealth to heirs

Individuals looking for a tax-efficient way to pass wealth to family members and make a generous gift to charity may look to Charitable Lead Trusts (CLTs). Interest rates often factor into the decision to use a CLT because low interest rates mean greater savings in transfer taxes. Its main purpose is to minimize or eliminate estate and gift transfer taxes that can be a serious drain on resources.

With careful planning, you can use a CLT to substantially reduce or even eliminate the taxes customarily due on the transfer of wealth to loved ones. It works like this:

- You transfer assets to an irrevocable trust.
- The trust exists for a set number of years or for your lifetime (or the life of another individual).
- The trust makes annual payments to the charity.
- At the end of the trust term, the assets remaining in the trust either pass back to you (grantor lead trust) or to someone else—such as your heirs (non-grantor lead trust or family lead trust).

For more information, please contact the Catholic Community Foundation at 317-236-1568 or ccf@archindy.org.

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Black-and-white caption: Bishop Ronald W. Gainer of Harrisburg, Pa., greets Jessica Bassili of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, Pa., and her sponsor during a Rite of Election at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg. Catholics interested in learning about the faith and passing it on to others can help evangelize by participating as a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults team member or sponsor. (CNS photo/Chris Heisey, The Catholic Witness)

Effective evangelization uses our God-given gifts and talents

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

All believers are called to do their part in the Church’s mission in proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples of all nations.

How that mission is carried out in particular situations can depend on both the qualities and gifts of individual believers as well as how the person being evangelized can best receive the Gospel.

People have different talents or life experiences that make certain ways of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others more effective for them.

Here are some examples.

—Some people have had difficult lives. They can relate to others in similar situations. They evangelize by sharing how their Catholic faith helped them through a death in the family, an illness or some other difficulty.
—Some people are active. They might help clean their parish church or help with its clothing drive. They evangelize by inviting others to join them. One woman decided to become Catholic after a friend invited her to help at her parish’s soup kitchen.
—Some people have had difficult lives. They can relate to others in similar situations. They evangelize by sharing how their Catholic faith helped them through a death in the family, an illness or some other difficulty.

In addition to Catholics using the particular gifts God has given them to share the Gospel more effectively, all people involved in evangelization—and that means all the Church’s faithful—should discern how best to reach those with whom they seek to share the Gospel.

Here are seven signs that someone might be open to evangelization:

1. The most common sign is when people begin to ask questions about God, good and evil or the meaning of life.
2. Reminiscing about Catholic school, nuns, priests or parish activities is another sign that someone may be open to having God or the Church play a larger role in his or her life.
3. Asking about where they can find Catholic reading materials is yet another sign. It’s a good idea to keep a supply of Catholic books, pamphlets and articles on hand.
4. Comments about the pope, the Church or parish activities can be someone’s way of starting a conversation about faith.
5. Major life events or crises such as illness, death, the birth of a baby, graduations, a job loss or transfer, moving to a new home, separation and divorce, financial difficulties, tension and other stress-related situations can trigger a desire to find a closer connection to God and the Church.
6. Experiencing the presence of God during a Mass, a funeral or the celebration of a sacrament might lead a person to explore the role of faith in his or her life.
7. Noticing your faith, love and deep sense of inner peace can capture the attention of people who are searching for God. Don’t be surprised if people begin to ask about your spiritual life. At that point, you’ll know that you are truly an evangelizer and the Holy Spirit is working through you.

The word “evangelization” comes from the Greek word euaggelizomai, which means “to announce good news” or “proclaim glad tidings.” The early Christians used the word when they spread the news about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the Church, evangelization has played a key role in converting people to Christ. Some of the greatest saints sacrificed their lives to spread the good news of Jesus.

Today, evangelization is becoming an increasingly important part of Catholic life following the direction of Pope St. John Paul II, whose call for a “new evangelization” captured the minds, hearts and imaginations of Catholics all over the world.

(Lorene Hanley Duquin is the author of Catholic books, pamphlets and articles on a variety of evangelization and ministry topics. She has conducted workshops in parishes and at diocesan conferences in the United States and Canada.)
As we go through an era of diversity and integration, we find ourselves in a world that increasingly cries for a new sense of balance, a true understanding of cultural diversity and languages. This need is indisputably authentic and must be categorized as urgent in society and, especially, within our Church.

