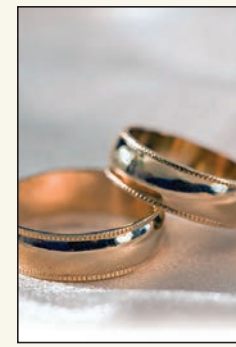




The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Marriage and Family Life Supplement

Articles, information, engagements and more, pages 9-13.

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LITTLE SOULS

SURROUNDING US ARE BABIES
LOST PRIOR TO 20 WEEKS GESTATION
GOD HAS THEM IN HIS KEEPING.
WE HOLD THEM IN OUR HEARTS

Within the cemetery of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg on Jan. 20, a statue of Jesus smiling and holding a baby marks the site of a section for burying miscarried babies called Little Souls Cemetery, a concept of Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry founded by Rebecca and Chris Harpring of St. Mary Parish. The couple's son Louis served as the model for the baby in the image, created by Michael McCarthy of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis exclusively for the Harpring's use. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

Greensburg couple says miscarriage ministry 'has definitely been God's doing'

By Natalie Hoefler

GREENSBURG—Rebecca Harpring was heartbroken when she saw her online lab results. As a nurse, she knew what the low pregnancy hormone levels meant: she was going to miscarry the cherished 6-week-young life within her.

In the following torrent of emotions and thoughts that day in February 2016, one urgent desire rose to the top.

"I just wanted to bury my baby," says Harpring.

But an exhaustive local search for the right supplies was unsuccessful. Harpring had to settle for an empty pill bottle for the diminutive remains of the child she and her husband Chris named Agnes Marie.

An infant plot was larger than needed for the tiny remains. So, using a small casket made by Rebecca's father, the Harplings buried Agnes Marie on Chris' grandparents' plot in the cemetery of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, where the couple and their four living children are members.

See MISCARRIAGE, page 12

Despite critical condition, pope works from hospital room

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In a sign affirming that Pope Francis has been able to conduct work while in the hospital, the Vatican said the pope had met with the



Pope Francis

top officials of the Vatican Secretariat of State and had signed several decrees in sainthood causes.

The Vatican press office said on Feb. 25 that the pope had signed the decrees the previous day during a meeting at Rome's Gemelli hospital with

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and with Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, substitute secretary of state.

The announcement followed a typically brief morning update on the health of the 88-year-old pope, which said, "The pope rested well, all night."

Pope Francis, diagnosed with double pneumonia, has been in the hospital since Feb. 14.

A medical bulletin published by the Vatican late on Feb. 24 said Pope Francis' condition had shown a slight improvement during the day, but his condition remained critical. He had not had another "asthmatic

respiratory crisis," so doctors were able to reduce the oxygen he is receiving by nasal cannula.

Hours after visiting Pope Francis in the hospital, Cardinal Parolin led the recitation of the rosary in St. Peter's Square, praying for

the pope and his health. Some two dozen cardinals joined the nighttime prayer, along with officials of the Roman Curia and hundreds of Catholics from Rome and around the world.

The 9 p.m. rosary will be a fixed appointment each evening in St. Peter's Square, the Vatican said. †

See related story, page 2.

For the most up-to-date information on Pope Francis' health, visit www.archindy.org/PopeFrancis.

Seccina students learn about Father Augustus Tolton during Black History Month

By Sean Gallagher

Bishop Joseph N. Perry, a retired auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, visited Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis on Feb. 18 to help the diverse student

body on the city's east side observe Black History Month.

He continues in retirement to be the principal promoter of the beatification and canonization cause of the Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, the first Black Catholic priest in the history of the U.S.

See TOLTON, page 14



Bishop Joseph N. Perry, a retired auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, right, speaks during a Black History Month event on Feb. 18 at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis about Venerable August Tolton, the first Black priest in the U.S. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Marriage and Family Life Supplement

A special section of The Criterion celebrating Christian marriage

Ministry leaders share ideas to help couples ‘celebrate, heal, renew their marriage’

By Natalie Hoefler

“As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live.” So said St. John Paul II during a homily in Australia in 1986.

He could have added as a preface: “As marriage goes, so goes the family ...”

A loving, sacramental marriage takes time, effort and commitment. It also takes three—husband, wife and God.

“The world is getting a very flawed vision of what a marriage is, should and can be,” says Nathanael Rea, director of faith formation and evangelization at St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. “Because the world has been better at messaging, many Catholics follow what the world proposes.



Nathanael Rea

“It’s our job, our role as Church to cast a supernatural vision for marriage as a sacramental covenant, a mirror of the love of God.”

Rea also notes that married couples “are meant to be in

communion as man and wife, but also with others as man and wife—other couples with struggles, those in the same season of life, those who’ve been through those seasons.

“Married couples need a place to celebrate, to heal and renew their marriage and discuss what God’s plan for marriage is. It’s the role of the Church to bring healing and restoration, and reorder creation back to God and his plan.”

