E6 conference participants exhorted to become ‘men of the Eucharist’

By Sean Gallagher

ST. LEON—“No cross. No glory. No Mass. No glory.”

As Father Jonathan Meyer offered that simple and direct message during a homily on Feb. 18, some 1,200 men ranging in age from teenagers to those who could be their grandfathers sat before him in an auditorium at East Central High School in St. Leon.

They had come there from Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and other states for the eighth annual E6 Catholic Men’s Conference sponsored by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County.

Father Meyer shared this message during the first year of the three-year National Eucharistic Revival. Named by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as a eucharistic preacher

Father Daniel Mahan named director of USCCB’s Institute on the Catechism

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The recently formed Institute on the Catechism will carry out the U.S. bishops’ vision of the importance of “connecting evangelization and catechesis,” according to Father Daniel Mahan, an Indianapolis archdiocesan priest just named as the institute’s director.

The institute is housed within the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis at the Washington headquarters of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Father Michael J.K. Fuller, USCCB general secretary, appointed Father Mahan on Feb. 27 to the post, effective on July 1. The appointment is for three years.

This “evangelizing catechesis,” a focus of the Church as a whole, aims to teach the beliefs of the Catholic faith in a “compelling and inviting” way to help young Catholics foster a “deeper relationship with the Lord and help them see their place within the body of Christ, the Church, and in turn, reach out to others to share the Good News,” Father Mahan told OSV News.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Conn., chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism, which reviews catechetical texts and provides consultation to the bishops’ Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, presented a proposal to create an Institute for the Catechism at the bishops’ spring meeting in June 2021, which was held virtually because of the pandemic.

The Institute on the Catechism was created “to reimplement and reinvigorate the mandate of the subcommittee in responding to the changing catechetical landscape,” said a USCCB news release announcing Father Mahan’s appointment.

Fellow prelates recall late Bishop O’Connell for his Gospel simplicity

LOS ANGELES (OSV News)—During his seven years as auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, Bishop David G. O’Connell made many friends—and a strong impression—among his brother bishops.

The native of County Cork, Ireland, was one of three priests named auxiliary bishops for Los Angeles by Pope Francis in July 2015. The pope was known to refer privately to the future bishops—then-Father O’Connell, then-Father Robert E. Barron, a Chicago-born media evangelist, and then-Mgr. Joseph V. Brennan, an LA priest, as “Archbishop Gomez’s triplets.”

LOS ANGELES Auxiliary Bishop David G. O’Connell is pictured during a Nov. 17, 2021, session of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. The bishop was found murdered in his home on Feb. 18 (OSV News photo/Barb Hiedrich)
Registration is open for 2024 National Eucharistic Congress

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Registration for the National Eucharistic Congress on July 17-21, 2024, has opened. The congress will take place in Indianapolis with the Church in central and southern Indiana serving as the host archdiocese for the historic event.

The Year of the National Eucharistic Congress and Missionary Sending 2024-25 is the third and final year of the U.S. bishops’ National Eucharistic Revival.

The congress is expected to draw more than 80,000 people — as well as a large number of bishops — to the event. Bishops from around the U.S. and the world will be present.

The congress is expected to include more than 200 speakers, who will share their insights and experiences with the faithful. The event will also feature a large eucharistic adoration, as well as a variety of other educational and inspirational programs.

The congress will be held in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, which is the host archdiocese for the event. The congress will be open to the public, and all are welcome to attend.

The congress will also feature a variety of other events, including a eucharistic adoration, a eucharistic procession, and a bishops’ conference.

The congress is expected to draw a large number of people from around the U.S. and the world, and is anticipated to be a significant event for the Catholic Church.

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Environmental advocates encouraged by changing climate at Statehouse

By Victoria Arthur

While falling short of their goal, members of a grassroots movement in Indiana for addressing climate change say they are heartened by progress they say they made last year at the Statehouse in cultivating support for their cause.

For the second year in a row, advocates—including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC)—backed legislation to create a climate solutions task force that would study issues related to sustainable and clean energy solutions. The task force, comprising legislators and environmental experts, ultimately would have been charged with delivering a report and recommendations to the General Assembly and the governor no later than November 2024.

While last year’s proposed legislation never received a hearing, this year’s version—Senate Bill 335—did get a hearing but no vote. Although the bill itself will not move forward in this legislative session, advocates and lawmakers alike are expressing hope that the widespread effort by citizens of years will lead to success in the future.

“This is good foundation for future policy,” said Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

“The conversation that we had during the committee meeting was hopeful, and the members that established a task force is a very welcome step—a prudent step—to studying some of the issues around environmental resiliency and climate change in Indiana.

Mingus joined more than a dozen supporters of Senate Bill 335 to present testimony during the Feb. 20 meeting of the Senate environmental affairs committee. In his remarks, Mingus shared Catholic social teaching about the “relationship of stewardship” between humanity and the environment.

His emphasis has endured through the lifetimes of the popes of recent history, continuing now with Pope Francis, Mingus said. “This teaching has not been addressed not just to just Catholic Christians of the world, but to all people of good will, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Most recently, the Church has viewed environmental issues through the lens of “Laudato Si’.” On Care for Our Common Home,” the groundbreaking 2015 encyclical on the environment by Pope Francis. In this pivotal teaching document, he called for global action and swiftness worldwide to protect the environment, curb irresponsible development, and respect God’s creation.

Mingus acknowledged the difficulties and “ideological battles” surrounding many environmental issues—especially the topic of climate change. But he and other supporters of Senate Bill 335 emphasized that the legislation would merely set a framework for future policy discussions.

“The task force proposed by this bill does not rush into any one policy idea, but rather sets the stage for understanding which policies might be most effective for addressing a changing climate in Indiana,” he said.

Preservation of state forests, funding for renewable energy, and support for workers affected by a changing energy industry would be among the issues addressed by the task force.

Senate Bill 335 was backed by a broad coalition of supporters ranging from business leaders to environmental groups to religious organizations. It was carried forward in the Senate by a cross-section of lawmakers representing both political parties and diverse backgrounds, including Sen. Eric Bassler (R-Washington), who said that his Catholic faith informs his thinking about these issues.

“One thing that God calls us to do and obviously the Catholic calls us to is to care for and to be a good steward of God’s creation,” said Bassler, a member of Our Lady of Hope Parish in Washington, Ind., who was among several co-authors of the legislation. “I think that establishing this task force is a way to do that.”

While expressing dismay that the bill did not come up for a vote, Bassler pointed to the cross-party path that lawmaking efforts often take.

“When it comes to the legislative process, sometimes in year one when a bill is written and submitted, it doesn’t even get a hearing,” he said. “And maybe in year two or three it gets a hearing but not a vote. And maybe in year three or four it gets a hearing and a vote. We can’t make anything happen on the Senate side this year, but maybe we can do this again and get a vote next year.”

“My instinct is that if we were to get a vote in a committee and then on the Senate floor, I think it would pass,” Bassler continued. “Sometimes when we talk about environmental or climate-type issues, it can be polarizing. So maybe it takes a while for people to grasp the idea. I’m cautiously optimistic that we can see something happen next session.”

Sen. Shelli Yoder (D-Bloomington), the primary author of Senate Bill 335, shared that hope. She and Bassler expressed gratitude to the ICC and other supporters of the legislation—and gave much of the credit behind the effort to an enterprising group of Indiana high school students.

Confront the Climate Crisis, established in West Lafayette in 2020, is a grassroots campaign that now comprises more than 150 high school students across the state who raise awareness about environmental issues and provide research and input to lawmakers. Beginning last year with Sen. Ron Alting (R-Lafayette), who brought forth similar legislation to establish a climate solutions task force, members of the group have been actively engaged at the Statehouse and presented testimony on Senate Bill 335.

“I appreciate so much the students coming at this with such passion and resilience and laser focus,” said Yoder, who was a co-author on Alting’s bill last year. “They so effectively and relentlessly got to work, and I got to work. We worked to get our bill a hearing this year, and really worked to get it to a vote, but we weren’t successful at that. But we got further along in the process than we did last year, and the students should be incredibly proud of what they were able to achieve.”

Rahul Durai, who at 16 is executive director of Confront the Climate Crisis, said that his organization will redouble its efforts in 2024.

“I’m encouraged by a lot of the conversations I had the day of the hearing because there are some senators who are beginning to talk about climate change and are beginning to show interest,” said Durai, a junior at West Lafayette Junior/Senior High School. “We will be pushing for this or similar legislation again in 2024 and continuing to advocate for responsible climate legislation for Indiana.”

Meanwhile, environmental advocates are hailing success on another measure. House Bill 1138, which would require childcare and pre-kindergarten facilities to test drinking water for lead contamination, unanimously passed the House Feb. 22 on second reading.