As Catholic Christians, we are called to understand our vocation and a search for the common good. Our faith reminds us it is not enough to be categorized as good, if we do not act out of love, those good, if we do not act out of love, those needs of others, interpreted the needs of others.

Our communities today are increasingly diverse. There will never be another spiritual leader like Saint Paul. We are called to a deep conversion within our Church. Our faith reminds us it is not enough to be categorized as good, if we do not act out of love, those needs of others, interpreted the needs of others.

As Catholic Christians, we are called to understand our vocation and a search for the common good. To be categorized as good, if we do not act out of love, those needs of others, interpreted the needs of others.

Understanding is only reached through love. It is as if a veil comes off or a bandage is removed. Why not then and interpret the needs of others.

Our faith reminds us that it is not enough to have good intentions, in reality, that is what matters is to love. When one loves, a sublime feeling exists and good acts, including love, make mercy, be released. It is at that point that we reach a true understanding of our call to discipleship.

Where there is love, there is no room for division. Where there is love, the will is not always what is seen. Where there is love, there is no pride.

If we claim to be the Church of Christ, why do we have divisions in our capacity to exist within our communities? Have we not been called to love? Our duty as members of the Church is, we believe, to accept the will of God—even when the will of God today translates into a series of challenges that make us leave our comfort zone.

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Our Church has undergone a transformation, where migration is a determining factor in the evangelization process, where the influence of cultures has generated and will continue to generate changes in the representation of our parish, diocesan, and national churches; where we need to update the mission of each of our parishes and adapt the Gospel message we live.

In this movement of the Holy Spirit in our Church, we must experience a diversity of works, but we must realize it is the same God who works in us all.

St. Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, tells us, “The manifestation of the Spirit that each one is given is for the common benefit” (1 Cor 12:7).

In our world today, we need to update the mission of each of our communities. In the Church of Christ, we are all necessary. Our diversity of talents makes us a continuous renewal to return where we all share a single mission, to be disciples of the Master. What are you waiting for to accept God’s will in your ministry?

(Felix Navarrete is archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic Ministry.)

La Iglesia, aunque numerosa, constituye el único cuerpo de Cristo es un regalo para la comunidad y fomentan el buen común.

La racionalidad de nuestros seres humanos, nacidos de amor, se armoniza con el mensaje del evangelio que nos llama a ser portadores de un mensaje de vida, un amor de salvación que no excluye a las personas por razón de la cultura y los matices propios de cada lengua, sino más bien encuentra fortaleza en una iglesia que por voluntad de Dios es diversa y cuya diversidad coadyuva en la extensión del reino hacia las periferias.

No solo latinos y anglos, sino todo el pueblo de Dios, tenemos el deber de incorporar nuestros dones al servicio de la Iglesia de Cristo, es imperativo buscar la unidad del cuerpo místico de Cristo. “Las partes del cuerpo son muchas, pero el cuerpo es uno; por muchas que sean las partes, todo forman un cuerpo, todos forman uno mismo en el cuerpo y no es posible que ninguno esté ausente.” Dios rige el encuentro de los diversos miembros, colocando cada uno en el cuerpo como ha querido; no lo hace a capricho, sino que el orden en que parecen ser más débiles son las más necesarias” (1 Cor 12:12, 14, 18, 22).

En esta iglesia de Cristo, cada uno de nosotros somos necesarios, el diversidad de talentos hace de ella una escuela de aprendizaje donde todos compartimos una sola misión, ser discípulos del Maestro. ¿Y qué esperamos para aceptar la voluntad de Dios en tu ministerio?

(Felix Navarrete es el coordinador del Ministerio Hispano en el Arquidiócesis de Indianapolis.)

During Lent, hope can be reborn ‘even now’

“It’s Lent.” Those are the first words of the first reading for the first Mass in Lent, proclaiming the beginning of a period of forty days on Ash Wednesday (3:12). Those two little words should echo in our hearts from now until Easter. Faith is a practice of hope. To the Lord, it matters not what bad choices we’ve made or what bad habits we’ve fostered that bury hope deep under dark memories and dim views of ourselves.

