Prayer is weapon against ‘diabolical’ power of violence, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Although it is easy to feel powerless in the face of war, “prayer is the meek and holy force to oppose the diabolical force of hatred, terrorism and war,” Pope Francis said.

With violence continuing in the Holy Land, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh, the pope repeated his calls for peace and for prayers on Oct. 15 after reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square.

“I continue to follow with great sorrow what is happening in Israel and Palestine,” he told an estimated 22,000 people in the square.

Pope Francis again called on Hamas to release the nearly 200 hostages, including children, they have claimed to be holding since their assault on Israel on Oct. 7.

“I strongly ask that children, the sick, the elderly, women and all civilians not be made victims of the conflict,” he said.

As Israel appeared to be preparing an invasion of northern Gaza, it ordered hundreds of thousands of civilians to move south and tightened its blockade on supplies into Gaza. Pope Francis insisted that “humanitarian law is to be respected, especially in Gaza, where it is urgent and necessary to ensure humanitarian corridors and to come to the aid of the entire population.

“Brothers and sisters, already many have died,” he said. “Please, let no more innocent blood be shed, neither in the Holy Land nor in Ukraine, nor in any other place! Enough! Wars are always a defeat, always!”

Before reciting a Hail Mary for peace, the pope asked Catholics to join with Christians in the Holy Land and mark Oct. 17 as a day of prayer and fasting for peace.

The pope also expressed concern for the ongoing crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority enclave captured by

St. Mary-of-the-Knobs bicentennial is call to ‘gratitude’ and to ‘carry torch forward’

By Natalie Hofer

FLOYD COUNTY—It was a touching, full-circle moment on Oct. 15 as Pat Byrne, a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish, placed flowers on the grave of his great-great grandfather, Thomas Piers, in the parish’s cemetery.

Piers donated one acre of his land for the new parish to build its first church in 1823.

Two-hundred years later, Byrne and his family walked from the cemetery to the Floyd County faith community’s fourth church, built in 2012—a structure he helped make possible by co-chairing its $12.5 million campaign.

It was in that church on Oct. 15 that Archbishop Charles C. Thompson presided at a Mass celebrating the bicentennial of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish—the oldest existing parish in the archdiocese.

Byrne noted that his link to Piers is just one of thousands of faith connections in a parish where he said, since 1823, parishioners have been “committed to living as a Catholic community, passing on the faith from one generation to the next, providing not only for current needs but future needs as well.”

Spurred by the Holy Spirit, woman feels chosen to lead Young Catholic Professionals

By John Shaughnessy

To get a sense of the commitment that Annie Harton is making as the president of a new group called Young Catholic Professionals, consider the dedication she has shown to “The Chosen,” the television series about Christ and the Apostles, Annie Harton was inspired by the Holy Spirit to lead the newly formed Indianapolis chapter of Young Catholic Professionals. (Submitted photo)
St. Thérèse teaches simplicity, love, trust, pope says in new document

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—St. Thérèse of Lisieux, long one of Pope Francis’ favorite saints, teaches Christians “the little way” of love, self-giving, concern for others and complete trust in the mercy of God, the pope said in a new apostolic exhortation.

“At a time when human beings are obsessed with grandeur and new forms of power, she points out to us the little way,” he wrote. “In an age that casts aside so many of our brothers and sisters, she teaches us the beauty of concern and responsibility for one another” (#52).

Published on Oct. 15, the pope’s exhortation is titled, “C’est la Confiance,” the opening words of her phrase, “It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to love.”

The exhortation is subtitled, “On holiness in the Church.”

“In place of a notion of holiness that is individualistic and elitist, one ‘more ascetic than mystical, that primarily emphasizes human effort,’ he said, ‘Thérèse always stresses the primacy of God’s will, his gift of grace, trusting that he would bring her to heaven one day (#17).’

Even in speaking about the Eucharist, her desire to receive Communion took second place to “the desire of Jesus to unite himself to us, and to dwell in our hearts,” the pope said. “Here people remained fixed not on herself and her own needs, but on Christ, who loves, seeks, desires and dwells within” (#22).

In his exhortation, Pope Francis focused on St. Thérèse’s reflection of St. Paul’s description of the Church in his First Letter to the Corinthians as the body of Christ with each part or member having a role to play in the functioning of the entire body.

But she did not see herself as the ‘apostle of God,’ as was I, but as a child or slave and humbled himself, becoming obedient, even to death on a cross (#40).”

Rediscovering love as the heart of the Church can be “a great source of light” for Catholics today, Pope Francis said. “It preserves us from being scandalized by the limitations and weaknesses of the ecclesiastical community, of its divisions and sins, and enables us to enter into the Church’s ‘heart burning with love,’ which bursts into flame at Pentecost, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

“It is that heart whose fire is rekindled in the Church’s heart, the Church needs to radiate the brightness, the fragrance and the joy of the Gospel.”

Pope Francis carried a white rose as he approaches a relic container containing the relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux before the start of his general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on June 7. He announced he was planning on issuing an apostolic letter dedicated to her for the 150th anniversary of her birth. (CNS photo/Lisi Gorni)

October 22 — 1:30 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Clarksonville; St. Joseph Parish, Cordova; Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes, Jeffersonville; Holy Family and Our Lady of Perpetual Help parishes, New Albany; St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish, Floyd County; and St. John Paul II Parish Sellersburg, at St. John Paul II Church Convent, New Albany.

October 22 — 5 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Mary Parish, New Albany, at St. Mary Church.

October 23 — 6 p.m.
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House Annual Dinner at The Marrott, Indianapolis.

October 24 — 10 a.m.
Fall clergy and parish life coordinator business meeting at St. Joseph Parish, Jennings County.

October 24 — 2 p.m.
Council of Priests meeting at St. Joseph Parish, Jennings County.

October 25 — 10 a.m.
Legal Team meeting at Archbishop Edward O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis.

Jerusalem cardinal offers himself in exchange for Israeli hostages

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Catholic Church’s highest ranking prelate in the Holy Land offered his “absolutely available” to be exchanged for Israeli children taken hostage by Hamas.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, told reporters during an online meeting on Oct. 16 that he is willing to do “anything” to “bring freedom and bring home the children” taken into Gaza during Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel, in which more than 1,300 Israelis were killed. The Israeli military said on Oct. 16 that some 200 people, including children and elderly persons, are being held hostage.

Returning the hostages held in Gaza is “absolutely necessary to stop the ongoing violence between Israel and Hamas,” the cardinal said. He expressed the Vatican’s willingness to assist in de-escalation and meditation efforts, but said they had not been able to speak with Hamas leaders.

Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

October 25 — 5:30 p.m.
Mass and dinner with Indiana University student leaders at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington.

October 26 — 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center.

October 26 — 12:30 p.m.
United Catholic Appeal employee lunch at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center.

October 26 — 4:30 p.m.
Mass for Indiana Non-Public Education Association at St. John the Evangelist Church, Indianapolis.

October 28 — 4 p.m.
175th Anniversary Mass at St. Martin of Tours Church, Martinsville.

October 29 — 1 p.m.
CST Confirmation for Mass youths of St. Isidore the Farmer Parish, Perry County; St. Pius V Parish, Troy; St. Paul Parish, Tell City; St. Michael Parish, Cannelton; St. Augustine Parish, Loogootee; Holy Cross Parish, St. Crox, at St Paul Church.

October 31 — 10:30 a.m.
Visit to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.
Espada is honored with society’s Woman for All Seasons Award

By Sean Gallagher

Lawyers, judges, other legal professionals and law students from across central Indiana gathered on Oct. 2 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis for the annual Red Mass of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson was the principal celebrant of the Mass. As the liturgy took place on the memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels, he and the concelebrants and deacon assisting at the liturgy wore white vestments.

Red vestsments are ordinarily worn at the Mass for legal professionals in a tradition going back to the Middle Ages in which they call upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their work at the beginning of a new legal term in the fall.

‘Something bigger than ourselves’

In his homily, Archbishop Thompson spoke about the day’s feast to the congregation of legal professionals, marked by two rows of federal, state and local judges in their black gowns in the front of the cathedral.