Authors Rep. Carolyn Jackson (D-Hammond), the bill now moves to the Senate for consideration at the midpoint of the legislative session, known as crossover.

The ICC and other allies will follow the progress of that bill while looking at ways to help ensure that the climate solutions task force becomes reality one day. Benedictine Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, one of the founding members of the Creation Care Commission of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, was among those who provided written testimony for the hearing on Senate Bill 335.

“Awareness is growing,” said Sister Sheila, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. “We have definitely made progress from last year to this year, and my hope is that it will continue to strengthen and grow.”

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

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownie, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

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Dialogue, not revenge, must prevail in the Holy Land, Pope Francis says

ST. SHIELA MARIE FITZPATRICK, O.S.B.

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WE ARE CLOSE TO 80% OF OUR GOAL!
Editorial

Pope Francis, dressed in the purple vestments of the Lenten season, delivers the homily during an Ash Wednesday Mass on Feb. 23 at Rome’s Basilica of Santa Sabina. (CNS photo/Hoang Dinh Nam)

Use Lent to become people of truth, reconciliation and love

There was recently a beautiful example of Christian unity where disciples of the Lord from various Christian traditions came together to share their love for Christ. Worshippers from across the country and beyond traveled to a chapel at Asbury University in Wilmore, Ky., to participate in a non-stop session of prayer, praise, worship and testimonial events. The event started on Feb. 5 and ended on Feb. 23.

Catholics were among those who journeyed to the Christian liberal arts college located southwest of Lexington, Ky., to be a part of the spontaneous event.

“It’s almost like a wellspring,” Father Norman Fischer, pastor of St. Peter Claver Parish in Lexington, and chaplain at Lexington Catholic High School, told OSV News. “You just know right away that God is there.”

“People are coming from all over the country, as far away as Hawaii, Mexico, New Zealand, Indonesia, everywhere,” Christel Broady, associate professor of English as a Second Language at Asbury, told OSV News. Broady, who is also Catholic, said the sight of participants “suddenly knowing together … arm in arm” brought her to tears.

“To see all these young people in reverent worship, quiet and … giving God the glory, made me so happy, as a Catholic, as a mother, as a teacher,” Broady added.

Father Fischer said he visited Asbury after celebrating Sunday Mass on Feb. 12, and saw several current and former Lexington Catholic High School students there.

“Hands were raised, people were singing, and all were in one accord,” said Father Fischer, adding he was reminded of Psalm 133:1, in which the psalmist declares “how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together as one.”

The Asbury phenomenon is “pure” and “definitely of God, definitely of the Holy Spirit,” the priest added.

Our faith instructs us the Lenten season is a time to focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving—what Pope Francis on Ash Wednesday called the three great paths to take on this journey of truth and reconciliation. He also reminded us it is a time to “break the chains of our individualism” and to rediscover “our companions along the journey of each day” through encounter and listening, and “to learn once more to love them as brothers and sisters.”

We believe if we take the Holy Father’s words to heart, we can use what transpired at Asbury University as a springboard in our lives of faith during this Lenten season and beyond. We have been reminded time and time again by the pope we are called to step outside of our comfort zones to encounter others on our journeys of missionary discipleship.

But what we do, the pope noted, must be done with a heart that is truly renewed and sincere.

“All too often, our gestures and rives have no impact on our lives; they remain superficial. Perhaps we perform them only to gain the admiration or esteem of others,” the pope said.

However, the pope warned, “outward displays of love and charity do not reach the world’s award count for nothing: the only thing that truly matters is the truth and love that God himself sees.”

Pope Francis asked that the faithful use the 40 days of Lent to “rediscover the joy, not of accumulating material goods, but of caring for those who are poor and afflicted”; to put God at the center of one’s life and pray and dialogue with him from the heart; and to become free “from the dictatorship of full schedules, crowded agendas and superficial needs, and choose the things that truly matter.”

Lent is an opportune time to draw closer to Christ. When we look at the cross, we must remember it is the ultimate expression of what love looks like. If we put Jesus at the center of our lives, there are grace-filled moments awaiting us. We need to believe in the power of prayer.

Since we are imperfect, there will be times we will fail and we will need to repent. We must remember—not only during Lent but during each liturgical season—that the sacrament of reconciliation is awaiting us to cleanse us of our sins.

Let us strive to become more selfless and pray for the gift of humility during this time. And as we travel on this journey, may we strive to be people of truth, reconciliation and love.

—Mike Krokos

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the right to hold opinions and to publish the results of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressio, 116). Letters of 120 words or less are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content—excluding spelling and grammar. In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to no more than three letters in a calendar year. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed. Letters must be signed, but for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to: Letters to the Editor, The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.

Be Our Guest! Sr. Constance Vei, L.S.P.

Up and down the mountain this Lent

Jesus’ transfiguration is one of the most dramatic scenes in the Gospels. It is a central image of Lent, reminding us that during this season we are invited to ascend a high mountain with Jesus to live a unique spiritual experience.

Pope Francis has chosen the transfiguration as the theme for his Lenten message this year.

Highlighting the voice coming from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Mt. 17:5), he asks us to listen to Jesus.

“Lent is a time of grace to the extent that we listen to him as he speaks to us” in the word of God, which the Church offers us in the liturgy.

“May that word not fall on deaf ears,” the pope writes, suggesting that even if we cannot attend daily Mass, we can still study the daily Bible readings.

In addition to the Scriptures, he writes, “the Lord speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, especially in the faces and the stories of those who are in need.”

So our first task this Lent is to listen to Jesus speaking to us in the word of God and in other people.

Pope Francis offers us a second Lenten personal challenge. Referring again to the transfiguration, he suggests that we resist the temptation to take refuge in a religiosity made up of dramatic mountaintop experiences, but that we “go down to the plain” strengthened by these experiences to be “artisans of synodality” in ordinary life.

As I reflect on this theme, I am transported back to Lent of 2020, when we were suddenly thrust into a surreal situation with the onset of COVID-19. The first weeks of the pandemic, which coincided with Lent, were intense on both the spiritual and practical levels.

Strangers in masks sat together in our home for the elderly and we were forced to bury ourselves under layers of personal protective equipment. As COVID struck more and more residents, a dark cloud hung over us—a mix of grief and fear of the unknown.

There were also moments of intense light, however. As we went into lockdown, we were deprived of daily Mass, but we watched it online each day.

We managed to find strength and grace through meditation on the Lenten readings and spiritual Communions.

Even when we felt the shadow of death engulfing us, I had a strong sense that Christ was present in the midst of it all—-not in his transfigured or risen glory, but in the vulnerability of his passion and death.

I also had a heightened sense of mission, believing that Christ was counting on me to love and serve the elderly to the best of my ability, despite the many obstacles continually posed by COVID.

Regardless of the seemingly dire circumstances and with which we found ourselves that Lent, we never doubted the presence of Christ in the person of the elderly, whom, Sr. Jeanne Veit had always said, “Never forget that the poor are our Lord.”

Now that the pandemic has largely receded, we have descended the mountain, so to speak, back to a more normal life. Yet we are confronted with new issues indicating that life in our homes will never be quite the same.

Our greatest challenge is the critical shortage of qualified caregivers to assist us in our apostolate.

With the nursing homes across the United States, our homes have been forced to limit the number of new admissions because we have not been able to recruit and retain enough staff members to care for the full number of elderly residents we could accommodate.

How can it be, I often ask our Lord, that at the very moment when the needs of seniors are greater than ever due to the ravages of the pandemic, and the population of older persons is growing exponentially, there are fewer caregivers prepared to meet their needs?

Individually and as a society, we need to show greater esteem and gratitude to caregivers.

We need to advocate for more educational opportunities and incentives for young people to enter the field of geriatrics, for better working conditions, compensation and benefits, and for better care and support for those experiencing exhaustion or burnout.

These suggestions may seem like a departure from our Lenten theme, but I believe that our Lord is speaking to us through the elderly—whom Sr. Jeanne Veit called the mouthpiece of God—and we need to listen.

As we deepen the ideal of journeying together in a spirit of synodality, let us come down from the mountain convinced that the eldest members of the human family are everyone’s concern.

(Little Sisters of the Poor Sister Constance Vei is director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.)
“Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light” (Mt 17:1-2).

Today, March 3, is the memorial of St. Katherine Drexel, who was born in Philadelphia in 1858. Katherine was a tireless missionary who established schools and who dedicated herself to the poor, especially minorities. She spent the final years of her life in retirement, dedicating herself exclusively to the ministry of prayer. A favorite saying of St. Katherine Drexel is, “My God! How much light can be wasted when the darkness does not comprehend it?” She saw the light of Christ in everything and everyone, and she grieved that it seemed to be wasted on those—Christians and non-Christians—who live in spiritual darkness.

