We are called to ‘dream’ of a Church that is a servant to all humanity, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—To reform the Church is to put God first and adore him, and to love and serve others, Pope Francis said at Mass marking the conclusion of the first session of the Synod of Bishops on synodality.

“The Synod of Bishops is the place where the Church listens to each other and to the Spirit,” said the pope at Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Oct. 29. “It is the great and perennial reform,” he said.

Thousands of faithful stood at the start of Mass as synod members and participants processed into the basilica. The procession was led by non-ordained members followed by bishops and then cardinals. The synod on synodality marked the first time laypeople and women religious were voting members. Of the total 364 members, close to 25% were “non-ordained members,” and 54 of them were women.

“The Church is on the side of the most vulnerable, of our brothers and sisters,” the pope said in his homily. “It is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters; a Church that never demands an attestation of ‘good behavior,’ but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives; a Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy,” he said.

We may have plenty of good ideas on how to reform the Church, but let’s remember to adore God and to love our brothers and sisters with his love, that is the great and perennial reform,” the pope said in his homily at Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Oct. 29.

“A Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters; a Church that never demands an attestation of ‘good behavior,’ but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives; a Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy,” he said.

“Let us now talk about his love for you, personally.”

The photo captures Kerin O’Rourke Buntin in a moment of pure joy. Buntin is beaming as she stands in front of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on May 20, her whole body outstretched toward the heavens.

“The scene reflects the feeling that fills her—‘as if a perpetual blanket of peace and love was wrapped around me,’” she says. “In that moment, she also feels God’s presence all around her, knowing in her heart that he has delivered her from one of the darkest times in her life, a time when she felt ‘guilty and unworthy.’”

“The photo captures Kerin O’Rourke Buntin in a moment of pure joy. Buntin is beaming as she stands in front of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on May 20, her whole body outstretched toward the heavens. The scene reflects the feeling that fills her—‘as if a perpetual blanket of peace and love was wrapped around me,’” she says.

God makes his presence known in special way at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House

When I reflect on how God has made his presence known to me, the answer comes in the form of a place: Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. I like to go there when they offer silent retreats. So often have I heard God at those times that I have come to call the place “my own Mount Tabor.”

One year during a silent retreat there, I was struggling with believing in God’s love for me. I “knew” he loved me, but I didn’t feel loved. Rather, I had long come to see God as a cold and distant judge who always found me lacking.

I had brought with me a book of retreat talks based on the teachings of St. Thérèse of Lisieux called I Believe in Love by Father Jean du Coeur de Jesus D’Elbee. I had read a few pages already, which to that point had addressed God’s love for all people.

“God, I just don’t understand how you could love me,” I prayed, curled up in the recliner in my private room for a three-day stay.

I heard an internal voice distinctly say, “Get the book.”

I didn’t question the fact that I heard a voice, but I did question its command.

“But all it’s talked about is how you love others. I need to know you love me,” I whined.

Again the words, spoken a bit more insistently: “Get the book.”

So I did. I opened it up and continued to read where I had left off.

The very next words in the book were God’s direct answer to my concern: “We have spoken of his love for everyone,” I read. “Let us now talk about his love for you, personally.”

The next seven pages are now so covered in underlines, stars,
saint of broken marriages. And she prayed to St. Faustina, the patron saint of mercy, for a different reason. "What happened next had to be the grace of God," she recalls. "It felt as if a blanket of peace and love was wrapped around me.

The feeling at St. Peter was a holy moment right up there with the birth of Christ in the mysteries and virtues of the holy rosary. Now I see why so many of the saints found respite in the rosary.

The joy that filled her that day in St. Peter's Square has stayed with her. "I am not the same woman I was years ago," she says, "I have a healthy perspective, and life is radically better. That feeling of being embraced by God's love continues for Buntin.

"My relationship with God now is a continuous trust walk," she says. "God continues to open doors for me to walk with others who are on a similar journey."

She described what the Church officially calls a "declaration of marriage nullity." Buntin began writing a journal, reflecting on her thoughts and feelings and that he hasn't changed, then who is love, so if he doesn't change, then who is love. She continued from page 1A

explanation points and notes that the words of the text are almost obscured. That was during one of her retreats.

On day two, I sat in the chapel listening to the priest's homily during Mass. I was paying attention, my mind for once not adrift, when again I heard a voice.

"I haven't changed," it said. Just like that, out of the blue, unsolicited and completely unrelated to the priest's homily or my prayer.

As I prayed about the experience after Mass, understanding washed over me: "God hasn't changed, God is love, so if he doesn't change, then he is still love. Therefore, I'm the one who has changed my perception of him."

God addressed that revelation further through the guidance of the spiritual director he had been assigned for the duration of my retreat. I met with him shortly after Mass, and I shared with him the two God-moments I'd experienced.

"If God is telling you he loves you

not see the full fruit of this process, but with this fattened sight we look to the horizon opening up before us. "The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel," he said.

As the Church concludes this stage of its journey, he said, "it is important to look at the 'principle and foundation' from which everything begins anew: love."

"Loving God with our whole life and loving our neighbors as ourselves," he said, "is the heart of everything." The way to channel this love is to adore God and serve one another, he said.

"We have lost the habit of adoration," the pope said, calling on all priests, dioceses, parishes and communities to "return to worship" and adore the Lord. "Only in his presence will we be purified, cleansed and renewed by the fire of his Spirit.

To adore God means "to acknowledge in faith that he alone is Lord and that our individual lives, the Church's pilgrim way and the ultimate outcome of history all depend on the tenderness of his love. He gives meaning to our lives," he said.

"We are always at risk of thinking that we can 'control God,' that we can confine his love to our own agenda. Instead, the way he acts is always unpredictable and consequently demands amazement and adoration," Pope Francis said. The path of idolatry is "wanting the Lord to act according to the image we have of him."

He said the Church needs to be "a worshiping Church and a Church of service, washing the feet of wounded humanity, accompanying those who are frail, weak and lost aside, going out lovingly to encounter the poor," as God commanded.

"It is a grave sin to exploit the vulnerable, a grave sin that corrodes fraternity and devastates society," he said, and, "as disciples of Jesus, we desire to bring to the world a different type of heaven, that of the Gospel."

Quoting St. John Chrysostom, he said that those who are merciful are like a safe harbor to those in need, so "when you see a man suffering shipwreck through poverty, do not sit in judgment on him, nor require explanations, but reli

Later in the day, before praying the midday Angelus, the pope again reflected on the Lord's command to love God and neighbor. He held up the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta as someone "who was so little," but was still "able to do much good—by reflecting God's love like a drop of clear water.

If at times, looking at her and other saints, we might be moved to think that they are heroes that cannot be imitated, let us think again about that small drop," which reflects love and "can change many things," he said.

"How?" the pope asked. By taking the first step to love and serve those in need without waiting for others to act, even though this is not easy. "

Moving? We'll be there waiting if you give us two weeks' notice! Use the form below or at archcatholic.org/moving.

Deadline: 11/03/23

Name __________________________
Email __________________________
Address __________________________
City __________________________
State __________________________
Zip __________________________
New Parish __________________________
Effective Date __________________________
Note: If you are receiving duplicate copies please send both labels.

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Synthesis shows agreement, divergences, including on ‘synodality’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A report summarizing discussions at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops said the Church may need more welcoming pastoral approaches, especially to people who feel excluded, but also acknowledged fears of betraying traditional Church teachings and practices.

Among the topics addressed in the report were clerical sexual abuse, women’s roles in the Church, outreach to poor and the concept of “synodality” itself.

The assembly, with 364 voting members—365 counting Pope Francis—met in working sessions six days a week on Oct. 4-28 after a three-day retreat outside of Rome. After the voting on the synthesis concluded, the pope said he wanted to remind everyone that “the protagonist of the synod is the Holy Spirit.” He briefly thanked the synod officers and joined members of the assembly in giving thanks to God.

The assembly’s discussions set the stage for a year-long period of reflection that will culminate in the second and final synod assembly in late 2024 on the same topic. The 41-page synthesis report, voted on by paragraph-by-paragraph on Oct. 28, described its purpose as presenting “convergences, matters for consideration and proposals that emerged from the dialogue” on issues discussed under the headings of synodality, communion, mission and participation.

According to the report, every item in the report was approved by at least two-thirds of the members present and voting, synod officials said. They published a complete list of the votes.

Within the synod topics, members looked at the role of women in the Church, including in decision making, and at the possibility of ordaining women deacons. The report noted that two-thirds support but still garnered more negative votes than any other item, passing 277 to 69. Assembly members also discussed pastoral approaches to welcoming and including in the life of parishes people who have felt excluded, including the poor, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ Catholics and Catholics whose marriages are not recognized by the Church.

The synthesis report did not use the term “LGBTQ+” or even “homosexuality” and spoke only generally of issues related to “matters of identity and sexuality.”

Jesuit Father James Martin, a synod member involved in outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics, told Catholic News Service, “From what I understand, there was too much pushback to make using the term ‘LGBTQ’ viable, even though it was contained in the ‘Instrumentum Laboris,’ or synod working document.”

“This opposition came up often in the plenary sessions, along with others who argued from the other side, that is, for greater inclusion and for seeing LGBTQ people as people and not an ideology,” he said.

The synthesis said that “to develop authentic ecclesial discernment in these and other areas, it is necessary to approach these questions in the light of the Word of God and Church teaching, properly informed and reflected upon.”

“In order to avoid repeating vacuous formulas, we need to provide an opportunity for a dialogue involving the human and social sciences, as well as philosophical and theological reflection,” it added.

The divergences in the assembly, it said, reflected opposing concerns: that “if we use doctrine harshly and with a judgmental attitude, we betray the Gospel; if we practice mercy ‘on the cheap’, we do not convey God’s love.”

Still, it said, “in different ways, people who feel marginalized or excluded from the Church because of their marriage status, identity or sexuality, also ask to be heard and accompanied. There was a deep sense of love, mercy and compassion felt in the Assembly for those who are or feel hurt or neglected by the Church, who want a place to call ‘home’ where they can feel safe, be heard and respected, without fear of feeling judged.”

The report emphasized the “listening” that took place on the local, national and continental levels before the assembly, and the “conversations in the Spirit” that took place during it, which involved each person speaking in his or her small group, other participants at first commenting only on what struck them, silent reflection and then discussion.

See SYNOD page 124
Editor
Pope John XXIII signs his encyclical “Pacem in Terris” (“Peace on Earth”) at the Vatican in this 1963 file photo. (CNS photo)

Peace on Earth

The encyclical that Pope St. John XXIII published in 1963, “Pacem in Terris” (“Peace on Earth”) is a passionate and compellingly urgent call for an end to the wars that, as Pope Francis says, “are always a defeat, always!?” Perhaps we would do well to revisit the message that Good Pope John tried to teach us some 60 years ago.

Pope John begins his encyclical with an affirmation of the fundamental truth that God alone is the author of all things visible and invisible. He is the one who establishes the necessary conditions for peace.

Thus, St. John tells us that “Peace on Earth—which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after—can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order” (#1).

In other words, it is human sinfulness, our deliberate refusal to live as God intended, that begat violence, injustice and war among the nations and peoples who inhabit the world that God created. A real and lasting peace can never be achieved among us until we dedicate ourselves completely to the restoration of God’s plan for us, his children.

What would it take to build a world order that reflects God’s plan? What must we do to place the good of all over the political, economic or social interests of the few individuals or organizations that set the agendas that provoke violence, hatred and injustice over the peace we desperately need and seek? What are the necessary conditions for a true and lasting peace—in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, and in all the areas of the world that are suffering from violence and the absence of freedom?

“Pacem in Terris” outlines the following conditions for genuine peace on Earth, which while framed understandably in Christian terms, apply equally to all religions, cultures, political and economic systems.

The first condition is a recognition of the greatness of God, who alone made the world and everything in it. Without a keen awareness of the grandeur and glory of the Divine Majesty, mankind ceases to search for God’s kingdom of justice and peace. Earthly kingdoms, no matter how well intended, always fall far short of the kingdom of peace and love that is the ultimate destiny of all humanity.

