Leader of effort to connect young adults and parishes finds hope in encounters with Christ

By John Shaughnessy

Cassie Schutzer smiles when she thinks about the unexpected changes that happened in the lives of the four young adults. All four were part of the Young Adult Initiative program that the 29-year-old Schutzer had planned on the grounds of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad—a weekend gathering in which young adults from across the Midwest and the South came together to learn better ways of connecting young adults to their parishes.

Schutzer had arranged a weekend filled with activities, community prayer and small-group interactions. Yet, she believes God had more personal plans for the four individuals who were a part of the larger group last November. By the end of the weekend, a young man and a young woman became engaged to each other. Another young man said that weekend was the first time he felt a sense of belonging. And a third young man felt drawn to consider a religious vocation.

“These moments were a confirmation that the weekend achieved what we were hoping for—creating a space for encounter with the Lord and one another,” says Schutzer, the director of the Young Adult Initiative, a program of Saint Meinrad’s Center for Youth and Young Adult Evangelization.

“Sometimes we spin our wheels trying to plan perfect

Archdiocesan Catholics are empowered for mission at annual chrism Mass

By Sean Gallagher

The annual archdiocesan chrism Mass brings together Catholics from across central and southern Indiana. Lay Catholics representing most of the 125 archdiocesan parishes, members of religious communities serving in the archdiocese, as well as deacons, seminarians and priests all gathered with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson on April 4, Tuesday of Holy Week, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for this year’s liturgy.

During the Mass, more than 150 priests serving in the archdiocese renewed their ordination promises.

As is traditional, Pope Francis did not give a homily during the morning Mass but bowed his head and observed several minutes of silent reflection after the chanting of the Gospel in both Latin and Greek.

Pope Francis prays that Easter joy will break through gloom of sin, war, strife

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—On a bright spring morning, Pope Francis prayed that Christians would experience the joy of Easter and allow Christ’s resurrection to be “the light that illuminates the darkness and the gloom in which, all too often, our world finds itself enveloped.”

“In Jesus, the decisive passage of humanity has been made: the passage from death to life, from sin to grace, from fear to confidence, from desolation to communion,” the pope said on April 9 after celebrating the Easter morning Mass in St. Peter’s Square.

In his Easter message, Pope Francis prayed for an end to the war in Ukraine and remembered Christians celebrating Easter “in particular circumstances,” specifically mentioning Nicaragua, where the government has imposed restrictions on public celebrations, has deported dozens of priests and has imprisoned Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa.

As is traditional, Pope Francis did not give a homily during the morning Mass but bowed his head and observed several minutes of silent reflection after the chanting of the Gospel in both Latin and Greek.

Marking the 38th year they have provided the Easter flowers for St. Peter’s Square, Dutch flower growers sent 38,000 blooming bulbs—tulips, daffodils and hyacinths—to the Vatican. The floral gift, arranged in the square by Dutch and Vatican workers, also featured 6,000 Avalanche roses, as well as hundreds of anthurium, delphinium and chrysanthemums. Flowering azaleas, ivy and celosia completed the Easter garden set up on the steps leading to the basilica, the area around the altar and the balcony of the church.
EASTER
continued from page 1

Some 45,000 people were present in the square for the morning Mass, the Vatican said, and by noon there were close to 100,000 people inside and outside the square for the pope’s Easter message and blessing “Urbi et Orbi” (to the city and the world).

U.S. Cardinal James M. Harvey, apostolic nuncio of Rome’s Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, stood alongside Pope Francis on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica for the blessing, announcing a plenary indulgence available for everyone present, listening by radio or watching on television or following with “other means of communication.”

Wishing everyone a happy Easter, Pope Francis prayed that the day would mark “a passage from affliction to consolation” for all, especially “the sick and the poor, the elderly and those experiencing moments of trial and weariness.”

“We are not alone: Jesus, the living one, is with us forever,” he said. “Let the Church and the world rejoice, for today our hopes no longer come up against the wall of death, for the Lord has built us a bridge to life.

“Yes, brothers and sisters, at Easter the destiny of the world was changed,” he said, “and on this day, which also coincides with the most probable date of Christ’s resurrection, we can rejoice to celebrate, by pure grace, the most important and beautiful day of history.”

Pope Francis noted how the various Gospel accounts of Easter mention Jesus’ followers rushing or going in haste to share the Good News, “spurred on by joy and renewed in hope.

“At Easter, then, the journey quickens and becomes a race, since humanity now share the followers rushing or going in haste to share the Good News, “spurred on by joy and renewed in hope.

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“The pope also offered special prayers for Syria, Lebanon, Haiti, Tunisia, Congo, Myanmar and other nations experiencing hardship and war.

He prayed that God would “comfort refugees, deportees, political prisoners and migrants, especially those who are most vulnerable, as well as the victims of hunger, poverty and the dire effects of the drug trade, human trafficking and all other forms of slavery.”

“Lord,” he continued, “inspire the leaders of nations to ensure that no man or woman may encounter discrimination and be violated in his or her dignity; that in full respect for human rights and democracy these social wounds may be healed; that the common good of the citizenry may be pursued always and solely; and that security and the conditions needed for dialogue and peaceful coexistence may be guaranteed.”

La jornada de puertas abiertas de la escuela St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic School se celebrará el 23 de abril

La escuela Andrew the Apostle Catholic School, ubicada en 4050 E. 38th St., en Indianápolis, organizará una jornada de puertas abiertas de 12 a 2 p.m. el domingo 23 de abril. Todas las familias interesadas en enrolled their children or learning more are invited to attend. Detalles se llevarán en inglés y en español.

“La escuela St. Andrew se unirá a otras tres escuelas católicas de Indianápolis para formar las academias católicas Madre Theodore (MTCA), para ofrecer académica, social y emocionalmente.”

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Archbishop Fabre, Kentucky governor call for prayer as Louisville mourns mass shooting ‘in the shadow of the cross’

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (OSV News)—Aid calls for prayer and praise for first responders, officials confirmed that four people were killed in an April 10 mass shooting, on Easter Monday morning, in a downtown bank in Louisville, Ky.

According to the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD), at least nine people were injured, including two officers, during the shooting at the Old National Bank, 333 E. Main St.

The shooter, identified by police as Connor Sturgeon, a 25-year-old bank employee with a finance degree and no known criminal record, died at the scene after exchanging gunfire with police who arrived within three minutes of the attack’s start. Sturgeon was reportedly armed with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle, and livestreamed the slaughter over Instagram.

“CCCCCCMy heart is heavy as we learn about another mass shooting, now in our own Louisville community,” Louisville Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre said in a statement provided to The Record, the weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese of Louisville, reminding the faithful that amid Easter joy, the cross remains. “Even with our Easter hope so recently renewed, we have been quickly reminded that we still live in the shadow of the cross, the cross of senseless violence.

“For now, please join me in praying for those who have died and for those who have been injured and for their families,” he said. “Let us also pray for all in our community as we deal with this tragedy.”

LMPD has identified those killed in the shooting as Joshua Barrick, Thomas Elliot, Juliana Farmer and James Israel. The victims’ ages ranged between 40 and 64 years old. Officer Nickolas Wilt, 26, who graduated from the police academy on March 31, was shot in the head and is in critical condition, the department said.

Prayer and praise for first responders, officials confirmed that four people were killed in an April 10 mass shooting, on Easter Monday morning, in a downtown bank in Louisville, Ky.

The mayor, who survived a shooting in his campaign offices last year, asked the community to pray for victims of the latest shooting and to work together to prevent gun violence. He also gave thanks for the efforts of “brave and heroic first responders.”

“Without a doubt, their actions saved lives,” he said.

LMPD Deputy Chief Paul Humphrey said during the press conference that officers who arrived at the scene exchanged gunfire with the shooter. It was unclear whether law enforcement killed the suspected shooter or if death was due to a self-inflicted wound, he said, adding that the cause will be part of the investigation.

