



# The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Amazing recovery

Fire captain rescues tabernacle from church's ruins, page 9.

CriterionOnline.com

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## Senior finds 'win-win situation all the way around' volunteering through RSVP

By Natalie Hoefler

Growing up on a farm in southern Indiana, John Kordes, 78, learned values that still drive him today.

"People in farming communities help each other," he says. "When you're raised in that environment, helping somebody else is not an exception, it's an expectation."

So, when he retired at age 74, the member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis knew he wanted "to do something constructive to help others."

"But then I thought, 'What am I going to do? I know all these different organizations need help, but who do I call and where do I go?' I think figuring all that out is the hard part for seniors who want to volunteer."

Kordes decided to start with the archdiocese's Catholic Charities. He called its Indianapolis office and asked if there was anyone he could speak with about volunteering.

"They said, 'We have just the person—that's exactly what she does,'" he recalls. "And that's how I got involved in RSVP."

RSVP—Retired and Senior Volunteer

See SENIOR, page 8

John Kordes, a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, enjoys volunteering to help alleviate hunger in his local community—in this case, filling bags with tomatoes at Gleaners Food Bank in Indianapolis on Jan. 2. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



## Legislation abolishing death penalty among ICC's priorities at Statehouse

By Victoria Arthur

At the start of a new legislative session, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is already out front on numerous issues, including the state's recently reignited debate over the death penalty.



The 124th

Indiana General Assembly opened

on Jan. 8, less than a month after the state carried out its first execution in 15 years. Lawmakers are now considering—and the ICC is strongly supporting—House Bill 1030, which would eradicate the death penalty in Indiana. Its author, Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), is a Catholic who has spoken widely about his personal change of heart concerning capital punishment, which he was in favor of until recently.

The ICC's support for this measure comes as additional Catholic lawmakers are leading the charge on other key legislation, including bolstering parents' authority over their children's use of social media and offering a fresh start to residents who have an eviction on their record.

Underscoring these issues is the Catholic Church's unwavering



Alexander Mingus

commitment to upholding the sanctity of human life and protecting the vulnerable, according to Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

"As we discern our priorities for any given legislative session, we always try to stay attentive to the moral areas the Church cares about—in particular, matters concerning the dignity of the human person," Mingus said. "But

See ICC, page 10

## When a teacher lost hope for her students, a new approach changed everything

*(Editor's note: As Pope Francis has announced that this year is a Jubilee Year for the Church with the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope," The Criterion has invited you, our readers, to share your stories of hope—how embracing hope has helped and guided you in the toughest moments of your life, how others have given you hope for your future, how your faith in God has sustained you and uplifted you in hope. Here is the second story in a continuing series.)*

By John Shaughnessy

In her 42 years as a teacher, Janine Schorsch always approached each school year with the hope and the belief that she would make a difference in the lives of the children she taught.

She had successfully used that approach for 26 years in Catholic schools, followed by more years in a public school. Then came a year of desperation when she was sent to a new

public school, a time when she broke down in tears and cried out, "My kids are so bad!"

Still, when she felt that all hope had been lost, everything changed.

"I was only given 10 students, but they were the most unruly, and often violent, students I had ever encountered," recalls Schorsch, a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. "I used every 'trick in the book' to try to get them under control, to no avail."

"The principal, knowing the kids that I had been given, had told me to send them to the office when they broke school rules. After the third visit, the principal stopped at my room and suggested that my teaching practices were inadequate. I knew there would

be no support from administration. I was on my own, out of ideas, and desperate."



Janine Schorsch

See TEACHER, page 10

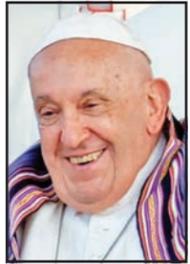
# Bishop Higi funeral



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson blesses the casket of Bishop Emeritus William L. Higi during a Mass of Christian Burial for the deceased fifth bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind. The Mass was celebrated on Jan. 10 at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Lafayette. (Photo by Chad Krockover/Krock Photography)

## Holy Year pilgrimage is a chance to begin again, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A holy year is an opportunity to start fresh with one's relationship with God and with other people, Pope Francis told thousands of pilgrims.



Pope Francis

The Holy Year 2025 theme, "Pilgrims of Hope," is a reminder that hope "is not a habit or a character trait—that you either have or you don't—but a strength to be asked for. That is why we make ourselves pilgrims: We come

to ask for a gift, to start again on life's journey," the pope said on Jan. 11.

Meeting more than 7,000 pilgrims who filled the Vatican audience hall or pressed against crowd-control barriers outside, Pope Francis began a series of Saturday general audiences designed, as he said, to "welcome and embrace all those who are coming from all over the world in search of a new beginning."

Throughout the audience, the pope had the crowd repeat "ricominciare," Italian for "begin again."

The audience was held the day before the feast of the Baptism of the Lord when the Church commemorates Jesus going down to the Jordan River and joining the crowds who responded to St. John the Baptist's call for conversion.

A summary of the pope's talk, read to the pilgrims in English, said that John the Baptist's "message in calling for conversion was one of hope in the advent of the Messiah, a hope fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and his invitation to welcome the kingdom of God.

"Like the crowds that flocked to the waters of the Jordan, may all who pass through the Holy Door this year receive the grace of interior renewal, openness to the dawn of God's kingdom and its summons to conversion, fraternal love and concern for the least of our brothers and sisters," the pope's message to English speakers said.

On a Holy Year pilgrimage and, more generally, on the journey of life, "we, too, bring many questions," the pope told the pilgrims, but Jesus replies by pointing to a "new path, the path of the Beatitudes," which proclaims how blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who struggle for justice and those who work for peace.

"Hope for our common home—this Earth of ours, so abused and wounded—and the hope for all human beings resides in the difference of God. His greatness is different," the pope said. Jesus demonstrated how greatness comes not from domination, but from learning "to serve, to love fraternally, to acknowledge ourselves as small. And to see the least, to listen to them and to be their voice." †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

January 19–28, 2025

**January 19 – 6 p.m.**  
Christian Unity Prayer Service at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Church, Indianapolis

**January 21 – 10:30 a.m.**  
Visit to Fiat Classical Academy, Aurora

**January 21 – 1 p.m.**  
School Mass at St. Nicholas School, Sunman

**January 22 – 9 a.m.**  
Respect Life Youth Rally, Mass and March for Life at Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis

**January 23 – 10 a.m.**  
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

**January 23 – 2 p.m.**  
Legal Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

**January 26 – 5:30 p.m.**  
Mass and dinner at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

**January 28 – 9 a.m.**  
School Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas School, Indianapolis

**January 28 – 1 p.m.**  
Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

## Vatican diplomats discuss paths toward peace in Middle East

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The Vatican's top diplomat met with papal representatives to various Middle Eastern countries to discuss possible avenues toward peace in the region and the state of the Catholic Church there.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, met in Amman, Jordan, with the Vatican ambassadors to: Bahrain, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria and Yemen. The meeting took place as part of the cardinal's visit to Jordan to dedicate a new church built on the site traditionally believed to be where Jesus was baptized along the Jordan River.

During their Jan. 13 meeting, the diplomats discussed the "ongoing crisis in the region, the political and ecclesial condition of each country, the signs of hope that can be glimpsed in some, the serious humanitarian situations faced by the people most affected by the conflicts, and the need for solidarity from the international community," the Vatican said in a statement.

Together, they expressed hope "that the hostilities can soon end on all fronts and the Middle East can be a land of peace, where Christians remain an essential component for fraternal coexistence among the various religions and for the progress of the respective countries," the statement said.

On the same day, Cardinal Parolin also had a phone call with Joseph Aoun, president of Lebanon and a Maronite Catholic, to congratulate him on winning election and taking office on Jan. 9. The cardinal "expressed best wishes to him, assuring him of his prayers," the Vatican said. "He also expressed pleasure with the timely appointment of Mr. Nawaf Salam as prime minister."

Lebanon had been without a president for more than two years since Michel Aoun's presidential term ended on Oct. 30, 2022, after which the Lebanese parliament made 12 unsuccessful attempts to elect a new president. Despite sharing the same surname, Michel and Joseph Aoun are not related. †

## What do we owe each other?

When he became the 18th president of the University of Notre Dame last year, Indiana native Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd chose a theme for the university's community to consider.

It's a theme connected to the ways that people are divided in this country, a theme based upon this question, "What do we owe each other?"

*The Criterion* is inviting our readers—our community—to share their answers to that question, as a way of starting the new year together. Your responses could range from a one-word answer to a personal story reflecting what you think we owe each other.

Please send your responses and stories to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto:jshaughnessy@archindy.org) or by mail in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †



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### NEWS FROM YOU!

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# Biden awards Pope Francis the Presidential Medal of Freedom

WASHINGTON (OSV News)— President Joe Biden awarded Pope Francis the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, the nation's highest civilian honor, the White House said on Jan. 11.

Biden, the nation's second Catholic president, spoke with the pontiff to name him a recipient of the award, the White House said. It marked the only time in his presidency Biden bestowed that award "with distinction," the announcement added.

On Jan. 8 Biden canceled a trip to Italy that had been scheduled for Jan. 9-12. It would have included an audience with Pope Francis and would have been his final foreign trip as president. The cancellation came in the wake of the devastating wildfires raging in California.

Pope Francis' mission of serving the poor "has never ceased," the White House said in its statement about the award.