He who was betrayed by one disciple and abandoned by the others save one, who was scourged and crucified, knows all too well how we have received from others through the years have torn hope out of our hearts.

It is in this past that we took a step forward to hope an empty word. Even now, says the Lord, hope can be reborn.

The start of this rebirth can begin when we heed the voice of the Lord speaking to us this Lent: “Even now,” God says, “return with your whole heart” (1 Jl 2:12).

Our hearts have been broken into pieces by our own faults, most often by the sins of others and simply by life in a world marred by the ever-continuing ripple effects of evil.

So, Our Lord invites us at the start of Lent to pick up the pieces of our broken hearts and give them to him. Then the blood that flowed from his pierced and broken heart can heal our own wounds and bring us to new mercy.

The message of mercy in those two little words, “even now,” should echo in our hearts each and every Lent as we live in a world where our increasingly secular culture focuses more and more on sin, but less and less on forgiveness.

It’s important for us parents to foster the message of “even now.” It’s from the hearts of our children who are growing up and coming of age in this culture. And Lent is a great opportunity to do so.

We parents know full well from past experience that the bright promises made on Ash Wednesday will be broken sooner or later, probably soon.

But Our Lord invites us to make these oh-so-fragile resolutions nonetheless, because of “even now.” He always has hope in us, even when we don’t have hope in ourselves. And not only does he have hope in us, he offers us his grace to make this Lent more like what he envisioned. Our jaded view might have we might have of the broken Lents of the past.

The seeds of such cynicism can be planted in the hearts of our children when they make their own resolutions and fail. For many parents, because well, they’re broken humans like the rest of us.

The key for parents, grandparents, teachers, and other adults who can form children is to be channels of God’s grace, instilling in them the message of “even now.” Because they’re the ones who will hold on to the hope of a better future for themselves, despite the mistakes they’ve made in the past. Because they’re the ones that tell us that if we continue to live in a world in which the culture tells them to give up on hope-filled ideals, shrug their shoulders and give in to society.

Helping our children to make the message of “even now” their own during Lent is a practical way to teach them the same in the bigger moments of life.

When children and adults build their everyday lives with the help of God’s grace on the foundation of an “even now” hope, we can joyfully bring God’s light into the world that needs so much. †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Mientras atraviesas la era del diversismo y del irracionalismo desmesiado, nos encontramos en un mundo que cada vez más gime por encontrar un equilibrio, donde exista una verdadera comprensión de las culturas, razas y lenguas, está claro que el indiscutible y auténtico e indisimulable debe ser categorizado como urgente en nuestros espacios sociales y en especial, dentro de nuestra iglesia.

Como Cristo, el Espíritu Santo está llamado a comprender, al servicio a la solidaridad y a la búsqueda del bien común, el apóstol Pablo es para nosotros un profeta para nuestra era.

En este movimiento del Espíritu Santo en cada una de nuestras comunidades, podemos experimentar la diversidad como es diseño de Dios que obra en todas, San Pablo nos dice en la Primera Carta a los Corintios, “La racionalidad de nuestros seres humanos, nacidos de amor, se armoniza con el mensaje del evangelio que nos llama a ser portadores de un mensaje de vida, un amor de salvación que no excluye a las personas por razón de la cultura y los matices propios de cada lengua, sino más bien encuentra fortaleza en una iglesia que por voluntad de Dios es diversa y cuya diversidad coadyuva en la extensión del reino hacia las periferias.”

No solo latinos y anglos, sino todo el pueblo de Dios, tenemos el deber de incorporar nuestros dones al servicio de la Iglesia de Cristo, es imperativo buscar la unidad del cuerpo místico de Cristo. “Las partes del cuerpo son muchas, pero el cuerpo es uno; por muchas que sean las partes, todo forman un cuerpo, todos forman uno mismo en el cuerpo y no es posible que ninguno esté ausente.” Dios rige el encuentro de los diversos miembros, colocando cada uno en el cuerpo como ha querido; no lo hace a capricho, sino que el orden en que parecen ser más débiles son las más necesarias” (1 Cor 12:12, 14, 18, 22).