Heavy with emotion, Gov. Beshear echoed calls to prayer and praise for law enforcement, “the brave heroes of LMPD” and others who responded.

“They earnestly, save lives and put their own on the line,” he said, noting that the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Department of Homeland Security and Kentucky State Police were among those on the scene.

Gov. Beshear said the shooting affected him personally.

“This is awful. I have a very close friend that didn’t make it today and another at the hospital,” he said.

Gov. Beshear noted his attorney general’s campaign offices were located in the Old National Bank building.

“When we talk about praying, I hope that we will,” he said.

He encouraged the community “to wrap our arms around these families” affected by the shooting and urged them to seek help if needed.

POLICE DEPOT at a scene of a mass shooting near Slugger Field baseball stadium in downtown Louisville, Ky., on April 10. A gunman opened fire at a bank in downtown Louisville that morning, killing at least four people and sending nine to the hospital before he died by gunfire at the scene. Louisville Metro Police Deputy Chief Paul Humphrey said during the press conference near the scene that officers who arrived at the scene exchanged gunfire with the shooter. It was unclear whether law enforcement killed the suspected shooter or if death was due to a self-inflicted wound, he said, adding that the cause will be part of the investigation.

The governor also reiterated his gratitude to LMPD, which was recently rebuked by federal investigators in a review of its practices.

“We saw the very best from them today,” he said.

Pope Francis tells young inmates Jesus wants to save us each of us

ROME (CNS)—Jesus never abandons anyone; he has come to save, serve and accompany everyone, Pope Francis told young inmates.

“If we listened to these [lessons] from Jesus, life would be so wonderful because we would rush to help one another instead of ripping off each other, taking advantage of each other like wise guys teach us,” he said, referring to Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan.

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But Jesus knows about it, and he loves us as if death was due to a self-inflicted wound, he said, adding that the cause will be part of the investigation.

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“We saw the very best from them today,” he said.
Let us pray also for the Jewish people, to whom the Lord our God spoke first, that he may grant them to love in his name and in faithfulness to his covenant. (Good Friday Prayer)

There has been a disturbing rise in anti-Semitism in the United States and in Europe in recent years. Racist, anti-Semitic attitudes and actions have caused the Jewish community to once again fear that their safety and welfare are threatened by those who believe that Jews are either inferior or that they are somehow bewitching against the rest of humanity.

Such attitudes and actions are profoundly anti-Christian as well as anti-Semitic. They have no place in the lives of Catholics or members of other Christian denominations, and they should be condemned by all people of good will.

According to a November 2022 statement by the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs:

"The rise in anti-Semitic incidents has become even more painful in light of the Church’s relationship to the Jewish people. Oppression of one Christian community to the Jewish people in dialogue and friendship.

The Catholic Church’s relationship with the Jewish people has a troubled history during the past 2,000 years. As recently as the Second World War, some historians have said, Pope Pius XII, who was pope from 1939 to 1958, was silent during the Holocaust and did not do enough to save lives. His defenders say he used quiet diplomacy and encouraged contacts with the various Jewish institutes to hide Jews. Regardless of how the Church’s role is perceived in this most shameful period of human history, there is no question that the teachings of St. Paul, who wrote “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” and “who also firmly condemned hatred, persecution and all forms of anti-Semitism.”

Due to our common roots, a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic!

The fundamental principles expressed by the declaration have marked the path of greater awareness and mutual understanding trodden these last decades by Jews and Catholics, a path which my predecessors have strongly encouraged, both by very significant gestures and by the publication of a series of documents to deepen the thinking about theological bases of the relations between Jews and Christians. It is a journey for which we must surely give thanks to God.

For our “common roots,” Pope Francis declared, “a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic.” Anti-Semitism is profoundly un-Christian. It destroys the fundamental principles underlying our mutual dignity as people made in the image and likeness of God and called to love God and our neighbor wholeheartedly and without exception.

We are right to pray for our Jewish sisters and brothers each year on Good Friday. This prayer, which has its own rich history, acknowledges that God spoke first to the Jewish people, and it asks that the Lord of creation will “grant them to advance in love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant.”

May our Church’s prayer be heard and answered in the reverent and respectful attitudes and actions of Christians everywhere.

―Daniel Conway

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., offers a closing prayer at a Jewish-Catholic interfaith prayer service on Nov. 20, 2018, at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Fort Wayne. Standing beside the bishop is Rabbi Paula Jayne Wimig, clergy leader of Congregation Achshalom Vestholm in Fort Wayne and co-leader of the service. (CNS photo/Nash维尔, Kevin Rierson, Today’s Catholic)

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Publisher
Mike Krokos, Editor
John F. Fink, Editor Emeritus

Be Our Guest! Sr. Constance Veit, L.S.P.
A new intergenerational covenant

Among the important issues involving the dignity of human life, abortion is of prime importance—but it is not the only pro-life issue.

As Little Sisters, we are deeply concerned about the “other end” of the pro-life spectrum—the care of the sick, the elderly and the dying.

In his landmark 1995 encyclical, “Evangelium Vitae,” Pope John Paul II wrote: “Neglect of the elderly or their outright rejection are intolerable. Their presence in the family as well as their closeness to the family in cases where limited living space or other reasons make this impossible, is of fundamental importance in creating a climate of mutual interaction and enriching communication between the different age groups. It is therefore important to preserve, or to re-establish where it has been lost, a sort of ‘covenant’ between generations (4).

Today our society is very far from Pope John Paul II’s vision.

Pope Francis’ recent words of the “throwaway culture” to describe the neglect and abandonment of those considered useless, particularly the very young and the very old. His concept of the throwaway culture aligns with what Pope John Paul II termed “a culture of death.”

I am convinced that the scarcity of religious vocations, including vocations to our congregation, is related to this culture of death. A decrease in the number of young women joining our community must be related to the fact that many young people today grow up far from their elders, without roots, as the pope often says.

From Little Sisters who share their vocation stories, it is evident that a close and loving relationship with grandparents or other family elders is often the spark that lights the flame of a vocation at the service of the elderly.

The month of April has a special meaning to the National Safe Haven Alliance (NSHA), a non-profit working to promote the existence of Safe Baby Haven Laws across the country. April is known as Safe Haven Awareness Month in all 50 states, as well as Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. The Safe Haven Law has saved 4,776 newborns since the first law was created in 1999 in Texas. Because of the growing number of infant deaths due to infanticide and newborn abandonment, this law provides that a safe alternative to save newborns and help their brothers and sisters passed in every state within 10 years.

The law that was enacted in Indiana in 2001 states that a mother or caregiver (who is unable or unwilling to care for her newborn can safely and anonymously hand her child (up to 30 days or younger) to a Safe Haven provider at a hospital, staffed fire station or law enforcement facility, call 911 for Emergency Medical Services to respond to a location for surrender. Infants must be handed to staff for immediate location.

The National Safe Haven Alliance always provides assistance to all mothers/ parents and infants in need. Mothers in need can call or text 888-510-2229, where a crisis response team is available for confidential help 24/7 to provide safe options for her and her baby.

For more information on NSHA, go to www.NationalSafeHaven.org.
“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy grace through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time” (1 Pt 1:3-5).

The Second Sunday of Easter is called Divine Mercy Sunday because the joy which we celebrate during the Easter season inspires us to reflect on the “great mercy” God has given us through the resurrection of his only Son, Jesus Christ. God's mercy is a major theme in sacred Scripture. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak of the ways in which God loves and forgives his people—even, or especially, when we don’t deserve it. Israel’s confidence in God’s mercy is affirmed in the responsorial psalm (Ps 118) for Divine Mercy Sunday:

Let the house of Aaron say, “His mercy endures forever.”
Let the house of Aaron say, “His mercy endures forever.”

Let those who fear the Lord say, “His mercy endures forever.” (Ps 118:2-4)
Let those who fear the Lord say, “His mercy endures forever.”