“We need something bigger than ourselves,” he said. “We need God’s grace to fill up what is lacking in us. We need God’s strength, wisdom and perseverance.”

In a dinner at the adjacent Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center that followed the Mass, the St. Thomas More Society’s Woman for All Seasons Award was presented to Angela Espada.

Currently the executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), Espada previously worked as a deputy prosecutor for Marion County and as a staff attorney for the Indiana Supreme Court.

In remarks after being honored, Espada sought to take the spotlight off herself and put it on the ICC’s work of legislative and public policy advocacy at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis.

“If you have a [business] card, please leave it so that we can send you information about what we do,” Espada said to the attendees. “Then, if you are so motivated to join us in our fight to advocate against bad laws and advocate for good laws, we can send you information and you can decide whether or not to lift up your voice and join us.”

The need for humility

One of those taking part in the Red Mass and dinner was Justice Mark Massa, a member of the Indiana Supreme Court and a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

“It’s a wonderful tradition,” said Massa. “I think it says something about humility. It reminds judges that they need to humble themselves.”

The archbishop noted the difficult work of judges and attorneys and praised their dedication.

“But for the grace of God, we can become overwhelmed with the volume or weight of responsibility placed upon us,” he said. “It is in those moments that we must be humble as children before the faithfulness of our God in prayer.”

“That’s why in our Red Mass we pray for our judges, both in thanksgiving and that God’s grace will be with you and all in the legal system, a prayer as simple as calling upon one’s Guardian Angel for guidance, to give strength, wisdom and perseverance.”

In his introduction, Judge David Certo of the Marion County Superior Court posed on Oct. 2 with Angela Espada, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference during a dinner at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis following the annual Red Mass of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Indiana. Espada was honored with the society’s Woman for All Seasons Award. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

“Something bigger than ourselves”

As a Church, we are stronger together. The impact of your generosity is well-formed conscience and a vision of eternal life with God.”

Espada is honored with society’s Woman for All Seasons Award

“The divine voice within”

In his remarks, Conrad reflected on the importance of conscience, rightly understood, in the life and death of Fisher and More.

The 20th-century playwright Robert Bolt lionized More in his 1960 play about him, A Man for All Seasons, which became an Academy-award winning film in 1966. But Conrad pointed out that Bolt understood More’s defense of conscience as focused on “the subjective fact that More the individual believed. To Bolt, it was that I believe, not that I believe.”

This, Conrad argued, is not faithful to the way Fisher and More understood conscience. Conscience, Conrad stated, “is not the right of self will, but the duty to obey the...” See ALL SEASONS page 15

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How has God made his presence known in your life? Share it with our readers

The Criterion is inviting you, our readers, to share your thoughts and stories about this question, “How has God made his presence known in your life?”

Maybe you routinely feel his presence in an everyday situation. Maybe you have known his presence in a life-changing moment. Maybe it’s happened in your relationship with a family member, a friend or even a stranger. Maybe it was in a dark time of your life or an especially joyful one.

Whatever the case may be, we would like to hear your thoughts and your stories. Send your submissions to John Shaughnessy at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †
Archbishop Thompson: Let us pray for peace in the Holy Land and an end to all violence

(ARCHBISHOP CHARLES C. THOMPSON issued the following statement in response to the violence in the Holy Land.)

“Violence and killing are deeply disturbing in any form, but especially disheartening in a place like the Holy Land, where two millennia of peaceful coexistence have given way to the deaths of the three most prominent religious leaders—Buddhism, Islam and Christianity—while honoring the sacred places of their respective religions. Such aggression, torturing and killing of innocent people, young and old, cannot be tolerated. In fact, such actions must be condemned.

“Violence, retribution and reaction often beget violence, retribution and reaction. The only lasting humane outcome in such situations is that of response, one that is directed toward overcoming rather than succumbing to injustice. Such a response necessarily seeks to set aside the causes of destruction in order to cultivate a sacred space of listening, dialogue, healing and reconciliation.

“The standard for this response as Christians is Jesus Christ and the Cross. Rather than reacting in kind to the violence and injustice of his time, particularly when it was directed toward him, Jesus chose to remain absorbing that behavior so that it would die with him. In this way, he took the sins of humanity on his shoulders, to suffer, resentment, shame and vengeance—to hang upon the Cross and die there in his gathering of love and forgiveness. Two days later, he would rise from the dead, having left the sin and evil on the cross to be transformed into divine grace and mercy. It was this response that ushered in our salvation and redemption.

“Together, we pray for all who are made to suffer violence and injustice, especially those who are victims of abuse, human trafficking, terrorism and war. We pray for all those in the Holy Land, both in Israel and Gaza, particularly the poor, the homeless, the grieving and the victims of torture. Let us pray for the end to all wars, violence and hostilities against the dignity of human life.

“May we never tire of praying and working toward cultivating a culture of response rather than a reaction to differences, injustices and violence. By the grace of Jesus Christ, our Savior, may it end with us.”

Archbishop Thompson is archbishop of Indianapolis.

Synodality and the sounds of silence

“In a world full of noise, we are no longer accustomed to silence; indeed, sometimes we struggle with it, because silence forces us to face God and ourselves. Yet it lies at the foundation of the Word and of life.” (Pope Francis)

There are moments of silence when people are traveling together that are especially precious. These are the occasions when no small talk, idle chatter or gossip break through. When “heavy” subjects and passionate argument have been set aside (if only temporarily), and a comfortable silence sets in.

Lovers and good friends know how to be together without constant conversation. People who pray frequently and from the heart long ago realized that talking with God requires attentive listening, which means disengaging from the noise and distractions that prevent us from hearing the “still, small voice” that brings us into direct contact with the Word of God.

Pope Francis has asked the participants in the synod to find moments of silence, and to make silence a part of their trip to Rome to participate in synod.

“Silence is essential in the life of the believer,” the pope said. “Indeed, it lies at the beginning and end of Christ’s earthly existence. The Word, the Word of the Father, became silence in the manger and on the cross, on the night of the Nativity and on the night of his Passion.” In other words, the most impactful moments in Christian history—the Incarnation and the Resurrection—were marked by moments of profound silence.

If the synodal process is to achieve its desired outcome of increased communion and participation in the Church’s mission, we must find significant opportunities for silent reflection on what the Holy Spirit is saying to us today.

“Indeed, silence is important and powerful,” the Holy Father says. “It can express unspeakable sorrow in the face of misfortune, but also, in moments of joy, a gladness that goes beyond words.” It’s sad, but it probably shouldn’t be surprising, that the pope’s efforts to unite all baptized Christians and to encourage greater participation by all in the Church’s mission are being used to further divide us. The amount of suspicion and negative commentary on the meaning and purpose of this synod is disheartening. Clearly the Evil One is at work sowing doubt and seeking to set Christians against one another.

The stillness of prayerful listening overpowers the shouting, arguing and chaos of the devil’s many voices. In the quiet of prayer and meditation, we can listen from the heart, so that when it comes time to speak, what we have to say will be cleansed of the vitriolic influences of prejudice and hatred.

Pope Francis insists that, to be authentic, a synod must be free from ideology, which the dictionary defines as “a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.” As long as we are proposing, debating or reacting to competing political theories, we are cut off from the attentive listening that is required to achieve genuine dialogue and mutual understanding.

“There is no place for ideology in the synod,” the Holy Father says. A synod requires “another dynamic. The synod is dialogue between baptized people in the name of the Church, on the life of the Church, on dialogue with the world, on the problems that affect humanity today. But when you think along an ideological path, the synod ends.”

Silence helps to keep the noise and distracting influence of competing ideologies (whether on the right or the left) from overpowering our ability to listen to the Word of God or to each other. The synod is not meant to be “a TV program where everything is talked about.” That’s why Pope Francis has asked that synod participants refrain from commenting publicly on their discussions. The synod should be a religious experience, he says, “a moment of religious exchange. Without a spirit of prayer, there is no synodality, there is politics, there is authoritarianism.”