"A loving pastor, he joyfully answers children's questions about God. A challenging teacher, he commands us to fight for peace and protect the planet. A welcoming leader, he reaches out to different faiths," the statement said. "The first pope from the southern hemisphere, Pope Francis is unlike any who came before. Above all, he is the People's Pope—a light of faith, hope, and love that

shines brightly across the world."

The Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction has rarely been bestowed in recent decades. But Biden himself is one such recipient. Then-President Barack Obama awarded Biden, who was then vice president, with such a medal in 2017 shortly before he left office. Another pontiff has also received the award. Then-President George W. Bush awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction to St. John Paul II in 2004.

Biden last met with Pope Francis at the Group of Seven summit in Puglia, Italy, on June 14, where they had a brief private bilateral meeting, according to Catholic News Service. The pair also spoke by telephone in December, the White House said, and shortly after that call, Biden commuted the sentences of 37 of the 40 individuals on federal death row to life sentences without the possibility of parole. Pope Francis and other Catholic opponents of the death penalty had sought such action.

On Oct. 29, 2021, Biden, accompanied by first lady Jill Biden, met with the pope at the Vatican. Biden spent 75 minutes talking to the pope privately and later told reporters that the pope had indicated that he was a "good Catholic."



Pope Francis greets U.S. President Joe Biden on June 14, 2024, before the pontiff gave a speech to world leaders at the Group of Seven summit in Borgo Egnazia in Italy's southern Puglia region. On Jan. 11, Biden spoke with the pope from the White House in Washington and named him as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction. Biden had been scheduled to have an audience with the pope during a Jan. 9-12 trip to Rome but the president canceled the trip amid the California wildfires. (CNS photo/courtesy of G7 Italia 2024)

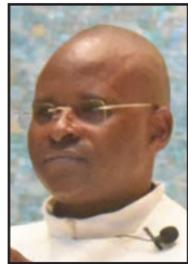
In a Jan. 11 post on X announcing the award, Biden is shown in a photo in the Oval

Office accompanied by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the U.S. †

# Father Jean Bosco Ntawugashira was pastor of Holy Angels, St. Rita parishes

By Sean Gallagher

Marianhill Missionary Father Jean Bosco Ntawugashira, pastor of Holy Angels and St. Rita parishes, both in Indianapolis, died of cancer on Dec. 26, surrounded by his loved ones at his family's home in his native Rwanda in eastern Africa. He was 51.



Fr. Jean Bosco Ntawugashira

At the time of his death, he had served as pastor of Holy Angels and St. Rita for two years.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 6 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Fatima in Ruhengeri, Rwanda, Father Jean Bosco's hometown. Bishop Vincent Harolimana, the shepherd of the Ruhengeri Diocese, was the principal celebrant of the

Mass. Burial followed in a cemetery adjacent to the cathedral.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson wrote a letter about Father Jean Bosco to the late priest's family that was read aloud at his funeral.

In it, Archbishop Thompson described Father Jean Bosco as "an incredibly decent, dedicated, holy, wise and gracious priest" whose "priestly life and ministry were rooted in prayer, God's holy word and the grace of the sacraments."

Father Jean Bosco's faith was evident, Archbishop Thompson explained in the letter, in how he faced the cancer that eventually took his life.

"He impressed many people, including his own health care team, by his profound faith and courage throughout his battle with cancer. He never gave up. He refused to give in. His mind and his heart remained

fixed on Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior."

Noting his priestly ministry in the archdiocese, Archbishop Thompson noted that Father Jean Bosco "served with great distinction, representing his family, nation and the Marianhill Missionaries with great honor and devotion. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis was deeply blessed by his presence and witness of priestly ministry."

Father Jean Bosco was born on Dec. 31, 1972, in Rwanda. He professed first vows as a member of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Marianhill on Feb. 2, 2002, and final vows on May 1, 2005. Father Jean Bosco was ordained a priest on Feb. 18, 2006.

He earned a diploma in sciences at the St. John Minor Seminary in Rwanda in 1994, a diploma in philosophy and religious studies at the St. Augustine Philosophical College in Zambia in 1999, a bachelor's degree in theology at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome in 2005 and a master's degree in applied ethics at the University of Zambia in 2015.

For 10 years after his ordination in 2006, Father Jean Bosco served in Zambia in a parish, in

youth ministry, as provincial treasurer in his religious community and as a lecturer in ethics at the St. Bonaventure University College.

From 2016-2022, Father Jean Bosco ministered in Rome at the offices of his religious community as its treasurer general, legal representative and as a house vice superior.

Starting in 2022 and until his death, Father Jean Bosco served in the archdiocese as pastor of Holy Angels and St. Rita parishes. †

## Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition

Feb. 14 issue of The Criterion

Couples who are planning to be married between Feb. 14 and July 11, 2025, in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between Aug. 1, 2024, and Feb. 1, 2025, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming Feb. 14 Spring Marriage Edition.

Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form below or electronically at [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements).

### E-mailed photos

Photos should be saved in jpg format and be at least 500 kb. Color photos are preferred. We recommend sending a photo where the couple's faces are close to each other. Please send the photo as an attachment to the e-mail: [alewis@archindy.org](mailto:alewis@archindy.org). Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). In the e-mail, please include the information in the form located below.

If it is not possible to e-mail a photo, a photo can be mailed with the bottom form. Please no photocopies or laser prints. To have the photo returned, please include a return addressed envelope with a postage stamp on it.

### Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on Feb. 5.

— Use this form to furnish information by mail —

Clip and mail to: BRIDES, The Criterion, ATTN: Ann Lewis, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. To submit information online go to: [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements). *Deadline with photos: Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 5 p.m.*  
Please print or type:

Name of Bride (first, middle, last)		Daytime Phone	
Mailing Address	City	State	Zip Code
Name of Bride's Parents (first, last)			
City		State	
Name of Bridegroom (first, middle, last)			
Name of Bridegroom's Parents (first, last)			
City		State	
Wedding Date	Church	City	State
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Enclosed	Signature of person furnishing information		Relationship
<input type="checkbox"/> Return photo			Daytime Phone
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## Editorial



Pope Francis makes the sign of the cross as he stops to pray in front of a Nativity scene in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican on Jan. 4, after meeting Catholic school teachers, students and parents. Prayer can play an important role in people's New Year's resolutions. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

## Resolving to become more Christ-like in our lives

We're a few weeks into 2025, and for those who decided on a New Year's resolution and kept it thus far, we say well done—and keep it up. For those who have already fallen short, that's OK. There's no reason you cannot pick yourself up and start again. No one said it would be easy. And we must remember, our faith reminds us that Jesus walks with us in our earthly journey. So, he is there by our side—picking us up and carrying us when necessary.

For those who didn't have the time or couldn't decide on a specific resolution for 2025, why not start now? It's never too late to try and improve the life God has called you to—whether you are young or old, retired or fully employed, or are Catholic or practice another faith tradition. (We know annual resolutions are made by people from all walks of life.) Becoming the people our Creator wants us to be takes time—and plenty of patience and God's grace.

In our Jan. 10 issue of *The Criterion*, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral parishioner Pat Maher shared a unique practice he and his family follow at the beginning of each calendar year: they choose a word to focus on for the coming 12 months.

In 2024, Maher's word was "chaos, because everything just seemed to be in chaos. That's the way the world was before it began. God gives us that order that we need, so we need to avoid the chaos."

He continued, "I'm trying to decide [among three words] for this year, either 'hope,' 'mercy' or 'truth.' ... Things keep coming up about those, but hope is leading the way right now."

For those still considering a New Year's resolution, the Maher family's example is worth considering. And because the theme of the 2025 Holy Year to mark the Jubilee is "Pilgrims of Hope," the word "hope" seems to be an appropriate word.

But words like "love," "mercy" and "peace" come to mind in our ever-challenging chaotic world. The choices—as we see in any dictionary—are endless.

Another recent suggestion from a friend had a unique bent as well: Why not a pick a "saint for the year" and

learn more about him or her and what led to that saint's canonization? Or if you're ambitious, why not pick more than one saint for the year—possibly one per month—to focus on?

It might be interesting to choose little-known saints. Find those saints' life stories and read them. What did you learn about them? What was unique about their vocation and the mission their life focused on? How did that play a role on their journey to sainthood? Finally, why not celebrate their feast days at home with your family? It would be a wonderful way to plant seeds of faith for all who take part, especially children.

There are plenty of other resolutions to consider in 2025. Here are a few more that may fill a much-needed void in your life of faith:

—Try to attend Mass more than once a week.

—Go to the sacrament reconciliation more often, possibly monthly.

—Pray the rosary or the Divine Mercy chaplet each day.

—Read the Bible in its entirety or Scripture as often as possible.

—Pray with your spouse and/or children each day.

—Visit an adoration chapel regularly.

—Join a men's or women's group at your parish.

—Volunteer at your parish, at a food pantry or at other agencies that assist our brothers and sisters in need.

If we become more Christ-like in our vocations, our lives will be good and fruitful. God's grace will flow in us.

Christ wants to be with us and in us. In 2025 and beyond, pray Christ becomes the focus of your life.

And as a reading from the Gospel of John proclaimed on the Saturday after Epiphany reminded us: "He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

Our primary mission in life is to be made holy, as our heavenly Father is holy.

As priest and theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar said in his book *Prayer*: "What you are is God's gift to you. What you become is your gift to God."

—Mike Krokos

Sight Unseen/Brandon A. Evans

## An empty hell

Jean-Paul Sartre once famously wrote, "Hell is other people."