A powerful testimony to God’s love and forgiveness is presented to us in the second reading for Divine Mercy Sunday (1 Pt 1:3-9). Here we learn that God’s great mercy has given us “a new birth to a living hope” (1 Pt 1:3).

As illustrated in the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11–32), our loving Father is always waiting for us with open arms in spite of our selfishness and sin. His mercy is boundless, and even when we have squandered the gifts God has given us, St. Peter tells us that God still provides us with an “inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Pt 1:4). Nothing that we do can destroy what God's great mercy has “kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time” (1 Pt 1:5).

There is a tendency on the part of some people to focus on the wrath of God. The true God is kind and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in mercy. Indeed, as we pray in Psalm 118: Let those who fear the Lord say, “His mercy endures forever” (Ps 118:4)

But what about God’s justice? Will God not hold us accountable for our sinful attitudes and actions? Yes, God is both merciful and just. The Scriptures and the Creed both attest to the fact that Christ will return on the last day “to judge the living and the dead.”

But before the Last Judgment, which will not be arbitrary or unfair in any way, we are given every conceivable opportunity to repent, ask God’s forgiveness and strive to change our ways with the help of God’s grace. And even when we prove over and over again by our actions and our hardness of heart that we are not worthy of God’s unconditional love, God is merciful. As St. Peter says, our inheritance is “kept safe for us in heaven” (1 Pt 1:4) so that the full extent of God’s love for us will only be revealed “in the final time” (1 Pt 1:5).

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, who died in 1938 and was canonized a saint by Pope St. John Paul II in 2008, was a Polish sister of Our Lady of Mercy whose mystical visions of Jesus inspired the devotion to the Divine Merci. She wrote in her diary that “[God’s] goodness no one has fathomed, no one can measure. His compassion is untold. Every soul that approaches him experiences this.”

Far from being an angry, vengeful tyrant, God is merciful beyond measure. God wants only what is good for us and for his creation. We may succeed in offending God by our words and actions, by the things we have done and those we have failed to do, but in spite of everything, our God waits for us. He stands ready to forgive us and welcome us home.

Throughout this Easter season, and especially on Divine Mercy Sunday, let’s thank God for his inexhaustible love and forgiveness. With the psalmist, let us pray: "I was hard pressed and was falling, but the Lord helped me. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my savior. Thank you, Lord, for being the cornerstone in the tents of the just.” (Ps 118:13-15)

And let’s forgive others as we ask our loving Father to forgive us. 

“Bendito sea el Dios y Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, que por su gran misericordia y mediante la resurrección de Jesucristo nos ha hecho nacer de nuevo a una esperanza viva, para que recibamos una herencia incorruptible, incontaminada e impecable. Esta herencia les está reservada en los cielos, para aquellos que alcancen la salvación, lista ya para ser manifestada cuando llegue el momento final” (1 Pt 1:3-5).

El segundo domingo de Pascua se llama Domingo de la Divina Misericordia porque la alegría que celebramos durante el tiempo pascal nos inspira a reflexionar sobre la “gran misericordia” que Dios nos ha concedido mediante la resurrección de su Hijo único, Jesucristo, nuestro Señor. La misericordia de Dios es un tema importante en la Sagrada Escritura. Tanto el Antiguo como el Nuevo Testamento hablan del modo en que Dios ama y perdona a su pueblo, que se ha “nacido de nuevo a una esperanza viva” (1 Pt 1:3).

Como ilustra la conocida parábola del Hijo Pródigo (Lc 15:11-32), nuestro Padre amoroso siempre nos espera con los brazos abiertos a pesar de nuestro egoísmo y pecado. Su misericordia no tiene límites, e incluso cuando hemos malgastado los dones que Dios nos ha concedido, san Pedro nos dice que Dios nos sigue proporcionando “una herencia incorruptible, incontaminada e impecable” (1 Pt 1:4).

En esta semana, nos invita a alegrarnos y a regocijarnos porque “La piedra que desecharon los edificadores ha llegado a ser la piedra angular” y porque la misericordia de Dios es “maravillosa a nuestros ojos.” (Sal 118:22-23).

En la segunda lectura del Domingo de la Divina Misericordia (1 Pt 1:3-9) se nos presenta un poderoso testimonio del amor y el perdón de Dios, mediante el cual descubrimos que por la gran misericordia de Dios “se nos ha hecho nacer de nuevo a una esperanza viva” (1 Pt 1:3).

Al comparar la bondad de Dios con lo que nosotros podemos hacer, podemos ver que la bondad y la misericordia de Dios son mucho más grandes. Cada alma que comprende, nadie puede medirla. Su misericordia es indecible. Cada alma que comprende, nadie puede medirla. Su misericordia es indecible.

“El Señor es mi fuerza, y a él dedico mi corazón; él es mi salvador y mi redentor...” (Ps 118:12-13).

La misericordia y la compasión de Dios son eternas. Por eso, la misericordia y la compasión de Dios son eternas. No hay límites, e incluso cuando hemos demostrado nuestras faltas y pecados, Dios está dispuesto a perdonar y a darse por vencido.

Por eso, es importante que recordemos cuánto nos ama y perdona Dios. La misericordia de Dios nos invita a reflexionar sobre nuestras propias faltas y pecados. La misericordia de Dios nos invita a reflexionar sobre nuestras propias faltas y pecados y a pedir perdón a Dios y a examinar nuestra vida en busca de un cambio positivo.

En este momento final, no será arriesgado ni injusto pedir perdón a nuestro Padre y a nuestro Señor. Dios nos invita a reflexionar sobre nuestras propias faltas y pecados. La misericordia de Dios nos invita a reflexionar sobre nuestras propias faltas y pecados y a pedir perdón a Dios y a examinar nuestra vida en busca de un cambio positivo.

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By Victoria Arthur

A ‘great moment’ as TANF update passes Indiana House

Advocates for the poor in Indiana witnessed the culmination of years of tireless efforts as a bolstering a key program for the neediest Hoosiers cleared the House of Representatives for the first time.

The House of Representatives on April 4 by a resounding vote passed a measure, Senate Bill 265, the latest attempt to update the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in Indiana, as Governor Eric Holcomb’s administration was gearing Gov. Eric Holcomb’s signature at press time and pressing the first meaningful change to this lifelong program for the poorest of the poor in more than three decades.

“This legislation has passed some major hurdles, and it’s closer now that we’ve been in the finish line,” said Angela Espada, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Charities Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. “We welcome this long-overdue change to this lifeline for the poorest of the poor in Indiana.”

TANF is a federal government program that provides block grants to states to administer temporary cash assistance payments, along with job training and other services for families in deepest poverty. But too many Hoosier families have faced obstacles in receiving that help because of outdated state guidelines.

Senate Bill 265, which expands TANF eligibility guidelines and increases the amount of the monthly cash payment that families receive, passed the House of Representatives on April 4 by a resounding 93-4 vote. This marked the first time legislation aimed at modernizing TANF had reached the House floor.

Among those anxiously observing from the gallery that day was Jessica Fraser, who has spent the last decade advocating for TANF reform. Although she had recently left her role as director of the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute, nothing could keep her from the House floor for this pivotal event.

Fraser described sitting near another longtime advocate, Emily Weikart Bryant, executive director of Feeding Indiana’s Hungry, and reacting to the close-to-unanimous vote. “She held my hand, and I cried,” said Fraser, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis.

“It was a great moment. Even though I’d left my previous job there was so many of us that had worked so hard for so long for this moment. This is going to be a life-changing development for so many of our most vulnerable families in Indiana.”

Indiana’s current eligibility level for TANF is the fourth-lowest in the United States, behind Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama. This means that Indiana sets its income requirements to qualify for TANF in the mid-1990s, when welfare reform was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Since then, those guidelines have not been adjusted for inflation since.