Halway throughout this particular synod, it’s clear that the commitment to maintaining silence will never be 100% successful. Still, many participants affirm that the effort to listen attentively and to allow the Holy Spirit to speak is bearing fruit—in spite of all the noise-makers who post negative, often vitriolic, personal attacks and divisive comments on social media.

Let’s observe a moment of silence for all who are participating in this synod. May they be open to hearing God’s Word and taking it to heart.

—Daniel Conway

Amid busy lives, Jesus Christ’s presence matters; ours does, too

A quote attributed to St. Teresa of Avila often pops into my head as I start the day: “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on Earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks upon the world. Yours are the feet with which he walks in the world. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you is his body. Christ has no body now on Earth but yours.”

The underlying foundation here, of course, is that by baptism we’re each grafted as members of the body of Christ. And that’s what makes us Christ’s presence in the world, as St. Teresa (or someone) so beautifully described it. But baptism isn’t a magic formula. We get it once, and then we’re on our own.

“Is it Christ who lives in me?” (Gal 2:20). But this depends upon our cooperation. Christ makes available to us through the Eucharist a great gift, one that aids us and reinforces and intensifies the relationship we’ve had with him since baptism. It’s in the Eucharist that we are given the opportunity to become more and more like Christ.

At each Mass, we offer ourselves with the bread and wine, which are transformed truly, absolutely, by the real presence of Christ among us. We pray we are changed, too, like our offerings, to be ever more like Christ. But sometimes it’s harder we work, by God’s grace, to grow in our similitude to Christ, the more we realize we need to spend time with Christ, the more we need to seek out what his real eucharistic presence ushers in our midst.

If we pause to think about it, Christ’s presence in every tabernacle throughout the world should stop us in our tracks. We drive by our churches, but do we stop to visit him, to be with him, to adore him? Do we hold his light and absorb all that he wants us to teach us?

The practice of eucharistic adoration can easily be misunderstood and misconstrued as something inferior, dismissed as a pious vestige of the past. But it is interesting to observe how the practice of adoration has only grown in the last few decades. As the world moves away from God, from the presence of Jesus in the world, the world cannot give. Adoration gives us the opportunity to sit at Christ’s feet and embrace his presence.

One of the greatest gifts I have found about my spiritual family—the Paulilme Family founded by Blessed James Alberione—is the centrality of eucharistic adoration. Alberione put a eucharistic “visit” at the heart of his spirituality: “Everything comes from the tabernacle; without the tabernacle there is nothing.”

How true is it. If we want to be filled with Christ that he is truly present within me, then we need to make the tabernacle the center of our lives. No relationship can advance if there is no investment of time. Nothing can be truly present amid absence. Nothing can grow unless it is nurtured and tended. As Alberione further explains, “In the Eucharist, Jesus becomes our nourishment, so that his divine heart may assimilate ours and make it one with his.”

Our lives are busy. Many demands are put upon our time. Making a daily holy hour might not be a possibility, but we should be under no illusion, Christ has no body now on Earth but ours, and we are members of his body. Rather than building our day around our own schedules, let’s build our schedules around the Lord—making time to bask in his presence, so we can bring his presence to others.

Be Our Guest/Michael R. Heinlein

Michael R. Heinlein is author of “The Criterion,” which brings his presence to the world.

The Criterion - OPINION - Friday, October 20, 2023
“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21).

The Gospel reading for this coming weekend, the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, contains a familiar word of Jesus in response to the Pharisees’ attempt to trap him into saying something that would be politically incorrect. We know this familiar saying, but we don’t always understand it. The questioners begin with an obviously insincere expression of flattery: “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion, for you do not regard a person’s status” (Mt 22:16).

Then, when they think he’s been sufficiently “buttered up,” they ask Jesus a loaded question: “Tell us, then, what is your opinion. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” (Mt 22:17).

The dilemma is that if Jesus says, “Yes, it is lawful to pay the tax,” he appears to contradict Jewish law. But if he says, “No, it is not lawful to pay the tax,” he would be urging them to disregard Roman law. It’s a no-win situation. But Jesus is smarter than the Pharisees. St. Matthew tells us that he knew their malicious intent, and he uses this opportunity to throw the question back at them: “Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax.” (Mt 22:18-19). Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, “Whose image is this and whose inscription?” They replied, “Caesar’s.” (Mt 22:20-21).

At this, Jesus says to them, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21). St. Matthew then tells us that, “When they heard this, they were amazed, and leaving him they went away” (Mt 22:22).

What is so amazing about Jesus’ response to this question about whether or not it is lawful to pay the tax?

Throughout Christian history, many commentators, including some great saints, have reflected on this Gospel passage. St. Augustine observed, for example, that “we are the coins of God stamped with his image, and God demands the return of his coins as Caesar did the return of his.” St. Ambrose wrote: “Let us give to Caesar the money which bears his inscription, since we cannot do otherwise, but let us give ourselves freely and of our own accord to God, for what our soul bears is the glorious imprint of the face of a God and not the more or less majestic head of an emperor.”

These interpretations demonstrate the “both/and” perspective that is fundamental to the Christian worldview. Jesus is not saying that money and material things are bad and, therefore, can be given to Caesar. Nor does he suggest that only “spiritual” things belong to God.

In fact, everything belongs to God—“all things visible and invisible” as we affirm in the Nicene Creed. Everything that God created is good and belongs to God alone. We are but trusted stewards of God’s creation.

So, when Jesus says, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21), he is reminding the Pharisees (and all of us) that we are responsible for taking care of, and sharing, both our material possessions and our spiritual gifts. “Let us give ourselves freely and of our own accord to God,” as St. Jerome says, because everything that we have belongs ultimately to our Creator. Jesus refuses to fall into the trap of thinking that there is a radical division between spiritual and material things. Since everything belongs to God, regardless of whether we choose to call it “spiritual” or “material,” we will be held accountable for the way we care for all God’s gifts, and we strive to demonstrate our stewardship responsibility by giving back both to God and to the community (represented in our modern democracy by the elected officials who levy taxes and ensure the public good).

When Jesus tells the Pharisees (and all of us) to repay to God what belongs to God, he includes both our material and spiritual gifts. Yes, we have to pay our taxes since, as St. Jerome says, “we cannot do otherwise.” But all of our financial transactions—buying, selling, saving, investing, giving to charities, and paying taxes—have a spiritual dimension because they reflect the profound but simple truth that, in the end, everything belongs to God.

“We are the coins of God stamped with his image,” St. Ambrose reminds us. That means that our primary responsibility is to give ourselves wholeheatedly to God and to our neighbor. Let us never forget this all-important stewardship responsibility.

Jesus nos llama a compartir nuestros dones materiales y espirituales

“Den al César lo que es del César, y a Dios lo que es de Dios” (Mt 22:21).

La lectura del Evangelio de este próximo fin de semana, el 29º domingo del tiempo ordinario, contiene una frase conocida de Jesús en respuesta al intento de los fariseos de atarparle para que diga algo que sería políticamente incorrecto. Conocemos este dicho, pero no siempre lo comprendemos.

Aquello que lo cuestionan comienza con una expresión de adulación obviamente falsa: “Maestro, sabemos que eres amante de la verdad, y que enseñas con verdad el camino de Dios; sabemos también que no permite que nadie influya en ti ni te dejas llevar por las apariencias humanas” (Mt 22:16).

Entonces, cuando creen que ya lo han “endulzado” lo suficiente, le hacen a Jesús una pregunta capciosa: “Por tanto, dímonos tu parecer. ¿Es lícito pagar, o no, el tributo?” (Mt 22:17).


¿Qué tiene de sorprendente la respuesta de Jesús a esta pregunta sobre si es lícito o no pagar el tributo?

A lo largo de la historia cristiana, muchos eruditos, incluidos algunos grandes santos, han reflexionado sobre este pasaje del Evangelio. San Agustín observó, por ejemplo, que “somos las monedas de Dios grabadas sobre su imagen, y Dios exige la devolución de sus monedas como el César exigía la devolución de las suyas.”

Y san Jerónimo dijo: “Demos al César el dinero que lleva su inscripción, ya que no podemos hacer otra cosa, pero demostramos libremente y por nuestra propia voluntad a Dios, pues lo que lleva nuestra alma es la huella gloriosa del rostro de un Dios y no la cabeza más o menos majestuosa de un emperador.”