And it certainly is sometimes.



We've all taken our turn being on the receiving end of someone else's rudeness or jealousy or greed; their lack of empathy or even their malice. Or just their desire to be right.

And we've all taken our turn

delivering those things.

It would be *inhuman* not to wonder at times how much better to just live our lives without anyone else getting in the way.

But what an awful fate that would be. And what a terror to run the risk of accidentally wishing for it with our actions.

It should create in us a shiver each time we choose to put *something* over *someone*, because when we do it without regret a darkness pulls us closer, not to a hell filled with wailing souls, but to an emptiness far more despairing.

There is an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in which this is portrayed chillingly.

The crew of the *Enterprise* comes to the aid of a planet under attack by an interstellar species called the Husnock.

But their rescue is too late. They find that the entire planet has been wiped out, save one small square of perfectly manicured grass upon which sits a pristine home; inside, a kindly old man and his wife.

Eventually, the puzzle of these survivors unravels: there is no idyllic home, no loving wife. They are all illusions of a life gone past.

The man living there is an immortal being of limitless power. Having fallen in love with a human woman, he lived on the planet in peace until it was invaded. When his wife was killed along with everyone else, he reached out in a moment of rage to strike the attackers.

He admits with unspeakable shame: "I didn't kill just one Husnock, or a hundred, or a thousand. I killed them all. All Husnock, everywhere."

The episode ends with the man being left alone to live his pitiful eternity surrounded by the illusion of a life—and a spouse—that will never really be there.

It's a horrifying punishment for a horrifying crime: to have everything you could ever want and no one to share it with; to have chosen exile as the cost of being rid of those whom you hate.

But genocide isn't the only way to find ourselves on that lonely road.

Original sin beckons us to it in far more subtle ways, tempting us at all costs to give up our neighbors for something—anything—else. Sin glimmers with the promise of power and possession and exclusion, blinding us to the fact that no matter how satisfying or interesting those things are, they eventually *end*.

We search for the next thing but know that it will never really fill our craving.

People, though, as author Peter Kreeft once said, are the only thing in this world that never stop being interesting.

People are *infinite*: they are endlessly creative and endlessly unpredictable.

They are able to surprise even God, because he gave them the independence and intellect to do so. We are capable of punchlines and twist endings and worlds never seen. Heaven will never want for stories and songs and poetry, nor will it ever run out of jokes.

But no such things exist in hell: there is no room for them; only room enough for what we've already chosen to put there.

Those who crave war and enmity will get it but have no one to fight; the prideful will strut for crowds that will never see them; the gluttonous will dine alone on a feast that never fills.

Those who choose an eternity of their own making will be stuck in a rerun of times gone by, played over and over in the empty theater of their own mind. No new places to see, no new experiences to have.

Only what was, and that forever.

Because hell is not, in the end, other people.

Hell is no one.

(*Sight Unseen* is an occasional column that explores God and the world. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of *The Criterion* and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

## Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in *The Criterion* as part of the newspaper's commitment to "the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God" (*Communio et Progressio*, 116).

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.

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). 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 must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to "Letters to the Editor," *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to [criterion@archindy.org](mailto:criterion@archindy.org). †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Let's not take the miraculous experience of the Eucharist for granted

The Gospel for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Jn 2:1-11) tells the familiar story of the wedding feast in Cana. The mother of Jesus informs her Son that their hosts are running out of wine. She believes that Jesus can, and should, remedy this embarrassing situation.

Jesus responds bluntly, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4). Mary is undeterred. She turns to the servers saying, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). And six stone jars, each containing 20 to 30 gallons of water, are miraculously filled with wine.

The story is reminiscent of the multiplication of the loaves and fish—the only miracle of Jesus that is reported in all four Gospels. The point of both stories is that Jesus is Lord. What is impossible for ordinary human beings is possible for the Son of God.

This same Jesus feeds our hungry hearts with his body and blood through the daily miracle of the holy Eucharist. In the Eucharist, through the action of the priest and by the power of the Holy Spirit, ordinary bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood,

soul and divinity of the same Jesus who performed the miracle at Cana and the multiplication of the loaves and fish. By this divine intervention, our hearts are satisfied and our hunger for God's love and compassion are fulfilled.

As Pope Francis wrote about the multiplication of the loaves and fish: "When Jesus, with his compassion and his love, gives us a grace, forgives us our sins, embraces us, loves us; he does nothing halfway but completely. As it happens here, all are satisfied. Jesus fills our heart and our life with his love, with his forgiveness, with his compassion. Thus, Jesus allows his disciples to carry out his command. In this way, they know the path to follow: to feed the people and keep them united; that is, to be at the service of life and of communion."

The miracle at Cana illustrates what can happen when we take to heart the words of Mary and do whatever he tells us. Our obedience to God's word is what makes miracles happen. Our openness to the needs of others, especially those who are most vulnerable, makes possible Christ's healing power.

The Gospel reminds us that if we let him, God can do impossible things through us. Jesus gives himself to us completely in the Eucharist. Then he sends us out as his missionary disciples to feed others, to bring them together into one family and, as the pope says, "to be at the service of love and communion."

In the second reading for this Sunday (1 Cor 12:4-11), St. Paul tells the Corinthians, and all of us, that "there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (1 Cor 12:4-6). Our unity is revealed in our diversity. The same God who works miracles through the ordinary elements of bread and wine makes it possible for us to live together in unity, despite the differences that threaten to divide us.

God himself is three-in-one, the Holy Trinity, and he works in us to bring about a miraculous but very ordinary unity in our lives and in our world. As Pope Francis says, Jesus does nothing halfway. When he is confronted with a problem, like the shortage of wine at

the wedding in Cana, he responds. The miracles he works are not self-serving. He cares nothing for the praise of others. What Jesus wants is to "be at the service of life and of communion."

In Cana, he simply wants to grant his mother's wish—in spite of the fact that his hour of public ministry has not yet come—and to spare his friends the agony and embarrassment of running out of wine.

In terms of the impact on the people involved, turning water into wine is not as great a miracle as feeding 5,000 people, but the fact that it happened at all is astounding.

The same is true of the eucharistic miracle that happens every day in every corner of the world. Changing ordinary bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is not an ordinary occurrence. It is a miracle of great significance. And the fact that each of us is invited to share in this extraordinary, miraculous experience is not something we should take for granted.

Let's not overlook the awesome beauty and power of the Eucharist. Let's thank God for the miracles he works in our daily lives. †



## Cristo, la piedra angular

### No olvidemos valorar la experiencia milagrosa de la Eucaristía

La lectura del Evangelio del segundo domingo del tiempo ordinario (Jn 2:1-11) relata la historia que todos conocemos de la boda de Caná. La madre de Jesús informa a su hijo de que los anfitriones se están quedando sin vino. Cree que Jesús puede, y debe, remediar esta situación vergonzosa.

Jesús le dijo: "Mujer, ¿qué nos interesa esto a ti y a Mí? Todavía no ha llegado mi hora" (Jn 2:4). María se mantiene firme. Se vuelve a los sirvientes y les dice "Hagan todo lo que Él les diga" (Jn 2:5). Entonces, seis tinajas de piedra, cada una de las cuales contenía de 20 a 30 galones de agua, se llenaron milagrosamente de vino.

Este relato recuerda el de la multiplicación de los panes y los peces, el único milagro de Jesús que se relata en los cuatro Evangelios. La moraleja de ambas historias es que Jesús es el Señor; lo que es imposible para los seres humanos ordinarios es posible para el Hijo de Dios.

Ese mismo Jesús es el que alimenta nuestros corazones hambrientos con su cuerpo y su sangre a través del milagro diario de la Sagrada Eucaristía. En la Eucaristía, por la acción del sacerdote y por el poder del Espíritu Santo, el pan y el vino ordinarios se transforman en el cuerpo y la sangre, el alma y la

divinidad, del mismo Jesús que realizó el milagro de Caná y la multiplicación de los panes y los peces. Gracias a esta intervención divina, nuestros corazones quedan satisfechos y se calma nuestra hambre del amor y la compasión de Dios.

Como escribió el Papa Francisco sobre la multiplicación de los panes y los peces:

"Cuando Jesús, con su compasión y su amor, nos concede una gracia, perdona nuestros pecados, nos abraza, nos ama; no hace nada a medias sino completamente. Al igual que en el relato, todos quedan satisfechos. Jesús llena nuestro corazón y nuestra vida de su amor, de su perdón, de su compasión. Así, Jesús permite a sus discípulos cumplir su mandato. De este modo, conocen el camino a seguir: alimentar al pueblo y mantenerlo unido; es decir, estar al servicio de la vida y de la comunión."

El milagro de Caná ilustra lo que puede suceder cuando nos tomamos a pecho las palabras de María y hacemos todo lo que su hijo nos dice. Nuestra obediencia a la Palabra de Dios es lo que hace que ocurran los milagros. Estar atentos a las necesidades de los demás, especialmente de los más vulnerables, hace posible el poder

sanador de Cristo.

El Evangelio nos recuerda que, si se lo permitimos, Dios puede hacer cosas imposibles a través de nosotros. Jesús se nos da por entero en la Eucaristía y luego nos envía como sus discípulos misioneros a alimentar a los demás, a reunirlos en una sola familia y, como dice el Papa, "a estar al servicio de la vida y de la comunión."