Today in Indiana, to be eligible for TANF a family can earn more than 16 percent of the federal poverty rate, which stands at slightly more than $23,000 for a family of three. That means that a family earning a mere $400 a month would not be eligible for TANF.

Under Senate Bill 265, authored by Sen. Jon Ford (R-Terre Haute), the eligibility level for TANF would jump from 16 percent of the federal poverty rate to 50 percent by the end of 2027.

“This bill will expand the eligibility for thousands of Hoosier families in need and offer a way out of poverty,” said Ford, who has brought forth legislation to modernize TANF since 2019. “Along with financial assistance, TANF provides job training, child care, and transportation so that many of the hurdles folks face when looking for higher-paying jobs are eliminated.”

The second major component of Senate Bill 265 is a long-sought-after increase to the monthly cash payment that families currently receive. The measure has passed since 1987.

For a family of three, that would mean a jump from the $286 set 35 years ago to $513 a month.

Fraser, who said she “stays just aligned” this year for TANF reform, praised longtime legislative champions, including Ford as well as Rep. Ed Clere (R-New Albany), the sponsor of Senate Bill 265 in the House.

This year, as in prior legislative sessions, the TANF bill sailed through the Senate and then unanimously passed its starting point in the House: the Family, Children and Human Affairs committee.

The next stop was the House Ways and Means committee, where TANF reform legislation had never received a hearing—until this time. On March 30, the committee heard Ford’s bill and passed it on a 20-1 vote, sending it to the House floor five days later.

“This legislation is all about helping vulnerable people,” said Clere, himself a member of the House Ways and Means committee and a longtime collaborator with Ford on TANF-related legislation. “We are talking about Hoosiers for whom a sudden hardship can be devastating and lead to a cascade of other events that not only impact their participation in the workforce but also the stability of their families and the well-being of their children.”

Clere, who attends Holy Family Catholic Church in Charlestown, added that this legislation is the first amendment to the bill to automatically extend TANF eligibility to women who are pregnant with their first child. Under current law, only pregnant women who have at least one other child qualify for TANF.

The lawmaker praised Fraser for her advocacy, and both thanked ICC leaders past and present for their role in bringing TANF reform efforts to this pivotal point.

“The Indiana Catholic Conference has always been a huge supporter of this legislation and helped shepherd it along with the entire team of advocates who have worked on this issue for so many years,” Fraser said. “I offer my sincerest thanks to [former ICC executive director] Glen Tebbe, Angela Espada and [associate director] Alexander Mingus for everything they’ve done to bring us to this moment.”

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICC’s Legislative Alert, which tracks the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICCA receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

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By Natalie Hoefert

A very close-knit group

In the early 1830s, German immigrants settled in Franklin County on Indiana’s southeastern border. Among those who migrated out farmed the land in Highland Township—families with surnames like Bauer, Fischer, Gesse, Ripperter, Ripperger and Weiler.

In 1838, they completed a small, log meeting house near the township’s first boundary of what was then the Diocese of Vincennes, the church was blessed by the Servant of God Simon Bruté, the diocese’s first bishop. He named the parish St. Peter.

“A very close-knit group”

The church is still “really out in the country, mostly farmland,” says Father Vincent Lampert, the parish’s pastor. “It’s a unique parish, because it only has about 150 families, several of them still bearing the surnames of the founders.

“Family” is the word that best describes the people who worship here, he says. “Being a small parish, it’s a very close-knit group. People always check in with the shut-ins and the sick or those in need, everybody is always asking how things are going and lending a helping hand.”

The same “pitch in” attitude is true of the paper where the parishers’ Fried Lampert. With a small staff shared with St. Michael Parish in Brookville, much of the work is performed by the parishioners.

St. Peter “is done by volunteers,” says pastor Joseph Mingus. “That’s the whole essence of it.”

The parish sits along the culinary “Chicken Trail” of southeastern Indiana. For many, the “trailer” is simply a way to enjoy fried chicken from Connersville down to Lawrenceburg every day of the week.

“People come from all over—Cincinnati, southeastern Indiana,” he says. In line with the parish’s “family” feel, Father Lampert calls the “Chicken Trail” as a trail you hike or drive. Visitors can watch a championship race, and amateurs from the young to the young at heart can participate in 3-mile races on the Whitewater River. Of course, fried chicken is available. For more information, visit brookvillecanafeast.com or e-mail brookvillecanafeast@yahoo.com.

If you prefer your water to be wider than a river, check out Brookville Lake. The area offers opportunities for camping, fishing, boating, swimming, hiking and biking.

Looking to winter, you can worship with the members of St. Peter at the beginning or end of a family fun-day selecting a Christmas tree and having refreshments.

For additional information, check out Whitetail Acres in Brookville, just 15 minutes north of the parish. Whitetail Acres, which has one of the two reindeer farms in the state, offers these activities for several weeks in November and December. For more information, go to whitetailacreestatefarm.com or call 765-647-6812.

And about that fried chicken trail of southeastern Indiana. You can find a map at www.ChickenTrail.com. The link takes you to a website on a site called “I’m a fried chicken trail.”

December 8 is the fried chicken trail of southeastern Indiana. You can find a map at www.ChickenTrail.com. The link takes you to a website on a site called “I’m a fried chicken trail.”

(Mass Excursions is a feature highlighting an archdiocesan parish and local attractions, encouraging a trip to the area that includes Mass with the members of that parish.)

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**The challenge to connect young adults and parishes is high, so is the hope**

By John Shaughnessy

The statistics are both hopeful and sobering about young adult Catholics, based upon a study called, “Faith and Spiritual Life of Catholics in the United States.”

A measure of good news is that, “Overall, 60% of Catholic young adults, ages 18 to 35, in the United States are practicing their faith in groups.”

Against that backdrop, the Young Adult Initiative at Saint Meinrad’s Center for Youth and Young Adult Evangelization at the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the School of Theology in St. Meinrad has been working with select parishes across the Midwest and the South with the goal to help parishes across the country engage, welcome and embrace young adults into their faith community.

**A lot of energy and questions**

The first phase of the effort has been completed, leading to a 180-page report from the Young Adult Initiative. As the director of the project’s second phase, Cassie Schutzer summed up what she considers some of the main insights and practical applications from the first phase—now over a year old.

She believes the effort is worthwhile because so is its ultimate goal. "It’s everyone growing together with the goal in mind of growing toward the Lord and growing more faithful as his disciples."

For anyone interested in accessing the 180-page report on the first phase of Saint Meinrad’s Young Adult Initiative, visit the website, www.saintmeinradvai.org/phase-1-report. A copy of the report can be downloaded for free. A hard copy of the report can be ordered online and is available for $8—the cost of shipping it.

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**As he gives a tour of the Archabbey Church of our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad, Benedictine Father Matthew François Reinert gives a moment of prayer with some of the participants of the Young Adult Initiative gathering in November of 2022. The participants include Cassie Schutzer, left, director of the initiative, Therese McGinnis, Jon Harter, Marti Frank, Veronica Hernandez and Claire Reinert. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)**

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The leaders of the 10 parishes involved in the initiative. She also gets that hope from young adult Catholics who she believes are searching for purpose and meaning in their lives, searching for God. They carry that same hope that she carries when I was the rebellious younger son, strayed from organized religion of all kinds. They’re disconnected from their families. They’ve lost the treasures of the Church that were always surrounding them. But they have seen the fruit that comes from investing in young people in this way.”

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"We are participating in the Lord’s work of conversion and making disciples, not just planning events and looking to increase the number of people who attend."

"The second phase of the initiative will last five years and involves 10 parishes in Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee. Its main goals include helping the parishes in the program to develop long-term ministry that’s focused on outreach, accompaniment and discipleship of young adults—and then sharing what works best with parishes in dioceses across the country."

"No archdiocesan parish is a part of this initiative determined that the best way to invest in young people in this way."

"It will take some measure of patience and patient relationship-building."