En esta iglesia de Cristo, cada uno de nosotros somos necesarios, la diversidad de talentos hace de ella una escuela de aprendizaje donde todos compartimos una sola misión, ser discípulos del Maestro. ¿Y qué esperamos para aceptar la voluntad de Dios en tu ministerio?

(Felix Navarrete es el coordinador del Ministerio Hispano en el Arquidiócesis de Indianapolis.)

The Church, though many, makes up one body of Christ
The Sunday Readings
Sunday, February 26, 2023

- Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7
- Romans 5:12-19
- Matthew 4:1-11

The first reading for Mass on this first weekend of Lent 2023 is from the Book of Genesis. Few passages in Scripture are as abundant in literary technique and in theological message as is this reading from Genesis. Bluntly confronting paganism and the tendency of people to accusing themselves of fault, it goes to the heart of sin.

The heart of sin is that it is the result of a freely chosen act by humans. While in this reading the role of the tempting devil is clear, it also is clear that the devil only tempts. The devil does not force the first man and woman to sin. They sinned of their own will.

The temptation has a lesson. Rebelling against God, the perfect and the perfectly just, was foolishly. Yet, imperfect in their pristine state of holiness, the first man and woman listened to bad advice and trusted not God but another. It is a process that has been repeated untold number of times in the lives of all.

The second reading is from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. In this reading, Paul looks back to the incident described in Genesis. He reminds us that by the original sin the first humans introduced sin and resulting chaos and trouble into earthly existence.

Thus, death and hardship are not God's designs for us. They were not curses sent from God and gives us strength sufficient to overcome any temptation. The Lord's strength fortifies us. This is the purpose of Lent.

Reflection
This is the first weekend of Lent. The Church uses the opportunity of this weekend to teach us one of the most basic facts of spiritual life. Sin removes us from God. We are tempted, but we are not helpless before temptation. Sin cannot capture us against our will. We choose to sin.

Two deadly effects of original sin were to leave humanity with the mind that sin is not so important and that we are without the power to resist sin. In these readings, the Church calls us to awake and turn away from sin. It reminds us of our own personal role in sin. It pleads with us not to underestimate temptations. They may be strong, but Jesus is God and gives us strength sufficient enough to overcome any temptation.

The Lord's strength fortifies us. This is the purpose of Lent.

Daily Readings

Monday, February 27
St. Gregory of Narek, abbot and doctor of the Church
Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18
Psalm 19:8-10, 15
Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday, February 28
Isaiah 55:10-11
Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19
Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, March 1
Jonah 3:1-10
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19
Luke 11:29-32

Thursday, March 2
Ephes 2:14-16, 21-25
Psalm 138:1-7, 8-9
Matthew 7:7-12

Question Corner

Orthodox, Eastern Catholics confer all sacraments of initiation on infants

Q Why do Orthodox Christians confirm their infants at baptism and also permit babies to receive the Eucharist, and why do Catholics wait? (New York)

A Thank you for your interesting question. First, it’s not only Orthodox Christians who confer all three sacraments of initiation at the time of baptism—Eastern Catholics do this as well. For some background, the universal Catholic Church includes not only the Latin (a.k.a. “Roman”) Catholic Church to which most Catholics in the United States belong, but also a number of smaller Eastern Catholic Churches. Eastern Catholics are fully Catholic and fully in union with the pope, but they follow a slightly different form of canon law, and they are organized into their own dioceses led by their own bishops.

Often, individual Eastern Catholic Churches are connected to a particular geographical area and culture. For example, Byzantine Catholics are generally of Slavic descent, and the Syro-Malabar Church has its roots in India. Because of cultural and historic reasons, Eastern Catholics have their own distinctive liturgical traditions and customs.

The difference in customs regarding the Christian initiation of infants amounts to a difference in emphasis between the broad liturgical traditions of Christian East and West.

In the Church’s early days, when most Christians were adult converts, it was standard practice for the local bishop to baptize each new Christian personally, conferring confirmation in the same liturgy as the baptism.

As Christians grew more numerous and as more Christian parents brought their children to be baptized, it became impractical for the bishop to baptize and confirm new every Catholic. Eventually, it became clear that other clergy would need to celebrate most baptisms.