St. Katherine died in 1955, but what a century preceded her! This is the period that saw the flourishing of women’s religious communities founded by Katherine Drexel, Rose Philippine Duchesne, Mother Mary Bayley Seton, Anne-Therese Guerin and others.

These undaunted women and their sisters established hundreds of schools, colleges, hospitals, and orphanages, educated and inspired thousands of poor children in big East Coast cities, in the rural communities of the Midwest, West and South, and in South America. They were advocates for justice and the liberating power of education. And they were wholly devoted to prayer and the sacramental life of the Church, especially the holy Eucharist.

Katherine Drexel was born into wealth and high society. But she was also taught to care for the poor and to take seriously the gift of faith. As a result, she freely decided to renounce her wealth to use it exclusively for the benefit of the poor.

Even when she founded her religious order, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, she insisted that none of her personal wealth should be used to support the sisters. They were to support themselves so that all of her inheritance could be used to care for poor people, especially African American and Native American communities.

All saints shine with light of Christ—even those who were women! Among many other things, Katherine Drexel was a stewardship saint. She recognized that her possessions were not something to be hoarded or wasted. They were a gift from God to be cultivated and shared for the good of others.

This “stewardship perspective” was not shared by everyone—any more than her views on service to poor minorities were embraced by everyone. She was opposed by the Ku Klux Klan in the South and by those who hated or feared Native Americans in the Midwest.

Katherine Drexel was responsible for establishing the first Catholic African American college, Xavier University in New Orleans. She opened schools for Blacks in 15 states and missions for Native Americans in 16 states. One of the schools she opened was burned to the ground by segregationists. When her sisters told her that they were mocked and scorned by those who opposed their work, she asked, “Did you pray for them?”

In spite of their differences, every saint has in common a rich prayer life and a deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The same is true for the holy Eucharist.

Today, March 3, is the memorial of St. Katherine Drexel, who dedicated herself to the poor, especially minorities.

Katherine Drexel was a good steward of her time. She used it wisely, dedicating a proportionate share of all her gifts to prayerful meditation on God’s word and to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Katherine decided early in life not to waste her time, her talent or her money. She gave it all back to God through loving service to those who needed it most. She was determined to be a steward of the light of Christ, sharing it generously with everyone, especially the poor.

As we continue our Lenten journey and reflect on the light of Christ’s resurrection, may we be inspired by St. Katherine’s example. Like her, may we ask ourselves how we shall use God’s gifts and be generous stewards of the light of Christ!
Mass, sculpture unveiling at Holy Trinity Heritage Park in New Albany will take place on March 12

After 33 years, the final St. Patrick’s Day celebration at Holy Cross Central School will take place in the school’s gym, 215 Broadway, Indianapolis, from 3:30-7 p.m. on March 12.

The event includes raffles, pull tabs and tirp boards. Irish Sw will play live music from 4:30-7 p.m., and the Indianapolis Rogues Pipes and Drums will perform. The menu consists of cabbage, soda bread, beverages and bakery items will be available for purchase.

The admission cost is $5. The funds raised go toward serving the local community through evangelization, outreach, weekly meals provided for shut-ins, and Thanksgiving and Christmas meals for more than 450 families.

For more information, call at 317-695-5421 or the St. Philip Neri Parish office at 317-631-8746. †

March 17

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Living the Stations of the Cross—14 Timeless Treasures and One Mighty Resurrection: Morning Reflection—9 a.m., butterflies, 9:30-11 a.m., buffet breakfast and program concluding by 4 p.m.

Information, registration: 812-535-2952, jimn@spsmw.org, www.spsmw.org/events.

March 18-19

March 22

Mount Saint Joseph Father Michael Caron presents, includes drive through, $14 dinner, $24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on March 14.

Information, registration: cutt.ly/StJoeRetreat23.

March 24

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, Pump House Studio, 110 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Anthony, Franciscan Father Peter Peterson facilitating, supplies must be provided, own pizza, breads and snacks provided, bring beverage to share, 12-person limit, $40. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 28

John Muir’s Birthday, 6-8 p.m., for all in March in Park, viewing of video, discussion, Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House program director Cheryl McSweeney facilitating, free will offering. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 24-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. Welcoming Lent, 6:30 a.m.-8 p.m., daylong retreat for married couples, Benedictine Father Noel McShane facilitating, 24 double registration: unimrntedretreats.org/retreats.
The love of a woman and the love of God reveal the heart of the new leader of pastoral ministries

By John Shaughnessy

The essence of life and faith for Paul Sifuentes is the pastoral relationship—high essence relationships—when the new executive director of pastoral ministries for the archdiocese talks about two defining parts of his life: his relationship with the woman he hoped would become his wife, and his relationship with the God he strives to make the center of his world.

Start with the story of how he first became friends with Alexa Puscas.

It’s a story that reveals part of the heart that Sifuentes brings to leading the archdiocese’s pastoral ministries, an umbrella group that includes Youth Ministry, Intercultural Ministry, Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, the Office of Human Life and Dignity, and the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

When they first met, Sifuentes and Puscas were both in their junior year at the University of Notre Dame studying abroad in London. During their semester there, they joined a group of about 30 students that began praying the rosary every night. As the weeks passed, the number of students dwindled until it was just the two of them praying the rosary each day.

They became close friends, but it wasn’t more than that because, at different times, they were dating other people.

They even grew apart for a while until they connected again after college—a connection that eventually developed into a romantic relationship by the fall of 2007 when they both served as lay ministers in Indianapolis, she as the director of religious education at St. Pius X Parish, he as the director of youth ministry at St. Simon the Apostle Parish.

“I knew I wanted to marry this girl for a long time, but I wanted to discern that. So, I was trying to find a prayer to discern marriage with her. I Googled ‘discernment prayer, rosary,’ and the first thing that pops up is a 54-day rosary novena. I was like, ‘OK, that’s an option, but let’s talk about something shorter,’” Sifuentes recalls with a laugh.

As his search continued, he even thought about the two of them designing their own marriage discernment prayer, something that would include the rosary “because that’s what brought us together, and it’s a big part of our relationship.”

“I came up with nothing else. I told her, ‘I found this 54-day rosary novena.’ And I was about to say, ‘But …’ Before I could say it, she said, ‘That’s perfect.’ The 54 days of praying the rosary together to discern if they should marry—‘Lord, is this what you want me to do?’ Sifuentes explains—eventually led to an unforgettable moment inside St. Simon the Apostle Church. It happened as they prayed the Luminous Mysteries of the rosary together during their shared time of eucharistic adoration.

After they finished the first decade of the rosary and right before they wanted to pray the second decade of the Luminous Mysteries—recalling the wedding feast at Cana—Sifuentes proposed to Puscas. And she said yes.

They have become parents of six children—ranging in age from 12 years to 3 months—and they still pray the rosary together.

Embracing the gift, breaking down in tears

Fast forward to an early February day in Colorado this year when Sifuentes’ relationship with God came into a clearer focus for him—another story which shows the heart that Sifuentes brings to leading the archdiocese’s pastoral ministries.

The impact came as he attended a presentation by Bishop Joseph A. Espaillat, an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, during a conference of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

One of the central themes of the bishop’s presentation was how lay ministers need to set aside time to pray for the people they minister “to and with”—and to pray for God’s guidance for themselves, too. He also encouraged the audience members to always remember “we are the sons and daughters of God” first.

That thought seared into Sifuentes’ heart and mind, leading to an emotional moment that left him in tears later when Bishop Espaillat made an invitation to people during eucharistic adoration.

“He said, ‘If you feel orphaned, and you really want to claim your sonship or your daughtership with God, I want you to move closer,’” Sifuentes recalls. ‘I came closer.’

“I’m very blessed with great parents and my in-laws have been amazing parents to me as well. But that will always pale in comparison to the love of the Father. It’s a great gift from God when you experience that love.’

As tears streamed from his eyes during that moment in Colorado, Sifuentes thought about why he had come forward, and why the wave of emotion overcame him.

“I think it was more of me forgetting who my Father was,” he recalls. “Being like a faithful servant rather than a beloved son was a little bit of where I was. It’s just life. Life gets busy. As a husband and father, you’re working from ‘What do I need to do? What do I need to take care of? Why do I need to take care of? How am I partnering with my wife?’ And now I’m in this position that I’m really excited about, but what do I need to do?’”

He found that the answers to all those questions came by focusing on his relationship with God first.

“I’m a son of the Father who is trying to be a faithful disciple of Christ who is also God,” he says. “Seeing myself as a beloved son of the Lord is critical to my spiritual life. When I get off of that is normally when I need to reconnect myself. And that is what we need to do with lay ministers in our pastoral ministry. We need well-formed lay ministers, but when they don’t recognize themselves as a beloved son or a beloved daughter of God, that’s when I think we can be in trouble.”