"My hope is that our partner parishes will have thriving, lasting, young-adult ministry in their parishes at the end of phase two," Schutzer says. "My prayer is that Saint Meinrad can be a place that accompanies the wider 10 parishes."

"Schutzer views her own faith journey as reflecting that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to helping young adults find their way to a relationship with God and a parish and a connection with a parish."

"At the core, they’re really searching for God. They’re searching for meaning and purpose.”

"Young adults create a meaningful relationship with God and living it within the community of a Catholic parish are two of the main goals of the Young Adult Initiative—a program whose second phase is being funded through a $1.25 million donation from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment, Inc."

"Schutzer notes that the first phase of the initiative determined that the best way to draw young adults into a connection with God and a parish is through “consistent and intentional relationship building.”"

"Young adults are all over the spectrum as far as their state in life, their knowledge of their faith, their expression of faith,” she says. "It will take some measure of patience on our part to listen to the stories of young people and to learn about their lives. But we have seen the fruit that comes from investing in young people in this way.”

The sobering news is that attending Mass a few times a year and being part of the faith lives of young adults are so inactive. In one way, that’s right. They’re disconnected from their parish and ‘they’re finding ways to practice [their faith] in groups.’ "

"For the first time or re-exploring the faith realities mentioned in “Faith and Spiritual Life of Catholics in the United States.” They don’t yet see that they can find Christ can be for a young adult Catholics who she believes are searching for purpose and meaning in their lives, searching for God. They carry that same hope that she carries when I was the rebellious younger son, strayed from organized religion of all kinds. They’re disconnected from their families. They’ve lost the treasures of the Church that were always surrounding them. But they have seen the fruit that comes from investing in young people in this way.”

"I spent the years right after graduation—ironically enough—working for a Catholic parish, but not practicing my faith and not believing in much of anything outside of myself and my friend group. I hit a point where I felt hopeless and decided that things needed to change."

"This is the time in my life that I call my ‘reversion’ to faith because I really did start to explore Catholicism as if for the first time. I found a lot of support in my faith community, in my friendships, and in my growing relationship with the Lord." Schutzer finds comparisons to her faith journey in the Gospel story of the Prodigal Son."

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Judges issue Good Friday ruling suspending FDA approval of abortion pill

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—A federal judge in Texas ruled on April 7 to suspend the approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of a medication abortion pill, additionally granting a seven-day pause for his ruling before it would go into effect to allow the federal government to appeal and seek emergency relief.

The Good Friday ruling comes amid a lawsuit by a coalition of pro-life opponents of the drug mifepristone, the first of two drugs used in a medication, or chemical, abortion. The groups are seeking for the FDA’s approval of the drug to be revoked, arguing the federal agency indicated it will appeal the ruling. Shortly after Kacsmaryk issued his ruling, another federal judge in Washington, Thomas Rice, ruled that the FDA’s approval of mifepristone “is safe when used as indicated and effective for its intended purpose.”

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred and must be respected from conception to natural death, and as such opposes direct abortion as an act of violence that takes the life of the unborn child. Alex McGill Johnson argued that while “access to misoprostol remains safe” for the time being, “we should all be encouraged that one judge can unilaterally reject medical evidence and overrule the FDA’s approval of a medication that has been safely and effectively used for more than 20 years.”

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is expected to consider the conflict between the two judge’s rulings within the seven-day window of Kacsmaryk’s order. In a statement Monday, Tom Yost said the Justice Department “strongly disagrees” with Kacsmaryk’s ruling, and “will be appealing the court’s decision and seeking a stay pending appeal.”

“In high school, it got me through the challenging situations of teenage life. In college, it calmed my nerves before a must-win performance. As a young mother, it gave me courage to meet my husband’s parents for the first time. As a young bride, it helped me survive our dealings with two different ways of managing a household. As a teacher, it reminded me to be patient with my students who weren’t getting it as quickly as I wanted. As a mother, it caimed me out of my grief when my daughter died. As a daughter, it eased my broken heart, as I cared for my father’s final days on this side of heaven. As a teacher, it carried me through some very difficult situations when people behaved in ways that were far less than kind. As a plumber, I found it to be a source of strength in times of crisis.”

“Today’s decision overturns the FDA’s expert judgment, renders the FDA’s approval of mifepristone “is safe when used as indicated and effective for its intended purpose.”

Support initiatives and policies in favor of increased compensation, benefits and incentives for aging professionals, and the elderly. Support improvement reform to make it easier for qualified caregivers to enter the workforce in our country, and by helping others to understand the inherent evil of these acts.

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Support reform of restrictive long-term care regulations and inadequate funding.

Support reform of restrictive long-term care regulations and inadequate funding. Two years ago, Pope Francis instituted a day honoring grandparents and the elderly, to be celebrated each year on the fourth Sunday of July. It is my dream that this day will evolve to the point where the streets of our major cities are filled with families and people of all ages joyfully celebrating the heart. It can come. It is my dream that this day will evolve to the point where the streets of our major cities are filled with families and people of all ages joyfully celebrating the heart. It can come. It is my dream that this day will evolve to the point where the streets of our major cities are filled with families and people of all ages joyfully celebrating the heart. It can come.

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Archbishop Thompson blessed oils used in sacraments and in the dedication of altars and churches. And parish representatives received those oils to take back for use in their faith communities.

Among these unique moments in the life of the Church, all those worshipping in the cathedral during the chrism Mass were still gathered before its altar to celebrate the Eucharist in the midst of the first year of the National Eucharistic Revival.

Father Matthew Perronie experienced this year's chrism Mass for the first time as a priest, having been ordained last June. It was a clear reminder to him of the importance of the Eucharist to the Church in central and southern Indiana.

“The Eucharist unites us,” said Father Perronie, parochial vicar of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, “and in comments after the Mass. “Looking out today, I saw this person that I encountered in this place and that person in that place. And here we were all together. What brought us together was the Eucharist.”

He appreciated renewing his ordination promises alongside the priests serving in the archdiocese.

“It brought me back to the day of my ordination,” Transitional Deacon Jose Neri said. “And I have a special relationship with Father Perronie, who is a member of San Damiano Parish in Osgood. “It’s part of the richness of the Catholic Church,” said Deacon Wright. “We renew them every year. And we just don’t renew them by ourselves. We come together with all of the other priests in the archdiocese in front of the archbishop and renew them together.”

In his homily during the Mass, Archbishop Thompson spoke about the importance of this unity among all the faithful.

“We proclaim the good news of salvation in [Christ] as the way, the truth and the life,” he said. “To proclaim ourselves, making our egos and agenda the focal point, is to discredit discipleship and betray the mission. ‘We are only credible if we are united in the mind and heart of the Church. And our Church has two wonderful ways of doing that. One is the synodal process that Pope Francis has brought to the universal Church. The other is our National Eucharistic Revival. Two means by which we can grow in unity... We must embrace both.’”

The unity at the chrism Mass was seen amid great diversity Catholics—lay, religious and ordained—from around the world who have come to live in central and southern Indiana took part in the liturgy.

“Today is a holy family coming together,” said Louise Rohrig, a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood. “It’s so holy. It feels like you’re getting nearer and nearer to Jesus all the time.”

Benedicive Novice Angel Romero attended the chrism Mass from Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, where he is in the initial year of his religious formation. He came to St. Meinrad from his native Mexico and was happy to see Catholics from around the world at the altar.

“It’s part of the richness of the Catholic Church,” said Novice Angel. “Many people from many cultures have come to the archdiocese and for this celebration. The Catholic faith is universal.”

Sitting not far away from him was Megan Gehrich, youth minister for St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, who received blessed oils for her faith community.

Born and raised in the archdiocese, Gehrich was impressed by worshipping with fellow Catholics from around the world at the Mass.

“One of my favorite things about being a Catholic is that, at any hour of the day, there’s someone celebrating Mass in all countries,” Gehrich said. “Seeing that represented here is very special.”