The second condition is an absolute reverence and respect for human dignity. “Any well-regulated and productive association of men in society demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual is truly a person,” St. John writes (#9). Human persons “have a nature that is, endowed with intelligence and free will. As such, they have rights and duties, which to together flow as a direct consequence from this nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable” (#9).

There can be no real peace without an absolute regard for the inalienable rights of all regardless of race, ethnicity, or political and economic circumstances.

Third, John XXIII tells us that “human society can be neither well-order nor prosperous without the presence of those who, invested with legal authority, preserve its institutions and do all that is necessary to sponsor actively the interests of all its members” (#46).

As social beings who live in ordered communities, men and women need to be led by people, St. John says, “derive their authority from God, for, as St. Paul teaches, there is no power but from God” (#46).

Authoritative leadership is a necessary condition for peace, but it’s important that leaders understand that their authority comes from God and is intended only for the good of those they serve.

“The attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities,” St. John says. “In working for the common good, therefore, the authorities must obviously respect its nature, and at the same time adjust their legislation to meet the requirements of the given situation” (#54).

Finally, we learn from “Pacem in Terris,” that “the world will never be the dwelling place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every man, till every man preserves in himself the order ordained by God to be preserved” (#165).

Peace is not something that someone else is responsible for. It begins with every individual person and extends outward to local, regional, national and global authorities.

May the Prince of Peace who sacrificed his whole life to bring justice, mercy and compassion to our world, show us the way to achieve lasting peace on Earth.

—Daniel Conroy

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters should be typed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@catholicindy.org.
Al igual que los santos, vivamos con humildad y sirvamos al prójimo desinteresadamente.

“El que sea más importante entre ustedes, su serío de todos. Porque el que se enaltece será humillado, y el que se humilla será enaltecido” (Mt 23:11-12).

Este fin de semana, en la lectura del Evangelio del trigésimo primer domingo del tiempo ordinario (Mt 23:1-12), Jesús nos dice que el servicio y la humildad son esenciales en su forma de vida, lo cual contrasta fuertemente con el modo de ejercer la autoridad de los líderes religiosos de la época de Jesús.

Como nos recuerda con frecuencia el Papa Francisco, ninguno de nosotros es perfecto sino que somos pecadores llamados por el Señor a proclamar la Buena Nueva de nuestra salvación en Cristo y a atender las necesidades de los demás. No siempre conseguimos practicar lo que predicamos.

Nuestra humildad pecaminosa está constantemente a nuestro alrededor, tentándonos a anteponer nuestros propios deseos a los de aquellos a quienes servimos. Por eso debemos confiar en la misericordia del Señor para que nos perdonen cuando no estemos a la altura de nuestro llamado banal y de nuestras vocaciones particulares. También es la razón por la que debemos confiar en que, por el poder del Espíritu Santo, la gracia de Dios hará por nosotros lo que no podemos hacer por nuestra cuenta.

Todos los que han sido bautizados tienen el reto de servir elamtamente en Jesús’ nombre. Por eso debemos confiar tanto en su ejemplo como con su ejemplo.

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Toda la vida de Jesús, su ministerio dedicado su vida al servicio humilde de Dios hará por nosotros lo que no podemos hacer por nuestra cuenta.

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November 6 Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Movie Night at Fatima: Jesus Revolution. 5:30-9 p.m., includes dinner, popcorn, refreshments, $16. Registration: tm@prochurch.org

November 6, 13, 27 St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 4720 E. 130th St., Indianapolis. Jesus and the Eucharist Bible Study. 6:30-8 p.m., final three of seven Thursday evening stand-alone sessions, content also available through formation, free registration preferred. Information: 317-506-0060, czechder@earthemail.com.

November 7 Holy Trinity Cemetery, 2473 Green Valley Road, New Albany. Burial Service forMiscarried Babies, 4-5 p.m., followed by a Mass lead by Conventual Franciscan Father. Information: Teri Popp, 812-944-0417, teri.ccna@gmail.com.

November 7, 14 Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 5335 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Parish Mass, 7 p.m., registration information: Franciscan Sister Maria Frances, 812-944-0417.

November 9 Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Rd, Indianapolis, Gold Mass Even More Scientists, Presentation 4:30-5:20 p.m. In E. Witcher School of Biomedical Engineering, Dr. Christopher Rasb presenting “Tissue engineering: Organ Transplantation, and the Church,” Mass 5-30 p.m. in St. Joseph’s Chapel, Wagger Hall followed by reception in engineering collaboration. Free admission, campus parking passes provided with registration. RSVP requested by Nov. 7. Information: registration: cischuh@iu.edu

November 9 Our Lady of the Apostles Family Center, 2884 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Thanksgiving Day: “The Joy of Being a Grandmother” An Expression of Our Feminine Genius. 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. prayers, talks, activities—sponsored by Regionum Christi of Greater Indianapolis, lunch included, suggested donation $30.00. Information: 317-498-7512, buddihunter@gmail.com.

November 9 St. Mary Parish, 1331 Hunter Robbins Way, Greenwood. Holiday Shopping Expo, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., free admission. Information: 812-663-2804, holidayexpo@stmarysgreensburg.com.


November 12 Mount St. Joseph Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Contemplative Prayer, in person or via Zoom. 2:3 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittke presenting, free will donation, information registration: 317-832-6437, oldenburg@franciscansusa.org.

November 12 Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Grieving Our Losses. 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittke presenting, $45, includes lunch and Mass Registration: tm@prochurch.org/events. 317-545-7681, knowe@archindy.org.

November 13 St. Louis de Montfort to host free Thanksgiving Day dinner on Nov. 23. A free dine-in or take-out Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetables, rolls and dessert will be offered in Craig Willy Hall at St. Louis de Montfort Parish, 11441 Hague Road, in Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on Nov. 23. All are welcome. For more information, call 317-517-4256.

November 14 Our Lady of Providence: Monthly Prayer with Sisters

November 15 Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave, Indianapolis. Mass, 2 p.m.

November 16 Our Lady of Peace Community Center, 1001 Havenstick Road, Indianapolis. Mass, 2 p.m. Information: 317-888-4189, cathedralsm@archindy.org.

November 16 Be the Poor, Celebrate the Poor: A Latino Youth Retreat, 5 p.m., registration: 812-825-4642 ext. 1. To obtain more information, contact Dr. Carmen Hernandez, IPI coordinator, at 317-261-3381 or e-mail chernandez@archindy.org.


November 18 Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Grieving Our Losses. 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittke presenting, $45, includes lunch and Mass Registration: tm@prochurch.org/events. 317-545-7681, knowe@archindy.org.

November 18 Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Advent of a Day of Quiet Renewal, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., $20, $30 with spiritual direction. Information and registration 812-933-6437, oldenburg@franciscansusa.org.

December 6 Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5335 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Mt. Mary’s Square—A Season of Joy and Peace. 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Mass, lunch and use of the common areas are included. Additional $10.

December 6 Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 5335 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Annual Christmas Bazaar. 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Information: 317-845-1267.

December 6 Our Lady of Providence: Monthly Prayer with Sisters

December 6 Saint Meinrad Archcarmy Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. The Advent Mysteries—An Evening of Reflection—James Farrell presenting, includes a private room for the day and lunch; spiritual direction is available. Cost of $30.

December 9 The archdiocese’s Intercollegiate Pastoral Institute (IPI) is hosting a women’s conference from 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on Dec. 9 at Holy Trinity Church, 100 Keeley St., in Edinburgh. The theme of the gathering is from the Book of Proverbs: “She is clothed with strength and dignity” (Prv 31:25). All women are invited. Speakers will include Dominican Father Oscar Castellanos, director for the Initiative for Parish Renewal (Renovación) at Marian University in Indianapolis, and Mariana Father Jofé Ferrey Aragón Britez, associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis.

December 9 The conference will be a day of meditation and reflection that will include Mass and the opportunity for women to take part in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available, and lunch is included. Cost is $30.

For more information, contact Dr. Carmen Hernandez, IPI coordinator, at 317-261-3381 or e-mail chernandez@archindy.org.

Events Calendar

Intercultural Pastoral Institute celebrating a conferencia de mujeres de habla hispana el 9 de diciembre

El Instituto Pastoral Intercultural celebrara una conferencia de mujeres de habla hispana el 9 de diciembre

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

Retreats and Programs

Retreat centers offer Advent-related retreats in November and December

To help prepare hearts for the coming of the Lord at Christmas, several retreat centers in the archdiocese are offering Advent-related retreats in November and December. Here is a compilation of the sites and their Advent-related offerings:

Benedict Im Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southaven St., Beech Grove. Information and registration: www.benedictim.org, 317-788-7581, benedictim@archindy.org.

—Dec. 4, Advent Mysteries: An Evening of Reflection, 6-9 p.m., Father James Fleming presenting, includes dinner, $45 credit card, $40 cash or check.

—Dec. 13, Personal Day of Retreat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., includes a private room for the day and lunch; spiritual direction is available. Additional $30, must be scheduled in advance.

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Rd. 48, Fishers. Information and registration: 317-825-4642 ext. 1.

—Dec. 21, Advent Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Dominican Father Reginald Wolford presenting “The Hope of the Advent Wreath for the Order of Preachers,” free will offering accepted; no advance registration required.

Saint Meinrad Archcarmy Guesthouse, 100 Hill Dr, St. Meinrad. Nov. 21: Advent Workshop—It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year? 9 a.m.-5 p.m. CT, topics include “The Scripture of Advent,” “Advent is Not Lent,” and “Keeping Advent surrounded by Christmas.” Benedictine Father Jeremy King presenting, $55 Registration: saintmeinrad@archindy.org.

Our Lady of Providence: Monthly Prayer with Sisters

El Instituto Pastoral Intercultural iniciará una conferencia para mujeres de habla hispana el 9 de diciembre

El Instituto Pastoral Intercultural (IPI) de la Arquidiócesis está organizando una conferencia para mujeres de habla hispana de 9:30 a.m. a 3:30 p.m. el 9 de diciembre en la Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad ubicada en 100 Keeley St., en Edinburgh. El tema de la reunión procede de Proverbios: “Se reviste de fidelidad y de hombría” (Prv 31:25). Todas las mujeres están invitadas.

Speakers will include Dominican Father Oscar Castellanos, director de la Iniciativa para la Renovación Parroquial (Renovación) de la Universidad de Marian de Indianapolis, y el Mariana Father Jofé Ferrey Aragón Britez, párroco asociado de la parroquia del Espíritu Santo de Indianapolis. La conferencia será una meditación y reflexión que incluirá Misas y la oportunidad para que las participantes compartan su experiencia de la Renovación del Santísimo Sacramento. También estará disponible el sacramento de la reconciliación para todas las mujeres que lo deseen. La conferencia tendrá un costo de $30.

Para obtener más información, comuníquese con la Dra. Carmen Hernández, coordinadora del IPI, coordinador, al 317-261-3381 o en correo electrónico a chernandez@archindy.org.

St. Louis de Montfort to host free Thanksgiving Day dinner on Nov. 23

A free dine-in or take-out Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetables, rolls and dessert will be offered in Craig Willy Hall at St. Louis de Montfort Parish, 11441 Hague Road, in Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on Nov. 23. All are welcome. For more information, call 317-517-4256.

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

In so many stories, the Gospels recount what priests and religious like to call “vocation stories.” They tell us about men and women chosen by Jesus for a special type of service.

No vocation story is quite the same, but they always start with Jesus. He finds who he wants and then issues a call.

Many examples come to mind from the Scriptures. Jesus summons Matthew out of his counting house. He invites James and John and a host of others out of their fishing boats. He tells Mary Magdeline to spread the news of his resurrection.

Each vocation story starts with Jesus calling and the recipient answering. One of the biggest mistakes we can make is to think of Jesus simply as a historical figure. He is the God-man who lived in the past. He worked miracles, taught people and called them to service—all in the past.

Why is this a mistake? Because Jesus is alive in the most holy Eucharist! Jesus Christ has all the same powers in the Eucharist that he had when he walked the Earth 2,000 years ago. He is still working miracles, healing and teaching, and yes, he is still calling men and women to serve him by laying down their lives.