Estas interpretaciones demuestran la perspectiva del “tanto el uno como el otro” que es fundamental para la visión cristiana del mundo. Jesús no está diciendo que el dinero y las cosas materiales sean malos y, por lo tanto, se puedan dar al César. Tampoco sugiere que solamente lo “espiritual” pertenece a Dios. De hecho, todo pertenece a Dios: “todo lo visible y lo invisible”, como afirmamos en el Credo de Niceno. Todo lo que Dios creó es bueno y pertenece únicamente a Dios. Apenas somos servidores de confianza, administradores de la creación de Dios.

Por eso, cuando Jesús dice: “Den al César lo que es del César, y a Dios lo que es de Dios” (Mt 22:21), les recuerda a los fariseos (y a todos nosotros) que somos responsables de cuidar y compartir tanto nuestras posesiones materiales como nuestros dones espirituales. “Entreguémonos libremente y por nuestra propia voluntad a Dios,” dice san Jerónimo, por lo tanto que tenemos perteneces en última instancia a nuestro Creador.

Pues no se niega a caer en la trampa de pensar que existe una división radical entre lo espiritual y lo material. Puesto que todo pertenece a Dios, los administradores cristianos responsables están llamados a tratar todas las cosas como sagradas y dignas de respeto. Sabemos que tendremos que rendir cuentas por esa forma en que cuidamos de todos los dones de Dios y, por tanto, nos esforzamos para demostrar nuestra responsabilidad como administradores al retuirbar tanto a Dios como a la comunidad representada en nuestra democracia moderna por los cargos electos que recaudan impuestos y velan por el bien público. Cuando Jesús dice a los fariseos (y a todos nosotros) que devolvamos a Dios lo que es de Dios, incluye tanto nuestros dones materiales como espirituales. Sí, tenemos que pagar tributo ya que, como dice san Jerónimo, “no podemos hacer otra cosa.” Pero todas nuestras transacciones financieras—compras, ventas, arriendos, inversiones, donaciones a organizaciones benéficas y pago de impuestos—tienen una dimensión espiritual porque reflejan la profunda pero sencilla verdad de qué, al final, todos pertenecen a Dios.

“Somos las monedas de Dios grabadas con su imagen,” nos recuerda san Agustín. Esta frase que muestra nuestra principal responsabilidad es entregarnos de todo corazón a Dios y a nuestro prójimo. No olvidemos nunca que esta importancia responsabilidad como administradores que somos.”

Cristo, la piedra angular
Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to cntf.by/anniversaries or call 317-236-1585.

No. 14 fundraiser for pregnancy care center will feature former Hebeart International worker Kirk Walden

A fundraiser dinner to support 1st Choice for Women’s efforts to open a pregnancy care center in Indianapolis will take place at The Artium, 3143 Thompson Road, in Indianapolis, from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Nov. 14. The goal is to raise $250,000 to finish necessary construction projects to open 1st Choice for Women’s crisis pregnancy care center on the southwest side of Indianapolis.

The keynote speaker will be Kirk Walden, a pregnancy help ministry worker for more than 30 years. Walden has worked for Heartbeat International, the world’s largest alliance of pregnancy care centers.

Fundraiser for Missy’s Hope Maternity Home is set for Nov. 3 in North Vernon

A fundraiser banquet to raise money for opening Missy’s Hope Maternity Home will take place at St. Mary Parish Center, 212 Washington St., in North Vernon, from 5 to 9 p.m. on Nov. 3.

Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for a meet-and-greet, dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m., and live and silent auctions will continue until 8 p.m.

Dr. Lori Buzzelli will be the keynote speaker. Buzzelli is the founder and president of So Big Maternity Home in Whitestown, Ind. The goal of the banquet is to raise money to open a faith-based maternity home in Jennings County. According to Indiana’s third annual SIDS report, Jennings County has the second highest teen pregnancy rate in the state.

The cost is $55 for the adults-only event. To register or for more information, call text 812-672-4497, or e-mail support@missyshope.org.

For a list of events for the next few weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.criterionindy.org/events
La XVI Asamblea General del Sínodo de los Obispos ha estado llevando a cabo en Roma desde el 4 de octubre, el memorial de san Francisco de Asís. Este encuentro es la culminación de tres años de debates en las diócesis locales y en los grupos continentales que han trabajado arduamente para hacer de la “sinodalidad” una experiencia que pueda transformar la forma en que se lleva a cabo la misión de la Iglesia en la práctica, día a día.

El Papado Francisco está ansioso por hacer de la sinodalidad mucho más que una reunión, o una serie de reuniones, de obispos y otros líderes de la Iglesia. Están convencidos de que el proceso sinodal—que implica un discernimiento piadoso, una escucha atenta y un diálogo respetuoso—es más importante que cualquier reunión de la Iglesia, independientemente de su resultado.

“La sinodalidad no es un capítulo de un libro de texto de eclesiología, ni mucho menos una moda o un eslogan que flaquee en nuestras reuniones. Se trata de una expresión de la naturaleza de la Iglesia, de su forma, estilo y misión. Podemos hablar de la Iglesia como ‘sinodal’, sin reducir esa palabra a una descripción o definición más de la Iglesia. Digo esto no como una opinión teológica, ni siquiera como mi propio pensamiento, sino basándome en lo que puede considerarse el primer y más importante ‘manual’ de eclesiología: los Hechos de los Apóstoles.”

Y tal como lo ve el Papa, aprendemos a ser iglesia al prestar mucha atención a la forma en que los Apóstoles resolvieron las cuestiones importantes, escuchándose unos a otros y dejando que el Espíritu Santo les guiara y dirigiera.

“No hay lugar para la ideología en el sínodo” —afirma el Papa Francisco—. “Es otra dinámica. El sínodo es un diálogo entre bautizados en nombre de la Iglesia, sobre la vida de la Iglesia, sobre el diálogo con el mundo, sobre los problemas que afectan hoy a la humanidad. Pero cuando se lo enfoca desde una perspectiva ideológica, se acaba el sínodo.”

Pensar en función de ideologías (ya sean de derecha o de izquierda) es inaceptable porque se trata de un pensamiento decidido de antemano que perjudica cualquier tipo de debate abierto o de escucha desde el corazón.

Un sínodo es, por definición, una experiencia religiosa basada en la oración. “Sin este espíritu de oración” —asegura el Papa— “no hay sinodalidad, sino política, parlamentarismo.” El Papa Francisco no desea cambiar la doctrina, sino revitalizar la forma en que los católicos bautizados se comprometen con la misión de la Iglesia y considera que la sinodalidad es la mejor manera de lograrlo.

Expresa su visión de la siguiente manera:

La sinodalidad, como elemento constitutivo de la Iglesia, nos ofrece el marco interpretativo más adecuado para comprender el propio ministerio jerárquico. Si entendemos que ‘Iglesia y sínodo’ son sinónimos, ‘la lucha en la que la Iglesia no es otra cosa que el “caminar juntos” del rédito de Dios por los caminos de la historia hacia el encuentro con Cristo el Señor, entonces entendemos también que, dentro de la Iglesia, nadie puede ser “elevado” por encima de los demás. Por el contrario, en la Iglesia es necesario que cada uno se “rebaje” a sí mismo para servir a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en el camino.

Común, misión y participación son los tres términos que se utilizan para describir el Sínodo de los Obispos que se celebra este mes en Roma. El Papa Francisco se toma estas tres palabras muy en serio.

“Común” habla de nuestra unidad: con Cristo y entre nosotros. “Misión” es el trabajo que estamos llamados a realizar como discípulos bautizados de Jesucristo. Y la “participación” de todos (o de tantos como sea posible) es la clave del éxito para llevar a cabo el mandato que nos dio nuestro Señor resucitado al ascender al cielo.