Sarah Heard, a student at Marian University in Indianapolis who worshiped at the chrism Mass, echoed Gehrich’s sentiments.

“It reminds me of the one faith that we celebrate,” said Heard. “We all come from different parishes and countries, but it’s the same Mass that we’re celebrating and the same faith. Us worshipping together is really cool.”

Heard and her fellow Marian student attending the Mass, Nick Vander Pluym, are San Damiano Scholars and are considering serving in the Church in the future. Others at the Mass, like Gehrich, are lay ministers in parishes across central and southern Indiana.

Pam Deveary came to the cathedral from Prince of Peace Parish in Madison where she leads liturgical music. For her, the chrism Mass was a valued respite during a very busy Holy Week.

“Because I’m music director, I’m involved in all the liturgies of Holy Week in my home parish,” said Deveary, who noted that she has been coming to the chrism Mass for more than 40 years. “But for this one, I come and enjoy. I just sit and enjoy everything. It’s a gift to myself.”

Referring to the oils blessed during the liturgy, Archbishop Thompson reflected in his homily on how all members of the Church have an integral role in carrying out its mission of evangelization.

“Through the sacred oils—chrism, catechumen and the infirmed—we are anointed in [Christ] to carry on his mission to the world,” he said. “In doing so, we allow ourselves to be instruments through which the world is transformed rather than allowing the world to get the best of us.”

Benedicive Sister Jeana Visel helps prepare lay Catholics for ministry in the Church as director of graduate theology programs at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

“We are one Church,” she said. “It’s not just the priests who are anointed. It’s the whole people of God in our baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. We’re anointed as priest, prophet and king. That’s all of us together at some level.”

As a member of the archdiocesan eucharistic revival planning team, Sister Jeana was happy to take part in such a special Mass.

She spoke of how the Eucharist empowers all Catholics to share in the ministry of Christ and the Church, something highlighted at the end of the Mass.

“We are sent forth to be the body of Christ where we are and serve,” Sister Jeana said. “What a great mission. What a great diversity of callings, even as we are in unity as one body of Christ.”
Too much time online can hinder relationships with God, others

(OSV News)—How much time is too much time online?

It’s a question facing all of us in the 21st century, as technology becomes more and more integrated into our lives. How do we balance work, shopping, reading, communicating—all the ways we use technology—with a desire to be intentionally present in our daily lives?

In 2000, just as the Internet was becoming ubiquitous, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications seemed to sense the coming struggle and the challenges it would bring.

In a document on ethics in communications, it addressed the fragile relationship between nature and modernity by reminding us: “Depending on how they use media, people can grow in sympathy and compassion or become isolated in a narcissistic, self-referential world of stimuli with near-narcotic effects.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that we’re made to live in communion with God and with our beliefs or aid in our worship of God, we are using the stimuli with near-narcotic effects.”

The key is to discern whether our technology use helps us deepen our relationship with God and those whom we encounter day to day. If it helps us connect with people, inform our convictions, defend the voiceless, proclaim our beliefs or aid in our worship of God, we are using the capabilities presented to us for good.

If it becomes a distraction from God’s plan—if we turn to it in moments of temptation and loneliness, searching for relationship from an online source instead of God, the ultimate source—we are letting ourselves be used by technology.

If you’ve been overconnected for too long, your first steps to reset your use of technology can be painful. You might feel like the world will stop spinning if you can’t reply to every e-mail within 10 minutes or check your most recent social media notification.

After a few weeks of a new routine, however, you may be surprised at how little you’ve “missed” and how much “found time” you recover for the things and the people that are truly important in your life.

Warning signs of technology overuse

How can you tell if your use of technology is throwing your life off-kilter? Consider some of the following warning signs:

—You have fewer deep, close relationships with people than you used to (even if you’re in contact with more people than ever before).
—You often feel resentful when family, work or social commitments interrupt time spent on the web.
—You frequently text or check your phone during meals or when other people are present—including during Mass, family celebrations, or other occasions that are traditionally times of worshipping God or bonding with the people around us.
—You spend far more time online for “fun” than you do in prayer or meditation.

If more than a couple of the previous statements sound familiar, your Internet and social media use is probably throwing your life out of balance. It’s a good idea to seek out moments for “unplugged” silence throughout your routine or re-center yourself through brief retreats from your ordinary environment—perhaps going outdoors into nature or stopping by church for a visit.

Finding balance: Some practical tips

Changing our technology use is easier said than done—but creating any new habit is a matter of small steps. Here are several suggestions to get you started:

—Track your time. Write down each day the amount of time you spend online and the activities in which you spend it or use provided smartphone data to track your use on that device.
—Just as studies show that people lose weight more easily when they keep a journal of all the food they eat, keeping a journal of how you spend your online time can be an eye-opener.
—Designate “offline times” and be open about them. For example, put away your smartphone when you are at your child’s soccer practice or during family meals. To avoid potential tension with people who want you to be “on” constantly, tell your friends, family and co-workers about your goal to get a better balance in your life; you may even inspire them to try something similar.
—Shut down your computer and other devices each night. Not only does this send a signal that it’s time to disconnect for the day, but the time it takes everything to boot up in the morning gives you a moment to collect yourself and plan how to use your time online to its best advantage.
—Contact your friends the old-fashioned way. Make an effort to regularly call, write a letter or visit your friends and family. Your relationships will benefit from the personal touch.

Institute time spent on your phone or other devices in your examination of conscience.

At the end of each day and before you receive the sacrament of penance, take a moment to ask yourself: Have I been using technology to deepen my relationships with God and others, or to avoid them? Has my time online caused me to neglect anything or anyone that I should be paying attention to?

With the help of God’s grace, which is always available to us, we can be mindful of the warning signs of being too connected to our devices and use a variety of means to establish a more healthy use of them.

Then our phones, tablets and computers can help us deepen our relationships with God and with others.
Harnessing the spirituality of procrastination

I’m a champion procrastinator from way back when. Throughout schooling and into my professional career, I’ve had to work hard to put off big projects until the last minute, telling myself I’ll work better under pressure. I have validated this approach many times and again when waiting until a deadline has passed to complete a work. But I’m also left with a feeling of negativity as I beat myself up being a procrastinator in the first place.

I know well the tell-tale signs of procrastination. I just glance at my project priorities list and bargain for more time to complete the assignment. Wanting to understand the pros and cons of procrastination, I read quite a few articles on the topic. Depending on the article, procrastination allows me to avoid all sorts of consequences such as breathing self-doubt, causing stress or poor results. Other authors extol the benefits of procrastination such as “going with the flow,” allowing time to process, and unleashing your creativity. I learned a few important things about my procrastination. To understand why I procrastinate, I needed to know the root cause. While some may simply be lazy or they fear the project because of lack of confidence, I determined my root cause is perfectionism. I want to get it right—whether it be a project, writing an article, or making a decision. I put things off because of a fear of failure.

However, I also learned that my procrastination has evolved. While in college, I most often would pull “all-nighters” having procrastinated to the last minute. I didn’t want to do the work, or I had more important things I’d rather be doing. However, my procrastination had become intentional. I wait until projects are due but, I factor in a little breathing room such as writing this column two days before the deadline. And I am purposeful in waiting until near the end to do most project so that I have ample time to mull it over. Articles have enlightened me that this is known as “delayed ministry” as opposed to procrastination.

As I procrastinated writing this column to the very last minute, I made the conclusion that I reap benefits from procrastinating. It definitely allows me the time to think through super- percolate ideas longer and to involve God. Taking the time to approach a project on its own can make it feel more enjoyable. Other times, God helps me see that my whole hypothesis is ill-conceived, and he sends me in a completely different and better direction.

As I shift my perception, I have to ask myself, am I procrastinating? Or am I procrastinating well?

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

How Grandma made me a work of art

Two parts reverence, one part mischief.