In the Christian East, there was a great emphasis on the fundamental theological unity of the sacraments of initiation, which is why Eastern priests confirm and give the Eucharist to the babies they baptize.

In the Latin Catholic West, there was a greater sense of the importance of maintaining a direct connection with the diocesan bishop as the father of the local diocesan church. For Latin Catholics, the sacrament of confirmation came to be celebrated at a separate, later liturgy—the idea being that even if a simple parish priest celebrated an infant’s baptism, the child could still be confirmed by the bishop himself.

For Latin Catholics, the history of our practices surrounding first Communion is long and rather complicated, as customs varied across the centuries. But our modern practice of children receiving their first Communion around the age of 7—the canonical “age of reason”—was established by Pope Pius X in 1910 with his decree “Quam Singulari.”

Q Sometimes I become distracted at Mass and only really get refocused when I hear the consecration bells. Is that a sin? (Florida)

A No. If you are accidentally getting distracted on occasion, this is not a sin. The Catholic faithful have an obligation to attend Mass by being physically present on Sundays and holy days of obligation; but the Church’s law doesn’t and can’t require the faithful to have their minds perfectly focused for the entire length of the liturgy.

Of course, the more focused we reasonably can be, the better. Sometimes there are actions we can take to minimize distractions—perhaps turning off gadgets or taking time before Mass to recollect ourselves—and we should do what we can in this regard.

But God understands that we are human and our active minds wander sometimes. The important thing is just that we keep turning our focus back to the Mass whenever we catch our attention straying.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at CNS News. Send your questions to CatholicQ&A所说.com)
Please submit in 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 The Criterion. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, solely because they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituarists on this page.


WELLE, William J., 96, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus, Indianapolis. Feb. 3. Father of Mary Norman, John and William Welles. Grandfather and great-grandfather of several.†

In too many cases, Cardinal Farrell said, people think the word of God can be preached “only inside of the church” without accepting responsibility for preaching the Gospel “by what we say, by what we do, whether we are in the church” without accepting responsibility for preaching the Gospel “by what we say, by what we do, whether we are in the church.”

That is one of the ways to make a report.

The diocesan explored those questions on Feb. 16-18 at a conference titled, “Pastors and lay faithful called to Church where people listen to one another and work for good things—but rarely do you encourage us in what we can do to be more effective.”


Dr. Micaela Harrison. Son of Sandra Bartley. Brother of Debra Straub.


Investing with Faith

Jim Maslar

Charitable Lead Trusts make a substantial difference you can see

When it comes to “big picture” charitable plans, there are many options for Catholics considering how to best thank and honor others the resources God has given them.

But because each person’s goals are different and their situations are unique, no single approach to what’s known as “planned giving” or giving incorporated into one’s annual, multi-year or lifetime estate planning is right for everyone.

Planned giving can be a lot like farming. The land is prepared and tilled before sowing the seed, so to speak; those who do the planting leave a legacy of financial support but do not get to see the impact of their generosity:

That’s not the case, however, with a Charitable Lead Trust (CLT). In fact, with CLTs donors are already playing the role of farmer for the giving to happen during their lifetime over a long period of time so they are able to see the fruit of the labor given to the organizations and causes they care about.

This is a major, though not only, way in which CLT’s stand out and differ from other vehicles of charitable planned giving.

What is a Charitable Lead Trust and how does it work?

A CLT is an irrevocable agreement that creates a stream of income for a charitable organization from a donor’s transfer of assets. Contributions are made for a predetermined period of time, and at the end of the trust’s term the remainder of the asset is transferred back to the donor or to the donor’s heirs.

What are the benefits of a CLT?

• A CLT can reduce or even eliminate estate taxes that are due when your beneficiaries pass these assets to the next generation of family members. Lower interest rates mean greater savings in both gift and estate taxes.

• When the applicable federal rate is low, the calculated value of the charity’s interest income is greater, and that generates a higher charitable deduction.

• The value of the calculated remainder passing at the end of the donor’s lifetime, and the amount on which the transfer tax is based.

• When you establish the trust, you can take a sizable tax deduction that substantially reduces your taxable income.