To accomplish this mission, parishes throughout central and southern Indiana offer various forms of marriage ministry.

In this article, leaders at St. Malachy, All Saints Parish in Dearborn County and Catalyst Catholic in the New Albany Deanery share ideas and tips to encourage the spread of parish marriage ministry in the archdiocese.

‘Resetting, putting Christ at the center’

Several years ago, All Saints received a grant from the Center for Congregations of Lilly Endowment, Inc., in Indianapolis, to enhance the parish’s ministry to young adults.

“We broke young adults into three groups—college,



Katherine Egan smiles at her husband Justin during a marriage event offered by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County on June 12, 2021.

(Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

singles out of college and married,” says Claire Keck, the parish’s young adult and electronic evangelization coordinator.



Claire Keck

With the grant money, the parish offered free retreats for married couples of all ages twice a year starting in 2019.

“We had such a great turnout, we kept offering the retreats after the grant ran out,” says Keck.

Each semi-annual event takes place on a Saturday evening in a hall on the parish’s St. John the Baptist campus. The format has evolved to include dinner, a speaker and adoration.

Keck tries to decorate the hall “so it looks really nice and inviting,” and adds that doing so doesn’t have to cost a fortune.

“We get plastic tablecloths and gold and white plates at Dollar Tree,” she says. “One time we had couples bring in china they got for their wedding. And we put candles on the tables, so the hall looks warm and inviting, and it feels more like a date night. People like that.”

One of the parish’s two priests offers a blessing before the dinner. Keck also works with them to identify topics and Catholic presenters, whether nationally known or local.

“We’ve focused on topics like communication, raising children, forgiveness, grieving the loss of a child, including miscarriage,” says Keck. “We’ve had a panel of couples married for different lengths of time, with time for questions and answers. One time we included dance lessons as part of the event.”

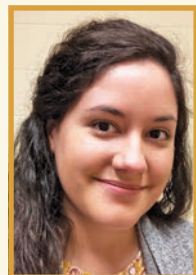
Keck recommends seeking feedback from participants to determine what works and what doesn’t.

See **MINISTRY**, page 13

Partnering with parishes to bring hope and renewal to marriage and family life

By Gabriela Ross

“No one in the Church is talking about this—I feel so alone.” I hear that often in my pastoral work serving



searching online, they call looking for understanding and hope.

Recently, a pastor referred a couple experiencing problems in their marriage to the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life. The husband called me. We had a good, long conversation about where they needed support and what groups and resources would be most helpful and fit best with their life circumstances, especially as parents of several little ones.

During the call, he mentioned how

lonely it can be to face challenges in marriage and feel like you are the only family in the pews with struggles. “I feel like no one at church ever talks about this,” he said. I reassured him, “That ends today. We are talking about it now. The Church cares about you, and your pastor cares about you because he sent you to talk to me.”

His whole tone and demeanor changed as he considered my words. “I guess it is actually pretty cool that the Church has someone like you to help couples in need. That’s amazing. Thank you for what you do.”

Not long after, I was approached by a parish that saw a need to minister to Catholics who had experienced divorce. Being further away from the Indy metro area, they reached out to my office asking for resources and advice to jump-start their divorce ministry.

After several phone calls and e-mails, we put together a plan for a day of reflection and a subsequent support group facilitated at the local parish and open to anyone in their deanery. The parish leader expressed that it was a joy to work together and that they felt so

supported in renewing this ministry.

Recently, I was approached by a parish staff member who shared that a family in their community had lost a baby just a few weeks after birth and were devastated with grief. After offering a prayer for the little soul and the grieving family, I shared a list of resources for grief and child loss ranging from local Catholic therapists to in-person support groups and tips for how to talk to young siblings about their family’s loss. This was another instance where a family could feel so alone, but the support of their Church can bring healing and hope during a time of grief.

I feel so privileged in my work to be a witness to the hope and renewal that come from the heart of the Church through so many caring individuals who are on fire for the Church’s mission.

One of my favorite projects this past year has been connecting with parishes that are already doing great work in ministering to marriages and helping them to spread the word. From Brownsburg to Greenwood to Scottsburg to Dearborn County, parishes have put together conferences and date night

opportunities to strengthen and renew marriages in their communities.

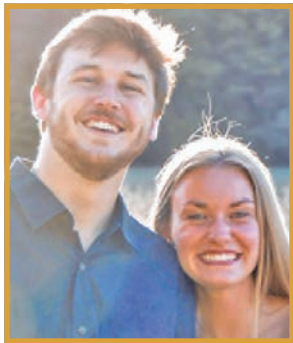
Connecting with these parish leaders, offering them encouragement, feedback and support, and helping to advertise their efforts to the wider archdiocese are some of the ways the Office of Marriage and Family Life serves all parishes, and participates in the mission of evangelization and catechesis that is so central to the work of our Church.