That’s how I’d sum up my grandma, whose name was Carmen. She was a work of art, a true beauty in our midst, sensing—if not fully grasping—that it points us to God. She raised five kids (which turns into many minutes) to check my e-mail. I’m suddenly very hungry so I make a snack. I find a few pennies in my project priorities list and bargain for more time to complete the assignment. Wanting to understand the pros and cons of procrastination, I read quite a few articles on the topic. Depending on the article, procrastination allows me to avoid all sorts of consequences such as breathing self-doubt, causing stress or poor results. Other authors extol the benefits of procrastination such as “going with the flow,” allowing time to process, and unleashing your creativity. I learned a few important things about my procrastination. To understand why I procrastinate, I needed to know the root cause. While some may simply be lazy or they fear the project because of lack of confidence, I determined my root cause is perfectionism. I want to get it right—whether it be a project, writing an article, or making a decision. I put things off because of a fear of failure.

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Divine Mercy Sunday

The Sunday Readings
Sunday, April 16, 2023

• Acts 2:42-47
• 1 Peter 1:3-9
• John 20:19-31

With deep faith and faith-filled excitement, the Church continues the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection and final victory over death and sin at Easter began a week and a day ago. As is the case in almost every Mass of this season, the first reading this weekend comes from the Acts of the Apostles. Originally it was seen as a continuation of St. Luke’s Gospel, and these books should be considered as being in sequence.

Together they tell an uninterrupted story of salvation in Jesus, from Jesus’ conception in the womb of Mary to a time years after his ascension.

This weekend’s reading reveals to us what life was like in the time shortly following the ascension. The first Christians, many of whom likely knew Jesus, reverently followed the Apostles. They were a vibrant living community, eagerly caring for the needy, praying and “breaking the bread,” a term referring to the Eucharist in the early Church (Acts 2:46). St. Peter clearly was the chief of the Apostles.

Most importantly, Jesus still lived and acted through the Apostles and in the Church. The sick were cured. The dead heard. The blind saw. No one was beyond the Apostles’ concern.

For its second reading this weekend, the Church offers us a passage from the First Epistle of Peter.

The Apostle Peter, leader of the apostles, wrote this letter to the Christians, many of whom likely knew Jesus, to tell them to gather around Peter and the Chief of the Apostles. Be strong of faith. In the end, Christ will redeem his people.

St. John’s Gospel provides the last reading. It is one of the most beloved and familiar of the Resurrection narratives.

In this reading is the story of the reluctance of the Apostle Thomas to accept that Jesus indeed had risen from the tomb. Then, as all recall, Jesus dramatically appeared on the scene. He invited Thomas to believe. In awe and the uttermost faith, Thomas declared that Jesus not only is his teacher, but that indeed he is God.

The Lord then confounded upon the Apostles that most divine of powers, the authority to judge what is sinful and to forgive sin.

Reflection

In two days, the people in Israel and for Jews everywhere will remember the millions who died in Adolf Hitler’s savage persecution of Jews.

Evil in the world has been and still is overwhelming. Violence and hatred in this country. Nicaragua. Ukraine. Bantam immorality.

These historic and current evils provide half of the picture of human existence. The other side shows how beautiful is life when the risen Christ reigns and is acknowledged.

This we celebrate on Divine Mercy Sunday. God sent the Lord Jesus to us in mercy, Christ redeemed us. He strengthens us. He shows us how to live. He leads us away from evil.

Christ’s victory over evil has been demonstrated so many times in history. He has never failed.

The Apostles and their successors brought Christ to their contemporaries. Their successors in the bishops, bring him to us today. They connect us with Jesus. They still act through the Church, so vivid in early Christianity.

As differences among themselves unsettle Catholics today, these readings tell us to gather around Peter and the Apostles. Be strong of faith. In the end, all will be good.

Trust in the Lord, as the martyrs trusted. His truth will prevail.

Daily Readings

Monday, April 17
Acts 4:23-31
Psalm 3:1-9
John 3:1-8

Tuesday, April 18
Acts 4:32-37
Psalm 91:1-2, 5
John 3:7b-15

Wednesday, April 19
Acts 5:17-26
Psalm 34:2-9
John 3:16-21

Thursday, April 20
Acts 5:27-33
Psalm 34:2-9, 17, 20
John 3:31-36

Question Corner

Jenna Marie Cooper

Apostles’ authority to forgive sins continues through apostolic succession

Q A Protestant minister (formerly a Catholic) said that the Church’s authority to grant absolution in confession expired upon Christ’s death. What authority does the Catholic Church rely on that requires confession to a priest?

A God is all-powerful and can extend his grace even beyond what he has promised. But when we confess our sins to a priest in the sacrament of penance, we can know with confidence that our sins are forgiven, because of Jesus’ own words.

In the Gospels, Jesus tells us that he intends to share his authority to forgive sins with the 12 Apostles. This is perhaps stated most directly toward the end of St. John’s Gospel, when Jesus tells the Apostles: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:23).

With respect to the minister’s assertion, one interesting thing about this passage is that the promise comes from Jesus after he had already died.

John 20 reconstrues some of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, one of which was his sudden appearance to many of the Apostles (notably minus Thomas, whose absence was a stage of later confession of faith) as they were gathered in hiding behind locked doors. This is the first place where Jesus sends the Apostles on mission, telling them: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

This part of this mission was the forgiveness of sins.

Catholics believe in apostolic succession, meaning that the power and authority Jesus gave to his original Apostles—including the sacramental power and authority to forgive sins—were in turn handed down by the Apostles to their successors throughout the centuries right up to our present-day bishops and the priests who assist them in their ministry.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, alluding to the above-mentioned passages from the Gospel of John, describes the succession like this: “Thus the risen Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, entrusted to them his power of sanctifying: they became sacramental signs of Christ. By the power of the same Holy Spirit, they entrusted this power to their successors. This ‘apostolic succession’ continues down the line of bishops down to our present-day bishops and the priests who assist them in their ministry.”

So, far from this authority expiring with Jesus’ death, it might be more accurate to say that the Church’s authority to forgive sins only began after Jesus died and rose from the dead.

This might prompt the question of when exactly the Church first came into being. Jesus does refer to his Church—albeit in a future tense—during his time of active ministry, when he says to the Apostle Simon Peter: “... you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

He follows by mentioning again the authority to loose or to bind sins when he notes the role Peter would hold as the earthly leader of the Church: “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19).

Traditionally, we call the feast of Pentecost the birthday of the Church. But there is also a beautiful theme running throughout the theological writings of an early Father of the Church who was born from Christ’s wounded side. As the catechism puts it, referencing St. Ambrose: “As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross” (P766).

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OvNews.com. Send your questions to: CatholicQA@OvNews.com

My Journey to God

Passing the Light

By Sandy Biery

Lord, fill me with Your radiant light.
And keep it burning ever bright.
Bringing warmth and grace to all I meet,
As I journey through this day.

Keep this light burning bright,
May it be the light of life,
In my home, parish, and community,
As I journey toward eternity.

(Sandy Biery is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Photo: A candle holds a vigil during an interfaith service at the Anglican Cathedral Church of St. Peter in Bradford, England, on Feb. 24, marking the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. (GV News photo/Molly Darlington, Reuters)
Kansas Legislature approves ‘born alive’ bill with veto-proof majority; awaits governor

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:

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(OSV News)–Kansas lawmakers approved a “born-alive infants protection act” on April 4, sending the legislation to Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly’s desk with a veto-proof majority. The bill aims to protect infants born alive, regardless of whether the intent was to abort them, and marks the first abortion-related legislation passed in the state since Kansas voters rejected an effort to strip abortion protections from their state constitution last year.

The bill requires physicians to provide medical care to infants “born alive” as the result of a botched abortion procedure appropriate to their gestational age, and to report data to the state about any such incidents. The Kansas bill also would apply to any such incidents where doctors induce labor to deliver an unborn child that is not expected to survive outside the womb.