“It’s all about relationships”

Sifuentes believes that when lay ministers embrace that they are loved by God, they’ll be better prepared to walk with the people they are trying to bring closer to God.

“In pastoral ministries, our role is one of companionship. At different times and at different times of life, we find ways to accompany individuals whether that’s through their marriage prep, in their marriage, as they experience the difficulties of marriage, or when they’ve experienced the cruelties of life, if you will. All of these are how we are walking alongside these individuals.”

It all leads to the essence of life and faith for Sifuentes, the offer that Christ makes to all who seek to follow him.

“In essence, the Lord is offering us his presence. He wants to be with us. He thirsts for us, as Mother Teresa would always point out.”

“In pastoral ministries, we want to help parishes and parish staffs see that as well, making sure that they’re aware of the critical goal that is. Our ministry is about people and not about programs. It’s all about relationships. And all those relationships will be fruitful when the relationship with the Lord is in order.”

Family life offers a continuing lesson in accompaniment for new leader

By John Shaughnessy

On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, popcorn and several varieties of candy awaited a crowd of people—Sifuentes among them—when he and Alexa Sifuentes gathered their children to talk about what everyone was planning to do for Lent.

Among the sacrifices that family members vowed to try to do is one that is particularly hard for Sifuentes, they are the parents of six children: Luke, Victoria, Peter, Natalie, Regina and Maria. (Submitted photo)

“Definitely the hardest” challenge for him and his family, Sifuentes says it opens up more time and resources for the family to teach me that.”

While limiting the use of “screens”—phones, tablets, computers and television—in his personal time is “definitely the hardest” challenge for him, Sifuentes says it opens up more time to focus on his children, to have better conversations with his wife, and have more time for God.

While other family members are doing different kinds of fasting, they are all sharing a common approach to almsgiving.

“All of our family members is going to do a letter each week to someone who we feel needs a letter,” he says. “Alexa and I have one grandparent who’s living, and we have some other people we know who could use a letter. We’ll help the kids write a letter or draw a picture and send it.”

As for prayer, “we do night prayer together often. We do a lot of counting in our night prayers. The kids really like to chant.”

Sifuentes views fasting, almsgiving and praying as a family during Lent as an act of accompaniment.

He believes that focus on accompanying each other mirrors the approach he sees in the staffs of the pastoral ministries who serve the Catholics in central and southern Indians—in Youth Ministry, Intercultural Ministry, Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, the Office of Human Life and Dignity, and the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

“One of the reasons I’m very excited about being executive director here is that we have a wonderful team of great ministers,” he says. “I see my role as helping them do their ministry. I am by no means the expert in what their individual ministries are, but I think I can help clear away obstacles, help overcome challenges and help build relationships that further and multiply their ministries.”

He also feels blessed that his wife Alexa has a long history in ministry for the Church.

“There are many things I ask her opinion on,” he says. “In terms of being a minister, there are many things she’s better at than I am. I’ve learned from her, and I rely on her.”

He’s also learned about accompaniment from being a dad.

“Would I say I do it perfectly? No. But I think every day I learn a tiny tad more about how to accompany somebody, how to walk alongside them, how to gently ask questions and listen, and how to ask for forgiveness when I step on a foot while I’m accompanying them.”

“Pope Francis talks about the family being a training place for missionary disciples. And how critical it is to live in community, to do ministry, to be a people of God. The family is that,” he says.

He smiles and says, “I got plenty of family to teach me that.”
for the revival, Father Meyer expanded upon his message, saying, “What is the Mass? It is the death of Jesus. But it’s also the resurrection. And there is no glory without the cross.”

Pastor in solidum with Father Daniel Mahan of the Franciscan Friars in Southeastern Indiana, Father Meyer exhorted his listeners to be “men of the Eucharist.”

“What does it mean to be a man of the Eucharist, to unite ourselves to Christ on the cross?” Father Meyer asked. “It means to know him so well that all we can do is say, ‘This is my body given up for you. This is my blood poured out for your sins.’

“That’s masculinity. This eucharistic revival needs to change us.

“The conference—speakers, opportunities for prayer, the sacrament of penance, adoration, Benediction and fellowship—moved participants to embrace that change.

“It starts one man at a time,” said David Rhenhardt, a father and grandfather from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, at the conference. “It’s the meeting of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has to be within you if you’re going to be a man of God. It’s not us that’s going to win the world, it’s the Spirit of God living in us that’s going over the world.”

Rhenhardt, who has attended several E6 conferences, said taking part in the daylong gathering with so many other Catholic men “is like reading the lives of the saints. This conference inspires me to live more for Christ.

“Attending the conference for the first time was Levi Ericks, a seventh-grade student at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond.

“It’s enlightened me to the ways of God and how he teaches us,” Levi said of the conference. “It’s cool to see how many are dedicated to their faith and have a passion for God.”

Jordan Puckett, 29, has attended most of the E6 conferences.

“It encourages me to be strong in our culture today,” said Puckett, a member of Old St. Mary Parish in Cincinnati. “I always felt more inspired to be a better man and Catholic after I leave here. I leave here feeling a lot more hope—hope for our culture and hope for myself that I can be better.”

“The E6 in the conference title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up “the armor of God” in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

Conference speakers—Matt Birk, Mark Houck and Bear Woznick—encouraged the participants to embrace their faith and live it out more consciously in their lives with their families, in the Church and the world. (See accompanying article about Mark Houck.)

Bear Woznick, a popular Catholic author and speaker, shared his experiences as a world champion facing 35-foot waves in Hawaii.

“When the surf comes up in Hawaii, we see people on the beach with shirts

from Abercrombie and Fitch that say ‘lifeguard’ on them,” he said. “We know they’re posers. When the surf comes up, the posers don’t paddle out.”

Woznick challenged his listeners not to be “posers” in living out their faith in today’s secular culture.

“We’re in big surf,” he said. “We can’t afford to be posers anymore. You need to spend time in prayer every morning, praying the rosary while you’re driving, … going to Mass.

Praying isn’t the last resort. The first thing is to spend time with God.”

Matt Birk, a retired All-Pro Super Bowl champion in the National Football League, emphasized doing what he did to reach the heights of professional football—working on the fundamentals every day.

“You’ve got to keep doing the fundamentals over and over again,” he said. “You can’t just be Catholic. You got to do Catholic. That’s where your ability to perform comes from.

Although he was a Super Bowl winner, Birk insisted that playing center in the NFL doesn’t require a lot of talent. Neither, he said, does going to Mass, praying the rosary, praying in front of abortion centers or volunteering to help those in need.

“It doesn’t take any talent to do these things,” Birk said. “We’ve got to go where the action is. This is what we were made for—this time right now.

Noting that society is no longer founded on Christian principles, Birk exhorted those at the conference to change that, one man at a time.

“We need to go out and evangelize,” he said. “We need to proclaim the Gospel. There are so many people, so many young people, who have never heard the Gospel. If we’re not going to tell them, who is? … It’s on us, guys.”

At the end of the conference, Birk and Woznick spoke about how they were impressed that so many young men were in attendance. According to conference organizers, about 200 of the participants were 25 or younger.

“I’ve never seen so many young men at a men’s conference,” Woznick said. “I’m stoked to see that. It’s very powerful.”

“Twenty or 30 years from now, they’re not going to remember the Skyline chili [at the lunch] or the speakers that were here,” Birk said. “But they’re going to remember that their dad took them to this and that’s awesome.”

Pro-life activist acquitted in federal court finds spiritual meaning in arrest, trial

By Sean Gallagher

ST. LEON—Mark Houck, a pro-life activist and leader of The King’s Men, a nationwide Catholic men’s ministry, stood before 1,200 Catholic men on Sept. 23 at the conference at East Central High School in St. Leon, in southeastern Indiana.

Less than three weeks earlier, he could have been put behind bars if a federal jury had found him guilty of violating the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act, for allegedly assaulting an abortion clinic volunteer in October 2022.

The jury returned its verdict on Jan. 30, acquitting Houck of the charges.

“There is great joy in being free to be able to talk to the guys,” said Houck in an interview during the E6 Catholic Men’s Conference, held on Feb. 18 at East Central High School in St. Leon.

“I was inwardly free the whole time, even if they would have put me behind bars. But now I’m outwardly free, which is great. I can talk about the trial and inspire the men,” he said. “The Lord has given me a platform to talk about Jesus, grace and mercy. I’m loving it.”

The trial followed Houck’s Sept. 23, 2022 arrest at his suburban Philadelphia home in front of his wife and seven children by “over 20 federal agents and Pennsylvania state troopers,” Houck said at the conference, describing the arrest as “an act of terror.”