In this issue of *The Criterion*, you will have the opportunity to read stories of hope and renewal in marriage and family ministry. This focus connects to the National Eucharistic Revival and the Jubilee Year of Hope. Take a look!

(Gabriela Ross is the director of the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life. She can be reached at 317-592-4007 and gross@archindy.org. To learn more about the Office of Marriage and Family Life and its resources, go to marriageandfamily.archindy.org. The work of the office is made possible by donations to the United Catholic Appeal. Thank you for your generosity.) †

Wedding Announcements

Altier-Scott



Carly Jane Altier and William Patrick Scott will be married on May 17 at St. Agnes Church in Nashville. The bride is the daughter of Aaron Altier and Chris Stevens. The groom is the son of Jeff and Tami Scott.

Crabtree-Adams



Rachel Elizabeth Crabtree and Jack Adams were married on Oct. 26, 2024, at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of James and Sherry Crabtree. The groom is the son of Doug and Julie Adams.

Johnson-Michael



Mary Johnson Michael and Robert Gerard Michael had their marriage convalidated on Oct. 26, 2024, at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis.

The bride is the daughter of Ed and Dolores Johnson. The groom is the son of Joe and Rita Michael.

McDaniel-Bohman



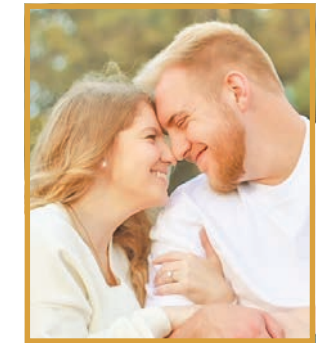
Autumn Nicole McDaniel and Michael Edward Bohman will be married on June 7 at Holy Guardian Angels Oratory in Cedar Grove. The bride is the daughter of Christopher and Kendra McDaniel. The groom is the son of Frank and Michelle Bohman.

Schulte-Reynolds



Lucy Marcel Schulte and Joseph Michael Reynolds will be married on June 21 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Thomas and Amy Schulte. The groom is the son of Michael and Polly Reynolds.

Ward-Meyer



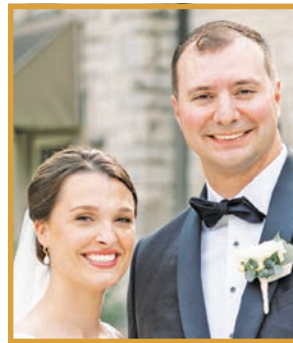
Mary Elizabeth Ward and William Michael Meyer II will be married on April 26 at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Edward and Elizabeth Ward. The groom is the son of Bill and Monica Meyer.

Annee-Asher



Victoria Grace Annee and Jones Allen Asher were married on Oct. 12, 2024, at St. Barnabas Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Dan and Sharon Annee. The groom is the son of Jamie and Diann Asher.

Dury-Goethe



Grace Elizabeth Dury and Jackson Pontz Goethe were married on Sept. 21, 2024, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of George and Theresa Dury. The groom is the son of Mark and Alison Goethe.

Koscielski -Burch



Grace Koscielski and Joel Burch were married on Dec. 14, 2024, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Paul and Amy Koscielski. The groom is the son of Joe and Angie Burch.

Picchione-Bushman



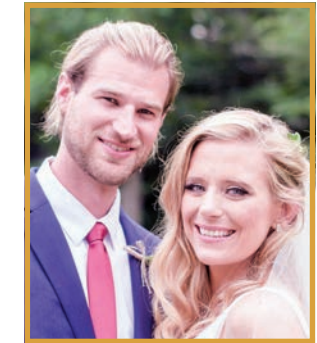
Sienna Maria Picchione and Tyler Bushman will be married on May 9 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Jeffrey and Michelle Picchione. The groom is the son of Michael and Kimberly Bushman.

Stonner-Fox



Cecelia Grace Stonner and Andrew Jonathan Fox were married on Aug. 24, 2024, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Ed and Trina Stonner. The groom is the son of Jon and Heather Fox.

Whitaker-Gabehart



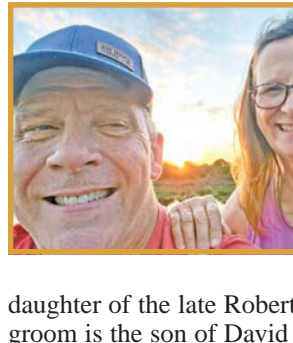
Kelli Whitaker and Tyler Gabehart were married on Feb. 15 at St. Rose of Lima Church in Franklin. The bride is the daughter of Douglas and Sandi Whitaker. The groom is the son of Jay and Kristine Gabehart.

Bell-McKay



Manuela Bell and Joshua Paul McKay will be married on June 27 at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Ricardo Rivera and Camila Gutierrez. The groom is the son of Peter McKay and Susan Beckham.