Tal como lo expresa Pablo a los corintios y a todos nosotros en la segunda lectura de este domingo (1 Cor 12:4-11): "Ahora bien, hay diversidad de dones, pero el Espíritu es el mismo. Hay diversidad de ministerios, pero el Señor es el mismo. Hay diversidad de actividades, pero Dios, que hace todo en todos, es el mismo" (1 Cor 12:4-6). Nuestra unidad se revela en nuestra diversidad. El mismo Dios que obra milagros a través de los elementos ordinarios del pan y el vino hace posible que vivamos juntos en la unidad, a pesar de las diferencias que amenazan con dividirnos.

Dios mismo es tres en uno, la Santísima Trinidad, y actúa en nosotros para lograr una unidad milagrosa pero muy ordinaria en nuestras vidas y en nuestro mundo. Como dice el Papa Francisco, Jesús no hace nada a medias: cuando se enfrenta a un problema,

como la falta de vino en la boda de Caná, responde. Los milagros que obra no son egoístas. No le importan los elogios de los demás. Lo que Jesús quiere es "estar al servicio de la vida y de la comunión."

En Caná, simplemente quiere cumplir el deseo de su madre—a pesar de que aún no ha llegado su hora de ejercer su ministerio públicamente—y evitar a sus amigos la angustia y la vergüenza de quedarse sin vino.

En términos de impacto sobre los involucrados, convertir el agua en vino no es un milagro tan grande como alimentar a 5,000 personas, pero el hecho de que ocurriera es asombroso.

Lo mismo ocurre con el milagro eucarístico que sucede cada día en todos los rincones del mundo. Convertir el pan y el vino ordinarios en el cuerpo y la sangre de Cristo no es algo común y corriente. Es un milagro que reviste gran importancia y el hecho de que cada uno de nosotros esté invitado a compartir esta extraordinaria y milagrosa experiencia es algo que debemos valorar.

No pasemos por alto la impresionante belleza y el poder de la Eucaristía. Demos gracias a Dios por los milagros que obra en nuestra vida cotidiana. †

# Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

## January 23

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Associate Professor of Finance for the University of Indianapolis MBA Program Dr. Matthew Will presenting “The Post-Election Economy,” rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Jan. 21. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## January 29

Lumen Christi School, 580 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **School Open House**, 12:30-2:30 p.m., free. Information: 317-632-3174, [erosko@lumenchristicatholic-school.org](mailto:erosko@lumenchristicatholic-school.org).

## February 1

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Devotion**, 8 a.m., rosary, litany, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, confession 8-8:30 a.m. followed by 8:30 a.m. Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

St. Matthew the Apostle chapel, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Children’s Rosary**, 9 a.m., children of all ages invited to pray rosary every first Saturday, donuts and fellowship to follow, free. Information: [julie3reyes@gmail.com](mailto:julie3reyes@gmail.com).

## February 2

Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N., 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **The Presentation of the Lord: Choral Concert with Night Prayer**, 7 p.m., featuring the archdiocesan *schola* Vox Sacra, free. Information: 317-236-1513, [amotyka@archindy.org](mailto:amotyka@archindy.org).

## February 5

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605.

## February 7

**Virtual Prayer with the Sisters of Providence**, 7-7:45 p.m., for single women

ages 18-42, prayer and sharing on topic of fear. Information, registration: [events.sistersofprovidence.org](http://events.sistersofprovidence.org), 361-500-9505, [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

Women’s Care Center, 4901 W. 86th St., Indianapolis. **First Friday Mass**, 5 p.m., optional tour of center to follow. Information: 317-829-6800, [womenscarecenter.org](http://womenscarecenter.org).

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass 6 p.m. followed by adoration until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, [msross1@hotmail.com](mailto:msross1@hotmail.com).

St. John Paul II Church, 2253 St. Joe Road W., Sellersburg. **First Friday Devotion**, 11:40 a.m., litany, consecration to the Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by noon Mass. Information: 812-246-2512.

## February 8

Our Lady of the Greenwood, Parish Life Center, 399

S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Celebrate Romance**, 6:30-11:30 p.m., dinner, dancing, door prizes, optional dance lessons 6 p.m., \$85 per couple, \$320 for table of four couples. Information, registration: [celebratemarriage ministry.com](http://celebratemarriage ministry.com).

## February 9

Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting**, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-762-6259, [popofsindy@gmail.com](mailto:popofsindy@gmail.com).

## February 14-16

Louisville, Ky. **Retrouvaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage, location disclosed upon registering. Information, registration: 502-479-3329, [3012@helpourmarriage.org](mailto:3012@helpourmarriage.org), [helpourmarriage.org](http://helpourmarriage.org).

## February 16

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Indianapolis Symphony Sphinx Series Concert “Strings and Soul,”** 2-4 p.m., featuring string

quartet of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra musicians, tour of Sacred Heart Church available after concert, free. Information: 317-902-3006, [judithessex@icloud.com](mailto:judithessex@icloud.com).

## February 19

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

## February 20

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898, [catholiccemeteries.cc](http://catholiccemeteries.cc).

## February 21

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, presenter TBA, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Feb. 18. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## February 22

East Central H.S. Performing Arts Center, 1 Trojan Place, St. Leon. **E6 Catholic Men’s Conference**, 8 a.m.- 3:30 p.m., featuring keynote by author and speaker Chris Stefanick, other speakers: Jake Khym, Bobby Angel and Father Jonathan Meyer, includes Mass, confession, adoration, lunch, adults \$48, group of 10 or more adults \$43 per person, high school and college students \$18, clergy and religious free. Information, registration: 812-576-4302, [contact@ecatholicmensconference.com](http://contact@ecatholicmensconference.com), [ecatholicmensconference.com](http://ecatholicmensconference.com).

## February 28

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Corpus Christi Hall, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Pro-life Film: The 1916 Project** film, 6 p.m. doors open for pizza dinner, 6:30 p.m. film showing, panel discussion following, free-will offering for dinner. Information: 317-407-6881, [smdye1@gmail.com](mailto:smdye1@gmail.com). View trailer at [the1916project.com](http://the1916project.com). †

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

### February 5, February 28

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

### February 13, March 13

**Virtual guided meditation series via Zoom**, 7-7:45 p.m., second Thursday of the month through May, offered by Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, free, registration required. Information, registration: [events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-

535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

### February 14-16

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Benedictine Wisdom for Married Life**, Valentine’s Day retreat for married couples, Benedictine Father Simon Herrmann presenting, \$550 double.

Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Seraphic Doctor’s Guide to Holiness**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father John Lawrence facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

### February 19

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for

additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: [archindy.org/fatima-events](http://archindy.org/fatima-events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

### February 22

**Mystics and Fellowship virtual program**, 9-10:30 a.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence, third of four independent sessions (March 29), register by Feb. 19, \$25 per session. Information, registration: [events.SistersofProvidence.org](http://events.SistersofProvidence.org), 812-535-2952, [provctr@spsmw.org](mailto:provctr@spsmw.org).

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Wisdom Knowing and Wisdom Jesus**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., doctor of nursing Kay Jackson presenting, \$40. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [center@oldenburgosf.com](mailto:center@oldenburgosf.com), [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

### February 25-27

Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **A Contemplative Approach to the Lord’s Prayer**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

### March 5

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Ashes, Awe and the Cross**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

### March 21-23

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Christian Contemplative Prayer: Being Centered on Christ**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats). †

## Mass and reception for Filipino *Sinulog* festival will be held at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on Jan. 26

A rosary, Mass and reception for the traditional Filipino *Sinulog* festival will be celebrated at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, beginning at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 26.

In the Philippines, the *Sinulog*—or *Santo Niño*—festival is a cultural and religious festival famous for its parades, street parties, elaborate costumes and dancing—the word “*sinulog*” is the name of a centuries-old Filipino ritualistic dance.

The festival is celebrated on the third Sunday of January. Its history began in 1521 when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan gave a small statue of the Child Jesus to

the king and queen of the Philippine province of Cebu, thus introducing the nation to Christianity.

The celebration begins with the praying of the rosary in the cathedral, followed by a Mass celebrated in Filipino (Tagalog). A reception with catered Filipino food will be held in the rectory after the Mass. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own *Santo Niño* (statue of the Child Jesus) for a blessing during the Mass.

All are invited to the rosary, Mass and meal. There is no cost for the meal, although freewill donations will be accepted.

For more information, contact Maria Solito at [mariasolito@yahoo.com](mailto:mariasolito@yahoo.com). †

## Morning reflection on Jesus’ healing touch to be offered at Oldenburg Center

A morning of reflection titled “The Power of the Jesus Touch: Healed, Transformed, Saved” will be offered at Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., in Oldenburg, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. on Feb. 8.

The reflection, presented by author, storyteller and speaker Sandra Hartlieb, focuses on the power of Christ’s healing touch, how his physical interaction with others led to salvation,

and how physical contact can help humans stay healthy.

Hartlieb is a member and former director of adult formation of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, and the founder of Sandra Hartlieb Ministries. She offers talks and retreats throughout the Midwest.

The cost is \$30. To register or for more information, go to [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org) or call 812-933-6437. †

## Indiana Youth Rally and March for Life in Indianapolis will take place on Jan. 22

The annual Indiana March for Life and associated events will take place on Jan. 22, in Indianapolis.

The day starts with a youth rally for students in grades eight-12 from 9-11 a.m. in the Indiana Convention Center, 100 S. Capitol Ave. Catholic radio host, author and speaker Katie Prejean McGrady will address the youths during the rally, with music by the Sarah Kroger Band. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available.