This is especially helpful for those who are looking for a way to offset a significant income event, such as the sale of a business or marketable securities.

• Creating a CLT during your lifetime reduces the size of your taxable estate when you die. And all appreciation in the value of your donated trust is completely free of gift and estate taxes so you can pass more of your blessing on to the people you love.

You can set the payments to a qualified charitable organization as a fixed amount or as a percentage of trust assets. If you establish the CLT during your lifetime, you’ll be able to see your gift make a tangible difference in your community.

The archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation welcomes such gifts designated for a specific purpose, but we are also grateful for unrestricted CLT gifts that allow us to direct support to our mission where it is most needed.

Who is a CLT for?

The quick answer is “not everyone.” A Charitable Lead Trust requires a substantial financial commitment over a long period of time. Individuals of significant means who are interested in maximizing both charitable giving and their family’s eventual inheritance in a tax-friendly way may explore CLTs. These trusts can allow donors to make an immediate impact with charitable giving while reducing the gift and estate taxes that are incurred when passing wealth on to heirs.

Learn more

If you are interested in learning more about Charitable Lead Trusts or how a CLT may help you meet your personal giving and financial goals, the staff of the Catholic Community Foundation is here to help you. Please contact us at ccf@archindy.org or call 317-236-1482.

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The FBI is facing scrutiny after a leaked memo suggested some “radical traditionalist” Catholics pose threats of racial or ethnically motivated violence. The memo has since been condemned by the bureau, a spokesperson told OSV News.

In a leaked memo dated Jan. 23, an analyst at the FBI’s Richmond Division said “radical traditionalist” Catholics are “typically characterized by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council.” The memo said the ideology can amount to an “adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and white supremacist ideology.” The memo also names far-right Catholics who the bureau said has ties to “white Christian nationalism.” The memo is noted that some of the groups named in the memo are not in full communion with the Church, and, “If evidence of extremism exists, it should be noted out, but not at the expense of religious freedom.”

Cardinal Dolan noted in his statement that some of the groups named in the memo are not in full communion with the Church, and, “If evidence of extremism exists, it should be noted out, but not at the expense of religious freedom.”

In a Feb. 16 statement, New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ religious liberty committee, said: “Let me first be clear. Anyone who espouses racism or promotes violence is rejecting Catholic teaching on the inherent dignity of each and every person.”

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, he said, “roundly condemns such extremism and fully supports the work of law enforcement officials to keep our communities safe.”

Cardinal Dolan said he agreed with Bishop Kneust that “the leaked memorandum was nonetheless ‘troubling and offensive’ in several respects, such as its religious profiling and reliance on dubious sourcing—and am glad it has been rescinded. We encourage federal law enforcement authorities to take appropriate measures to ensure the problematic aspects of the memo do not compromise the public safety of these agencies’ work going forward.”

Virginia Attorney General Jason K. Miyares, along with his counterparts from 19 other states, including Indiana, sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland condemning the memo as “anti-Catholic.”

Miyares said in a statement that “Virginia is the birthplace of religious freedom and has a long history of protecting the inalienable right to live your faith free from government interference or intimidation.”

“The leaked memo from our state capital’s FBI office is unacceptable, unconstitutional and un-American. Frankly, it’s what I would expect from Communist China,” Miyares said.

“As attorney general, I’m responsible for defending Virginians’ rights, and religious freedom is the bedrock of the constitutions of the United States and of Virginia. Virginians should not and will not be labeled ‘violent extremists’ by their government because of how they worship or because of their beliefs.”

The same FBI memo noted that “conversely, deep-seated anti-Catholicism remains a characteristic of many far-right white nationalists.”

A cited source in the FBI memo is a Charitable Lead Trust requires a substantial financial commitment over a long period of time. Individuals of significant means who are interested in maximizing both charitable giving and their family’s eventual inheritance in a tax-friendly way may explore CLTs. These trusts can allow donors to make an immediate impact with charitable giving while reducing the gift and estate taxes that are incurred when passing wealth on to heirs.