Gahimer-Mitchel



Cheryl Ann Gahimer and Matthew David Mitchel will be married on June 14 at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of the late Robert and Ethel Gahimer. The groom is the son of David and Barbara Mitchel.

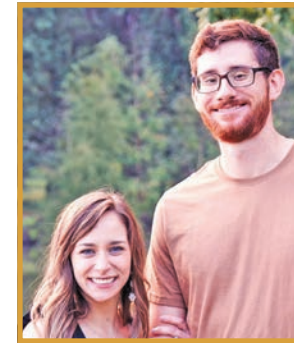
The bride is the daughter of the late Robert and Ethel Gahimer. The groom is the son of David and Barbara Mitchel.

Koscielski -Kirch



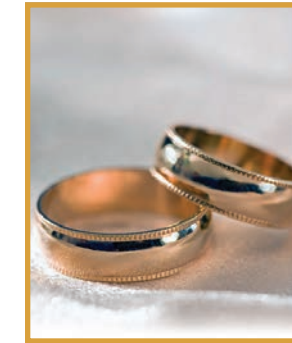
Maeve Koscielski and George Kirch will be married on March 1 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Paul and Amy Koscielski. The groom is the son of Bob and Kelly Kirch.

Riedford-Curry



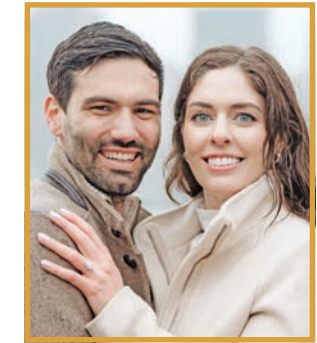
Sarah Kathryn Riedford and Cameron Scott Curry will be married on May 3 at St. Mary Church in Evansville, Ind., (Diocese of Evansville). The bride is the daughter of Rick and Kathy Riedford. The groom is the son of Scott and Camille Curry.

Sullivan-Weingart



Margaret Shea Sullivan and Daniel James Weingart will be married on May 10 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Kerry and Eileen Sullivan. The groom is the son of John and Robyn Weingart.

Wichern-Ditzler



Natalie Ann Wichern and Drew William Ditzler will be married on June 7 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Dennis Wichern and Patricia McGarry. The groom is the son of William and Nancy Ditzler.

Blair-Collom



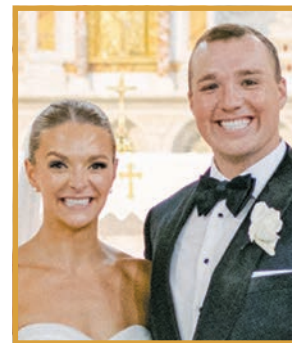
Emily Ann Bennett and Nicholas Daniel O'Connor will be married on June 7 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Craig and Mary Jane Bennett. The groom is the son of John and Jane O'Connor.

Gies-Krier



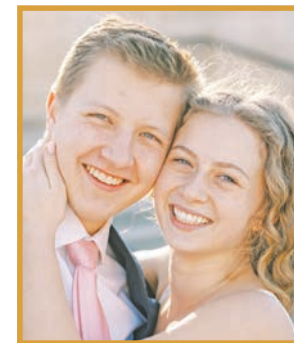
Alexis Ann Gies and Nicholas Aidan Krier will be married on June 28 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Sean and Valerie Gies. The groom is the son of David and Jennifer Krier.

Lennon-Sprecher



Colleen Teresa Lennon and Nicholas David Sprecher were married on Oct. 5, 2024, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Kevin and Teresa Lennon. The groom is the son of Steven and Stacy Sprecher.

Roller-Egan



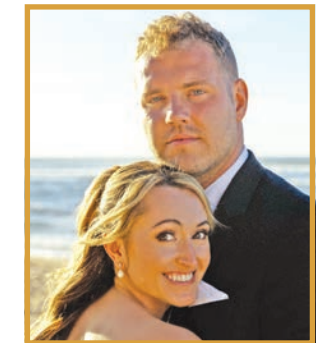
Moire Kathryn Roller and Roch Patrick Egan will be married on June 21 at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Robert and Caris Roller. The groom is the son of Timothy and Rose Egan.

Umana-Olexa



Erika Lynn Umana and Joseph Michael Olexa III will be married on June 21 at St. Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Greg and Kristy Umana. The groom is the son of Joseph, Jr., and Ann Olexa.

Wilderman-Lutgring



Claire Elizabeth Wilderman and Brandon Allen Lutgring were married on Nov. 21, 2024, at St. Michael Church in Waiialua, Hawaii (Diocese of Honolulu). The bride is the daughter of Steve and Ellen Wilderman. The groom is the son of Douglas and Melissa Lutgring.

Callaway-Gates



Allison Blythe Callaway and Richard Paul Gates were married on Oct. 11, 2024, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Jeffrey and Deborah Callaway. The groom is the son of Larry and Lisa Gates.