The youth rally is free, but registration is required at [archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life](http://archindyym.com/youth-rally-for-life).

Following the rally, all are invited to worship at a Mass for Life at 11:30 a.m. in the convention center, concelebrated by four of Indiana’s five bishops (Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Gary Diocese is unable to attend.)

No registration is required to worship at the Mass.

Right to Life of Indianapolis is coordinating the remaining events of the day—a pre-march rally, the Indiana March for Life and a post-march rally at the south steps of the Indiana Statehouse.

The pre-march rally with pro-life speakers will take place at 1 p.m. on the east side of Illinois Street at Georgia Street.

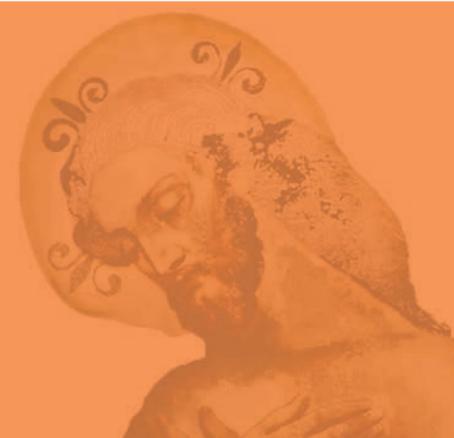
The Indiana March for Life will begin at 1:45 p.m. at the corner of Georgia and Illinois streets. It will conclude with a rally on the south steps of the Statehouse, 200 W. Washington St., from 2:30-3 p.m.

For more information, including about parking, go to [cutt.ly/INMFL2025](http://cutt.ly/INMFL2025). †



# The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



## Let's open the doors of our hearts to all in hope and peace

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Jubilee 2025 in St. Peter's Basilica. This door represents "Jesus, the door of salvation open for all," the pope said in his message "*urbi et orbi*" (to the city and the world):

"Jesus is the Door; the Door that the Father of mercies has opened in the midst of our world, in the midst of history, so that all of us can return to him," Pope Francis says. "We are all like lost sheep; we need a Shepherd and a Door to return to the house of the Father. Jesus is that Shepherd; Jesus is the Door."

The theme of Jubilee 2025 is "Pilgrims of Hope." Pope Francis describes this year as a time when the hopes of millions of people throughout the world can be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is our hope. If we encounter him in word, sacrament or service to all those in need, our deepest longings will be satisfied, and we will know peace.

Hope burns like a blazing fire in the hearts of God's people, the Holy Father

teaches, but it must be ignited by the Holy Spirit and kindled by missionary disciples of Jesus who seek to spread the good news by their words and actions. As the pope says in his letter introducing the jubilee year:

"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the jubilee, 'Pilgrims of Hope.'"

"This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity. Here I think in particular of the many refugees forced to abandon their native lands."

The voices of the poor cry out in the darkness and despair of poverty,

illness, injustice and indifference.

The Holy Door that the pope opened on Christmas Eve reminds us that we are all called to open the doors of our hearts and welcome the poor, the suffering and the stranger as Christ himself.

"In the realization that all of us are pilgrims on this Earth, which the Lord has charged us to till and keep [Gen 2:15], may we never fail, in the course of our sojourn, to contemplate the beauty of creation and care for our common home," the pope writes. "It is my hope that the coming jubilee year will be celebrated and experienced with this intention too. Growing numbers of men and women, including many young people and children, have come to realize that care for creation is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will."

The Door that is Jesus Christ leads us as pilgrims of hope to care deeply about one another and about our common home. This is what the Holy Father calls "the spiritual dimension of the jubilee, which calls for

conversion." He tells us that we should not focus on only one or two aspects of our pilgrimage, but "should also embrace these fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a coherent whole."

In his annual Christmas blessing, Pope Francis expressed his gratitude to the many who are already opening doors to Christ day in and day out each year:

"On this festive day, let us not fail to express our gratitude to those who spend themselves, quietly and faithfully, in doing good and in serving others. I think of parents, educators and teachers, who have the great responsibility of forming future generations. I think too of health care workers, the forces of order and all those men and women who carry out works of charity, especially missionaries throughout the world: they bring light and comfort to so many people in difficulty."

To all of these, Pope Francis simply says: Thank you!

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion's editorial committee.) †

"Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God."

—Pope Francis, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("The Face of Mercy")

"Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios."

—Papa Francisco, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("El rostro de la misericordia")

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

## Abramos las puertas de nuestros corazones a todos con esperanza y paz

En Nochebuena, el Papa Francisco abrió la Puerta Santa del Jubileo 2025 en la Basílica de San Pedro. Esta puerta representa a "Puerta de salvación abierta a todos," dijo el papa en su mensaje "*urbi et orbi*" (a la ciudad y al mundo):

"Jesús es la Puerta; es la Puerta que el Padre misericordioso ha abierto en medio del mundo, en medio de la historia, para que todos podamos volver a Él. Todos somos como ovejas perdidas y tenemos necesidad de un Pastor y de una Puerta para regresar a la casa del Padre. Jesús es el Pastor, Jesús es la Puerta."

El tema del Jubileo 2025 es "Peregrinos de esperanza." El Papa Francisco describe este año como un tiempo en el que las esperanzas de millones de personas en todo el mundo pueden concretarse en la persona de Jesucristo, el camino, la verdad y la vida. Jesús es nuestra esperanza. Si nos encontramos con Él en la Palabra, en los sacramentos o en el servicio a todos los necesitados, nuestros anhelos más profundos quedarán satisfechos y conoceremos la paz.

El Santo Padre nos enseña que la esperanza arde como una llama

abrasadora en los corazones del pueblo de Dios pero es el Espíritu Santo el que la enciende y los discípulos misioneros de Jesús que tratan de difundir la buena nueva con sus palabras y acciones, quienes la avivan. Como dice el Papa en su carta de presentación del Año Jubilar:

"Debemos avivar la llama de la esperanza que se nos ha dado y ayudar a todos a adquirir renovadas fuerzas y certezas de cara al futuro con espíritu abierto, corazón confiado y proyección. El próximo Jubileo puede contribuir en gran medida a restaurar un clima de esperanza y confianza como prelude de la renovación y el renacimiento que tan urgentemente deseamos; por eso he elegido como lema del Jubileo 'Peregrinos de la esperanza.'"

"Así será, en efecto, si somos capaces de recuperar el sentido de la fraternidad universal y nos negamos a ignorar la tragedia de la pobreza rampante que impide a millones de hombres, mujeres, jóvenes y niños vivir de una manera acorde con nuestra dignidad humana. Aquí pienso en particular en los numerosos refugiados obligados a abandonar sus tierras natales."

Las voces de los pobres gritan en la oscuridad y la desesperación de la pobreza, la enfermedad, la injusticia y la indiferencia. La Puerta Santa que el Papa abrió en Nochebuena nos recuerda que todos estamos llamados a abrir las puertas de nuestros corazones y acoger al pobre, al que sufre y al forastero, como Cristo lo hizo.

"Al darnos cuenta de que todos somos peregrinos en esta Tierra, que el Señor nos ha encomendado labrar y conservar [Gn 2:15], que nunca dejemos de contemplar, en el curso de nuestra estancia, la belleza de la creación y de cuidar nuestra casa común," escribe el Papa. "Espero que el próximo Año Jubilar se celebre y se viva también con esta intención. Un número creciente de hombres y mujeres, incluidos muchos jóvenes y niños, se han dado cuenta de que el cuidado de la creación es una expresión esencial de nuestra fe en Dios y de nuestra obediencia a su voluntad."

La Puerta que es Jesucristo nos lleva, como Peregrinos de Esperanza, a preocuparnos profundamente unos de otros y de nuestra casa común. Es lo que el Santo Padre llama "la dimensión espiritual del Jubileo, que

llama a la conversión." Nos dice que no debemos centrarnos únicamente en uno o dos aspectos de nuestro peregrinaje, sino que "también debemos abarcar estos aspectos fundamentales de nuestra vida en sociedad como parte de un todo coherente."

En su bendición anual de Navidad, el Papa Francisco expresó su gratitud a los muchos que ya abren puertas a Cristo día tras día, cada año:

"En este día de fiesta, que no falte nuestra gratitud hacia quien se esmera al máximo por el bien de manera silenciosa y fiel. Pienso en los padres, los educadores y los maestros, que tienen la gran responsabilidad de formar a las nuevas generaciones; pienso en el personal sanitario, en las fuerzas del orden, en cuantos llevan adelante obras de caridad, especialmente en los misioneros esparcidos por el mundo, que llevan luz y consuelo a tantas personas en dificultad."

A todos ellos, el Papa Francisco les dice simplemente: "¡gracias!"

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

# SENIOR

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Program—is a program of AmeriCorps Seniors, a federal agency for service and volunteerism for those age 55 and older.

Agencies offer the program throughout the country, including in New Albany and Terre Haute. Catholic Charities Indianapolis (CCI) coordinates RSVP for Hamilton, Hendricks and Marion counties.

“Think of it as a volunteer clearinghouse for those 55-plus,” says Monica Woodworth, director of the Indianapolis-based RSVP office.

Through the program, Kordes has volunteered for food banks, CCI’s Holy Family Shelter and Christmas Store, and more.

“It’s that rewarding feeling of happiness you get from volunteering,” he says. “You get more than you give.”

## ‘Volunteering has flexibility’

That last statement is true on several levels, says Woodworth.