El Papa Francisco cree que con un enfoque más sinodal, la mayoría de los católicos pueden pasar de ser observadores pasivos a desempeñar un papel activo en la vida de la Iglesia. Recemos para que el Espíritu Santo nos guíe y nos inspire a todos a participar plenamente y en oración en la misión de nuestra Iglesia.
great-great-grandfather" who helped
in 2012. Other Catholic families joined them from Ireland as well as Belgium, England, France, Germany and Switzerland. Many of those early settlers’ names still fill the parish roster, names like Banet, Batlinger, Byrne, Duffy, Didat, Receveur and Sprigler. The faith community soon outgrew the 1823 log church. A new church was built on seven donated acres in 1837 with bricks made by parishioners. That church came under threat of attack by the members of the Know Nothing political party, who were prejudiced against foreign-born citizens, in the mid-1850s. “There was a group of about 50 who came from Corydon on horseback to burn down the church,” said John Merck, who recorded fellow parishioners' stories for an anniversary video. “Men of the parish learned of it, and I was told over 100 went to the church with guns,” positioning themselves “behind tombstones” and “sticking guns out of [the church] windows to protect it.” When the priest told the band they were outnumbered, they left without incident. By the early 1900s, the parish again needed a larger church. A new structure was built in 1909, and the former church was razed to expand the parish cemetery. “It was my grandfather who, with a team of horses, cut the road to the [new] brick church and carried the rock to make a road for the parishioners and their horses and buggies,” said lifelong parishioner Mary Ann Duffy, 87. She recalled the same church was “sitting behind tombstones, guns sticking out!” “Thus, the parish continues to
...
BICENTENNIAL

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‘Look back’ but ‘carry torch of faith forward’

Geswein became a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs 17 years ago when she married her husband Nick. The couple, whose three children are now in eighth grade, sixth grade and kindergarten at the school, call St. Mary-of-the-Knobs “the center of our family’s universe,” said Geswein. “My time in the parish is so short when you look at it in 200-year history,” he said. “Still, looking back, it’s amazing to think of all the people who came before and humbling to be even a small part of the long history of this parish.”

Brittany sees the milestone as being “like a call to action,” she said. “Knowing that our parish is 200 years old and it’s up to us to keep it going and evangelizing—it’s humbling but also inspiring.”

Father Marks agreed with both of the Gesweins’ perspectives. “Celebrating a bicentennial calls [us] to look backward with gratitude to God and the faithful who came before us,” he told The Criterion.

“But we are also reminded that our mission continues. We are called to carry the torch of faith forward, to inspire future generations, and to ensure that the legacy of our parish endures as we follow the way of Christ and the Holy Spirit.”

HARTON
continued on page 1

started to spread globally, when she was too busy to show up.

“She was this Facebook ad about a Jesus show that continued at nag at me,” recalls Harton, who is 33. “I thought it would just be another cheesy Christian media project, but laying on the couch gave me the time to find out what it was all about.

“I had recently been diagnosed with ADHD [Attention Deficit, Hyperactivity Disorder] and autism so I was particularly touched when Matthew was portrayed as being on the spectrum, too. God knew that I needed Matthew’s character in ‘The Chosen’ to remind me that God can work all things for good, and that he calls people like me to follow him.

“I binged the whole series and soon found myself praying holy hours online with the devout Catholic man who plays Jesus. That group of virtual prayer warriors was an incredible support of getting me through the pandemic as a lonely person company or consoling someone who is lonely.”

When Harton created a profile and emerged as one of the top earners for the fundraiser, she was invited to come to Utah to be an extra on the show during four days of filming. “The experience was a dream come true,” says Harton, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis. “The environment on set was incredibly hospitable, and everyone felt connected with not only the mission of the show but the mission of heaven.”

“Being around that cast and crew was a glimpse of heaven. I pray that I can bring a piece of that to my work as president of Young Catholic Professionals. If we could all run our businesses or show up to work the way ‘The Chosen’ cast and crew does, this world would most certainly be a better place.”

“That’s her goal for the newly formed Indianapolis chapter of Young Catholic Professionals, the largest professional networking organization for Catholic young adults in the United States. It’s a group where young people can connect through their faith across different fields of work,” Harton says. “I hope that this will encourage people to know that they are not defined by their differences.”

“Following their example helps me to see the face of Christ in their clients and customers—and to know that their employment is an avenue to be the hands and feet of our Lord.”

(For anyone interested in learning more about the Indianapolis chapter of Young Catholic Professionals, send an e-mail to, ycpiindianapolis@gmail.com. The group is also seeking a priest to serve as a chaplain for the chapter and board members to help support the group’s mission and to mentor young professionals.)

PRAYER
continued from page 1

Azerbaijan’s troops in late September. More than 100,000 ethnic Armenians fled.

“In addition to the humanitarian situation of the displaced people—which is serious—I would also like to make a special appeal for the protection of the monasteries and places of worship in the region,” Pope Francis said. “I hope that, starting with the authorities and the local team to keep me accountable in delegating and sharing responsibilities with others, I can help those that I will be able to work the way ‘The Chosen’ cast and crew does, this world would most certainly be a better place.”

“Follow me and find a place in God’s family. He loves you.”

(For anyone interested in learning more about the Indianapolis chapter of Young Catholic Professionals, send an e-mail to, ycpiindianapolis@gmail.com. The group is also seeking a priest to serve as a chaplain for the chapter and board members to help support the group’s mission and to mentor young professionals.)

“Other,” he said, “we struggle to have free time, but today Jesus invites us to find the time that frees the time to dedicate to God, time that lightens and heals our hearts, that increases peace, confidence and joy in us, that saves us from evil, loneliness and loss of meaning.”

Opportunities to be with God and with the people he loves are plentiful, the pope said, pointing to the Mass, to personal Bible reading, helping the poor, keeping a lonely person company or consoling someone who is suffering.
The theme “One mission, one Church, all the archdiocese on Oct. 5 revolved around Mass and dinner in the southern part of Charles C. Thompson’s remarks at the archdiocesan Eucharistic Revival, more Spirit-permeated encounter. Listening. It’s how we discern the Holy Spirit. It’s a lot like the Synod on Synodality. We need to be intentional about listening. "Your gift matters. Reaching our goal helps us to keep us Christ-centered. Archdiocese has had since 1997. "We are 32 archdiocesan seminarians in preplanning for the priesthood, and serve the poor, providing Catholic education to students, helping refugees, preparing seminarians for the priesthood, and caring for religious. Archbishop Thompson spoke of the 72 disciples sent out in pairs by Jesus (Lk 10:1-12). "For whom were the 72 sent out?” he asked. "They were carrying out Christ’s mission, not theirs. That was so important to the Church today. "And he sent them out together. They took healing and reconciliation out to the whole world. But in this time of polarization, when people dehumanize and demonize each other, we are called to healing and reconciliation to the world." Archbishop Thompson recalled a poster that left a lasting impression on him—a photo of a shopping cart in the middle of an empty parking lot with the caption: “If you’re too big to do small things, you’re too small to do big things.” "A lot of the things we do are unseemly,” he said. "A lot of what we are listening. We need to be intentional about listening. It’s a lot like the Synodality. Listening. It’s how we discern the Holy Spirit. Our listening should be a Spirit-permeated encounter. "The Synodal Year of the [National] Eucharistic Revival, more Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Jesus. Only a third of active Catholics believed that [truth] a year ago. Now, according to a new survey, two-thirds do. "Ultimately, it is Christ working in the Holy Spirit, that carries his message of hope. In this way, we are living in a time of paganism, trying to create God in our image.”

Archbishop Thompson said "Our Church has always taught us that every human being is created in the image of God. We need the Eucharist to keep us Christ-centered. When we keep him at the center, nothing’s impossible. Nothing’s too small for us, nothing’s too big.”

"Your gift matters!” at a reception following Archbishop Thompson’s remarks, Robert Genovese, a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Jeffersonville, said, "The UCA shows "the connectedness that we [Catholics] have with each other. That only comes through the Eucharist.”

(Leilie Lynch is a freelance writer for The Criterion. She is a member of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville.)
Michigan grandfather, stigmatist being considered as possible saint

By Joseph O’Brien

OSV News—Irving “Francis” Houle’s death in 2009 didn’t make national news. He wasn’t what the world would consider either a mover or a shaker. But his death touched many in the Michigan Upper Peninsula Diocese of Marquette and around the country—those who knew Houle through his prayer ministry and as a healer of bodies and souls.