In tabernacles and monstrances around the world, and lain on altars simple and fancy, there is the living Jesus. Alive in the Eucharist, Jesus is still calling men and women to sing God’s praises and lead all humanity to his kingdom.

Because each vocation starts with Jesus, each vocation necessarily starts with the Eucharist. Looking for a way to know your vocation? Go to the Eucharist, the living Jesus!

Trying to grow and mature in your vocation and find the strength you need to persevere in it? Go to the Eucharist, the living Jesus!

Trying to find a way to call on Jesus, the master of the harvest, to increase the number of laborers for his harvest? Go to the Eucharist, the living Jesus!

There is no more beautiful sight than a burning sanctuary lamp flickering in the nearest Catholic church. For as long as that light flickers, Jesus is there calling men and women for special service from our parishes and families.

Not only does every vocation start with the Eucharist, but every vocation matures with the Eucharist, is held together by the Eucharist and reaches its fulfillment in the Eucharist—because the Eucharist is the living Jesus!

As you read this year’s Vocations Awareness Supplement, pray for our priests who bring the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus to our altars and into our souls. Pray for our seminarians in formation who hunger for the day of their first Masses. Pray for our deacons who serve humbly at the altar and from the altar. Pray for our religious men and women vowed to the eucharistic Lord, for whom the Eucharist is their portion and cup.

And pray, too, for those in every vocation and those searching for their vocation. Jesus in the Eucharist is the way.

Get ready to meet people who have fallen deeply in love with the eucharistic Lord and who have been summoned by him to lay down their lives for the Eucharist. May their love of Jesus inspire us all to a deeper love of the Living Bread.

(Father Michael Keucher is director of vocations for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, dean of the Batesville Deanery and pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County. Contact him at mkoeucher@archindy.org.)

New postulant finds a spiritual home with the Sisters of Providence, page 5B.

Benedictine monks live a ‘eucharistic life’ that is ‘immersed in God’, page 9B.

Sister Evangeline follows her heart to embrace a lifelong dance with Jesus, page 4B.
Seminarists’ love of the Eucharist draws them closer to the priesthood

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—The Church in the U.S. is in the middle of its three-year National Eucharistic Revival. Its mission is to renew the relationship of Catholics across the country with Christ in the Eucharist with the hope that it will then spur them to more effectively proclaim the Gospel in their everyday lives.

Four seminarists for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis recently shared with The Criterion how their love for Christ in the Eucharist has grown in three stages of their lives: while growing up, in discerning a possible priestly vocation and while in seminary.

They are seminarists Casey Deal, Samuel Hansen and Isaac Siefker, who are enrolled at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, and seminarian Randall Schneider, who is in his final year of formation at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis.

‘You look at him and he looks at you’

For Schneider, his family’s move to southeastern Indiana when he was about 15 was the point where he started to grow in his love for Christ in the Eucharist.

The move closer to All Saints Parish in Dearborn County—where they were already members—led his parents to commit to praying weekly for an hour before the Blessed Sacrament in the faith community’s perpetual adoration chapel.

Schneider often went with his mother for her hour of prayer. Spending time in silence before the Blessed Sacrament opened him to the mystery of Christ’s presence.

“My senses failed me when I tried to understand our Lord’s presence in the Blessed Sacrament,” said Schneider. “I began to pray and intentionally look at the Eucharist and to see Jesus there… You look at him and he looks at you. “You begin to understand that he’s there and wants to be there. He wants to be there with you. That really drew me. Without even knowing it, I was being catechized by adoration.”

The seeds of his vocations were being planted as well.

“My vocation really blossomed under the sun of adoration,” Schneider said. As a home-schooled high school student, he spoke about the priesthood with Father Jonathan Meyer, who serves in All Saints Parish and the other three parishes in Dearborn County. After graduating from high school, Schneider became an archdiocesan seminarian and has been in formation at Bishop Bruté for three years.

Hansen’s love for the Eucharist grew as a student at St. Roch School and Roncalli High School, both in Indianapolis, where he was influenced by “a lot of people who practiced what they preached.”

That started with his father, Joseph Hansen, who was St. Roch’s principal when he was a student there. It also included his fourth-grade teacher Dick Gallimore and St. Roch’s pastor at the time, now-retired Father James Wilmuth.

“He was my Catholic Superman when I was young,” Hansen recalled. At Roncalli, Hansen was impressed by his English teacher Philip Milroy, who went out of his way to kneel during all-school Masses celebrated in the school gym.

“With the gym filled up, there was no room to kneel,” Hansen recalled. “But I remember Mr. Milroy. He’d always sit on the edge of a row in the bleachers and kneel on the stairs during the consecration of the Eucharist. I thought then that it was incredible that he did that. He showed a profound reverence.”

It was during high school that Hansen started praying a holy hour, often in the perpetual adoration chapel of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

This practice was strengthened when he became a student at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind., and he saw Catholic peers praying before the tabernacle in the school’s Newman Center.

“That started to rub off on me,” Hansen said. “I started to see the character of these guys. I realized that, if I wanted to be the man who I was created to be, I needed to give time to the Eucharist.”

His thoughts about the possibility of a call to the priesthood, which had been on his mind in high school, then crystallized enough that, after two years at Wabash, he became an archdiocesan seminarian and transferred to Bishop Bruté.

The Eucharist as the ‘core component’ of discernment

Casey Deal grew up in Bloomington as a member of St. Charles Borromeo Parish. Attending public schools there, he credits the parish’s catechists and pastors for helping him grow in his love for the Eucharist.

This love started to take off as a young adult when Father Thomas Gallamore and St. Roch’s pastor at the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.

Seminarians Isaac Siefker, left, Samuel Hansen and Casey Deal stand on Oct. 11 by the tabernacle in the St. Theodore Guérin Chapel at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

Vocations Awareness Supplement highlights the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life

This issue of The Criterion features our annual supplement that highlights vocations in the Church to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.

It is ordinarily published during the U.S. bishops’ annual Vocations Awareness Week, which this year is on Nov. 5-11.

From the beginning, the Church has recognized that marriage is also a vocation, a pathway to holiness, to which God calls people. The Criterion publishes two marriage supplements annually, usually in February and July.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has three offices which promote vocations. For information on the Office of Marriage and Family Life, visit www.archindy.org/marriageandfamily. For information on the diaconate, go to www.archindy.org/deacon. For information on the priesthood and consecrated life, visit www.archindy.org/vocations.
Vow of stability helps Benedictine sisters be rooted in prayer and mutual support

By Sean Gallagher

BEECH GROVE—What vows do religious in the Catholic Church profess? Poverty, chastity and obedience? That might be the most common answer. But it wouldn’t be entirely accurate.

For some 1,500 years, Benedictine men and women have professed vows of obedience, stability and conversion to the monastic way of life. The last vow includes poverty and chastity but encompasses more aspects of life than just them.

But what about stability? What is it? In that vow, Benedictines promise to be tied to their particular monastic community for the rest of their lives.

That’s what links the 45 members of Our Lady of Grace Monastery to their monastic community in Beech Grove, which was founded in 1955 by Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Ind., in the Evansville Diocese, and became an independent community in 1961.

Three members of Our Lady of Grace recently spoke with The Criterion about what the vow of stability means to them.

Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne, who teaches middle school religion at nearby Holy Name of Jesus School, said stability is “a solid, rooted tree.”

“To be really rooted and secure allows me to live all the other vows,” Sister Nicolette said. “When you’re really secure, confident and sturdy, the winds can blow, but you’re safe, because you’re secure.”

“Everything else flows from my feeling strong, secure and rooted in my love for Christ and my Benedictine sisters. That makes me strong to be able to go out and build God’s kingdom.”

Benedictine Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, a member of the archdiocesan Creation Care Commission, understands stability as the rich soil Jesus spoke of in the parable of the sower that yields 100 fold (Mt 13:1–23; Mk 4:1–20; Lk 8:4–15).

“Rich soil doesn’t happen overnight,” Sister Sheila Marie said. “When you think of how nutrients are put in soil, it takes season after season, year after year in the cycles of life. Vegetation dies. It creates new compost and builds layer after layer.

“When we make our monastic vows, we make them for life. So, we keep renewing them in ourselves every day. It’s our sense of stability that allows us to do that.”

Benedictine Sister Susan Nicole Reuber, her community’s director of development, offered a relational image of the vow of stability: “staying at the table.”

“How can things be tough and hard, stability asks us to stay in the conversation,” Sister Susan Nicole said. “Even if other people have an opinion different from mine, I stay in the conversation.

“That’s I becoming ‘we.’ That’s very important in community life. If I stay at the table and listen to the rest of the sisters, then maybe I can have a conversation and understand why we’re not choosing my particular opinion.”

The vow of stability for Benedictines grew out of St. Benedict’s experience of the great instability of society in late 6th-century Italy in the waning part of the Roman Empire was collapsing.

Sister Sheila Marie thinks many people in society today, perhaps especially young adults, similarly seek a stability amid the often-rising changes in contemporary culture.

“Our culture in the United States is one that thrives on change,” she said. “Our advertisements focus on what is newer and better. To move from job to job now is seen as moving up. You don’t stay in one place.

“[But] that doesn’t get to the deep longing for belonging. It doesn’t allow people to truly belong. I think there’s a real longing for that.”

Sister Susan Nicole, who was a young adult teacher at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis before joining Our Lady of Grace in 2012, has firsthand experience of this.

“I was doing lots of things at Roncalli and at St. Jude [Parish],” she said. “But there was still something missing. It was a tie to something bigger, to a community, to be with other women who believed in the same things that I believed in, being part of a group that saw gifts in me that I didn’t see in myself.

“I think that’s what young adults long for. They want to be known and to belong.”

The Benedictine sisters of Our Lady of Grace don’t just belong to their monastic community. They also value the connection they have with the city of Beech Grove in which they’re located.

It’s history is largely rooted in the early 20th-century development of the town as a railroad center. The days of the Beech Grove community finding its lifeblood in the large rail yard along Emerson Avenue, though, have long since passed.

“Beech Grove has survived the changes that have happened in its history,” said Sister Sheila Marie. “And it’s still able to maintain a small-town sense. It’s a tight-knit community. It’s a real blessing to have that. We hope that we’re holding down our part of it on the north side [of Beech Grove].”

Sister Susan Nicole recently spoke with Beech Grove leaders about the place of Our Lady of Grace in the wider community.

“All of them said that, even if a Beech Grove community member isn’t Catholic and doesn’t know about the sisters, they still know that 1402 Southern Avenue is a special holy place,” said Sister Susan Nicole, referring to the monastery’s street address. “People know who the sisters are and the stability that we’ve brought to the community.

“One aspect of the life of the Benedictine sisters at 1402 Southern Avenue in Beech Grove that Sister Nicolette, Sister Sheila Marie and Sister Susan Nicole emphasized as the prime expression of their stability is their daily life of prayer.

“St. Benedict in his Rule for Monasteries said that ‘nothing is to be preferred to the work of God.’ Which, for him, meant monastic communities gathering several times a day to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

“Our monastic life is centered around common prayer and community life,” Sister Nicolette said. “That’s what gives us the strength to go out to build the kingdom of God.”

Sister Susan Nicole sees the vow of stability beautifully illustrated in the spirituality of Benedictine Sister Mary Carol Messmer, 100, and a founding member of Our Lady of Grace, to the community’s life of prayer.

“She is still at prayer every single morning, noon and evening,” Sister Susan Nicole said. “She may be in a wheelchair or behind a walker, but she’s there.”

Sister Susan Nicole said that, while stability drew her to her Lady of Grace, it was prayer in the midst of stability that has kept her there.

“When I do occasionally have a time where I can’t be at Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer, my day feels off,” she said. “It just feels like something is missing, a great big piece of my life.

“Some mornings, I wish I could just sleep until 10 and not have an alarm clock. But then I need to be there with my sisters. I need to be praying for them. They’re praying for me, even if I don’t feel like being there.”

For Sister Nicolette, being part of a community of women religious gathering faithfully for prayer every day is at the heart of who she is before God.