“Research tells us that volunteering has mental and physical benefits, including lower rates of depression and anxiety, lower mortality rates,” she explains. “It increases physical movement and opportunities for learning new skills, and it creates and expands social networks.”

At a time in life when retirement, children moving out of the home or the loss of a loved one can lead to loneliness or a feeling of being lost, volunteering “can provide a sense of purpose,” Woodworth says.

Such purpose is what Kordes was seeking when he was put in touch with her. After an introductory meeting, he filled out registration and background check forms.

“Then she looks at your application, your strengths, what you like,” says Kordes. “And then she says, ‘I’ve got these things here that look like they really fit your interests.’ She puts the pieces of the puzzle together.”

The resulting picture can vary greatly, depending on the volunteer.

“There are one-time and ongoing opportunities, and volunteers can serve from home or in the community” for as little or as much time as desired, says Woodworth.

“We want people to know that volunteering has flexibility—there is likely something that will fit your schedule and physical needs without overwhelming you.”

If a person comes to realize their choice is not the right fit, “volunteers have our support finding something else,” she adds. “We do whatever makes the volunteer most comfortable. Our goal is to have volunteers excited about their volunteer time.”

While the organizations seeking volunteers through RSVP vary, Woodworth notes that many of them “focus on addressing food insecurity and supporting older adult independence.” Exposure to those needing such help can “increase your knowledge about social issues in your community while you work to address those issues. Stronger communities benefit all of us.”

## ‘It’s a beautiful thing for everyone’

Those remarks ring true for Kordes, who, through RSVP, volunteered for a few months helping drive seniors to medical appointments.

“You get an idea of the different needs and challenges that are out there in the community,” he says. “Then seeing how blessed you are by not having those struggles keeps you humble, it really does.”

One such struggle is hunger. Even before retiring, Kordes helped with St. Christopher’s food pantry. Through RSVP, he found himself called to volunteer at Gleaners Food Bank in Indianapolis.

“There’s such a severe need” when it comes to hunger, he says, citing a statistic from a 2022 Feeding Indiana’s Hungry report that one in five Hoosier children are food insecure. “I decided I’m going to make helping the hungry my thing.”

That “thing” has become a passion for Kordes, who volunteers weekly at Gleaners while still helping at St. Christopher’s food pantry. And through a partnership between the parish pantry and Midwest Food Bank in Indianapolis, he volunteers for that food bank as well.

“About a year, year-and-a-half ago, I started thinking, ‘Well, other people need help, too,’” says Kordes. Through RSVP, he began volunteering at Catholic Charities’ Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis.

Even there he discovered ways to help better feed those living at the shelter.

“At the time, [the shelter was] only getting food from Midwest Food Bank,” says Kordes. “I hooked them up with the people down there at Gleaners. It’s beautiful, because [Holy Family is] now able to utilize them to get the majority of their food, and they can now use Midwest [Food Bank] to subsidize the rest of it.”

“And now when [Holy Family] gets food donations from other places beyond



John Kordes, a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis, volunteers with Catholic Charities Indianapolis’ Christmas Store on Dec. 7, 2024. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

what they need, they give the extra to St. Christopher’s food pantry. It’s a beautiful thing for everyone.”

## ‘A win-win situation’

Kordes also considers the benefits of volunteering a “beautiful thing.”

“It makes you feel happy when you’re giving help, that rush of joy that you get inside when you feel like you’ve actually done something positive for someone else that made a difference in their life,” he says.

“But volunteering is also good physically and psychologically. Engaging with others is good for a person’s mental health. So many people who are retired have problems with depression and loneliness that’ll be taken care of by volunteering. These places I volunteer, they’ve become like family.”

“I’ve found it to be a win-win situation all the way around.”

(For more information about RSVP of Hamilton, Hendricks and Marion Counties, contact Monica Woodworth at 317-261-3378 or [mwoodworth@archindy.org](mailto:mwoodworth@archindy.org). Other agencies offering RSVP in central and southern Indiana are Western Indiana Community Action Agency Inc. for Putnam and Vigo counties, 812-232-1264, ext. 6221, [dfullhart@wicaa.org](mailto:dfullhart@wicaa.org); and Hope Southern Indiana Inc. for Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Jefferson and Scott counties, 812-948-1815, [rsvp@hopesi.org](mailto:rsvp@hopesi.org). Numerous volunteer opportunities are also available with Catholic Charities in Indianapolis, New Albany, Tell City and Terre Haute—go to [archindy.org/cc](http://archindy.org/cc) for contact information—as well as through parishes, St. Vincent de Paul conferences, pregnancy care centers and other Catholic agencies throughout the archdiocese.) †



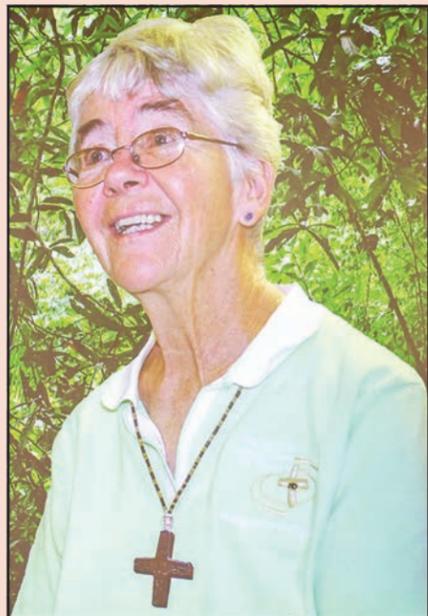
‘There are one-time and ongoing opportunities, and volunteers can serve from home or in the community. ... We want people to know that volunteering has flexibility—there is likely something that will fit your schedule and physical needs without overwhelming you.’

—Monica Woodworth, director of the Indianapolis-based Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) office as a service of Catholic Charities Indianapolis

## U.S. sister killed in the Amazon honored at Rome ‘new martyrs’ shrine

ROME (CNS)—“It’s quite an honor for her to be here with the likes of St. Oscar Romero,” Tom Stang said after a relic of his sister was placed on an altar in Rome alongside a relic of the martyred archbishop from El Salvador.

A cross containing dirt stained with the blood of Sister Dorothy Stang, a U.S. member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur shot down in the Amazon



A picture of U.S. Sister Dorothy Stang, who was killed in the Amazon in 2005, is displayed during a symposium in her honor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on Jan. 10. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

20 years ago, and one of her sweaters were placed on Jan. 10 on the altar of the “new martyrs of the Americas” in Rome’s Basilica of St. Bartholomew.

Honoring her at the new martyrs’ shrine is not an official Vatican recognition of her martyrdom.

Sister Dorothy was sent on mission to the Brazilian Amazon in 1966 and worked closely with the Brazilian bishops’ Pastoral Land Commission in favor of land rights for the poor and for sustainable development in the region. The work she did angered many large landowners, and she had received death threats. A rancher and three others were convicted of plotting her death and killing her in 2005.

The international leadership team of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and leaders of the order’s Ohio province, in which Sister Dorothy was a member, along with her brother and 24 nieces, nephews and other family members were invited by the Community of Sant’Egidio to place her relics at the new martyrs’ shrine and museum, which the community cares for at the basilica.

The relics were added to the shrine during an evening prayer service led by Archbishop Fabio Fabene, secretary of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The service followed a symposium at Rome’s Gregorian University on Sister Dorothy’s life and ministry and “women’s leadership in the climate movement.”

Sister Mary Johnson, the international congregational leader of the sisters, told

the conference that “years before Pope Francis’ magnificent [2015 encyclical] ‘Laudato Si’ [On Care for Our Common Home], Dorothy was hearing and articulating the cries of the poor and the cries of the Earth. Her prophetic words and actions became a symbol of hope for those who struggled for life and dignity in the Amazon.”

As wildfires continued to burn in Los Angeles, bringing death and destruction, Sister Mary said, “Dorothy’s inspiration is needed to move individuals and nations beyond division and deceit regarding climate change.”

“She and her inspiration call us to a deeper, broader solidarity,” she said. “We need to realize her vision of a solidarity that transforms attitudes and behaviors in order to move national and global systems from dealing death to enhancing life.”

Sister Mamalifar Poreku, a member of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa and a leader in the justice, peace and integrity of creation commission of the international unions of superiors of men’s and women’s religious orders, told the conference that, like Sister Dorothy, “religious women cannot remain indifferent to how the climate crisis is impacting the people they serve.”

Sister Dorothy, she said, is one of many “eco-martyrs” killed for their defense of the Earth and of the poorest people who rely on it for sustenance.

Laurie Johnston, a professor of theology at the sisters’ Emmanuel College

in Boston, said Sister Dorothy’s ministry and martyrdom help people recognize the existence of what Catholic social teaching calls “structures of sin” and not just individual sins.

“One of the things martyrs point to is broader forces at work,” she said. The death of martyrs helps people see whole political, social and economic systems that are unjust and feed violence, poverty and a lack of respect for human life.

At the evening prayer service, Archbishop Fabene said Sister Dorothy “defended the life and dignity of the poor and of the Earth, because God created it for the benefit of all.”

In his “Laudato Si’,” the archbishop said, Pope Francis insisted people must care for three fundamental relationships: with God, with their neighbors and with the Earth.

“Sister Dorothy was a radical and effective witness of this triple relationship,” he said.

Sister Kathleen Harmon, provincial of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur’s Ohio province, told Catholic News Service that an official sainthood cause for Sister Dorothy has not been opened.