By all accounts, Houle led a relatively normal life. He had survived by his wife of 61 years, Gail Houle, and their five children, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was raised on a rural farm in upper Michigan, graduated from a Catholic high school and served in the Army during World War II with an honorable discharge in 1946. He was a factory worker and a member of the Knights of Columbus.

And he also apparently had the stigmata.

Could Houle have a place among the great stigmatists of the Church’s history—including Catherine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, Rita of Cascia and Padre Pio of Pietrelcina? Catholics may find out soon enough. In November 2018, Bishop John F. Doerrler of Marquette, Mich., opened the cause of canonization for Servant of God Irving C. Houle. In June 2019, the Catholic bishops in the U.S. indicated their support for the advancement of the cause at their spring meeting that year in Baltimore.

Houle had prayed for, and apparently received throughout the last 16 years of his life, the privilege to share in Christ’s sufferings as a disciple in a particularly unique way.

As affirmed by the Second Vatican Council, the Church teaches that Jesus Christ “is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation,” with followers of Jesus being united to his sufferings as members of his mystical body, “suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified.”

St. John Paul II, in his 1984 apostolic letter “Salvifici Doloris,” explained that “each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ” (919). This realization caused St. Paul to tell the Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

However, some followers of Christ have manifested this profound truth of the Christian life in their own bodies in a mystical way, through the stigmata.

Sometimes described as “It’s the kind of thing you only see once in your life.”

Father Robert J. Fox, founder and former director of the Alabama-based Fatima Family Apostolate, knows enough about Houle’s life as anyone. He’d written a book about his life titled A Man Called Francis, and he had come to know Houle well since they first met in 1992.

“I remember distinctly the aroma of roses about him,” he said. But he also witnessed enough to make sure his bishop approved of what he was doing.

“He was a very special man,” Fox remarked. “He was the kind of guy that wanted some sort of official recognition of the wounds, satisfied that the man himself was blessing others with his presence and his ministry.”

As the most conspicuous sign of Houle’s own mystical manifestation of the redemptive suffering of Christ, his hands were used to heal—but had themselves a constant reminder of Christ’s eternal wounds.

After Father Fox, Houle first detected pain in his hands on Holy Thursday evening at the Mass of the Lord’s Supper.

“Irrving would go into ecstasies between midnight and 3 a.m.” Father Fox said prior to his death in 2009. “After Good Friday 1993, when he received the stigmata, his wounds would bleed every Holy Thursday night into the Lord’s Supper.

“Father Fox felt a pain that we do not see in most people—Houle’s pain was immense. He would not heal or open up at different times,” Wachs, who was received into the Catholic Church before meeting Houle, said he would willingly stake his entire medical career on the claim that these wounds had no natural medical explanation.

“If the Church ever needed a person to testify about these wounds, I would gladly do it,” he said.

Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland, Ore., served as bishop of Marquette from 2006 to 2013, and had followed his predecessor, Bishop James H. Garland, in granting Houle approval to continue his work of healing among the faithful. A native of the Marquette Diocese, Archbishop Sample said he first met Houle while serving the diocese as a priest.

“I remember distinctly the aroma of roses about him,” he said.

Archbishop Sample’s second meeting with Houle took place shortly after he was ordained and installed as bishop of Marquette. He said he was impressed by Houle’s desire to seek his bishop’s blessing of his ministry.

“He was respectful that way, and wanted to be in communion with his bishop,” he said. “He wanted to make sure his bishop approved of what he was doing.

“He didn’t draw attention to himself,” Archbishop Sample said. “He gave the glory to God and not to himself. That was a confirmation for me that he was authentic.”

As for the stigmatist, the archbishop said neither he nor Bishop Garland sought official confirmation of the wounds, satisfied that the man himself was blessing enough for the Diocese of Marquette.

“He clearly touched the lives of many people,” Archbishop Sample said. “He helped many people, and that certainly was a blessing to the Church and to our diocese.

“I think Irving would be the first to say he wouldn’t want any further attention drawn to himself. He wasn’t the kind of guy that wanted some sort of official recognition or a stigmatist or extraordinary person of healing prayer.”

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(Joseph O’Brien writes from Soldiers Grove, Wis.)

(John O’Brien writes from Soldiers Grove, Wis.)
Listen because God speaks his love to us in many ways

I was sitting in my office at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis, getting ready to come up with some inspiration for this column. The sun was setting off the hook, and there was noise all throughout the building. I was given the chance to really tune out the world and tune into God would be to walk our wooded trails on this beautiful autumn day. As I entered one of our wooded trails, I was immediately startled by several small spiders crawling across the ground. It seemed the trees were dropping crabbles on my head. I tried to keep my senses open to what is all around me. I noticed they had been stained by inspection. It seemed I was incorrect about thinking, "I was definitely going to be OK, so I ventured on."

I looked down and saw the trees were dropping yellow leaves. I’m what everybody says, “I’m no ‘tree-o-elogian”, so I never knew these things for sure. When I looked at my hands, I noticed they had been bitten by the spiders. It reminded me of the blood Jesus spilt for us. I was definitely going the right way.

As I crossed a bridge, I noticed a rather large spider web. I couldn’t help but add its flawlessness. I couldn’t build something without God, who has turned our seemingly "bad" days into a blessing in disguise. I’ve long prided myself on being a “glass is 99% full” person. Until this year, if I had a problem, I was unlikely to say much about it to anyone else. I recognize now that a good portion of what I thought was simply positivity and coping might also be pride and mistrust in the fullness of God’s Mercy.

There’s God again. I continued on.

I walked past the Holy Family shrine. There was a clearing in the trees just above, and the sun’s rays shone luminously onto the shrine. There’s God again.

Senior Standing/Lisa Hensey

Faith calls us to drop to our knees instead of dropping out

“The Lord must love you very much,” a wise friend recently encouraged me. I nodded. I’d just shared with her that a close relative of mine was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. My confidante has been paying close enough attention to my life to know that I was now adding “caregiver” back into my daily job description. This situation is severe. A diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes earlier in the fall and my cancer recurrence struck her as a lot for one person to bear.

“The Lord must love you very much to trust you with falling or failing or dropping away from the weight of it all,” she said. “Instead, you’ll just drop to your knees.”

To be honest, her words gave me pause.

Just a few days earlier, I’d had a fairly severe conversation with God at daily Mass. “What the heck, heavenly Father?” I whined. “I tended mentally in that fragment of silence during the intercessory prayers. “Wouldn’t one of the things you’re asking for be that I know if I can deal with all of this now?”

That day after Mass, I lingered in my pew to chase down a portion of Scripture that had popped into my head. Into my phone I typed, “sufficient grace.” A flurry of ideas and inspirations for this column. I thought, only God could come up with this kind of elegance.

I continued on.

I walked past the Holy Family shrine. There was a clearing in the trees just above, and the sun’s rays shone luminously onto the shrine. There’s God again.

Confronting my physical and emotional weakness and being open and honestly asked to be shown mercy, has turned us to a blessing in disguise. I’ve long prided myself on being a “glass is 99% full” person. Until this year, if I had a problem, I was unlikely to say much about it to anyone else. I recognize now that a good portion of what I thought was simply positivity and coping might also be pride and mistrust in the fullness of God’s Mercy.

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Feeling Weeffie Caldarola

Grandma still uses cash, but updates as needed

It was a beautiful morning for a walk. As I made my way to pick up the young boys manning a lemonade stand.

They were enthusiastically loudly yelling “lemonade” at everyone who stopped back memories.

With three kids, I went back, wishing they were selling lattes. As I paid—Grandma still uses cash—I noted the barcode-taped to their table. Yep, Vennos. Here’s another thing I did not think about.

Lemonade-stands moms, please: try to find some completely paper, compostable cups. I know, we are all weary of apocalyptic climate messaging—and no one likes a lecture—but there are small things we can do and we can’t be putting down on single-use plastic is undeniably tough. Here’s a couple of things I’m trying: I order reusable water bottles and provided huge, single-use plastic glasses for their project. I’m sure back in my day, I did the same thing. But now, of summer, sign-making, the marketing, the sense of camaraderie with neighborhood friends. And, oh yes, the pure motive.