“Life isn’t always easy,” she said. “We’re a group of women who are all different and have different idiosyncrasies. But our common goal is seeking God. It’s why I’m here. To be able to seek God with another person is easier to do than doing it by yourself.”

(For more information about Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, visit www.benedictine.com )
Sister Evangeline follows her heart to embrace a lifelong dance with Jesus

By John Shaughnessy

When she talks about her relationship with Jesus, Franciscan Sister M. Evangeline Rutherford shares a thought that is uplifting and unusual.

“Jesus wants us to try to be the best version of ourselves”

“I have been blessed to share the faith journey with my parents,” says Sister Evangeline, who grew up in Michigan. “I was able to experience many formative moments during my high school years with my dad. He was involved with youth ministry. We attended a Catholic youth camp together and went to several Franciscan University of Steubenville Youth Conferences together.

“My parents always encouraged me to do my best, but they did not demand perfection. I feel like my parents really feel safe talking to a sister, and many people really open up to me. I sometimes marvel at that privilege. It is so much larger than just myself.”

That last sentence also captures her path to becoming a religious sister, starting with the influence that her parents—George and Linda—had on her, the younger of their two children.

“God wants us to try to be the best version of ourselves”

It was during one of the youth conferences at Franciscan University— in the summer after her high school graduation—that she first thought about being a religious sister.

“At the end of the weekend conference, they invite up any young men and women who are thinking about religious life or the priesthood to come forward for a blessing,” she recalls. “I remember thinking, ‘Why not me?’ I did not go up for the blessing, but the question stuck, and I could never let it go.”

Her eventual answer to that question took another step forward during her college years at Michigan State University, a time when, she says, “I grew to know Jesus more and more and came to know that this is how he made my heart.”

She also became aware of the Franciscan sisters during her senior year in college, thanks to the influence of another young woman who felt called to religious life.

The woman, who later became Sister Mary Augustine, dropped out of her doctoral program to pursue a master’s degree that prepared her to enter the Franciscan community.

“I lived in a women’s discernment house at the time,” Sister Evangeline recalls. “We had Saturday morning Mass and formation nights, so I got to know her through that. I went to her entrance ceremony in 2013 and met the sisters.”

“A bright light among her peers”

Her connection with the Franciscan sisters continued when she moved to Indianapolis in 2014 to take a job in the laboratory at Franciscan Health Indianapolis. Looking for a parish with a strong young adult faith community, she found hers at St. John the Evangelist, led by its pastor, Father Rick Nagel.

“I did not know anyone, and it was a place to start to get to know people,” says Sister Evangeline, who also became involved in the activities of IndyCatholic, an outreach of the archdiocese’s Office of Young Adult & College Campus Ministry.

“I am inspired by what has happened at St. John’s with Father Rick’s leadership. Adoration was just beginning when I was there. We had a holy hour on Thursday evenings. I went to confession several times during those holy hours, and Father Rick had great fatherly advice for me. I felt supported to continue in my discernment.”

Father Nagel remembers her time at St. John with joy.

“She was always a bright light among her peers and gave hope to the parishioners that the young Church is alive and well,” he says. “Her steadfast faith, attention to prayer and intentional discernment of God’s plan for her life served as a fruitful example for others in the community.”

When Sister Evangeline professed her perpetual vows this August as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Father Nagel made sure he was there in the chapel of St. Francis Convent in the northern Indiana community of Mishawaka.

“It was a great joy for me as a spiritual father,” he says. “I was deeply moved by the joy of both Sister Evangeline and her community of sisters who welcomed her into the family of faith. During the reception, after her perpetual vows, Sister Evangeline was so present to each person who greeted her. I was moved by the time she took with us all and made each person feel as if they had an important role in her formation and life.”

For Sister Evangeline, that day and her choice were a natural extension of her love of Christ and her deep appreciation for St. Francis.

“Jesus wants you to fully become who he created you to be”

“I was always drawn to St. Francis,” she says. “He simply wanted to preach and live the Gospel. Our charism of perpetual adoration fits so well with Franciscan spirituality. We want to spend time with the Lord, to entrust the cares of the world to him, and to go out and preach the good news through our witness and in our words.

“I remember hearing about our community and thinking that I could spend the rest of my life reflecting on the beauty and the mystery of the Eucharist. I have been able to give my total commitment to the person of Jesus. He is now my spouse forever.”

In many ways, her dance with Jesus has just begun. In other ways, she has always been moving toward his embrace of her life. It’s a relationship that she hopes other young women will consider as a religious sister.

“Let your discernment flow from prayer,” she advises. “The Lord often reveals his will one step at a time. So, ask the Lord, ‘What are you calling me to do at this point in my life?’ It might be as simple as going to adoration for an hour every week or attending weekday Mass.

“Seize the graced moments. If you are inspired to go talk to a sister or a priest or go on a discernment retreat, do it.”

Most of all, she says, turn to Jesus, trusting he will lead you to where he wants you to be.

“Do not be afraid!” she says. “Jesus wants you to fully become who he created you to be. He knows your heart.”

(For more information on the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in Mishawaka, Ind., visit sfspa.org.)
ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS—"I knew when I came here for a month’s stay in 2022, and I didn’t want to leave Providence Hall."

Stephanie Rivas finally felt like she was home at St. Mary-of-the-Woods in western Indiana when she came to visit with the Sisters of Providence.

After four years of investigating religious life, Stephanie found herself in front of the entrance to historic Providence Hall on Sunday, Sept. 9, 2023. She knocked on the door and was greeted by Providence Sister Dawn Tomaszewski, the sisters' General Superior. She stepped through the doors and was welcomed as the congregation's newest postulant.

Stephanie, 36, has visited with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods since 2020. At that time, she stayed at a hermitage because Providence Hall at the motherhouse was closed due to COVID-19. However, during her stay in 2020, she met with Providence Sister Barbara Bluntzer who is from Stephanie’s hometown of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Stephanie’s discernment began in 2019 as she investigated many other religious communities. But after meeting with Sisters of Providence vocations director Providence Sister Joni Luna, she felt God nudging her closer and closer to the congregation founded in 1840 in western Indiana by Mother Theodore Guérin, Indiana's first saint. "I always came back here," Stephanie said. "Sister Joni always reached out to me. It started in 2020 through social media."

Stephanie has a bachelor’s degree in management from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. She later earned a master’s degree in early childhood development at Texas A&M University-San Antonio.

After completing her graduate education, Stephanie started teaching at a reservation in South Dakota, but COVID-19 reared its ugly head and she began to feel something might need to change.

"I wasn’t expecting to not be with students," she said. "So, I used that time to teach and discern." Following her teaching stint in South Dakota, Stephanie found herself compelled to volunteer to aid women in crisis pregnancies with the Vitae Corps program in Chicago. During her stay there, she met with many members of the Sisters of Providence who lived in Northlake, Ill., and began furthered her discernment process with Providence Sister Teresina Grasso.

"I had to know who I was as a person," Stephanie said. "I was learning myself and the history of religious life. I wrestled with it."

Even though she continued to visit with other congregations, Stephanie always felt her heart drawn back to the Sisters of Providence and all of the natural beauty of the motherhouse campus at St. Mary-of-the-Woods. "I like the quiet pace, and I connected with nature," she said. "I like to be in nature. Something moved me, that at-home feeling. It was probably very subtle, the at-home feeling, to me in little ways. But the quiet felt loud."

After her stay in 2022, Stephanie went home to Texas and taught at a charter school before coming back for a come-and-see retreat in October of that year. "I started the process at that time," she said. "I applied and only three Sisters of Providence knew. I kept everything quiet. It was hard, but all of my experiences have led me to this point."

The congregation’s director of postulants, Providence Sister Editha Ben, will help coordinate Stephanie’s new schedule and ministry.

After approximately 10 months in the postulancy, Stephanie will be eligible to enter into the first year of the novitiate. At that point, she will receive the title of sister.

(From the communications director for the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.) For more information on the community of women religious in western Indiana, visit spsmw.org.™

New postulant finds a spiritual home with the Sisters of Providence

Stephanie Rivas knocks on the entrance door of Providence Hall on Sept. 9, prior to being welcomed by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in western Indiana as the congregation’s most recent postulant. (Submitted photo)
New deacon aspirants come from varied backgrounds

In August, 17 men from across central and southern Indiana began formation as the archdiocese’s fifth class of deacon aspirants. During the next four years, they will participate in the four dimensions of deacon formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. In that time, they will meet as a group for classes or on retreat one weekend a month for 11 months each year. Additionally, they will participate in various ministries of charity in parishes to which they will be assigned as well as other places outside of parishes such as jails, hospitals and nursing homes.

Leading the men in their formation will be Deacon Kerry Blandford, archdiocesan director of deacon formation. The new class of deacon aspirants range in age from 40 to 72. They have been married as few as 10 years and as many as 41 years. All continue to work at careers in the secular world in a wide range of fields including technology, engineering, education, social work, firefighting and carpentry.

The 17 aspirants come from 14 archdiocesan parishes that are located in eight of its 11 deaneries. †

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<td>Engineer</td>
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<td>Jayson Waterman</td>
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<td>St. Gabriel, Connersville</td>
<td>Forest for Indiana Department of Natural Resources</td>
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<td>Bryan Wulf</td>
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<td>Carpenter</td>
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<td>Patrick Hoekstra</td>
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<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>St. Malachy, Brownsburg</td>
<td>Licensed clinical social worker, program manager for mental health staff for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>Peter Mejeski</td>
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<td>Angela</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thomas More, Mooresville</td>
<td>Insurance agent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miguel Angel Perez</td>
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<td>Fernande Denise</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>St. Bartholomew, Columbus</td>
<td>Computer systems analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augustin Torres-Lozano</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Angelica Guadalupe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>St. Bartholomew, Columbus</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jayson Waterman
Age: 53
Wife: Karen
Children: 2
Parish: St. Gabriel, Connersville
Occupation: Research scientist

Bryan Wulf
Age: 58
Wife: Patricia
Children: 2
Parish: Good Shepherd, Indianapolis
Occupation: Carpenter
OLDENBURG—Franciscans have always done things a bit differently. It’s in their history. In the story of their founder, St. Francis of Assisi himself. As the son of a rich cloth merchant in early 13th-century Italy, Francis had the destiny of raising his family’s glory to greater heights by becoming achivalrous knight. It was a dream he fully embraced. But that dream turned into a nightmare when, in a battle against neighboring Perugia, he was taken as a prisoner of war. While in captivity, Francis experienced a conversion and threw away his dreams of knightly glory. But he went further, turning his back on his family’s material riches to become “the poor man of Assisi.” Although he has been beloved for centuries since by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, Francis’ vocational choice shocked the townspeople of Assisi at the time. That’s not what the son of a rich cloth merchant was supposed to do.

Today, members of the community of Franciscan sisters in Oldenburg are following in their founders’ footsteps. Some of them have walked away from wealth like Francis did. But four of them have broken the mold of vocational discernment in another way by embracing a call to religious life at an older age—when they were in their 40s or 50s.

Their newest postulant, Maureen Pisani, is 55. A native of Malta and a naturalized U.S. citizen, Pisani moved to Oldenburg earlier this year after selling a comfortable home in Santa Fe, N.M., and giving away many of her possessions to friends. A successful hypnotherapist, Pisani had been driven to succeed, describing herself as a “typical type A personality.” “I would set a goal, strive to achieve it and then go on to the next,” she said. After earning a doctorate in her field in 2021, however, she was no longer satisfied making plans for the future. “There was absolutely nothing inside,” she recalled. “Every time I thought of what was next, I would get this question, ‘So, are you going to say ‘Yes’ to me now?’” “I stopped me in my tracks. Every step I took, it was, ‘Is this because Maureen wants it? Or is it because God is asking?’”

Once she opened herself to a possible religious vocation, Pisani embraced it much like she had driven herself to succeed in worldly pursuits. After meeting Franciscan Sister Kathleen Branham, the Oldenburg Franciscans’ vocations director, she visited the motherhouse in May 2022. “I fell in love with the community,” Pisani said. “The sisters are tremendously.”