“At the time of her death, we had many sisters in Brazil,” she said, and the congregation felt that the expense and the attention required for the sainthood process would take resources away from continuing Sister Dorothy’s work.

“I think that was true at the time,” Sister Kathleen said. “But that may be changing.” †

# Fire captain makes way through ruins of church to find tabernacle intact

LOS ANGELES (OSV News)—Four days after Corpus Christi Church was incinerated in the Palisades Fire, Capt. Bryan Nassour of the Los Angeles Fire Department picked his way through a 6-foot layer of rubble in the ashen bones of the sanctuary and recovered the tabernacle on Jan. 11.

“I did it because the whole community has been decimated—it looks like a nuclear bomb has gone off and nothing is standing,” Nassour told *Angelus*, the news outlet of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Nassour is a member of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Sherman Oaks, and his brother is a member of Corpus Christi Parish.

“My brother lost his home. I have close friends who lost everything but the shirts on their backs, and they belong to that [parish] too. So, if I could save just one thing, let it be this, so they have something to believe in,” he said.

As of early on Jan. 14, the California wildfires have killed at least 24 people, forced more than 200,000 to evacuate, and destroyed or damaged more than 12,401 structures, including houses and churches. Most of the damage has been done by the two largest fires: the Palisades Fire in Pacific Palisades and the Eaton Fire in Altadena.

During his televised *Angelus* address on Jan. 12, Pope Francis directly addressed those impacted by the wildfires in southern California, saying, “I am praying for all of you.

“I am close to the residents of Los Angeles County, California, where devastating fires have broken out in recent days,” the pope told thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square to pray the *Angelus* with him.

In a telegram released by the Vatican the previous day, Pope Francis also

assured the people of Los Angeles of his prayers as the fires continued to cause death and destruction.

“Entrusting the souls of the deceased to the loving mercy of almighty God, His Holiness sends heartfelt condolences to those who mourn their loss,” said a telegram sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, to Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles.

“He likewise prays for the relief efforts of the emergency services personnel and imparts his blessing to all as a pledge of consolation and strength in the Lord,” the telegram said.

On the morning of Jan. 11, Nassour, whose station in Pacific Palisades is across the street from Corpus Christi, had been up all night battling other fires. As he sipped coffee at his desk and gazed at the ruined church, he decided to check for valuables. He wanted to protect them from looters and perhaps return something meaningful to the parish.

Scorched bricks, tiles and hunks of debris filled the nave so high that he had to crawl under the top of door frames that no longer had doors. The roof had collapsed, a burned steel frame teetered above the twisted remains of a chandelier. The pews had been consumed. Only the granite altar remained, with the solid brass tabernacle atop it and a cross above. The Blessed Sacrament was intact.

Nassour was astounded to find that the tabernacle weighed more than 300 lbs. His crew helped him get it into the station house.

“It was one of the most uplifting things,” he said. “Not everyone is religious, but they saw that and they’re like, ‘This is awesome.’ We’re doing something—at least one thing—that we can salvage for the community.”

He made many calls before he was

able to reach Msgr. Liam Kidney of Corpus Christi Parish to tell him that the tabernacle was safe and undamaged.

“He was in utter disbelief,” Nassour said.

Nassour offered to search for other sacred objects and the priest told him where to find the chalices and patens. Firefighters from Station 69 helped dig for the crushed cabinet. The chalices and patens had been severely damaged. But the firefighters recovered other sacred objects, including three unbroken containers of holy oils.

Brass withstands high heat, but Nassour suspects more was involved in the tabernacle’s survival.

“Talk to any firefighter. In any religious building what usually survives is the cross and certain specific items that are highly religious, unless they’ve been specifically set on fire,” he said.

Gabe Sanchez, a retired FBI special agent who does contract investigations for the Los Angeles Archdiocese, was sent to retrieve the tabernacle. Firefighters helped



Msgr. Liam Kidney, left, and Msgr. Lloyd Torgerson are pictured at St. Monica Church in Los Angeles with the tabernacle recovered on Jan. 11 from nearby Corpus Christi Church, where Msgr. Kidney is pastor. Some days after Corpus Christi was incinerated by the Palisades Fire, Capt. Bryan Nassour of the LA Fire Department crawled through the rubble and found the tabernacle intact. (OSV News photo/Victor Alemán, *Angelus*)

him wrestle it into his car. He drove it to St. Monica Church, where Msgr. Kidney celebrated Mass for survivors the next day.

At that liturgy, the tabernacle stood on a table by the altar. Msgr. Kidney recounted Nassour calling him to ask, “I have found this big gold box. What would you like me to do with it?”

The Corpus Christi parishioners burst into applause.

Nassour was unable to attend because he was fighting fires. †

# Pope Francis looks back on his life, urges people to look to future with hope

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While calling himself an “old man” and saying he never expected to be pope this long, Pope Francis said he still has dreams for the future.

“We must not stumble upon tomorrow, we must build it, and we all have the responsibility to do so in a way that responds to the project of God, which is none other than the happiness of mankind, the centrality of mankind, without excluding anyone,” the 88-year-old pope wrote in his autobiography.

*Hope: The Autobiography* was written with the Italian editor Carlo Musso beginning in 2019. The book was released on Jan. 14 in its original Italian and in 17 other languages in about 100 countries. Random House published the book in the United States, and Penguin Random House Canada released it in Canada.

The original plan, Musso said, was for the book to be released after Pope Francis’ death. But Mondadori, the Italian publisher coordinating the release, said the

pope decided in August that it should be published at the beginning of the Holy Year 2025, which has hope as its central theme.

In several chapters of the book, Pope Francis directly addresses readers, including when he quotes St. John Paul II’s words during the Jubilee 2000: “Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ!”

“If one day you are overcome by fears and worries,” he told readers, “think of that episode in the Gospel of John, at the marriage at Cana [Jn 2:1-12], and say to yourselves: The best wine has yet to be served.

“Be sure of it: The deepest, happiest, most beautiful reality for us, for those we love, has yet to come,” the pope continued. “Even if tiredness weakens your powers, never lose this hope that cannot be beaten.”

Much of the book contains familiar stories of Pope Francis’ past, his childhood and relationship with his grandmother Rosa, his vocation and ministry as a Jesuit, his service as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and his election as pope in 2013.

Pope Francis acknowledged that he has made mistakes during his pontificate, usually because of his impatience, but he defends some of his most controversial decisions, including expanding the possibilities for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to return to the sacraments and, more recently, to authorize the blessing of same-sex or cohabiting couples.

He wrote about both of those decisions in the larger context of how the Church should reach out to and welcome everyone.

“All are invited. Everyone,” he wrote. “And so: Everyone inside. Good and bad, young and old, healthy and sick. For this is the Lord’s plan.

“It is our task as pastors to take others by the hand, to accompany them, to help them to discern, and not to exclude them,” the pope wrote. “And to pardon: to treat others with the same mercy that the Lord reserves for us.”

In late 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published, with the pope’s approval, “*Fiducia Supplicans*” (“Supplicating Trust”), on “the pastoral meaning of blessings.”

The declaration said that priests can give brief, spontaneous, non-sacramental, non-liturgical blessings to individuals who are in irregular situations or part of a same-sex couple “without officially validating their status” or blessing their union.

In *Hope*, Pope Francis again said: “It is the people who are blessed, not the relationships.”

The blessing, he wrote, is a sign that the Church wants to accompany everyone and that it does not exclude

anyone because of “one situation or one condition.”

“Everyone in the Church is invited, including people who are divorced, including people who are homosexual, including people who are transgender,” the pope wrote.

As for his decision in the 2016 exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*” (“The Joy of Love”) to open a possibility for some divorced and civilly remarried people to have access to the sacraments, Pope Francis said that decision “made some people throw their arms up in horror.”

“Sexual sins tend to cause more of an outcry from some people,” he wrote. “But they are really not the most serious [sins]. They are human sins, of the flesh. The most serious, on the contrary, are the sins that have more ‘angelicity,’ that dress themselves in another guise: pride, hatred, falsehood, fraud, abuse of power.

“Homosexuality is not a crime, it is a human fact,” the pope wrote. LGBTQ+ people “are not ‘children of a lesser god.’ God the Father loves them with the same unconditional love, He loves them as they are, and he accompanies them in the same way that he does with all of us: being close by, merciful and tender.”

Pope Francis also discusses his health and asserts again that he has never thought of resigning, although like his predecessors he had prepared a letter early in his pontificate offering his resignation “in the event of impediment for medical reasons.

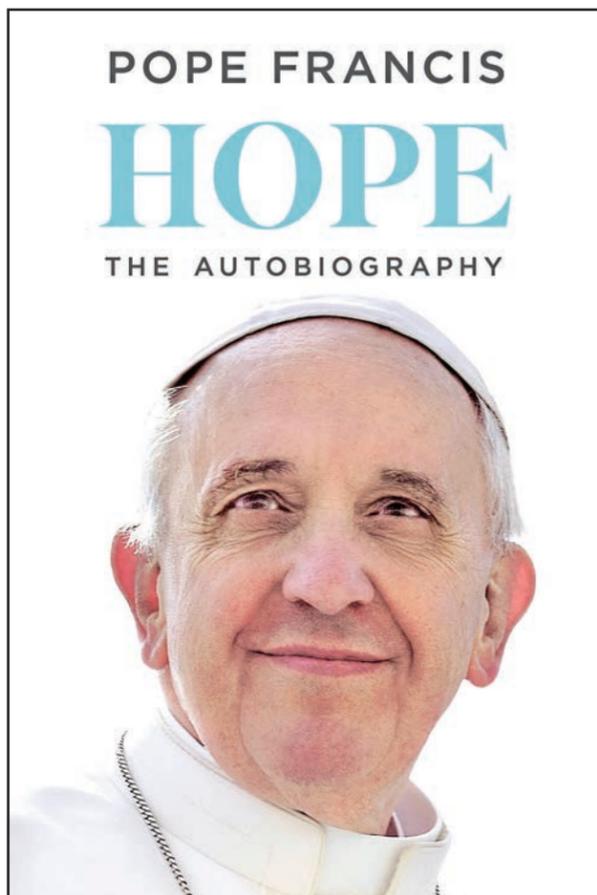
“At the beginning of my papacy, I had the feeling that it would be brief: no more than three or four years,” he wrote. “I never imagined that I would write four encyclicals, and all those letters, documents, apostolic exhortations, nor that I would have made all those journeys to more than 60 countries.”