Houck recalled being taken from his home, wearing “flip-flops, a pair of shorts and a T-shirt” to a federal building in Philadelphia where his wrists and ankles were shackled and he was chained to a table.

The one thing he had that gave him comfort was his rosary.

“I prayed without ceasing,” Houck said at the conference. “And I had peace, brotherhood and the knowledge that God was with us, you would never have imagined. I was at the foot of Calvary. I was next to Jesus. I felt so much joy in that moment that I was filled with grace being poured out on me and my family.

“It was so freeing for me to be able to pray to Jesus. Your will be done. It was the first time in my life that I believe that my will was perfectly united with God’s will.

Houck reflected on his experiences in light of the life of Christ and encouraged his listeners to do the same for themselves.

“That’s how your life makes sense,” he said. “You understand your life, men, through the One who lived it before you, who’s gone through every human suffering that can ever be gone through. There’s nothing that you can experience in this life that he cannot relate to.

Houck reflected on the pain of the accusations made of him during his trial.

“They were calling me all sorts of things that, that I would never even think about myself,” he recalled. “My dignity was totally stepped on and crushed in front of my children and friends. I was presented as… some- one who hated people, someone who didn’t want to help people. And I’m just putting it mildly.

As the jury deliberated, Houck experienced again the peace that he knew on the day of his arrest.

“I knew that, no matter what happened, I was in the shelter and protection of God,” he said. “He would protect my family and take care of my children, no matter what happened. I had great peace.”

In two presentations at the conference, Houck also reflected on the passage from chapter six of St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle exhorted his readers to “take up the armor of God” in their spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

“Everyone in here is a beloved son of God,” Houck said. “If you live in that identity every day of your life, not only will you have that fullness of the armor of God, but you will grow in holiness, love and mercy. You will be a conduit of God’s grace in this world and a force to be reckoned with.

“The devil will quack every time you wake up because you are a threat to his kingdom.”

In his interview during the conference, Houck reflected that his arrest and trial were the result of living the life of a Catholic husband and father to which so many of the conference participants also are called.

“I’m not so sure that what happened isn’t going to happen to them,” he said. “It’s possible. They need to be vigilant for it. I hope it doesn’t happen to them.”

In any case, Houck didn’t want his listeners to be afraid to live their faith publicly, including praying outside of abortion centers, because of what happened to him.

“You can’t run from the unknown or the fear of what happened to me and somehow think you’re going to avoid it,” he said. “If you’re going to be a Catholic today, the devil knows it. He wants to come after each and every one of us.

But the armor of God helps us move forward with hope, confidence and peace, knowing that, no matter what happens, grace is going to be abundantly."
In his often emotional remarks about Bishop O’Connell in the days since his Feb. 18 murder, LA Auxiliary Bishop John Sherrington of Westminster, who serves as a counselor to the late bishop’s recruits to the subcommittee. 

Bishop O’Connell invited the English priest back to St. Frances Cabrini Parish in south central LA while serving there. "I knew him to be a very special person, a real brother," said Bishop Nevares. "I consider myself his brother." Bishop Nevares is the archbishop of Monterey-Salinas and has worked as a close friend of the late bishop for 25 years, including as a core team member for the institute since its late 1990s and has worked as a subcommittee in new ways to pass on the understanding of the Church," Bishop Sherrington said that Bishop O’Connell had “made it clear calling each other cousins,” since they shared family roots in County Cork. 

Bishop Brennan said that Bishop O’Connell was a “man who loved Jesus Christ, and gave his whole life to being his friend and to helping others to find Jesus.” And in interviews with Angelus, the archdiocesan news outlet, bishops from around the country and even across the pond in England answered for Father Mahan’s energetic faith, his ability to work with all types of people, and his kindness. “If you had to play a sport all of his life, it would be A Man for All Seasons,” said Bishop Brennan, who left LA in 2019 to lead the Diocese of Fresno, Calif. “He was ‘all things to all people,’ ” St. Paul described his mission. Bishops O’Connell and Brennan were ordained priests for the Los Angeles Archdiocese a year apart in 1979 and 1980. “I remember thinking, here’s this great Irish guy, hope he does well,” said Bishop Brennan, who also is of Irish descent. “I think he was already throwing circles around us native guys, just in terms of totally immersing himself in the community.” Bishop Brennan said that Bishop O’Connell had a special way of “making everyone feel that he was a kindred spirit to them,” from community organizers to law enforcement officials. “And he was,” Bishop Brennan added. “But Dave was never a chameleon. He was never pretending to be anything he was not, so he was genuinely interested in everyone, wanting to love everyone.” Bishop Barron, who now heads the Diocese of Rockford, Ill., described Bishop O’Connell as “absolutely devastated” by the news of Bishop O’Connell’s death. “He was a man of enormous kindness, dedication, great courage, and Gospel simplicity,” Bishop Brennan told Angelus. “I always came away from meetings with him feeling more alive, more confirmed in my faith. I will miss him tremendously.” Bishop O’Connell served in the archdiocese for all of Cardinal Roger M. Mahony’s 25 years as archbishop of Los Angeles. Cardinal Mahony recalled that “his entire life and ministry were devoted to his people, those who were poor, powerless, and边缘ized, whose personal lives are charisma, such as the people’s dissatisfaction with organized religion, the growing secularism in society and the influence of social media. The institute also will provide resources to dioceses and yearly, in-person training conferences for diocesan officials. 

Through the institution, catechetical publishers and developers of catechetical content will work directly with the USCCB subcommittee in new ways to pass on the faith using digital tools while aiming to reach a more diverse Church. The institute will help them address today’s challenges in catechesis, such as the people’s dissatisfaction with organized religion, the growing secularism in society and the influence of social media. The institute also will provide resources to dioceses and yearly, in-person training conferences for diocesan officials. The bishops want to make sure “we’re doing the best we can on the Catechism, please visit evanglizingcatechesis.com.

We know we are one screen away from materialism, narcissism that leads to opting out even if they are still going to them live the faith for a lifetime.”

“Evangelizing catechesis” draws inspiration from Pope Francis’ 2021 document, Antiquum Ministerium (“Ancient Ministry”) that described catechesis as a distinct ministry in the Church. It also builds on the most recent edition of the Vatican’s Directory for Catechesis, issued in 2020, that gives guidelines for catechists and pastors, particularly in the role of evangelization. The institute launched its inaugural meeting on Nov. 10-12, 2022, in Baltimore ahead of the U.S. Bishops’ Nov. 14-17 general assembly. Father Mahan told OSV News the gathering drew more than 130 Church leaders, including bishops, other Vatican officials, staff of the USCCB subcommittee, priests and others currently helping review catechetical texts as well as representatives from various publishers of catechetical materials. He called it a “beautiful opportunity” for all involved in catechesis “to be together. We are in this together.” The institute is meant to keep us together and help us work together for the same goal—to form young people in the faith, help them live the faith for a lifetime.” “We know we have a lot of young Catholics who are leaving the Church, some at a very early age. Some kids will make that decision in middle school—opting out even if they are still going to Mass and religious ed. They’re already out the door,” he said. 

The bishops want to make sure “we’re doing the best we can on catechesis,” and help those called in that direction to produce high quality, doctrinally sound, compelling materials for our young people that will help them.” 

He paid tribute to the late Indianapolis Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein for playing a significant role in the renewal of catechesis in the U.S. while he was chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

In spite of the great efforts by catechists and publishers of catechetical materials to date, “we are still losing young people,” Father Mahan said, due in part to the many “powerful influences in our culture that are sort of like tentacles that can wrap around and not let go.” 

The “isms” are—individualism, materialism, narcissism that leads to nihilism,” Father Mahan told OSV News. “When we look at how saturated many young people are in media—whether watching TV, music, movies, engaged in social media—there are a lot of influences that mitigate against a solid formation in the faith.” 

I’m not sure we can do a whole lot to change what’s out there. That may be someone else’s calling,” he said. “But the Church can make sure what we are offering is top-notch, innovative.” We know we are one screen away from anyone else in the world and that can present some great opportunities for us in using media in ways that glorify God.” 

*For more information on the Institute on Catechesis, please visit evanglizingcatechesis.com.*
Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to The Criterion.