Harton-Kassell



Anne Miller Harton and John Patrick Kassell were married on Nov. 8, 2024, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Bob and Janey Harton. The groom is the grandson of John and Louisa Heyden.

Lipsey-Gottschall



Emily Anne Lipsey and Zachary Andrew Gottschall were married on Sept. 21, 2024, at St. Malachy Church in Brownsburg. The bride is the daughter of Rob and Margie Lipsey. The groom is the son of Matt and Carol Gottschall.

Pre-Cana Retreats, Tobit Weekend and One in Christ program prepare engaged couples for marriage

Criterion staff report

Three marriage preparation programs offered in the archdiocese—the Pre-Cana Conference, Tobit Weekend and One in Christ—help prepare engaged couples for the sacrament of marriage as well as the challenges of married life.

Early registration is recommended for all programs, as each fills up quickly.

Pre-Cana Retreats cover skills for marriage, a catechesis on the sacrament of marriage and an introduction to the science and morals behind natural family planning. They are offered in English in Indianapolis and New Albany.

There is one upcoming Pre-Cana Retreat in English in Indianapolis on Sept. 20 and 21:

—Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day, \$200 per couple. More information and registration available at tinyurl.com/IndyPre-Cana.

Tobit Weekend retreats take place at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis,

and are offered in English. The cost is \$330 per couple, which includes program materials, meals, snacks and two rooms for two nights.

The next retreats will take place on May 2-4 and Sept. 26-28.

Registration is available at www.archindy.org/fatima/calendar/tobit.html. For registration questions, contact Lisa Coons at lcoons@archindy.org or 317-545-7681. For more information about the program and its contents, contact Jennifer Burger at jburger@archindy.org or 317-545-7681, ext. 106.

One in Christ marriage preparation, which includes a medical panel to address questions on reproduction and fertility, involves an online pre-seminar course (\$99 per couple) and a three-day seminar (\$300 per couple) spanning a weekend and the following Saturday. On Saturdays, the program runs from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., and on Sunday it runs from 9:45 a.m.-4 p.m. Meals and materials are included. Scholarships are available for those with financial difficulty.

There are two upcoming One in Christ opportunity: —April 5, 6 and 26 at St. Malachy Parish, 9833 E. County Road 750 N, Brownsburg.

—June 7, 8 and 21 at Holy Spirit Parish at Geist (Diocese of Lafayette), 10350 Glaser Way, Fishers, Ind.

To register, go to oicmarriage.org/seminar-info. For more information, call 317-600-5629, e-mail info@OICIndy.com or go to oicmarriage.org.

Parish-led marriage preparation retreats in Spanish are available throughout the archdiocese. For a current list, go to tinyurl.com/PrematrimonialesEnEspañol.

Live retreats offer an invaluable experience for engaged couples and are the expected formation option.

However, for couples who experience significant difficulties attending a live retreat, including but not limited to preparing for marriage while out of state or country, being deployed in the armed forces or inflexible shift work at a hospital or factory, the online and self-paced Joy-Filled Marriage course ensures that no one misses out on valuable and comprehensive marriage formation. It is available in English and Spanish at cutt.ly/Joy-FilledMarriage. The cost is \$124.95.

For more information or to register, go to tinyurl.com/Pre-CanaOnline. †

Chapman-Vuoncino



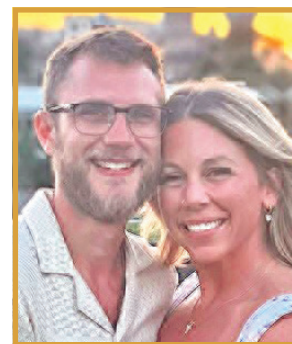
Erin Claire Chapman and Michael Salvatore Vuoncino will be married on May 10 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of J and Mary Claire Chapman. The groom is the son of Louis and Maria Vuoncino.

Horvath-DeLeon



Catherine Elizabeth Horvath and Matthew Mark DeLeon will be married on June 21 at St. Joseph Church in Mishawaka, Ind., (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend). The bride is the daughter of Kenneth and Nancy Horvath. The groom is the son of Mark and Theresa DeLeon.

Love-McCarthy



Sumer Nicole Love and David Richard McCarthy will be married on June 28 at St. Michael Church in Greenfield. The bride is the daughter of John and Brenda Frain. The groom is the son of Tim and Letsy McCarthy.

MISCARRIAGE

continued from page 1

They miscarried another child later that year—Andrew Paul—and buried him on the same plot.

“As more people heard about the burials, we heard people saying, ‘I wish I would have known I could do that’ or ‘I would have but had no place to bury them,’” says Harpring.

“That’s when Chris and I said, ‘Maybe we can bring something good out of our own loss.’”

So began the idea that is now Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, with God “leading the whole process,” says Harpring.