“The supermajority of Kansas legislators heard the testimonies of abortion attempt survivors and doctors and responded with compassion,” Diane Underwood, director of communications for Kansans for Life, said in a statement. “The bill now heads to the governor’s desk where she can sign it into law, allow it to become law and deserve equal care.”

Critics of the bill say the legislation could come between patients and their doctors about difficult medical decisions, with some arguing such instances of infants surviving abortions rarely to never occur.

“This bill is absolutely unnecessary,” Democratic Sen. Pat Petriny of Kansas City said during a debate on the bill in March. “This bill will traumatize mothers who desperately want to be mothers, who already are dealing with the [most] heart-breaking moments of loss imaginable.”

Proponents of born-alive bills argue that such instances do occur, pointing to cases like that of Philadelphia abortionist Dr. Kermit Gosnell, who was convicted in 2013 of first-degree murder for cutting the spina cord of multiple babies delivered alive in his abortion clinic, as well as the involuntary manslaughter of an adult patient, performing abortions beyond Pennsylvania’s limit of 24 weeks, among other charges.

Underwood argued that Kansans “must hold our elected leaders accountable to recognize these babies exist and deserve equal care.”

“Kansans for Life calls on all who believe that no baby should be left to die alone on a cold, steel table to urge elected leaders accountable to recognize these babies exist and deserve equal care,” Underwood said.
MOORESVILLE—Father Joseph Moriarty, rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, was glad to bring 15 of the young adult men in priestly formation at the seminary to a March 27 dinner in support of vocations at St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville.

“It’s tremendously encouraging,” Father Moriarty said. For him, the dinner was a sign that vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life are “in a deep level of the hearts” of St. Thomas More’s parishioners.

“They allow their faith, what they believe about vocations, to issue forth in action,” Father Moriarty said. “This dinner is a sign of that action.”

Parishioners also attended the dinner, many of them bringing their children, something Father Moriarty appreciated.

“They can look and say, ‘These aren’t people I only hear about or read about in Sunday school class. These are people I get to visit with,’” he said.

The dinner was organized by Saint Thomas More Knights of Columbus Council 7431 at St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville.

Larry Janeczek, a member of the council and of the parish, noted that the dinner took place two days before the anniversary of the founding of the Knights of Columbus, which was started in 1882 by Bishop Michael McGivney, a diocesan priest at the time in Connecticut.

“Being founded by a parish priest defines a main reason why the Knights are committed to supporting and helping with vocations so strongly,” said Janeczek.

Donnie Miller, a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond and the vocations chairman for the Indiana State Council of the Knights of Columbus, was in Mooresville for the dinner.

“It’s great,” he said. “We’re always trying to encourage vocations. I enjoy coming to these events and seeing what each council is trying to do to support vocations. We need to encourage as many young men as we can to become priests.”

Several of the seminarians from Bishop Bruté spoke at the dinner, sharing with attendees how they came to know God’s call to the priesthood in their lives.

Seminarian Randy Schneider, a member of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, was one of them. Growing up in southeastern Indiana, he knew little of the priesthood.

“Knowing of their origins with Father Michael McGivney and knowing the history of their support for priests is awesome,” he said. “The Knights from my parish and the area around it are very supportive. They’re like surrogate fathers for these young men.”

Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director, spoke at the dinner.

“The power of a ‘yes’ doesn’t just transform one young man’s life,” he said. “It transforms a whole parish. It transforms the whole world, and it effects eternal salvation. So just join me in thanking our seminarians and in praying for them every day.”

What you seminarians are doing is heroic. Souls depend on it. The fact that you are laying down your life for Jesus and the salvation of souls matters. That’s why we have this dinner.”

(For information on a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.)

**FANUCCI**

continued from page 12

routines of prayer amid the chaos kept you going.

No matter what you experienced, God’s promise to remain constant and faithful holds true. Christ has stayed with you, never abandoning us as even the world turned upside down.

In thanksgiving to our faithful God, we can commit ourselves to deepening our domestic, church and community lives. May we never take the gift of the Eucharist for granted. May we gather now, for the grace of worshipping together in person.

Most of all, may we never forget the days when every prayer was uttered within our own walls.

May we give thanks each time we gather together, for the grace of worshipping together in person.

(Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality.)

**CAPECCHI**

continued from page 12

St. John Paul II’s letter to artists, who wrote that “all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting our own life: in a sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece.”

She painted nine decades with such vibrance and joy. Masterpiece, indeed.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer and spiritual director.)

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(For information on a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.)
Pope Francis tells priests: Be agents of harmony, not division

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Priests “anointed” by the Holy Spirit should be authentic agents of harmony rather than “instruments of division,” Pope Francis said.

Celebrating the chrism Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on April 6, the pope addressed his homily to about 1,800 concelebrating priests in the basilica on what he called “the birthday of the priesthood,” the institution of the Eucharist that is celebrated on Holy Thursday.

Building harmony is not only a way of improving the Church or being polite, Pope Francis told them, but “an intrinsic demand of the life of the Spirit.”

“If others see in us people who are dissatisfied and discontented, who criticize and point fingers, where else will they find harmony?” asked the pope. “How many people fail to approach us, or keep at a distance, because in the Church they feel unwelcomed and unloved, regarded with suspicion and judged?”

“In God’s name, let us be welcoming and forgiving, always,” he said.

Pope Francis presided over the chrism Mass, named after the oils blessed during the liturgy, but the principal concelebrants at the altar were Cardinals Angelo De Donatis, the pope’s vicar for Rome; Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals; Leonardo Sandri, vice dean; Francis Arinze, the third-ranking cardinal; and Auxiliary Bishop Baldassare Reina of Rome.

After the homily, the priests renewed the promises made to their bishop at their ordination. Deacons then wheeled large silver urns down the center aisle of St. Peter’s Basilica to receive the pope’s blessing. The oils will be distributed to Rome parishes and used for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, ordination and the anointing of the sick in the coming year.

Following tradition, Pope Francis breathed on the chrism oil to symbolize the infusion of the Holy Spirit, though he did not stand over the urn as in past years—the massive container was brought to his chair, and he remained seated as he continues to experience knee pain.

While thousands of laypeople were in attendance, Pope Francis discussed the problems priests and bishops face in their vocations and encouraged them to look to the Holy Spirit to embrace their calling in times of doubt.

“Sooner or later, we all experience disappointment, frustration and our own weakness; our ideals seem to recede in the face of reality, a certain force of habit takes over, and difficulties that once seemed unimaginable appear to challenge our fidelity,” said the pope.

In this “watershed” moment, he said, priests may either “drift toward mediocrity and settle for a dreary routine” or be reinvigorated by the Holy Spirit.

“Priestly maturity comes from the Holy Spirit,” he said. “Our priesthood does not grow by quick fixes but an overflow of grace.”

Setting aside his prepared text, Pope Francis shared that he was thinking of priests “in crisis, who are disoriented and don’t know how to take back up the way of the anointing of the Spirit.”

“To these brothers, I am thinking of you, and I simply say, ‘have courage,’ the Lord is greater than your weaknesses, than your sins. Entrust yourself to the Lord,” the pope said. “A double life won’t help you, nor will tossing everything out the window. Look ahead and let yourself be caressed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”

Welcoming the Spirit into one’s life “happens when we admit the reality of our own weakness,” he said.

Priests, he said, should be honest and ask themselves, “Does my fulfilment depend on my abilities, my position, the compliments I receive, my promotions, the respect of my superiors or coworkers, the comforts with which I surround myself? Or on the anointing that spreads its fragrance everywhere in my life?”

Spiritual life becomes “liberating and joyful once we are no longer concerned to save appearances and make quick fixes,” said the pope.

He ended his homily with two “simple and important words” for the priests: “Thank you.”

“Thank you for your ministry, which often is carried out with great effort and little recognition,” he said, before praying that they would be “apostles of harmony.”