Among those sisters, she met three women who, like herself, joined the community at an older age.

One of them is the vocations director. Sister Kathleen joined the Oldenburg Franciscans when she was 43, walking away from a successful career in the transportation industry, selling a big home, a lake house and a boat. All of my friends and family were saying I was crazy for giving everything up that I had worked my life for,” she said. “That’s when I was realizing that St. Francis was about living the vow of poverty that everything was a gift given to me by God to begin with to enjoy. Now it was time for me to pass them on to others.” While embracing a life of poverty after living a life of wealth as an adult was relatively easy for Sister Kathleen, living the vow of obedience was more of a challenge. “I am a very independent woman,” she said. “The vow of obedience—I’m not going to live—has been kind of tough for me off and on through my 23 years of religious life. “But once I got it ingrained that it’s not about me, but it’s about we and what the common good of all of us, then I learned to let go of my independence and learned to become interdependent.”

Franciscan Sister Susan Marie Pilessi, who oversees Pisani’s formation in the community, had already given up a career as an engineer long before becoming a Franciscan. Raised as a Catholic, she became an evangelical Christian as a young adult. That led her to serve as a missionary in China. Eventually making her way back to the U.S. and the Catholic Church, Sister Susan Marie ultimately discerned in her 50s that God was calling her to religious life. Coming to religious life after living an independent adult life for decades made some parts of her transition easier. “You’ve been through lots in your life already,” Sister Susan Marie said. “You’ve had lots of challenges. Things are not as dramatic and dramatic. You can put your nose to the grindstone and get through the formation period seemingly at times just because of your life experience. “That might be harder for a young person who’s maybe just starting to make their way.”

But, like Sister Kathleen, embracing the will of the community was challenging for Sister Susan Marie after being so used to following her own will alone for so many years. “I had more freedom to act, especially in the area of social justice that you can’t necessarily do when you’re part of a community,” she said. “Your voice is now the voice of the community and not your own voice as an individual Catholic.”

When Franciscan Sister Janette Marie Pruitt entered the Oldenburg community in 2000, she was 51, a mother and grandmother. Raised in Bay St. Louis, Miss., she had a desire as a child to become a religious sister, but saw racial barriers to that dream. “Being an African-American, no one invited us to be sisters,” she said. “We were not allowed to be sisters in my time.”

She eventually married and was divorced, raising her children as a single mother. After her children were living on their own and she had received a declaration of nullity (annulment) regarding her previous marriage, the possibility of religious life re-emerged in her life. “God handled me with a long-handled spoon,” Sister Janette Marie said. Entering religious life at a later age has helped her be open to new possibilities, said Sister Janette Marie, who now makes Mass vestments. “I’m still discovering what God has for me to do next,” she said. “There’s always something evolving.”

In her work in promoting vocations for her community, Sister Kathleen is seeing a growing interest among middle-aged adults in religious life. “God calls people at different times in life, not just when you’re young,” she said. “The Franciscan way of life is open to all of God’s people. It’s a radical availability. Age really doesn’t have anything to do with it.”

(For more information on the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg, visit oldenburgfranciscans.org)
Kovatch became St. Charles’ pastor. Deal recalled being impressed by the love Father Kovatch showed for the Eucharist in the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. It’s a liturgy that especially celebrates Christ’s gift of himself in the Eucharist and his institution of the priesthood. A eucharistic procession often happens after the Mass. “You could just see the love that he had for the Eucharist,” Deal said. “To see him love Jesus so much—the impact of those Holy Thursday Masses when he took the Blessed Sacrament out of the church—it was so moving for me. Jesus’ presence in the Blessed Sacrament is really felt in those times.”

During that time, Father Kovatch also made eucharistic adoration more widely available at St. Charles. Deal was attracted to praying before the Blessed Sacrament and began to discern God calling him to consider the priesthood. “There was a draw to want to be with Jesus in that unique way that a priest has,” he said. “That God calls normal men to confer his presence through words of the priest is incredible. It’s something that I want to do and somehow I think that God might be calling me to do.”

Isaac Siefker felt a call to the priesthood at a much younger age. “The Eucharist was the core component to my discernment,” said Siefker. “As long as I can remember, I’ve always said that I wanted to be a priest when I grew up. And it started with a basic love of the Eucharist.”

He felt that when he was 6, before he had received his first Communion, when he saw his older brother serve at Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and had an urge to be in the sanctuary with him. Father Richard Eldred, St. Vincent’s pastor at the time, knew of his desire. “One day, he came out of the sacristy and said to me, ‘Do you want to serve?’” Siefker recalled. “I remember being so excited. I zoomed back into the sacristy. I loved so much being that close to the altar.”

Like Schneider, Siefker’s love of the Eucharist was also planted in him by the witness of his parents praying before the Blessed Sacrament, which they did at St. Vincent’s perpetual adoration chapel. “We were a big homeschool family,” he said. “We were very busy. And yet the Eucharist was something that they made time for. It was a priority. That alone spoke volumes.”

His love of the liturgy grew when his family moved and became members of St. John the Apostle Parish in Bloomington and came to know the Franciscans of the Immaculata, who minister at the nearby Our Lady of the Redeemer Retreat Center.

After high school, Siefker took time to discern where God might be calling him. Two weeks that he spent with the Knights of the Eucharist, a community of Franciscan brothers ministering at the time at the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Ala., proved crucial for him. That was when I really got the strength I needed to enter seminary,” Siefker recalled. “It had been something I was afraid of. I was able to sit before the Blessed Sacrament and tell our Lord, ‘I’m afraid to do this. … But if you’re going to ask me to do it, I know you’ll give me the strength and I’ll give it a shot.’”

“I dream about it every day” Mass is celebrated daily at both Bishop Bruté and at Saint Meinrad. And the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for adoration most days of the week at both seminaries. Thus, the Eucharist is a central part of the priestly formation that archdiocesan seminarians experience. “It’s a privilege that I get to go to Mass every day,” Deal said. “I have chapels readily available to me where I can pop in and say hi to Jesus in a real way. I don’t want to take this for granted.”

Since Schneider is involved in liturgical music at Bishop Bruté, he often finds himself praying at the back of its chapel, where its organ is. Seeing his fellow seminarians in front of him praying before the Blessed Sacrament moves him. “It’s so inspiring,” he said. “Every time that I get distracted, I see one of them and their gaze redirects me back to the Eucharist. That’s really been powerful for me.”

As Siefker has progressed in his priestly formation, his daily life has become more complex. He takes a full load of classes at Saint Meinrad, has a parish assignment, holds down a work-study job and volunteers for the seminary’s Project Warm in which seminarians help provide firewood for people living in poverty in the area. Yet, in the midst of being pulled in so many directions, Siefker feels a greater draw toward prayer before the Eucharist. “It’s so tempting to put eucharistic adoration on the back burner,” he said. “But then I realize you have to make your time with the Eucharist your priority. Then, somehow, everything else will get done.”

Keeping the Eucharist at the heart of a busy daily schedule is good training for Siefker for what it will be like for him as a parish priest, something he’s yearning to be. “Maybe I’m ahead of myself, but I dream about it every day,” he said. And those dreams are all centered on leading his future parishioners to a greater love for the Eucharist. “If I can just get them to love the Eucharist, everything else will come along.”

Hansen gets a taste of what serving as a priest can be like when he serves as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at St. Roch, where he’s still a parishioner. “Each of the people that I’m giving our Lord in the Eucharist to are being affected differently,” Hansen said. “How are these people’s lives being transformed by the Eucharist? That’s something I won’t know until I get to heaven.”

When envisioning himself as a priest, Hansen thinks about a photo of retired Father Paul Landwerlen, the archdiocese’s oldest priest, praying in 2022 on his 94th birthday before the Blessed Sacrament in the perpetual adoration chapel of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville. “That’s what I want,” Hansen said. “I want to be the 94-year-old priest that can just kneel before the Eucharist, seeing that this is what made my life great.”

(To learn more about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com)
Benedictine monks live a ‘eucharistic life’ that is ‘immersed in God’

By Br. Zachary Wilberding, O.S.B.

All you who are thirsty, come to the waters! You who have no money, come, buy grain and eat. Come, buy grain without money, wine and milk without cost! (Is 55:1).

For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. (Jn 6:55-57).

The above Scripture quotations remind us that God’s love is expressed in a desire to feed his people. God feeds us through his word in Scripture and through his body and blood in the holy Eucharist.

Catholics in the U.S. have been taking part in the National Eucharistic Revival since Corpus Christi Sunday of 2022. Sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the renewal will culminate in the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July 2024.

The revival addresses, affirms and celebrates a critical truth: the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith because it is the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God and the root of our faith. The bishops have given us an opportunity to reflect on this gift and proclaim it to others.

The Eucharist is all about presence. When we gather together for the Eucharist, we are present to Jesus as the assembled people of God. And because he said that he is present when two or three are gathered in his name, Jesus is present in the assembly.

During the liturgy of the word, Jesus is present in the Scriptures proclaimed. And in the liturgy of the Eucharist, he becomes present to us under the forms of bread and wine.

In receiving holy Communion we receive Jesus—body and blood, soul and divinity. To reflect on this is to realize that when we participate in the Mass, it is like standing in the midst of a tsunami of God’s grace. The communion of Christ then is communion with one another, with the word of God and with the body and blood of Jesus.

The English word Eucharist is based on the Greek word eucharistia, which means thanksgiving. Since the body and blood of Christ presented in the sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest possible gift, thanksgiving is the foremost response.

At Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, the monks call their refectory the monastery dining room, which the monks call their refectory.

This feature is intentional and is meant to remind us that, in both places, we gather in an assembly for nourishment. Neither at the table of the Eucharist nor at the dining table do we eat in isolation. We eat as a community. We are in communion.

For Benedictine monks, the meal of physical nourishment will always be a reminder of the meal of spiritual nourishment.

Several times a day, we listen to God’s word in Scripture in the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as privately. And so, we are in communion with Christ, present in the words of Scripture. Through reflection and meditation, we deepen our relationship with him.

Like the eucharistic liturgy, the life of a monk is very much about presence and communion. Our daily lives are punctuated by times for gathering for prayer, meals, work and recreation. We are present to one another in all of these activities, and Christ is present in our brothers.

Living in community means that we serve one another. In serving one another, we serve Christ who taught us to wash each other’s feet. Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister once remarked that you can’t wash someone else’s feet if you live in isolation. Life lived in community is a life of communion.

Fed by the body and blood of Christ received at Mass, we meet and serve Christ in our brothers in the community. In his Rule for Monasteries, St. Benedict counsels monks and nuns to always be ready to welcome guests as Christ. Hospitality offered to guests is another way of being present to Christ, of meeting Christ and serving him. It is a form of communion.

The core value of Benedictine monastic life is to seek God. This desire to seek God is already a gift to communion. Therefore, we make ourselves present to God by being present to his word through reading and reflection, by publicly praying with the psalms and other Scriptures in church, by celebrating together the Eucharist at Mass.

Furthermore, we are present to Christ in one another in the community. We serve him in our relationships with one another.

This is a life immersed in God. It is a life of joy and gratitude, but it is also a life of trials and crosses. But they do not overwhelm us. Jesus said that his followers would have to experience them. They lead us to resurrection and fullness of life in God’s kingdom.

At the end of several of our times of prayer, we say “Thanks be to God.” Thanks for this eucharistic way of life.

(Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding is vocations director of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. For more information on the monastic community there, visit saintmeinrad.org.)