Wow, guys, I haven’t even had coffee yet,” I told the boys. “The boys, “But everyone says,” one of them replied. It was barely 8 o’clock.

And, “I continue, “I don’t have money but I do have my credit card.”

One pipes up: “We Accept Vennos!”

Armed with money, I went back, wishing they were selling lattes. As I paid—Grandma still uses cash—I noted the barcode-taped to their table. Yep, Vennos. Here’s another thing I did not think about. It made a huge difference in plastic usage. You have to advocate for that. That’s why it was a good thing in 2006 when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops helped form Catholic Climate Covenant, a project of education, advocacy and prayer. Their advocacy work encourages our legislators, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies to get on board to do the right things for our Earth.

By googling Catholic Climate Covenant, you can learn how to be part of advocacy for change on a national scale. Maybe you can even encourage your parish to get on board.

In his environmental encyclical, Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis wrote, “When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor sofa, a human embryo, a person with disabilities—to offer just a few examples—it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself or of any other person (217).”

Yes, all of us are connected, and we’re intimately connected to the natural world that is now under assault.

Jesus Father Daniel Bertrigan said, “About practically everything in the world, there’s not much you can do about it, however, about a few things you can do something. Do it, with good heart.”

Help ensure for the next generation, little kids will still have beautiful, mild mornings where lemonade stands beckon, with Venus or without.

(Elfie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmom.)
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, October 22, 2023

- Isaiah 45:1, 4-6
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b
- Matthew 22:15-21

The second part of the Book of Isaiah provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. The context is a bad time for God’s people. The two Hebrew kingdoms no longer existed, both having been victims of a military onslaught from neighboring and very strong Babylonia. These invasions swept away the structures of the two kingdoms. Their ruling dynasties were eradicated. They lost their independence. Many people died. Survivors were at the mercy of the invading armies.

Victorious invaders took many of the survivors to Babylon, the capital of the empire. While the Hebrews were not exactly hostages there, their lives were miserable. Times eventually changed, however. The Babylonians themselves fell before the intrusion of a powerful neighbor, Persia. Cyrus, the Persian king, had no interest in the exiles from the once Hebrew kingdoms. So, he allowed them to return home. For the exiles, it was a day of unparalleled joy. A most novel turn of phrase was the prophet’s depiction of King Cyrus as an instrument of God. It was a novelty since Cyrus was a pagan. He was not in any sense a son of Abraham. He had no knowledge of, or regard for, the God of Israel. His ancestors had never followed Moses across the Sinai Peninsula in the Exodus. Yet, God used Cyrus to accomplish his divine will. The divine will was responsible for the survival of the children of Abraham, for their return to peace and security.

This weekend’s second reading is from St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians. Thessalonica was a city in northern Greece. It is one of the few New Testament cities still existing as an important center, the site of the modern Greek city of Saloniki. The epistle comes from Paul, along with his disciples Silvanus and Timothy. Paul had to reassure, encourage and strengthen Thessalonica’s Christian community, trying to exist amid a hostile pagan culture. He also had to assert his own credentials. Paul insisted that he was a most devout believer in the message of the Lord Jesus.

He was an Apostle, specially chosen by Christ. So, his authority came from the Lord.

St. Matthew’s Gospel provides the last reading. It is one of the best-known passages in the New Testament. In it, Jesus is asked about the morality of paying taxes to the Romans who occupied the Holy Land. Again and again, this text is used to defend the principle of separation of Church and state, as if to say that two reservoirs of authority exist on Earth, equal but distinct—human and God. This is not the Gospel’s message. Jesus faced a question. Detractors thought that they could trick the Lord. By opposing paying taxes, Jesus would have insulted Roman law. The Romans were unforgiving. Jesus would be doomed. If Jesus approved paying taxes, then the Lord seemingly would endorse the hated Roman conquest and occupation.

Jesus fell into neither trap. He bluntly stated that God’s law is supreme. Consider first and last the kingdom of God.

Reflection

Sadly, this magnificent lesson from Matthew’s Gospel often is distorted into arguing for the separation of Church and state, in the modern context, seeing God on one side, civil authority on the other, each with equal standing.

This is the actual message: Reigning supreme over everything is the Gospel. Even civil authority must submit to God’s law and revelation. Church-state relations, freedom of conscience and individual political opinion create differences that are not necessarily bad. In the end, though, all are called to “render to God the things of God” (Mt 22:21).

Since everything is subject to God, first, last, and always, God deserves homage in any human decision. The image on the coin was important. It bore Caesar’s profile, making it contemptible for Jews because Caesar was an oppressor. Give the emperor the detested, filthy coin, only a piece of metal. Give God total devotion of the heart.

The Daily Readings

Monday, October 23

St. John of Capistrano, priest
Romans 4:20-25
(Responsor) Luke 1:69-75
Luke 12:13-21

Tuesday, October 24

St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop
Romans 5:12, 15, 17-19, 20b-21
Psalm 40:7-10, 17
Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday, October 25

Romans 6:12-18
Psalm 124:1-8

Thursday, October 26

Romans 6:19-23
Psalm 1:1-4, 6
Luke 12:49-53

The Question Corner

Jenna Marie Cooper

While private revelations may occur, Church does not obligate belief in them

Q I have a question on discernment of private revelations. I don’t mean big ones like Medjugorje, etc., but individuals who say they “have had a word from the Lord.” Couldn’t this be just human interpretation as God talking? (Ireland)

A Yes, this is a concern. With these kinds of more personal private revelations, we always need to be aware of the possibility that a person could be mistaking their own opinion for God’s will. The Church never expects us to take such revelations uncritically and at face value.

Even the “big” approved private revelations such as those that happened at Lourdes, France, and Fatima, Portugal, are never obligatory for the faithful to believe in, despite being a recognized part of the life of the Church to the point of having feast days on the general liturgical calendar. After very careful objective investigations, the Church only ever acknowledges them as “worthy of belief”—i.e., that we may believe in and follow them, not that we have to.

Because very personal, supposed private revelations like the one you mentioned do not go through any formal approval process, it’s important to regard them with a healthy skepticism.

A theological term for such revelations, which is often used when one is talking about people who have an interior sense of words coming to them, is “locutions.” Locutions are considered extraordinary phenomena. As such, they are not necessary to our life of faith—unlike the essentials of prayer, catechesis, growth in virtue and the sacraments.

In fact, St. John of the Cross, a doctor of the Church and one of the Church’s most famous mystics, taught that we should never expect God to communicate his particular will for us here and now. God will call to task many of us for presuming we know His will when we are not in a state of grace and divine charity.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, written by St. John of the Cross, is considered by many to be the most profound work on the process of discerning God’s will. St. John of the Cross begins the work with the following words: “When I am in the presence of God, I am in His Will. I am not in the Will of the world, nor in the Will of my own soul.”

Locutions can be misinterpreted by good people. But while the discernment of God’s will matters, we shouldn’t misinterpret their own interior experience on the one hand; or, on the other, the danger of becoming so certain about a presumed locution that it distorts the normal responsibilities of a faithful Catholic. We should always be humble and prayerful in our understanding of the messages we receive.

It’s important for such people to bring up their perceived revelations in an honest and open way with a confessor or qualified spiritual director. And any spiritual experience that leads someone to commit a sin, to disobey legitimate authority in the Church or believe something contrary to the Church’s teachings, should automatically be rejected as a false revelation.

That being said, we as Catholics do believe that God can and does communicate his will to us. This is why our vocation or state in life or discerning how to apply the teachings of the Gospel in specific concrete situations. Another great spiritual master, St. Ignatius Loyola (most famous as the founder of the Jesuits), wrote extensively on the process of discerning God’s will.

St. Ignatius acknowledges the possibility that God might, in rare situations, make his will known in extraordinary ways, such as through locations and visions. But it’s far more common that God will communicate with us in subtle ways and in the context of a regular and devoted prayer life.