FBI faces scrutiny over memo on ‘radical traditionalist Catholics’
New Albany Knights of Columbus open youths’ ‘minds and hearts’ to religious life, ordained ministry

By Natalie Hoefner

NEW ALBANY—Recalling his childhood growing up in Mt. St. Francis, Greg Brodfehrer remembers knowing religious men and women of various orders—particularly the Conventual Franciscans whose Province of Our Lady of Consolation is based in the town.

“I had a lot of exposure to religious life, which led to my own vocation journey,” said Brodfehrer, who spent five years in formation with the Conventual Franciscans. “A lot of us had religious sisters or brothers teach us [in Catholic schools].

“But that’s not happening as much now. A lot of kids know what a priest is, but don’t really understand there’s more than just being a priest” when it comes to vocations.

To make local youths more aware of various priestly and religious orders, the member of the Knights of Columbus Cardinal Ritter Council #1221 in New Albany enlisted the help of his fellow Knights in hosting a vocations fair on Feb. 2 for sixth-graders of six Catholic schools in the New Albany Deanery.

“I just wanted to expose them to different kinds of religious life,” said Brodfehrer. “I figure with changes in the world today, we need to think of new ways to do that.”

He said the event was designed to “help kids know there are more vocations out there than marriage and parish priests, that a religious vocation is one of those, and that there are many ways to live out a religious vocation, like as doctors or teachers.”

The day—which included lunch and prizes—began with a silent procession from the Knights’ headquarters to St. Mary Church in New Albany for Mass.

“I asked the Holy Spirit at Mass today to bless us and the kids so that a seed might be planted. I think it was meant to be planted,” said Mercy Sister Paulanne Diebold.

She represented one of three women’s religious orders that Brodfehrer invited to the vocations fair. He also invited members of the Conventual Franciscans at Mount St. Francis, the Benedictine monks of St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, a Dominican priest, a permanent deacon of the archdiocese and two archdiocesan priests to participate in the fair—the first of what he hopes will become an annual event.

Each order provided him with questions and answers to add to a questionnaire. To complete the questionnaire, students visited stations with representatives from each order.

“There’s a lot more religious orders than I originally thought,” said Ambrose Kreuer of Holy Family School in New Albany. “And it’s not just that they do one thing—they do different things like charity and teaching.”

His classmate, Cecilia McGovern, said she “definitely thought [the event] helped me learn more about the different orders. Some I knew about, but others I didn’t. I thought it was very interesting.”

So did Nicholas Smith of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County.

“I learned that the Sisters of Charity helped in the Civil War,” he said. “And [President Abraham] Lincoln sent a special notice that nobody could hurt them because they were helping care for people on both sides of the war. They cared for all life.”

The timing of the event was “excellent,” said Brittany Geswein, who teaches sixth-grade theology at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School. “We have a whole unit where we focus on vocations. Talking about the different options versus hearing from people who are living this life is a great opportunity.”

The religious and priests present also felt the timing was right.

“I think that this is a good age range,” said Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding, a monk of St. Meinrad.

“They’re coming into adolescence. It’s a time that they start thinking about what they might want to do with their future. I think [events like this are] very important for helping kids know what’s available to them in terms of service to the Church, service to the community and finding their way in life.”

Father Adam Ahern agreed.

“Moreover, we can do stuff like this, the better,” said Father Ahern. “Men’s clubs at parishes, Knights of Columbus, ladies’ sodalities—any organization that cares about the life of their parish and the life of the Church could put in something like this.”

Father Michael Keacher, archdiocesan director of vocations, was also grateful to the Knights of Columbus in New Albany for organizing and holding the vocations fair.

He said the organization’s founder Blessed Father Michael McGivney “always saw the promotion of priestly vocations as perhaps the most important work of the Knights. He knew that without priests, there is no Eucharist, no sacraments. Events like this go a long way to supporting [religious and priestly] vocations.”

Vocations that might be considered by young people like Ambrose, Cecilia and Nicholas, as well as St. Mary-of-the-Knobs sixth-grader Lillian Boelker

“I like to help people, so I think there could be a possibility of becoming a sister,” she said. “It’s not something I really ever thought of before. But now that we did this project, I think I’ll start thinking about it a lot more.”

(The link to more about priestly and religious vocations in the archdiocese, visit www.HearGodsCall.com)