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ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS
2023–2024 Seminarians

VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE

Deacon Anthony Armbruster ‘24
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Malachi, Brownsburg

Deacon Sam Moska ‘24
Saint Meinrad Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis

Deacon Bobby Vogel ‘24
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Joseph, Jennings County

CONFIGURATION STAGE

Thomas Day ’25
Saint Meinrad Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis

Casey Deal ’27
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington

Kristofer Garlitch ’26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mary, South Bend

Samuel Hansen ’26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Boniface, Indianapolis

Liam Hosty ’25
Mount St. Mary’s Seminary
St. Bernadette, Indianapolis

Timothy Khulisheng ‘26
Pastoral Internship
St. Mary the Evangelist, Indianapolis

Aaren Noll ’25
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St.ift. St. Joseph, Columbus

Isaac Sieffer ’25
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Joseph, Indianapolis

Khaing Thu ’26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis

Lance Tony ’26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. John the Apostle, Indianapolis

Emiliano Enriquez De Alava ’29
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Francis Xavier, Seymour

Aidan Hausserperger ’29
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Joseph, Jennings County

Alexander Lindberg ’29
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Joseph, Jennings County

Robert McKay ’25
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Anne, Indianapolis

Aidan Smith ’29
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. John the Apostle, Indianapolis

Noah Sherman ’25
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Mary, North Vernon

PROPÆDEUTIC STAGE

Seth Hickey ’29
Saint Meinrad Seminary
Mary Queen of Peace, Denville

Nathan Hughe ’31
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, North Albany

Maximilian Eggen ’30
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis

Lucas LaRossa ’30
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis

Antonie Habert ’31
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Joseph, South Bend

William Rees ’31
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Matthias, Riley County

Joshua Russell ’31
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
Holy Family, New Albany

Abraham Hudepohl ’31
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
St. Matthias, Riley County

Levi Wajtalik ’29
Bishop Simon Brude Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis

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RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION
2023–2024

Sr. Teresa Kang, SP
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Temporary professed

Sr. Emily Tekulste, SP
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
St. Anthony, Indianapolis
Temporary professed

Sr. Jessica Vilente, SP
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Temporary professed

Sr. Leslie Dao
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Novice

Stephanie Marie Rivas
Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Postulant

Sr. Mary Lily Among
Theres McCann, SSMV
Sisters of the Holy Family
Postulant

Br. Mary Guadalupe Figureroa, RSM
Religious Sisters of Mercy, St. Anthony, Indianapolis
Temporary professed

Sr. Evelyn Lobo, SSpS
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, St. Monica, Indianapolis
Temporary professed

Sr. Mary Amala Navele, OFR
Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, St. Mary, Navarleon
Temporary professed

Sr. Mary Peter Ruzhko, OSM
Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Batesville
Temporary professed

Maureen Pisani
Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg
St. Joseph, Shelbyville
Temporary professed

Sr. Israel Mercy Magnificat
Sisters of Life Novice

Br. Maria Guadalupe Fuentes
St. Francis Sisters, Oldenburg
Temporary professed

Br. Gregory Morris, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed

Sr. Mary Paul Callahan, FSGM
Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Heart of Jesus, St. Joseph University
Temporary professed

Br. Jude Romo-Oliva, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed

Sr. Maria Gemma Barnett, SOLT
Sisters of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity
St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington
Temporary professed

Br. Katelyn Wells
Sisters of St. Francis of Nazareth
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
Temporary professed

Sr. Stephanie Pahret
Sisters of Charity, St. Michael, Brockville
Temporary professed

Andrew Levering
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Novice

Sr. Maria Guadalupe Ochoa
Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Heart of Jesus
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed

Br. John S. Allbright
Sisters of Charity, St. Michael, Brockville
Temporary professed

Patrick Allbright
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Novice

Benjamin Sasin, C.S.C.
Congregation of Holy Cross
United States Province of Priests and Brothers
St. John the Evangelist, Indianapolis
Temporary professed

Josh Amodeo
Congregation of Holy Cross
United States Province of Priests and Brothers
St. Francis and Clare
Temporary professed

Taylor Fulkerston, SJ
Society of Jesus
Maryville Theology
Temporary professed

Dominican Friars Central Province
Dominican.org

Franciscans of the Immaculate
maryschollcen.com

Missionaries of Charity
motherteresa.org

Society of Jesus Midwest Province
jesuitsmidwest.org

Order of Friars Minor St. Louis
Provost
fraternal.org

Order of Friars Minor Cincinnati
Assumption Province
franciscan.org

Order of Friars Minor St. Louis
fraternal.org

Little Sisters of the Poor
littlesistersofthepoor.org

Order of Friars Minor Cincinnati
Assumption Province
franciscan.org

Order of Friars Minor St. Louis
fraternal.org

Order of Friars Minor Cincinnati
Assumption Province
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RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Sisters of St. Benedict
benedictin.com

Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis
Oldenburg | oldenburgfranciscans.org

Sisters of Providence
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods | spwmw.org

Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration
Mishawaka | sfpa.org

Discaled Carmelite Nuns
Terre Haute | heartsofJesus.org

Order of St. Benedict
Saint Meinrad Archabbey | saintmeinrad.org

Conventual Franciscan Friars
franciscansusa.org

Little Sisters of the Poor
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New role brings full-circle moments in Father Brockmeier’s vocational story

In an article published just weeks before his June 25, 2016, ordination, then-transitional Deacon James Brockmeier expressed to The Criterion his desire for his priestly vocation. “I just think Christ is so much closer to our lives than people think sometimes,” he said in the article. “I want to help others see that closeness.”

Since being appointed as director of the archdiocesan Office of Worship this summer, Father Brockmeier is in a unique position to fulfill his desire. “I get to focus on helping parishes in the archdiocese and the archdiocese as a whole, reflect on our worship, and to help serve as we worship the Lord well,” he says. “And I’m still blessed to be a parish priest as rector of the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, and a chaplain at Butler University.”

In this article, he shares more about his new role—and how those duties bring him full circle in his vocational journey.

It’s that “encounter with Christ”

One of those full-circle moments involves the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

Father Brockmeier’s first experience with NCYC was in Atlanta, Ga., in 2005, when he was 14. Looking back, he calls the event “really great.”

His second NCYC experience had a much more profound impact on him as a transitional deacon less than a year away from his priestly ordination. At that NCYC in 2015, he was honored to proclaim the Gospel to 26,000 youths during the conference’s closing Mass in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

“In the midst of this huge celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus is giving us himself to us for the whole Church,” Father Brockmeier said in the 2016 article. “But he’s also calling each person to receive the Eucharist and be close to us for the whole Church,” Father Brockmeier says.

He was struck by the chapel’s stunning stained-glass windows—15 of them, each about 50 feet tall, portraying 1,113 scenes from the Bible.

“The theology of the space is that the light of Christ reaches us in the Scriptures,” then-transitional Deacon Brockmeier explained in the 2016 article before his ordination. “We sit in the midst of the word of God, and God’s light shines through these stories.”

“I really communicated the beauty of the word of God. And it’s inspiring to look at the potential of the Church to create a place in the world where the light of the Gospel can shine. We’re called to create this beautiful thing in the world.”

Illuminating the Gospels through liturgy and worship is Father Brockmeier’s mission in his new role.

“The Office of Worship serves the parishes of the archdiocese in the way that we worship as the people of God, as the Church,” he explains.

That service comes in many forms. The office fields questions from parishes regarding the celebration of the Mass and other sacraments. It also coordinates preparations with parishes when the archbishop comes to celebrate Mass. “I’m also more involved in the bigger liturgies that happen at the cathedral—ordinations, the Chrism Mass, Rites of Election,” Father Brockmeier says.

“There are a lot of moving parts in those Masses.”

He particularly enjoys educating Catholics about the liturgy. “Sometimes I’ll be invited by parishes to come and give presentations about the Mass,” he said. “And I’m preparing right now for a day of formation for our permanent deacons about their role in the liturgy.”

Then there’s the blessing of his continued role as a parish priest. He’s rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, and also serves as chaplain to the Catholic students at Butler University in Indianapolis.

“My role there is very similar to a parish priest, but on a college campus,” Father Brockmeier explains.

Each Sunday, he celebrates Mass and enjoys dinner with the students, and offers Mass and adoration on Wednesdays.

“Every Wednesday, I also spend a couple hours in the afternoon out on campus making confessions available,” says Father Brockmeier. “I just have a bench in the middle of campus where I sit, and I send something out to all the Catholic students signed up on our text list and say, ‘Hey, I’m out in the middle of campus. I’m available to talk or hear confessions. Come stop by.’”

“And I’m still blessed to be a parish priest as rector of the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, and a chaplain at Butler University.”

And they go toward fulfilling his heart of the Christian life, the source and summit of the Christian life,” he says. “I’ve been trying to keep that focus at the heart of my work, that our worship of God and the Eucharist is the most important thing that we do as Catholics, and all the little details that are a part of my work all go to serving our worship as the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.”

And they go toward fulfilling his vocational desire to “help people see the closeness of Christ.”

Father James Brockmeier prays part of the eucharistic prayer as a concelebrant during a Sept. 28 Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Father James Brockmeier, chaplain to the Catholic students of Butler University in Indianapolis, speaks with Butler student Stephanie Gonzalez on Oct. 25 on Butler’s campus. (Submitted photo)
Stewardship is about ‘our entire relationship with God’

By Susan M. Erschen

(OST News)—What is stewardship?

Stewardship is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the Church today. Some people think it is all about money. Others think it means only time, talent and treasure. Some wonder if it is just another word for fundraising or tithe.

In reality, stewardship is the word that describes our entire relationship with God who loves and trusts us so much that he made us his stewards.

Our challenge is to strive to be good stewards by recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God, taking time to be grateful for the gifts that he has given us. We are called to realize that God gives each of us all we need—plus enough to share—and turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance in sharing our gifts as God intended.

Stewardship, therefore, is linked to our life of following Jesus. “Once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option,” the bishops in the U.S. stated in their 1992 pastoral letter “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response.”

Anyone who wants to be good at any task must study it and practice it. Stewardship, too, takes practice. Society tempts us in our material accomplishments and continually strive for more. At times, resisting this pull toward self-centered materialism requires practice, prayer and careful study of God’s teachings.

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ gave us important final messages: “I no longer call you slaves, because I have told you the truth, you are free because I have chosen you, contribute something for God, trust in God’s abundance, and love and serve.

Realize God has chosen us

How awesome it is to realize that God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen us. Everything we are, everything we do and everything we have is a result of God choosing us, loving us and blessing us.

God chooses each one of us to be the stewards of different gifts. We may have a musical talent, financial aptitude, a generous spirit or a positive attitude. Even our faith is a gift from God.

God does not give us all the same gifts. We could look around and see people who have more gifts than we have and become jealous. Or we could look around the world and see people who have much less than we have and learn to be compassionate. The choice is ours.

Contribute something for God

Based on the unique combination of gifts that God has given us, each of us is called to make a contribution that is uniquely ours to make.

We can contribute in a variety of ways: by providing a helping hand or a strong back; leadership, knowledge or wisdom; financial support; a listening ear or a gentle smile; a new idea; and special skills or talents.

Only we, through prayer, know what God is calling us to contribute.

Trust in God’s abundance

It can be difficult for any of us to give away something that we think we need. However, stewardship teaches us to look at our financial situations in a new way. When we believe our own needs will be met, it is easier for us to give.

Unfortunately, the endless advertising so prevalent in today’s media convinces us we have endless needs. However, the things the world tempts us to grasp for ourselves are not needs. They are wants. God may not give us all we want, but we must trust that he will give us what we need, when we ask. In turn, we generously share with the world what God has entrusted to us.

Love and serve

When we share our resources more generously with the parish or our wider diocesan community, we take the focus off their financial burdens.

In this way, stewardship encourages ministry and a more loving parish and diocesan community. When we love and serve others in our local Church, we build up a community that will also love and serve us.

We become part of something greater than ourselves.

We feel a sense of belonging. We also develop a sense of compassion when we reach out to those who are most in need. Belonging and compassion are two of the many unexpected benefits of living as God’s stewards.

Stewardship is not a gift we give to God, but rather a gift God gives to us.

From the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ, Catholics made the work of the Church, Christ’s mystical body, a priority in their lives. The great cathedrals and simple country churches where people worship, schools where countless children are educated, and hospitals that care for the sick and charitable institutions that serve the needs of many, have been built by generations of the faithful.

They gave, even when they had little to give, because they knew Jesus had called them as his disciples to be good stewards of the resources God entrusted to them.