Namely, when we are striving for holiness and make a point to be open to God in prayer, we will know something is of God by the sense of peace we feel, and we will likewise know that what is not God’s will for us when it induces a sense of anxiety.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose weekly column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.)
In memoriam of unborn lives

Despite prejudices, Catholics helped rescue Jews in Nazi-occupied Italy

Before anti-Semitism was declared a sin with the Second Vatican Council, it was commonplace for Catholics "to think of Jews and Judaism as something dangerous, something different," said Suzanne Brown-Fleming, director of international academic programs at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, opening the conference on Oct. 9.

However, many Catholics overcame these prejudices to rescue some Jews in danger, "sometimes at the cost of their lives. Others did not. And that's what their house would do, with many helping, and some not.

"Thousands of people were helping thousands of other people," in a kind of underground popular movement after decades of dictatorship, said Picciotto.

Sister Grazia Loparco, a professor of Church history at Rome's Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences "Ave Angeli," said it is highly unlikely Pope Pius XII directly wrote an order to hide Jews and others because a written directive would have been too risky. "However, that he was aware and that he supported this is very clear" since the cloistered monasteries had been given permission to do so.

She told the conference that oral communication in the Church hierarchy "worked very well in Rome." Every morning a priest from the Vatican or the Diocese of Rome visited each women's monastery to ensure the cloistered nuns were successful in hiding Jews.

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Picciotto said the visitor, identified only as Father Giovanni, directly found shelter for 176 people—civilian fighters and Jews—in the monasteries and convents he oversees.

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She told the conference that oral communication in the Church hierarchy “worked very well in Rome.” Every morning a priest from the Vatican or the Diocese of Rome visited each women’s religious house in order to celebrate Mass, making it “very easy” to pass along information.†
President of University of Notre Dame to step down at end of academic year

(OSTV News)—The longtime president of the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana will step down at the end of the current academic year to return to teaching and ministry at the school.

John J. Brennan, a Holy Cross priest, announced the news on Oct. 13, according to a media release posted by the university.

Elected in 2005 as the university’s 17th president, Father Jenkins was most recently re-elected by Notre Dame’s trustees to his fourth five-year term in 2021. The search is now underway for the university’s next president, who will be elected by the trustees from among the university’s board of lay and religious trustees and fellows.

In the same release, the university also noted that John B. Veihmeyer, the retired chairman of KPMG International, has been elected as chair of Notre Dame’s board of trustees, effective June 2024 and succeeding current chair John J. Brennan.

Father Jenkins said his tenure as president had been “both a privilege and a calling.” Brennan said that the university “is and has been incredibly blessed by Father Jenkins’ courageous and visionary leadership,” which had been directed toward building “a great Catholic university for the 21st century.”

A search is now underway for the university’s next president. It will be conducted by the trustees from among the priests of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, which founded the school in 1842. The school’s governance was transferred to the congregation to a two-tiered board of lay and religious trustees and fellows.

Under Father Jenkins’ leadership, Notre Dame saw significant growth and expansion, particularly in its research initiatives, global engagement, student diversity and financial resources. The school was admitted this year to the Association of American Universities, which represents the nation’s leading research universities.

In addition, Notre Dame enjoys partnerships with a number of schools throughout the nation and the world. The university operates Global Gateways in Rome, Dublin, Jerusalem, Beijing and London, as well as six Global Centers in Hong Kong, Ireland, Mexico City, Mumbai, São Paulo and Santiago.

At the same time, Father Jenkins faced criticism from those opposed to the university’s policies related to health care, civil discourse and has served as a longtime member of the Commission on Presidential Debates.

Bishop Rhoades, who is presently in Rome attending the Synod on Synodality, gave a statement that it was “wrong for Notre Dame to honor any ‘pro-choice’ public official with the Laetare Medal.” Similarly, a 2009 commencement address by President Barack Obama (part of the university’s custom of having U.S. presidents speak at the school graduation while in office) sparked backlash.

“I am grateful that, in promoting the growth of research at the university, Father Jenkins has promoted the moral, spiritual, and religious dimensions of that research, an important part of Notre Dame’s distinctive Catholic identity,” he said. “I am also grateful for Father Jenkins’ commitment to the pastoral ministry at Notre Dame and the spiritual welfare of the students, his dedication to Notre Dame’s service of our local Church as well as the wider Church throughout the world, and for his advocacy of civility in public discourse, so much needed in our nation and world today.”

Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C.

### Classified Directory

**Archdiocese of Indianapolis Maintenance Technicians**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking to hire part-time and full-time maintenance technicians.

The person hired for this job will work as a member of the Catholic Center Staff. This person may be asked to do maintenance at any one of our associated properties in Indianapolis. The part-time position can have flexible hours. The full-time position can be either a four day or five day a week position totaling forty hours a week.

The major responsibility of the person in this position is to keep the Archdiocese’ buildings and property in good working condition. Knowledge in the areas of: Mechanical, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, and painting is a plus.

The person in this job will need to be an independent thinker.

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- Good communications are required to prevent scheduling conflicts and insure access to work.
- A candidate for the position needs to have had some prior maintenance experience.
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VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The life of St. Josephine Bakhita, a former slave from Sudan who became a nun, demonstrates how love liberates people from oppression and breaks cycles of hatred and violence, Pope Francis said.

“Often, a wounded person wounds in turn; the oppressed easily becomes an oppressor,” the pope said on Oct. 11 at his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square. In contrast, he said, St. Josephine teaches people that “forgiveness takes away nothing but adds dignity to the person; it makes us lift our gaze from ourselves toward others, to see them as fragile as we are, yet always brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

Continuing a series of audience talks highlighting saints who demonstrate zeal or passion for evangelization, Pope Francis said St. Josephine’s life story shows how “forgiveness is the wellspring of a zeal that becomes mercy and calls us to a humble and joyful holiness.”

St. Josephine, who lived from 1869-1947, was abducted and enslaved at the age of 7. “She suffered cruelty and violence. On her body she bore more than a hundred scars,” the pope said. And yet, she wrote, “I never despaired, because I felt a mysterious force supporting me.” Later she was given a crucifix—the first thing she ever owned—and, the pope said, “looking at it, she experienced a profound inner liberation, because she felt understood and loved and therefore capable of understanding and loving in turn. This is how it begins. One feels understood, loved and is then able to understand and love others.”

Having compassion, he said, “means suffering with the victims of the many forms of inhumanity present in the world as well as pitying those who commit errors and injustices—not justifying them, but humanizing them.”

Love, forgiveness liberate, break cycles of violence, Pope Francis says

Celebrating a Filipino Saint

Filipino members of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora and St. Luke Parish in Nicholasville, Ky., pose in front of the altar of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church on Sept. 28 after a Mass celebrating the feast day of St. Lorenzo Ruiz, the first saint from the Philippines. The Mass was celebrated in the Tagalog language by Father Aldrin Tayag, pastor of St. Luke Parish in Nicholasville. He was assisted by Deacon Kevin Daly of St. Lawrence Parish. (Submitted photo).

Celebrating Milestones and Honorees

Location
JW Marriott Indianapolis

Time
Reception 6 p.m.
Program and Dinner 7 p.m.

RSVP at:
marian.edu/gala

All proceeds received through the Marian University Gala will benefit our Journey to 2030 effort to secure a better future for our university and students.

Join Marian University for our annual Gala

On November 3, President Daniel J. Elsener and event emcee Rafael Sánchez will take you through an unforgettable evening honoring individuals who have significantly impacted our community, and share our progress on the Journey to 2030: Always Forward strategic plan.

Visit marian.edu/gala to:
• Purchase a table or individual tickets.
• Explore sponsorship opportunities.
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To be a great Catholic university dedicated to providing students with excellent teaching and learning in the Franciscan and liberal arts tradition. We welcome students of all faiths who seek an educational experience framed within the context of our values.

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Al Leighton ’62 and Kathy Fox ’75

John A. Purdie Innovator and Mentor of the Year
Teresa Lubbers
President, Sagamore Institute; former Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education

Franciscan Values Honoree
Ted Gary
Owner, AMG Engineering & Machining

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NOVEMBER 3, 2023