**BatesvilleDeanery**
March 9, 7 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
March 14, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brussels
March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County
March 22, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Mary, New Albany
March 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
March 23, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
March 27, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight
March 28, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navutation
March 29, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
March 29, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Michael, Charlestown
March 30, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

**Seymour Deanery**
March 7, 4 a.m.-4 p.m. at St. Ignatius, Ferdinand
March 14, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Lebanon, Salem
March 17, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, New Albany
March 21, 6-7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Rosary, New Albany
March 23, 6-7 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Charlestown
March 24, 6-7 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
March 26, 5-6 p.m. at St. Boniface, Ferdinand
March 27, 5-6 p.m. at St. Peter, Salem
March 28, 6-7 p.m. at St. Paul, Greentown
March 28, 6-7 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
March 29, 6:15 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
March 29, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
March 29, 7 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhousen
March 29, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the West Deanery are as follows:

**Bloomington Deanery**
March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
March 16, 7 p.m. at St. Boniface, Bedford
March 20, 6-7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel, Danville
March 27, 6-7 p.m. at St. Barnabas, Danville
March 29, 6-7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel, Bloomington

**Terre Haute Deanery**
March 10, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at St. Patrick and St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute, at St. Margaret Mary
March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute
March 22, 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph, Rossville, and Sacred Heart, Clinton, at Sacred Heart
March 23, 7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
April 10-11 a.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
April 2, noon-3 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greenscatter

**Connersville Deanery**
March 7, 6-8 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Connersville
March 14, 6:30 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Connersville
March 17, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Connersville
March 21, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Ann, Connersville
March 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Connersville
March 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph, Connersville
March 28, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Ann, Connersville
March 29, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Connersville
March 31, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph, Connersville

**New Albany Deanery**
March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
March 14, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Beauford
March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Knobs, Floyd County
March 22, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Mary, New Albany
March 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
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March 29, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Michael, Charlestown
March 30, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

**Tell City Deanery**
March 5, 3 p.m. at St. Boniface, Fudia
March 12, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

**El Pastor**

The pope then explained what he meant by “politics,” saying it is “a way of life for the ‘polis,’ for the city.”

Speaking about the increasing polarization in the world, the pope said, “we are not water and oil, we are brothers and sisters.”

“Thanks to technology and the Internet, we have a better ability to express our categories of what we are and what we do. But, if we are not careful, we can lose what it means to take part constructively in the life of a nation or society. Pope Francis said in a new book of interviews.

Even the Gospel has “a political dimension” in that it seeks to convert “the social, religious, and political conscience of the people,” he said, according to a series of excerpts published by Vatican News and other outlets on Feb. 6.

Marking the 10th anniversary of the pope’s election, journalists Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti planned to release a book-length compilation of a decade of interviews with the pope in Spanish on March 1.

Titled El Pastor (The Shepherd), the book covers the “challenges, reasons and reflections” of Pope Francis over the course of his pontificate. Rubin and Ambrogetti had previously compiled two years of interviews with then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires for their 2010 book The Jesuit (The Pope), which became a bestseller after the cardinal was elected pontiff, and retitled Pope Francis.

Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio: His Life in His Own Words.

In The Shepherd, the authors pick up where they left off to cover his papacy and the path he has taken.

He said his plan has always been “to carry out what the cardinals expressed in the general congregations on the eve of the conclave,” which was to “revitalize the proclamation of the Gospel, reduce centralization in the Vatican, eradicate the abuse of minors and fight economic corruption.”

When asked what he would say to those who accuse him of “doing politics,” the pope said, “I am doing politics. Because everybody has to do politics. Christian people have to do politics. When we read what Jesus said, we see that he was doing politics.”

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Drawn held at St. Mary of the Knobs on June 17, 2023.

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Everyone must engage in politics, which is simply what it means to take part constructively in the life of a nation or society, Pope Francis said in a new book of interviews.

Even the Gospel has “a political dimension” in that it seeks to convert “the social, religious, and political conscience of the people,” he said, according to a series of excerpts published by Vatican News and other outlets on Feb. 6.

“Picture the world of finance prevailing, he explained, and “where we can all agree is that something is wrong.”

The pope then explained what he meant by “politics,” saying it is “a way of life for the ‘polis,’ for the city.”

Speaking about the increasing polarization in the world, the pope said, “we are not water and oil, we are brothers and sisters.”

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**Everyone must take part in politics for the common good, pope says**
Church’s ministry to the sick and dying is often a hidden treasure

By Michael R. Heinlein

(OSV News) — When someone is sick, elderly or dying, Catholics tend to automatically think of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. But we don’t tend to think about the sacrament consistently. Some only think it is for those who are actively dying, while others think it ought to be received without serious reason. Sacramental anointing seems to be one of the more underappreciated, misunderstood, under-utilized and least talked about of the Church’s seven sacraments.

Some of it is a matter of poor catechesis. Some of it is a combination of a growing shortage of priests and diminished availability, and a matter of the culture and our own self-reliance rather than our reliance on God, particularly in times of vulnerability.

Whatever the reasons that anointing of the sick doesn’t seem to get its proper due, we can be sure it is an important opportunity to receive Christ’s grace and make his life our own.

The sacrament, in fact, conforms us more clearly to Christ, especially to him in his passion and death. Through his presence and grace in the sacrament, we are reminded we are not alone and that our struggles, pains and sufferings are not isolated. We can lean on the crutch of the cross amid our illnesses, infirmities and approaching death to make sense of it all and find strength, purpose and hope.

The anointing of the sick is explicitly mentioned in Scripture, in the New Testament’s Letter of St. James (Jas 5:14-15), which also identifies it as a ministry specific to priests. Through them, Christ is able to encounter, accompany and strengthen those who receive the sacrament.

Jesus can bring physical healing to the person, of course, as he brought the same to so many during his public ministry. But as those cures were meant to herald the coming of the kingdom of God, our prayers for healing now originate mostly from a desire for spiritual healing in the face of illness and death.

Christ conquered sin and death. Through his grace, we share in this victory. We experience Christ’s peace in this sacrament, involves principally the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil. The laying on of hands recalls Christ’s healing of the sick through the same gesture, and offers a sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

The oil of the sick, often itself having been blessed and consecrated by a bishop at a chrism Mass in advance of the previous Easter, is applied to the forehead and hands of the person being anointed. The use of oil in Scripture is remedial, comforting and restorative.

There are times during the year that parishes might offer communal celebrations of the sacrament, either within the context of the Mass or as a separate celebration. The sacrament is available for those whose health is seriously impaired, discerned without scrupulosity, and should not be administered indiscriminately and without prudential judgment.

Those to be anointed include the elderly and those preparing for surgery. It can be repeated if the illness returns, if the same illness worsens or has become chronic or when requested and determined by the minister’s pastoral judgment to be warranted.

Timing for anointing

The sacrament of anointing does not consist exclusively of what is commonly referred to as the “last rites” of the Church. It is a sacrament to be celebrated early in illness and may be repeated as a condition worsens or death is thought to be approaching. What constitutes “last rites” would consist of “viaticum” and the commendation of the dying ritual prayers.

Part of overcoming this common misunderstanding of the sacrament’s timing is to encourage the celebration of the sacrament outside of preparation for death itself.

The faithful should not wait until death seems imminent to request sacramental anointing. With fewer priests, and more faithful under their charge in many places, it has become increasingly difficult for priests to be available at a moment’s notice. But waiting also keeps God’s grace from the person needing it. It is important to see to it that a person in need of the sacrament can receive it as soon as reasonably possible.

In next week’s issue, more aspects of the Church’s ministry to the sick and dying and how Catholics can make it more a part of their and their loved one’s lives of faith will be explored.

(Michael R. Heinlein is the author of the recently released Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and editor of Our Sunday Visitor’s Simply Catholic. Follow him on Twitter @HeinleinMichael.)
**Feeling IV**

Effie Caldarola

**You are enough for God just the way you are**

Some people don’t believe in miracles. Other people see little miracles every day. I try to be that second kind of person, but sometimes I’ve had to put down my drum to get my attention.

During the holidays, I broke my wrist and had to wait 10 days for surgery. So, in addition to weeks of post-surgery healing, I had days languishing in an unbearably split applied haplessly at the emergency room.

If you’ve ever tied your dominant arm behind your back (and why wouldn’t you?), you know the helpless feeling.

I asked the Lord to help me make something positive of this, but I’m impatient.

Then, online, I noted a young Jesuit mentioning “Brother Curry’s” influence on him. He seemed familiar, so I researched him. What an inspiration.

Richard Curry was born in Philadelphia in 1956. He is, perhaps, described as show an adorable baby, but his good Catholic parents were devastated. His dad spent two years in prison.

But Rick Curry became a Jesuit brother and turned what others might see as a “handicap” into an extraordinary gift for helping others. Drum banging softly, I realized I was being asked to see my right arm situation for the relatively minor bump it was.

But much more than that, then-Father Curry, who died in 2015, left me to think in the eyes of God we are all beautiful just the way we are. We’re enough.

It’s a real miracle, sometimes, to truly grasp that.