(Susan M. Erschen served for 12 years as the director of stewardship education for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. She is the author of the books God’s Guide to Grandparents and Finding a Loving God in the Midst of Grief.)
Social justice emanates from the heart of Jesus Christ

In a society with so many challenges and diversity of interests, we find a palpable reality that strongly demands our attention, especially in the Christian sphere where one of our biggest interests continues to be man and his dignity as a human being and as a child of God.

The topic of social justice should not be considered revolutionary by a group that seeks to claim its importance, nor is it a new anthropological philosophy where man becomes the center of everything. On the contrary, the topic springs from the heart of our Lord Jesus and is intrinsically a part of the Gospel message to love and care for the most vulnerable and needy.

In reality, our Lord never tried to abolish the law of the ancients, but gave it a more human meaning by creating a close relationship between man and God. What Jesus called the law of love, we can consider as the first foundation for the social doctrine of the Church: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

This reality reflects the true evangelical meaning of the message of a triune God, incarnated in a human being who experienced firsthand the challenges of society and the injustices of the world. It is a truth that led Jesus to be unjustly accused for simply wanting to demonstrate a particular and real interest in those who were oppressed by an authoritarian regime.

Social justice invites us to continue with our evangelical mission, but above all, it invites us to imitate the first teacher in social doctrine: Jesus.

There are many things that begin with the Church must respond to, including the endless realities of injustice experienced by diverse peoples or groups in the world. But it is important to remember that the Church is especially characterized by our being “Catholic,” that is, universal. Such universality has unimaginable power and can never be said to be unjustly accused for simply wanting to demonstrate a particular and real interest in those who were oppressed by an authoritarian regime.

Social justice invites us to continue with our evangelical mission, but above all, it invites us to imitate the first teacher in social doctrine: Jesus.

En una sociedad con tantos retos y diversidad de intereses, nos encontramos con una realidad palpable que nos reclama fuertemente nuestra atención, especialmente en el ámbito cristiano donde en el interés superior continúa siendo el hombre y su dignidad cómo ser humano e hijo de Dios.

El tema de la justicia social no debe ser considerado como una especie de revolución por parte de un grupo que busca reclamar derechos, tampoco es una nueva filosofía antropológica en donde el hombre se vuelve el centro de todo. A nuestro entender el tema de la justicia social brota del corazón de nuestro Señor Jesús y está íntimamente comprometido con el mensaje del evangelio, amor y atención por los más vulnerables y necesitados.

En realidad, nuestro Señor Jesús nunca trató de abolir la ley de los antiguos sino que le otorgó un sentido más amplio en donde existía la reconciliación entre los hombres y el gran Dios creador. A esto que Jesús denominó la ley de los antiguos viene el interés particular y real por aquellos que eran oprimidos por un régimen autoritario.

La justicia social hoy en día nos invita a continuar con la misión evangelica pero sobre todos nos invita a imitar al primer maestro en doctrina social: Jesús. Son muchos los retos que tenemos como Iglesia para dar respuesta a las innumerables realidades de injusticia que viven los pueblos o grupos diversos en el mundo, pero es importante recordar que la Iglesia se caracteriza especialmente por ser “Católica” es decir universal, tal carácter de universalidad tiene un poder inimaginable cuando existe unidad entre el pueblo de Dios, cuando el interés de unos pocos adquiere el interés de muchos, y más aún cuando invoquemos la ayuda que proviene del Espíritu Santo.

El último acto de amor de nuestro Señor Jesús antes de su resurrección fue el haber entregado su sangre por completo, es decir vaciarse completamente brotando de su costado hasta la última gota de sangre pero también de agua, una sangre que nos recuerda el dolor y un agua que nos lava del dolor y que nos brinda esperanza, esta escena de Jesús siendo traspatado por la lanza nos lleva a reflexionar acerca de un pueblo que gime y clama misericordia, un pueblo que sufre las injusticias y la falta de amor, una escena trágica en donde muy pocos sienten la pena de ver a un hombre joven colgado de un madero sin haberlo merecido, una escena que describe el dolor profundo de las mujeres al ver al tal acto de ultrajante que atenta incluso contra la mirada humana, cuando volvemos a revivir esa escena pensamos en las madres que sufren por no poder salvar o proteger a sus hijos de la guerra o de la desnutrición, o por no poder tener la oportunidad de brindar los derechos básicos a sus pequeños como el de vivir en un ambiente sano y saludable o de enviarlos a la escuela. También recordamos en esta escena la falta de misericordia de aquellos que pasaban por el lugar sin despertar en ellos una reacción de compasión ante tal injusticia.

Nuestra Iglesia sufre y llora junto a esas madres. (Mitra HISPANIC página 20A)

Ministerio Hispano/Felix Navarrete

The scene of Jesus being pierced in the side leads us to reflect on a people who grow and cry for mercy, a people who suffer injustice and lack of love, a tragic scene where very few feel the shame of seeing a young man hanging from a cross without having deserved it. It is a scene that describes the deep pain of women when they see such an outrageous act that attacks the human gaze.

When we relive that scene, we think of the mothers who suffer from not being able to save or protect their children from war or malnutrition, or from not being able to have the opportunity to provide basic rights to their little ones, including living in a healthy environment or being able to send them to school. In this scene, I also see the lack of mercy for some who passed by without showing compassion in the face of such injustice.

Our Church suffers and cries alongside these mothers who have no voice, suffering and crying with the marginalized of society. Our Church presents the pain of a crucified Christ, not as a sign of defeat as some believe, but as a sign of humanity to remind us that, as a Church, we have been the product of great pain.

The Church of Christ also cries out for justice for the helpless, accompanies them in suffering and represents See HISPANIC, page 20A

More than 30 parish leaders took part on Aug. 11-12 in a collaborative training effort provided by the Indiana Catholic Conference and an interdiocesan alliance to discuss several topics, including some of the challenges faced by undocumented immigrants. (submitted photo)

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

While you can’t be perfect, always give your best effort in this life

“Perfect!” My family and I have a reminder—whether it’s a as a couple or in the sacred single life—that people and situations are never perfect.

In my experience, it’s a word that is sometimes used when a young couple is just beginning a relationship.

“I have found him amusing but not perfect or she is perfect!” Those two phrases are the beginning, every activity is fun or interesting or exciting and new! But as times passes, we realize—when we are living in the sacred single life—that people and situations are never perfect.

More than 30 parish leaders took part on Aug. 11-12 in a collaborative training effort provided by the Indiana Catholic Conference and an interdiocesan alliance to discuss several topics, including some of the challenges faced by undocumented immigrants. (submitted photo)

I am among those who believe every effort in life should not be characterized as merely “decent.” I believe somewhere between a “decent” and “perfect” job is an appropriate middle ground for more opportunities to apply the word “perfect” to whatever challenges they are taking on.

We do not need to understand that total perfection is unachievable in this lifetime, but as followers of Christ, let’s always strive to put our best effort into everything we do.

(Richard Etienne has a degree in theology from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and resides in Newburgh, Ind.)
The Book of Malachi provides the first reading for Mass this weekend. The prophet’s name, Malachi, reveals his role. In Hebrew, it means “messenger of God.” As a prophet, he brought God’s message to the people.

Often in prophetic writings, as in this weekend’s reading, the prophets wrote in a way in which God spoke in the first person. The prophets presented themselves merely as earthly instruments through whom God spoke, but the actual communicator was God.

Malachi did not write at a time of crisis for God’s people, as was the case for other prophets, or when life was filled with peril and destitution. Nevertheless, Malachi shared with all the prophets the opinion that when people were sluggish in their religious observance, or when they altogether had rejected God, they risked their own well-being.

Lack of fervor, in the estimates of the prophets, was the height of ingratitude. By contrast, God always was merciful, always faithful to the covenant. In this weekend’s reading, God accuses the people of sin. He is the perfect and all-knowing judge. He is merciful, but God does not prevent people from sinning. It is their choice. He also does not interrupt the consequences of sinning.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians supplies the second reading. In this reading, Paul reassures the Thessalonians that he brought God’s message to them, not to remove them from suffering, but to strengthen them. In the Gospel, Jesus discusses or argues with the Pharisees. It is the last in a series of stories presenting the wisest and most reasonable communicator was God.

In this weekend’s Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples to serve others. With more than 7 billion people in the world, it stands to reason that, at any given moment in time, thousands of people are praying to any given saint (Our Lady being an exception). If the saints still have minds like they did when alive on Earth, how can they possibly grasp and process all of those prayers?

A I think a key phrase in your question is “if the saints still have minds like they did…” There is a reason why we sometimes refer to a person’s passing away as “entering into eternity.” Linear time as we know it is something specific to our mortal lives on Earth and does not carry over into the afterlife. Heaven, like hell and purgatory, is a state that exists outside of time.

(Although prior to the Second Vatican Council partial indulgences were sometimes referenced in terms of days or years saved from purgatory, this was meant to represent the amount of time it would take to obtain a similar amount of purifying grace for someone on Earth, and not a literal timeline for the one actually in purgatory awaiting heaven.)

Q You might as well ask why someone like Francis himself. St. Peter was the first pope, we have only two of his writings in the New Testament.

A Perhaps some Apostles have more writings in the New Testament than others because—like their successors, today’s bishops—they were human beings with different strengths, talents and particular pastoral concerns. You might as well ask why someone like Bishop Francis, who was the bishop of a small rural diocese in Minnesota, has written more books than many bishops of much larger archdioceses—or Pope Francis himself.

Even though St. Peter was the first pope, the term “equals” among the Apostles doesn’t automatically mean that writing was his personal strong suite. Unlike St. Paul, who was a Pharisee and a scholar, St. Peter had been a humble fisherman before hearing Jesus’ call to follow him.

St. Paul’s ministry also had a different theme, as it were, than Peter’s. Paul himself tells us in his Letter to the Galatians that Peter was an Apostle to the Jews, working to bring the Gospel among those who already worshipped the one true God, while Paul saw his mission as directed toward the Gentiles, striving to evangelize the pagan cultures of the first century Roman empire (See Gal 2:7-9).

Because of this, St. Paul had to address a greater variety of people. He traveled more widely, and therefore he would have had a more pressing need to communicate via written letters. Naturally, the more letters written, the more likely were to have been preserved and later included in the canon of Scripture.

Many Apostles have no extant writings at all, but we might reasonably suppose that the content of their teaching was done via oral preaching in the context of the particular local Churches to which they devoted themselves.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQ&A@osv.com.
After mass shooting, Maine parish becomes a hub of healing

(OSV News) — A Maine parish has become a hub of healing as its community grapples with a devastating mass shooting.

“It’s been miraculous what the Holy Spirit has done,” said Tyler Nadeau, director of evangelization and catechesis at Prince of Peace Parish in Lewiston, Maine. “I can say with 100% certainty that God has sent multimillions of angels into our community!”

Nadeau spoke with OSV News hours after an Oct. 29 prayer vigil — organized by Lewiston officials and hosted by the parish — drew some 4,000 residents to the town and surrounding communities in Uvalde, Texas, in May 2022.

The evening gathering commemorated the 18 victims killed in an Oct. 25 shooting rampage that spanned two locations in Uvalde. The attack was the deadliest mass shooting since 23 people were killed at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, in May 2022.

After a two-day manhunt that saw the town and surrounding communities locked down, 40-year-old suspect Robert Card was found dead of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Speaking to media after the discovery, Maine Gov. Janet Mills said, “UVALDE, TX, was breathing a sigh of relief … knowing that … Card is no longer a threat to anyone.”

“Now is a time to heal,” she said.

That task began when “the community came back to its roots” at the basilica, Nadeau told OSV News.

“We were able to come out as one,” he said. “So many people just walked into [the basilica] and said, ‘We had forgotten how beautiful this is.’”

The bells of the basilica — which was “built by the community of mill workers through the Great Depression” — tolled for the dead, and “there were almost 2,000 people standing outside in the street on the front lawn watching a [virreal church] of what was happening inside,” said Nadeau.

The parish also held an additional vigil featuring eucharistic adoration and another tolling of bells, with some 200 in attendance — including members of some of the victims’ families, Nadeau said.

No parishioners from Prince of Peace were among those slain, he said, although one teen parishioner was injured and hospitalized for reconstructive surgery.