The national, online non-profit creates totes with miscarriage burial supplies, guides the process for cemeteries to create a miscarriage burial section (called a “Little Souls Cemetery”), offers online resources and more.

Harpring summarizes the ministry’s mission more simply: “Our goal is to provide dignified care to miscarried babies and their families.”

‘Having that grave gives them a visual’

Creating a non-profit was not even a thought when Harpring experienced her miscarriages.

“I knew each of our babies had a soul,” she says. “I wanted to give them a dignified burial like I would any other child I would have of any age.

“Being able to have that final burial place has been able to provide a sense of closure as well,” she adds. “We go out there and say prayers on their death dates or Memorial Day, or just random visits to pray. It’s enabled Agnes and Andrew to still be a part of the family.”

And for the couple’s four living children, ages 3-10, “Having that grave gives them a visual to appreciate and understand that they have two other siblings,” Harpring adds.

The couple was open with family, friends and St. Mary parishioners about their miscarriages and the burials.

“That’s when people started saying, ‘I wish I would have done that,’” she recalls.

Some women spoke of feeling uncomfortable talking about their loss after a miscarriage, says Chris, co-owner and executive president of an engineering company his father founded in Greensburg.

“So often, moms would say they didn’t even want to talk about it because people just don’t know what to do with that information,” he says. “Or they face an attitude of, ‘You never had the baby, you never held the baby, so what’s the big deal?’”

He says parents burying or memorializing a miscarried child “helps them understand that yes, it was a baby, and yes, they did lose a child.”

The couple developed an idea for St. Mary’s cemetery to help such parents. They shared the idea with their pastor, Father John Meyer, early in 2017, and “he supported it 100%.”

‘Room to help more families’

The concept was to create a “Little Souls Cemetery” section specifically for miscarried babies—by medical definition, those less than 20 weeks’ gestation. (Loss after that point is called “stillbirth,” which involves different burial requirements in Indiana.)

“So, for miscarriages, we’re talking remains of no more than about 10-11 inches,” says Harpring, a former pregnancy care center director and former natural family planning practitioner.

“If a cemetery has a section for infants, that’s wonderful. But those plots are usually a few feet, and the remains of a miscarried baby don’t really need that much space.”

Little Souls Cemetery plots are 8 inches square. The smaller size also “means there’s not as much expense involved, and there’s room to help more families,” says Harpring.

The section also includes a place for plaques to memorialize babies miscarried in the past.

In 2019—two years, two newborns and “lots of meetings” later—the Harprings had a design to present to the parish community for financial support.

The response was tremendous, taking “only a couple of weeks” to raise the necessary funds.

After a delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Little Souls Cemetery section was completed in 2022. Father Meyer celebrated a Mass at the site to consecrate it.

Previously submitted names of 29 miscarried babies were read aloud during the Mass, an act Harpring says many people found moving.

“For some, it might have been the first time somebody was acknowledging their baby as a life,” she says.

It’s a form of honor still offered during St. Mary’s Mass in memory of miscarried babies each October during Miscarriage Awareness Month. (See sidebar on page 13.)

The Harprings took extensive notes as they researched and planned the Little Souls Cemetery. They now offer the notes as guidance for cemeteries nationwide to create a Little Souls section. One now exists in Greensburg’s public cemetery, and discussions are under way with a cemetery in southeastern Indiana.

‘Getting supplies out there’

But without the proper supplies for a miscarried child’s remains, burial is not even an option.

Harpring recalls her own frantic local search ahead of her first miscarriage.

“I called the hospital where I was going to deliver,” she says. “I called my doctor’s office. I called the emergency rooms at the [local] hospitals, and I called both funeral homes in Greensburg.

“I could’ve mail-ordered these things, but my need was immediate. And that’s not uncommon. Many women miscarry early and might not have even had their first doctor appointment.

“That’s why it’s so important, getting the supplies out there and readily available so that a woman can have what she needs to retain that baby’s remains for burial.”

Harpring felt called to fill that need.

In 2019, she began creating totes with various ranges of miscarriage burial supplies—plastic receptacles in varying sizes, silk sleeves to wrap them in, instructions, prayer cards and more, even the option of a 10-inch upholstered casket.

The intent was not to wait for women in need to seek out the supplies through the ministry.

Rather, the totes are “intended for hospitals, doctor offices, funeral homes, pregnancy care centers—even churches—to help women who have miscarried or know they’ll miscarry,” Harpring explains. “Each tote has enough supplies to help several women, then [the providers] can easily re-order what they gave out.”

The key is for such places to make women aware that they have miscarriage burial supplies available.

“It may be uncomfortable to broach such a sensitive topic as miscarriage,” says Harpring. “But it’s important for these places to let women know, ‘Just in case you ever miscarry, we have these things to help you.’ Or to let their staff or congregation know so they can tell a woman in need, ‘Here’s a place you can go that can help.’”