This story reminds me of a quote frequently attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola: “Most people have no idea what God would make of them if they would only place themselves at his disposal.”

Father Curry changed the world for the people who felt they were out of reach of their gifts. He founded the National Theater Workshop for the Hard of Hearing and Deaf, which offers programs to people with disabilities have participated in performances and workshops. He earned a doctorate in anthropology and worked with Wounded Warriors Writers Workshop and the Academy for Veterans to promote healing and storytelling.

According to The New York Times, he helped found a bakery for veterans, and wrote two cookbooks, including The Secret of Jesus Breading.

And, although he was once laughed out of an audition for a commercial because he was missing an arm, he later appeared in an episode of the television series “Monk.” This good-natured, good-hearted Jesuit had the last laugh.

In 2009, he became a priest. Why not earlier? During ordination, the right thumb and forefinger are anointed. Father Curry, despite his amputation, didn’t. The story goes he sought one only after an amputee came to him for counseling and anointing.

Father Curry explained that he couldn’t graduate without being called to the presence of his amputation.

“Why not?” the man demanded. “Who calls you?”

Father Curry explained that God and the Christian community calls.

“Well, I’m calling you,” the man proclaimed.

Maybe this was God banging a drum for Father Curry.

When Rick Curry was in first grade, a student was one only after an amputee came to him for counseling and anointing.

Rich". 

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The Book of Genesis is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. As its name implies, Genesis reveals the divine origin of life and the divine plan in the forming of the human people.

First and foremost, Genesis is a splendidly vivid revelation of God’s majesty and power, but also of the purpose and meaning of life.

It is a great pity that this marvelous book has been so tortured and misconstrued by well-meaning, but uninformed readers over the years. The message of Genesis is not about the details of how creation occurred. This weekend’s reading is about Abraham. Considered by scholars to have been an actual person and not a myth, Abraham is regarded as the father of the Jewish people.

The reading makes several points. God is active in human affairs, communicates with humans and they with God. Abraham has a very strong faith. He was Paul’s secretary at one point and by their lives of faith, reveal to God and, by their lives of faith, reveal to the world.

For its second reading, this weekend’s liturgy presents a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to Timothy. Timothy was a disciple of Paul. The Church venerates Timothy as a great saint, important in the formation of the Church. According to the New Testament, Timothy was the son of a pagan father and a devout Jewish mother. He was Paul’s secretary at one point and once was imprisoned with Paul, although eventually released. Tradition holds that Timothy was the first bishop of Ephesus, then a major city, its present ruins on the Mediterranean coast of modern Turkey. Jesus’ call encourages Timothy to be strong in his Christian belief despite difficulties and obstacles.

St. Matthew’s Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is the story of the transfiguration, ablaze with symbols of God with which any Jew instantly would understand what we are praying, it’s our model of absolute faith. Remember the transfiguration, ablaze with symbols of God. Finally, on either side of Jesus were Moses and Elijah, the great heroes of the Hebrew religious tradition. This scene utterly contrasts with that of Calvary. Instead of shimmering clothes, Jesus is crucified after being stripped of his garments. Instead of glowing clouds and brilliant light, darkness surrounds the cross.

Reflection

Lent is little more than one week along, and already the Church is encouraging us and reinforcing our faith, just as Jesus strengthened the faith of the Apostles who stood trembling and in dismay before the divine sight manifest on the mountain.

The message is clear. Jesus is God, active and present among us. To be saved, we must believe in and our belief must commit our lives to Christ. This is hard. Abraham is critically a part of this weekend’s lesson as an example. He was firmly loyal to his faith in God regardless. Nowhere in these readings is any account of the crucifixion, no reference to Calvary. Nevertheless, the event of the Lord’s death on the cross is essential to understanding fully this weekend’s message.

Calvary represents the world. It was seemingly for a moment the triumph of earthly power and human sin over good. Jesus died, but then came the wonder of Easter.

Every human being can be tricked into assuming that earthly things or earthly satisfaction will bring them reward. Instead of reward, sinning brings death. All around it is gloom.

So, the Church counsels us. Have faith, see beyond the gloom, rejoice in the light of Jesus. Remember the transfiguration, and remember Abraham, our model of absolute faith. Remember what truly matters in life.†

Daily Readings

Monday, March 6
Daniel 9:4-10
Psalm 79:1-3, 6, 11, 13
Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 7
St. Perpetua, martyr
St. Felicity, martyr
Isaiah 1:10, 16-20
Psalm 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23
Matthew 23:1-12

Wednesday, March 8
St. John of God, religious
Jeremiah 18:1-10, 12-14
Psalm 31:5-6, 14-16
Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday, March 9
St. Frances of Rome, religious
Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1:1-4, 6
Luke 16:19-31

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Only priests and bishops can confer sacramental absolution of sins

Q: If someone is dying, can anyone hear their confession and offer absolution? (Pennsylvania)

A: No. Only a priest or bishop has the power to forgive sins sacramentally in Jesus’ name. Even in an emergency, laypeople are not able to confer absolution; nor can deacons, even though they are ordained.

Interestingly (and only if there is a real danger of imminent death), a priest who, for a variety of reasons, may have lost his priestly faculties can still validly confer sacramental absolution upon a dying penitent.

A “faculty” in this sense is the permission from the legitimate authority, (generally the local diocesan bishop), for a priest to celebrate certain sacraments. For some sacraments, including the sacrament of penance, this faculty is needed not only so that the sacrament may be licit, but also for its validity (see Canon 966 of the Code of Canon Law). To be sure, most parish priests you encounter will indeed have the faculty to hear confessions. A priest might lack this faculty in a few unusual scenarios, such as being deemed incapable of the good judgment needed to counsel penitents appropriately (e.g., perhaps due to severe physical or mental illness), or if he is under some sort of canonical punishment like excommunication.

In some situations, even a priest in good standing may not have the faculty to absolve certain egregious grave sins (such desecration of the Blessed Sacrament or making an attempt on the life of the pope).

However, in danger of death, the Church’s law itself is the authority giving the faculty to grant sacramental absolution. As we read in Canon 976: “Even though a priest lacks the faculty to hear confessions, he absolves validly and licitly any penitents whatsoever in danger of death from any censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present.”

That being said, hopefully you never find yourself in danger of death and without a priest! If this happens, the best thing to do is make a sincere act of contrition and have trust in God’s mercy. But this also underscores the importance of going to confession regularly, so that we’re always as prepared as we can be should the unexpected happen.

Q: Our whole Mass is the “Novus Ordo” Mass. As the Second Vatican Council documents “Sacrosanctum Concilium” says: “... steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to sing together Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them (#94).

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com†)
Ash Wednesday at the cathedral

USCCB offers March 10-18 novena for those on the path to adoption

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

- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry

For more information, please log on to www.archindy.org/layministry

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, or you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

- Ethics Point
- Coordination, Onida Reporting
  www.archindy.org/ethicspoint or 888-393-6810

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The USCCB (US Conference of Catholic Bishops) created an online novena to St. Joseph for those on the path to adoption, available in English and Spanish. The novena begins on March 10 and ends on March 18, the day before the saint’s principal feast day.

Each day of the online novena includes an intention for the day, a Scripture reading, a prayer, a petition to St. Joseph and concluding prayers.

- Day 1: For mothers who place their children for adoption. (Eph 3:14-15, 17-19) †
- Day 2: For adoptive fathers. (Mt 1:18-21, 24)
- Day 3: For family members of children placed for adoption. (Mt 19:13-14)
- Day 4: For children awaiting adoption. (Mt 19:13-14)
- Day 5: For married couples pursuing adoption. (Rom 8:14-17)
- Day 6: For adopted children. (Mt 19:13-14)
- Day 7: For adoptive mothers. (Mt 19:25-27)
- Day 8: For adoptive fathers. (Mt 19:21-24)
- Day 9: For family members welcoming children through adoption. (Eph 3:14-15, 17-19) †
Pope Francis

Around the world in 10 years: Pope's 40 trips reflect his priorities

(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)—Many of the 40 international trips Pope Francis has made during the past 10 years have been to countries where Christians are a minority or where he can draw close to people on the fringes of the world’s attention.

The pope always “chooses the peripheries,” said Andrea Tornielli, editorial director of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, who writes about the pope on his website Pope Francis.

Pope Francis goes “to the most problematic places where he thinks his presence can give way to positive developments, or where he can ‘turn on a light’ so that the world can see the reality of these places,” Tornielli told Catholic News Service (CNS).

Pope Francis has visited some of the poorest countries in the world, such as Mozambique and Madagascar in 2019 and Congo and South Sudan early this year.

In countries experiencing war, he has pleaded for peace as he did during a visit to the Central African Republic in 2015, and in nations recovering from conflict, he has promoted reconciliation as he did in Iraq in 2021.