At the same time, “we all [lost someone],” said Nadeau. “This is one community, and people don’t appreciate how connected Maine is.

Several of Nadeau’s family members who are hard of hearing knew the victims who were part of the local deaf community.

One of the parish’s priests — who wished to remain unnamed and who serves as a hospital chaplain — “sat with one of the deceased until the family could arrive,” said Nadeau. “And then he sat with the family the rest of the night.”

Parishioners also are remembering the suspect in their prayers, he said.

“I’m not going to say it’s easy to pray for Robert Card,” Nadeau admitted. “It’s very, very hard to pray for him. [But] we can’t hate him, because hate just brings more pain. … And we don’t know the whole story. Mental health struggles are real. … What was going through his mind? Did he get any clarity as to the evil that had been committed? … If he did wrestle with his own demons, we have to pray for that.”

Nadeau said the parish will frame and present to first responders and city officials an Oct. 28 message of consolation from Pope Francis, which was issued by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and sent to Bishop Robert P. Deeley of Portland, Maine, by the U.S. apostolic nuncio, Cardinal Christoph Pierre.

The parish has already raised more than $10,000 for the victims’ medical and funeral expenses, Nadeau said.

The work of healing hearts will take time, he said.

“We’re always going to be that town where that awful thing happened. … It needs to scar over, this wound,” he said. “[But] it’s going to be a continual prayer for hate, that evil does exist, but that wherever evil things happen, there are abounds and the Holy Spirit is there.”

In a reflection penned moments after his interview with OSV News, Nadeau added, “If our churches could speak, they would tell the people of Lewiston, that they are one with them. That their doors are open for them, and that all are welcome to come and rest. … They would tell Lewiston of how very sad they are, for the losses they have endured.

“How could our churches speak, they would tell the people of Lewiston of their love for them.”

— HF

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

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**REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW**

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of someone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator.

Please read the Ethics Point before submitting a report:

1. Ethics Point
2. Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis (P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410)

| 317-236-1548 or 800-382-8366, ext. 1548 | victimassistance@archindy.org |
As atestados por paz, Israel-Hamas war intensifies by air, on ground

JERUSALEM (OSV News)—As the world prayed for peace in the Holy Land on Oct. 27, Pope Francis called for the war to halt and prayers to continue during the Angelus on Oct. 29, as death toll in Gaza passed 8,000 and Israeli troops greatly increased their ground activity in the Gaza Strip.

“Let us not stop. Let us continue to pray for Ukraine, as well as for the serious situation in Palestine and Israel, and for other regions at war,” the pope said.

Particularly, in Gaza, may space be opened to guarantee humanitarian aid, and may the hostages be released right away. Let no one abandon the possibility that the weapons might be silenced—let there be a ceasefire,” the Holy Father urged.

In a recorded on Oct. 25 YouTube video message, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, told the Christians in Gaza—who he called his “dear ones”—“that he is dedicating all of his time not only in prayer for them, but also in dialogue with all the responsible authorities in order to bring the Israel-Hamas war, now in its third week, to an end.

“We are living now… is touching my heart, me personally but [also] all of our community,” he said in the video, which he began with an Arabic greeting. “We are also very encouraged, I am very encouraged, by your testimony for the way you are living this terrible situation.”

He said their testimony reminded him of the word of Jesus: “Do not be afraid of those that can kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Mt 10:28).

“I am with you in your suffering and your pain is my concern,” he said. “You are not alone: all the Christian community in the Holy Land, not only in the Holy Land, all the Christian community, are with you praying for you and supporting you.”

There are some 1,000 Christians living in Gaza mainly belonging to the Latin Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, with a small Baptist presence as well.

“Nothing, I mean nothing, can stop our concern,” he said. “Let us do everything necessary to look for the solution and to put an end to the war.”

“We are also very encouraged, I am very encouraged, by your testimony for the way you are living this terrible situation,” he said. “We all—religious and lay—are praying for peace and an end to the war, and for help to all the needy in the south and north of Gaza. We are grateful for the closeness of the Holy Father, and we thank all who pray and work for peace. We want to pray to the Virgin this beloved prayer of peace.”

Another video posted on the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Facebook page shows a group of children from the parish with their hands pressed together praying for peace during the feast of Our Lady of Palestine celebrations.

At the shrine of Deir Rafat, outside of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pizzaballa presided over a Mass followed by the traditional procession with the icon of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine, who is the principal patroness of the diocese. The shrine was erected during another time of tensions, in 1929, and was chosen as a special place to pray for peace. However, because of the current state of war, where Hamas is still firing missiles into Israel, the faithful were not able to attend the Holy Family Parish on the feast of Our Lady of Palestine.

The majority of the Christian community has taken shelter in the Holy Family Parish church compound after an Israeli missile landed next to a Greek Orthodox Parish church compound after an Israeli missile landed near a Greek Orthodox Parish church compound.

Israel has since retaliated with air strikes. Save the Children put the number of children killed in Gaza at 3,195 during the three weeks of fighting. But as war rages in Gaza, settler violence is growing in the West Bank as all eyes are focused on the war, noted the Israeli NGO network, “A day without violence”, which documents and publishes instances of settler violence.

Since Oct. 7, the NGO said at least 82 Palestinians households were forcibly driven from their homes by settlers, who have been threatening farmers herding their flocks and now with the start of olive-picking season, also farmers tending their trees. On Oct. 22, for the first time, settlers threatened and beat farmers from Christ the Redeemer Parish in the West Bank Village of Taybeh as they began harvesting their olives, said parish priest Father Bashar Fawadleh.

“Our village is quiet. We are afraid, it is not safe. There has never been anything like this, not even during the second intifada,” he said. “It is because of the fanatical trio in the Israeli government (Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich and Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir) that this is the point we are now in. It is very dangerous,” the priest said.

On Oct. 27, a Jewish settler fatally shot a Palestinian man harvesting olives near the city of Nablus.

On Oct. 28, only three families were out picking their trees and only on lands close to the village with their cars facing in the direction of the village, so that in case the settlers came from over the ridge, they would be able to escape quickly, Father Fawadleh noted.

Father Franceso Patton, united with the Franciscan friars in Jerusalem, led by the cardinal, and the custos of the Holy Land, Father Franco Patton, united with the call by Pope Francis for a day of prayer and fasting by walking the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem’s Old City for the first time since the war broke out.

“The situation in Gaza is critical, with bombings and in all of Gaza Strip there is shortage of everything: water, fuel, food, medicines,” said Mother Maria del Pilar Llerena Vargas, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word from Peru who is serving in the Catholic parish in Gaza, in a videotaped Spanish message on behalf of all the Christians of Gaza. She shared her message before she led the worships in a prayer for peace at the Holy Family Parish on the feast of Our Lady of Palestine.

“We all—religions and lay—are praying for peace and an end to the war, and for help to all the needy in the south and north of Gaza. We are grateful for the closeness of the Holy Father, and we thank all who pray and work for peace. We want to pray to the Virgin this beloved prayer of peace.”

Another video posted on the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Facebook page shows a group of children from the parish with their hands pressed together praying for peace during the feast of Our Lady of Palestine celebrations.

A child is near a sign that says “Pace,” peace in Italian, as visitors gather to pray the Angelus with Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Oct. 29. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)
Pope asks Mary to ‘convert those who fuel and foment conflict’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis asked Mary to look mercifully upon the human family, “which has strayed from the path of peace,” and entrusted to her protection the world’s regions and nations at war.

“Queen of Peace, you suffer with us and for us, as you see so many of your children suffering from the conflicts and wars that are tearing our world apart,” the pope said during a prayer service for peace in St. Peter’s Basilica on Oct. 27.

“At this dark hour—this is a dark hour, Mother—we submerge ourselves in your luminous eyes. We entrust ourselves to your heart, sensitive to our problems,” he said, looking at an icon of Mary.

With a black-beaded rosary in hand, Pope Francis prayed with cardinals, bishops and delegates of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, recalling Mary’s strength and initiative from several Gospel scenes—the visitation, the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus’ passion and resurrection.

“There, Mother, once more take the initiative for us, in these times rent by conflicts and waste by the fire of arms,” the pope said. “Teach us to cherish and care for life—each and every human life!—and to repudiate the folly of war, which sows death and eliminates the future.”

Pope Francis asked Mary to “touch the hearts of those imprisoned by hatred, convert those who fuel and foment conflict.”

“Queen of all peoples, reconcile your children, seduced by evil, blinded by power and hate,” he said.

The pope also asked her to care for the victims of war: “children, the elderly and isolated, the sick and wounded and those forced to abandon their homeland and loved ones due to conflict.”

To you we consecrate our world, especially those countries and regions at war,” the pope said without naming any particular nation or region. “To you we consecrate the Church, so that in her witness to the love of Jesus before the world, she may be a sign of harmony and an instrument of peace.”

Present on the altar was an icon of Mary, “Salus Populi Roman,” (“Protector of the Roman People”) which has been present on the stage of the Vatican audience hall where the assembly of the synod on synodality has been held.

Among the cardinals present for the ceremony was Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, the pope’s Ukraine peace envoy and a synod delegate. Ambassadors to the Holy See from many nations also attended.

On the eve of the last working day of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis asked Mary to “help us preserve unity in the Church and to be artisans of communion in our world.

“Make us realize once more the importance of the role we play,” he said. “Strengthen our sense of responsibility for the cause of peace as men and women called to pray, worship, intercede and make reparation for the whole human race.”

After Pope Francis’ prayer for peace, the Eucharist was exposed on the basilica’s main altar, and a moment for silent prayer in adoration was observed.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, led Benediction, blessing the people gathered in the basilica by making the sign of the cross with the monstrance, praying, “let us adore with living faith the holy mystery of your body and your blood.”

SYNOD

continued from page 3A

In several places throughout the report, assembly members insisted that greater efforts must be made to listen to the survivors of clerical sexual abuse and those who have endured spiritual or psychological abuse.

“Openness to listening and accompanying all, including those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the Church, has made visible many who have long felt invisible,” it said. “The long journey toward reconciliation and justice, including addressing the structural conditions that abetted such abuse, remains before us, and requires concrete gestures of penitence.”

Members of the assembly said the process helped them experience the Church as “God’s home and family, a Church that is closer to the lives of her people, less bureaucratic and more relational.”

However, it said, the terms “synodal” and “synergy,” which “have been associated with this experience and desire,” need further clarification, including theological clarification and, perhaps, in canon law.

Some participants, it said, questioned how an assembly where about 21% of participants were lay women, lay men, religious and priests could be termed a Synod of Bishops.

The report also acknowledged fears, including that “the teaching of the Church will be changed, causing us to depart from the apostolic faith of our forebears and, in doing so, betraying the expectations of those who hunger and thirst for God today.”

In response, though, assembly members said, “We are confident that synodality is an expression of the dynamic and living Tradition.”

“It is clear that some people are afraid that they will be forced to change, others fear that nothing at all will change or that there will be little courage to move at the pace of the living Tradition,” the report said.

“Also, it added, “perplexity and opposition can sometimes conceal a fear of losing power and the privileges that derive from it.”

Members of the assembly described the synodal process as being “rooted in the Tradition of the Church” and taking place in light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly its emphasis on “the Church as Mystery and People of God, called to holiness.”

Synergy, they said, “values the contribution all the baptized make, according to their respective vocations,” and thus “constitutes a true act of further reception of the Council.”

The report also insisted the purpose of synodality is mission.

“As disciples of Jesus, we cannot shirk the responsibility of demonstrating and transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity,” the report said.

Throughout the synod process, the report said, “many women expressed deep gratitude for the work of priests and bishops. They also spoke of a Church that wounds. Clericalism, a chauvinist mentality and inappropriate expressions of authority continue to scar the face of the Church and damage its communion.”

“A profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change,” it said. “Sexual abuse and the abuse of power and authority continue to cry out for justice, healing and reconciliation.”

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The SYNDROME of those who fuel and foment conflict

Women religious join Pope Francis in praying for peace in St. Peter’s Basilica with members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican on Oct. 27. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)