‘A very humbling experience’

As demand for the totes grew, the Harprings felt God calling them to expand the reach and vision of Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, which became a non-profit organization in 2023.

They developed new tools for the organization’s website: a list of cemeteries nationwide with a section for miscarried babies, books, Little Souls rosaries, memorial ornaments, links to helpful resources, and more.



Rebecca and Chris Harpring smile with their children Philomena, left, Louis, John and Albert in the church of their home parish, St. Mary in Greensburg, on Jan. 20. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

“Right now, we have talked with a family, gotten a family a Little Soul’s ornament or gotten miscarriage supplies into at least 24 states,” says Harpring.

The children have become more involved as they’ve aged, she adds.

“John has been there from the beginning,” Harpring says of the couple’s 10-year-old son. “He decided there should be a reception after the [Little Souls Cemetery] dedication Mass. He dressed up in a suit and went to stores asking for drinks and packages of cookies.”

Now he, Philomena, 7, and Louis, 6, help Harpring fill the totes. Even 3-year-old Albert is starting to catch on.

“He understands that we do something with babies,” says Harpring. “If we’re out somewhere and he hears someone talking about babies, he tries to get in my purse to give them a business card and a holy card.”

Last July at the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, John helped steer people to Covenant Ministry’s booth in the event’s exhibition hall. Harpring met many people—including some who had benefited from the ministry.

“It was a very humbling experience,” she recalls. “There were lots of tears shed, lots of hugs. Lots of women saying, ‘Keep this up, don’t ever stop. We need this.’”

“It was interesting meeting people who had used supplies from totes at places that offered them and said, ‘Because of that, I was able to bury my baby.’”

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Snow covers the Little Souls Cemetery for miscarried babies within the cemetery of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg on Jan. 20. Rebecca and Chris Harpring, members of the parish, created the concept and now, through their Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, offer guidance to other cemeteries to create a Little Souls section.

Archbishop Thompson will celebrate Wedding Anniversary Mass on Aug. 24

Criterion staff report

The archdiocesan annual Wedding Anniversary Mass, to be celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, will take place at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at 2 p.m. on Aug. 24. A reception will follow across the street at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center.

The Mass and reception, sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, are for couples of the archdiocese married sacramentally in the Catholic Church and celebrating an anniversary ending in 5 (for example, 5 years, 25 years, 45 years, etc.) or 0 (10 years, 30 years, 50 years, etc.).

All couples celebrating an anniversary ending in 0 or 5 who register will receive a certificate.

The event is free, but registration is required and will open in May at tinyurl.com/WedAnniversaryMass (case sensitive).

For additional questions, contact Claudia Corona at 317-236-7310 or ccorona@archindy.org. †

Photo at right: Sylvia, middle, and Primo Andres, members of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Terre Haute, pose with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson during a reception in the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis after the archdiocese's 40th annual Wedding Anniversary Mass on Aug. 25, 2024. (Submitted photo)



Couples may announce engagement or marriage this summer in *The Criterion*

Criterion staff report

Engagement announcements will be published in the July 11 issue of *The Criterion* for couples planning to marry between July 12, 2025, and Jan. 31, 2026, in a marriage that is

recognized by the Church as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage.

Submissions may also be sent by couples who wed in a marriage as described above between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2025, if they did not publish their engagement in *The Criterion*.

The wedding announcement form is online at cutt.ly/CriterionWeddings.

An engagement or wedding photo may be sent to alewis@archindy.org. Digital photos must be clear, high-resolution images with the couple close together. Photos can also be

mailed to Ann Lewis, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN, 46202. To receive the photo back, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Due to print quality, Xerox copies of photos will not be accepted. †

MINISTRY

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“At first we tried a full-day retreat, eight hours, but cut it back to just an evening because the evaluations said it was too long,” she says.

Another change involved child care during the event. Keck says the service used to be offered, but “people didn’t use it.”

One recent addition was closing the evening with adoration led by a priest.

“We got great feedback on that,” she says. The couples “love having time to pray together at adoration and time to focus on each other.”

“It’s all about resetting, putting Christ at the center of the marriage.”

Formation, community life ‘start in the home’

Catalyst Catholic primarily serves youths and supports youth ministers of parishes in the New Albany Deanery. But it has also offered a series for married couples called Three Great Dates.

“Having a strong family is important to strong youth ministry,” says Kelli Reutman, evangelization and outreach coordinator for Catalyst Catholic. “Formation and community life all start in the home. So, it’s important for couples to have something to continue their formation after they’re married.”

The Three Great Dates series has provided that opportunity.

The three Saturday evening events begin by worshipping at the vigil Mass of the rotating host parish, followed by a catered dinner, a presentation by a Catholic speaker or couple, and time for questions and answers.

“Having interesting topics that speak to what it means to be married is important,” says Reutman. “We’ve had speakers from psychologists to marriage counselors to

couples who’ve been married a long time. They’ve talked about things like fighting fair, supporting your spouse, the connection between marriage and the Eucharist.”