He has returned to his native Latin America six times—but has never gone back to his native Argentina—and has traveled to every continent except for Oceania, where he was scheduled to visit in September 2020 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pope Francis has averaged four international trips each year of his 10-year pontificate even though he was unable to travel in 2020 due to the pandemic. He has visited 60 countries.

Yet just as notable as the countries Pope Francis has visited are those he has not: Spain, Germany and England, all visited by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Even Pope Francis’ brief visits to France and Switzerland lasted more hours so he could attend the assemblies of the European Union and the World Council of Churches, respectively.

In December 2022, he told the Spanish newspaper ABC that he had not organized an extended visit to any large European nation because he preferred visiting “smaller countries.”

Several of Pope Francis’ trips have reflected his commitment to interreligious dialogue. He became the first pope to visit several Muslim-majority countries: the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Bahrain, to advance dialogue with Muslim communities and condemn all forms of religious extremism with Muslim leaders.

In Abu Dhabi in 2019, he signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together with Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt’s Al-Azhar Mosque and University and widely considered to be the leading figure in Sunni Islam thought. And in 2022, the pope and the sheikh participated in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan alongside 80 other religious leaders and hundreds of delegations.

Don’t we usually pray God will eliminate our problems? With that, the elevator doors opened, and we bad fares entered the car. While I may never see Maria again, I cherish our encounter and her simple declaration.

I just might change my prayer this morning…. Dear Lord, please help me with whatever problems come along today. Amen.

(Debra Tomasielli writes from Alumnus Springs, Fla. She can be reached at dromasiellieflc@crr.com)  

The pope has also used travel to extend Pope Francis' choice of activities can be surprising and show his desire to stay close to marginalized people.

During his apostolic visit to the United States in 2015, the pope received a regal welcome, he met with President Barack Obama at the White House and became the first pope to address a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress. Yet immediately following the historic moment, he ate lunch with homeless people at a local parish. In Philadelphia, he visited a maximum-security prison before celebrating Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Papal trips have seen the pope visit refugee camps, elderly person homes and hospitals.

“He always tries to visit places where people are suffering,” Tornielli told CNS, “places where he can feel people’s lived experiences.”

As for where the pope will travel next, he will visit Hungary on April 28-30 when the pope will meet with government officials, refugees, academic scholars and young people in Budapest.

Pope Francis has also indicated a possible trip to Mongolia is on the horizon. Tornielli noted that a papal trip to India which was previously in the works could be revived.

He added that Pope Francis’ dream is to travel to places where he had a predecessor, St. John Paul II, had also wanted to go but never managed: China.  

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St. Joseph School, Bardstown Ky., is a nationally recognized Blue-Ribbon school. We are seeking a principal who can carry forward the strong leadership of our retiring principal. Applicants must be a practicing Catholic and meet the requirements as outlined by the Archdiocese of Louisville.

The principal oversees our K-8th grades and Preschool. There are a total of 415 students and 42 faculty and staff.

Applicants are asked to submit their letter of interest and resume by March 22, 2023 to:

St. Joseph Search committee PO Box 548 Bardstown Ky. 40004 or by email: thristhias@stjosechurch.com.

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Bishop Chatard High School
Executive Assistant to the President

The Bishop Chatard High School Office of the President is seeking a part-time Executive Assistant to the President. The ideal candidate will possess a passion for the mission of Bishop Chatard High School and a desire to serve the needs of the community through the inner workings of the Office of the President.

The Executive Assistant to the President position will be part-time with anticipated hours of approximately 20 hours per week. More information about the scope of responsibilities of this position can be found at www.bishopchatard.org/about-employment/.

Applicants are asked to submit a resume to Maureen Jones at mjones@bishopchatard.org by March 17.
Standing among thousands of faithful into a sedan in Atlantic, Iowa, they were Hohenberger and Marilyn Freund climbed the U.S., and Guatemala where Blessed Stanley Rother served in a mission before being martyred during a violent civil war in 1981. The martyr’s heart is still enthroned there.

While the shrine church filled with guests, those who waited outside for a seat appreciated the warm sunshine in 30-degree temperatures. Many expressed excitement and joy at being present for an historic event for the Church in the U.S.

“He’s the first American-born martyr—a blessed. It’s a beautiful occasion,” Hohenberger told Sooner Catholic, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. “We’re blessed to see this,” Freund added. “How often do you get to see a priest who will be a saint?”

Nearby stood Brian Stafford and other members of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Del City who contributed to the campaign to build the shrine, and the Hernandez family who watched construction of the shrine as they drove by on Interstate 35.

“I missed his beatification, and I was so upset, so this time I told my boss I’m taking off—I didn’t ask! I’m just excited. It makes my heart so happy. I am already tearing up and I forgot my Kleenex!”

Olivia Hernandez from Midwest City told Sooner Catholic.

At 10:30 a.m., the doors opened, and the line of people filled the sanctuary, which accommodated nearly everyone. More than 2,000 faithful and guests filled the church and an outdoor space that broadcasted the Mass on large screens.

“Today, we gather to dedicate a church. A church that has been built to give glory to God and to serve in a mission,” said Archbishop Coakley in his homily about the true reason for the shrine.

“Today, we gather to dedicate a church. A church that has been built to give honor and glory to God. Yes, we honor Blessed Stanley Rother here, but none of this ultimately is about Blessed Stanley. It’s not about the beautiful art and architecture that speaks so eloquently of God’s goodness and mercy and beauty, he said. “We gather here to honor the God who created all of this and the God who is glorified in his saints. We honor Blessed Stanley because we are giving glory to God.”

Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, were seated in the front row. Members of the Rother family, including Blessed Stanley’s birth sister, Adorers of the Blood of Christ Sister Marita Rother, sat at the front of the main pews of the sanctuary along with invited leaders and dignitaries, including Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt.

Following the blessing of the altar and sanctuary with holy water, the presentation of the lectionary, and the Mass readings in English, Spanish and Vietnamese, Archbishop Coakley spoke in his homily about the true reason for the shrine.

“It’s not about the beautiful art and architecture that speaks so eloquently of God’s goodness and mercy and beauty. It’s not about the beautiful art and architecture that speaks so eloquently of God’s goodness and mercy and beauty. We gather here to honor the God who created all of this and the God who is glorified in his saints. We honor Blessed Stanley because we are giving glory to God.”

Archbishop Coakley said Blessed Stanley, “was an ordinary guy, an ordinary man from Okarche, Okla., but God chooses the ordinary. He was a good shepherd,” the archbishop continued. “Long before Pope Francis coined the beautiful expression, Father Rother—or as he was known in Guatemala Padre Francisco or Padre Aplas—had already ‘taken on the smell of his sheep,’ learning the languages of his people. This man who had been asked to leave seminary because he couldn’t master ecclesiastical Latin, mastered Spanish and a rather obscure and rare Mayan dialect called Tz’utujil. I wish we could submit that as a miracle!”

Archbishop Coakley used his homily to reach out to families and young men in Oklahoma and beyond who may feel called to a heroic, impactful and radical life as a priest, with Blessed Stanley’s fidelity to his calling and the Holy Spirit as inspiration.

He reminded those in attendance that Blessed Stanley needs a verified miracle to be canonized.

“It is our responsibility; it is our privilege to work to make Blessed Stanley Rother better known … to increase devotion to him. And it shouldn’t be hard. The more we know about his life, [the more] we find in Stanley Rother a very attractive figure—and so relatable—a real every man,” he said. “I hope we will bring him all of our needs, those of our families, our parishioners, and ask his heavenly intercession in the presence of God, before the throne of Christ. Ask with confidence, ask with boldness," the archbishop said. “If you need a special favor, a healing, a miracle, remember so does Blessed Stanley.”

As with all dedications of churches, the shrine’s altar and walls were anointed with sacred chrism oil, the altar and the church were wafted with incense, linens were placed, and candles were lit. Communion was distributed throughout the sanctuary and to those gathered outside before Archbishop Coakley inaugurated the altar, consecrating the tabernacle with a new ciborium.

At the end of Mass, most of the faithful remained to pray and to visit the chapel where Blessed Stanley is entombed. The chapel was dedicated on Feb. 13 with priests from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa, Okla.

Sister Raphael Marie of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ Sisters from the Diocese of Amarillo told Sooner Catholic she was “moved to tears” by witnessing the dedication of the shrine and hearing “Blessed Stanley Rother’s story and his love for the people.

“He’s a saint of the people, a saint for modern day,” she said. “It’s so important to bring people into a personal relationship with Jesus and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and that’s what Blessed Stanley Rother did: he brought people the love of Jesus.”

(Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine is open to the public every day. For more information on hours and Mass times, visit rothershrine.org.)