While there is a charge for each event, the cost is low and includes child care.

Unlike All Saints’ experience, “We’ve found one of the key things is offering child care, so all couples are able to come, especially when you have lots of young families,” says Reutman—proof that each parish marriage ministry needs to assess their own local needs.



Kelli Reutman

‘Our job is to sow seeds’

As one of the largest parishes in the archdiocese, St. Malachy’s marriage ministry is broad, with help from the pastor, staff and a team of volunteers.

“We have date nights once a month, a formal dance in November, a marriage conference sometime in the spring, and we hand out books for people looking to heal, grow and encourage their marriage,” says Rea.

The parish is also considering offering The Third Option program, a series of classes designed to help couples build stronger marriages.

The monthly date nights, which always take place at the parish, “try to pair formation and fun,” says Rea.

“Formation” includes a presentation “like on the Theology of the Body or communication,” with time for discussion.

“Fun” has ranged from game nights, to watching a movie, to dance lessons, solving a murder mystery, an escape room and more.

The daylong marriage conference in the spring includes nationally- or locally-known Catholic speakers, discussion, Mass, time for prayer and lunch.

Rea has several practical tips for parishes or groups of parishes considering starting a marriage ministry—bearing

in mind what works for each community might differ:

—“Experiment and see what kind of response you get. Then you can build from there.”

—“Don’t just advertise—invite people personally. You can have the best messaging, and people will say, ‘That looks nice, but I’m busy.’ But a personal, friendly invitation goes a long way.”

—“Make sure the content isn’t just about [helping] with problems. Also focus on the good.”

—“Make sure it doesn’t come across as this is a place for people in a troubled marriage—every marriage can grow.”

—“If your parish is small, work with other parishes. There’s great fruit that can come from parishes coming together—marriage ministry is too important to let the cop-out of ‘we’re small’ get in the way.”

—“Charge, even if it’s just \$10. People are more likely to show up, and you don’t have to worry about buying stuff then have only a few show up.”

—“If you can swing it, child care really helps.”

Just as important—or perhaps even more—is Rea’s spiritual advice:

—“Any marriage ministry needs the blessing of the pastor and parish team to be successful. It has to be a collaboration between parish staff, the pastor and volunteers.”

—“Pray and discern what [marriage ministry] should look like where *you* are. What do marriages in *your* community need?”

—“Don’t be too hard on yourself when not as many people show up. Our job is to sow seeds—we don’t always see the fruit. But if you’re doing God’s will, there will be signs of fruit.”

(For guidance in starting a parish or multi-parish marriage ministry, contact archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life director Gabriela Ross at gross@archindy.org or 317-592-4007.) †

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‘This has been all God’

While Covenant Resources is focused on the dignified burial of miscarried babies, Harpring is quick to note such a gift is not always possible.

“We always like to make sure we let women know that if you did not bury, if you flushed the toilet because you were in shock, if you didn’t know where to bury: You didn’t do anything wrong,” she assures. “You did the best you could. We never want a woman to feel like she was a bad mother if she didn’t bury” her miscarried child.

Every aspect of the ministry is focused on mercy and compassion—which is not surprising, given the source Harpring credits for the ministry’s conception.

“This has been all God,” she says. “I’ve told Chris more than once, ‘All

I wanted to do was bury my baby, and look what happened.’

“When we buried Agnes and Andrew, we didn’t have any intent of starting this [ministry]. When we started the cemetery, we had no intent of it becoming a 501(c)3. But God just keeps guiding it.”

The couple has learned to trust that guidance. Through COVID delays and other challenges, they discovered that “God had a better plan than we did, and it was on his timing,” says Harpring. “We would step back and realize he had a better way of doing something than we did.”

“This [ministry] has definitely been God’s doing. He’s making it into something we could have never imagined.”

(For more information on Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, go to www.covenantresources.org.) †

Office of Marriage and Family Life website offers miscarriage resources

By Natalie Hoefler

The website for the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life offers several miscarriage-related resources at marriageandfamily.archindy.org/miscarriage.

Such resources include a link to Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry (see article on page 1); a link to an at-home delivery guide for parents who learn their pregnancy will end in miscarriage; information about an in-person support group at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis for miscarriage and loss of a child 12 months or younger; a link to a list of local natural family planning instructors, and more.

The page also includes a list of parishes in the archdiocese that have offered—and might still offer—a memorial Mass for miscarriage and child loss. The list includes:

- All Saints Parish, Dearborn County
- St. Joan of Arc Parish, Indianapolis
- St. Mary Parish, Greensburg
- St. Mary Parish, Indianapolis

Any parish can plan a such a Mass. Contact the parishes above to learn about the liturgy they prepared and promotional materials they used, or contact the Office of Marriage and Family Life at 317-592-4007 for planning support and help promoting. †