But, he said, “the reality is, quite simply, that I am old.”

Pope Francis wrote that he will be pope as “long as God wishes,” and repeated his plan to be buried in Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major and not in St. Peter’s Basilica as most modern popes are.

“The Vatican is the home of my last service, not my eternal home,” he wrote. His burial site is “in the room where they now keep the candelabra, close to the *Regina della Pace* [Mary, Queen of Peace] from whom I have always sought help, and whose embrace I have felt more than a hundred times during the course of my papacy. They have confirmed that all is ready.

“Though I know that he has already given me many blessings,” Pope Francis wrote, “I ask the Lord for just one more: Look after me, let it happen whenever you wish, but, as you know, I’m not very brave when it comes to physical pain—so, please, don’t make me suffer too much.” †



# ICC

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we also look at what is on the minds of legislators and how we can advance the Church's long and rich tradition of social teaching when it comes to the issues of the day."

The ICC has been taking that approach since its inception nearly 60 years ago. Now, Mingus is its new leader following the retirement last summer of his predecessor, Angela Espada. And there is a new voice at the ICC, too—that of Roarke LaCoursiere, its new associate director.

With her background in law and her deep formation in Catholic tradition, LaCoursiere has immersed herself in the death penalty debate that has been making headlines since then-Gov. Eric Holcomb announced in June that Indiana would resume executions in Indiana state prisons. Despite opposition from the five Catholic bishops in the state, the ICC and other pro-life advocates, 49-year-old Joseph Corcoran was executed on Dec. 18 for the murders of four people in 1997.

In their recent ICC podcast, she and Mingus discussed the legislation that Rep. Morris introduced two weeks before the execution—and well ahead of the opening of the 2025 Indiana General Assembly. House Bill 1030 has undergone its first reading and now awaits further action in the Committee on Courts and Criminal Code.

"I'm so inspired by Rep. Bob Morris and the efforts that he has taken to spread the word about how abolition of the death penalty is in line with the pro-life agenda, and all the efforts he's made to talk to his co-legislators about this issue," LaCoursiere said.

Mingus, who helped institute the weekly ICC podcast four years ago, called on the Catholic faithful to engage on this and other key issues throughout the upcoming session. He pointed to numerous resources on the ICC website, [www.indianacc.org](http://www.indianacc.org), which also includes access to the podcast, better known as the ICAN (Indiana Catholic Action Network) podcast.

"If you haven't thought much about the death penalty or the Church's teaching on it, take some time to read about it and to pray about it, just as we have—trying to steep ourselves in the Church's wisdom," Mingus said. "This is very much going to be an issue that is on

everybody's mind, and we're going to be talking about it."

The ICC testified on day one of the legislative session in support of another measure—Senate Bill 11—which would require social media companies to verify parental permission for users under age 16. Its author, Sen. Mike Bohacek (R-Michiana Shores), introduced legislation last year aimed at restricting minors from accessing online pornography—a measure that was ultimately signed into law.

"The Catholic bishops of Indiana, as pastors, are aware of the potential harms of social media and the emerging body of evidence that links mental health issues with social media usage," Mingus said during a Jan. 8 hearing on the bill in the Senate judiciary committee. "Youths are particularly vulnerable to harm and exploitation online, and we believe this bill makes an important step toward their greater protection.

"The requirements in this bill respect the authority of parents as the primary educators of their children," he continued. "Senate Bill 11 would give parents a tool for checking unmonitored and unapproved social media use."

Another Catholic lawmaker, Sen. Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne), is Bohacek's co-sponsor on that legislation—as well as the primary author of another measure that has the support of the ICC. Senate Bill 142 would automatically expunge, or permanently erase, an eviction from a person's record after seven years. Under current law, an individual has to proactively apply for an eviction to be expunged—and only after 10 years.

The ICC and other advocates say passage of this bill would open doors for people who face serious challenges in attaining a stable housing situation. A past eviction creates what many call a "Scarlet E," haunting a tenant for years.

"This would be a preferential option for people who have been struggling with housing," LaCoursiere said. "Taking an eviction off their record could help them find another rental unit much more easily, or to even open up



**'We will be working with INPEA [Indiana Non-Public Education Association] and other organizations to make school choice universal in this legislative session.'**

—Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

the possibility for them to one day be homeowners."

In this long session of the General Assembly, held every two years and culminating in passage of the state's biennial budget, fiscal matters will be at the forefront. Attaining universal school choice will be a high priority for the ICC and advocates including the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA).

Two years ago, the state legislature expanded school choice eligibility to 97% of Indiana families. This year, advocates want to see that reach 100%, ensuring that any Indiana family can receive a voucher for their child to attend a school of their choosing.

"We will be working with INPEA and other organizations to make school choice universal in this legislative session," LaCoursiere said.

She and Mingus encourage the Catholic faithful to stay up to date on the issues and legislation before the General Assembly by joining ICAN. Details can be found on the ICC website.

"To amplify the voice of the Church, we need the engagement of all Catholics in our state," Mingus said. "We thank everyone who has been active with our ICAN network in the past, and we hope to expand our reach as we work to bring the timeless teachings of the Catholic Church to the public arena."

For more information and ways to get involved with the ICC and its mission, visit [www.indianacc.org](http://www.indianacc.org).

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

# TEACHER

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That feeling stayed with her as she participated in a women's prayer group one weekend.

"During a moment of silent prayer, my hopelessness overwhelmed me, and I began sobbing," she notes. "The other women were understandably alarmed and concerned. When I could finally get my breath, I was only able to cry, 'My kids are so bad!' I then told them the whole situation.

"One of the members asked me to tell them the names of the children. The group committed to praying for them, by name, every day."

Schorsch hoped the prayers would make a difference, but on that following Monday, she was initially greeted with the same troublesome behavior—followed by an unexpected surprise.

"Two boys were preparing to fight each other when the tallest, meanest girl in the class stepped between them and said, 'Stop!' They heard her command and obeyed. I was astonished," Schorsch says. "Led by the Holy Spirit, I immediately went to the girl and proclaimed her a 'Peacemaker.' I made her a special tag to wear that designated her as a Peacemaker.

"She had permission to move about

the room freely anytime she saw trouble brewing and help to restore peace. We had lunch together once a week and discussed classroom problems and solutions."

It was the beginning of the transformation of the class.

"It didn't take long for others to want to be Peacemakers," Schorsch recalls. "As a class, we created a 'job description' and consequences for not fulfilling the role once they became a Peacemaker. It was not perfect; it needed tweaking as we evolved, but my weekly meetings with the Peacemakers were blessed.

"And the difference in class behavior was astounding. Before, my kids were so focused on being tough enough so no one would bother them that they shut themselves off from positive interaction. At the end of the year, they shared materials and ideas, offered guidance to each other in difficult situations, and truly cared about each other. There were hugs rather than fists. They became compassionate friends."

The principal noticed the change and stopped by Schorsch's room to compliment her on the children's behavior. She also asked what led to the change, wanting Schorsch to share her approach during the next teacher's meeting.

"I told her, 'They were prayed for.'" Seeing the principal's reaction,

Schorsch knew it wasn't the response the administrator wanted to hear.

"She was literally speechless and left. I know it was prayer that changed the behavior of my class," Schorsch notes. "It saddened me to have the principal turn away, but I know with all my heart that prayer saved my children."

The memory of that school year still fills Schorsch with joy.

"Without ever being able to mention God, through prayers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I was able to foster a core feeling in my students that they did matter, they were worthy and loved. They felt the beauty of being children of God.

"I still think about them and pray for them. I pray that their roles as Peacemakers have helped them to overcome the negative experiences that they would encounter through life. I pray that they learned a different way to live, to give love."

Schorsch learned a lasting lesson, too. "It wasn't enough to pray for God to help me," she says. "I had to beg his mercy for all of us."

Here's a request from Schorsch, who now teaches a faith formation class to children at the parish.

"This is a quote from St. John Baptist de La Salle, 'To touch the hearts of



Janine Schorsch strives to share her faith—and touches of hope—as a faith formation teacher for children at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. (Submitted photo)

your students is the greatest miracle you can perform.' This sums up my goal in teaching," she says. "Please pray for our students and teachers. Pray and then pray some more. Your prayers can become miracles."

(If you'd like to share your story of hope, please send it to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto:jshaughnessy@archindy.org) or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.) †

# The best gift a child can receive is faith, pope says at baptisms

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—When children are baptized, their parents and the Church are giving them the greatest gift ever: the gift of faith, Pope Francis said before baptizing 21 infants in the Sistine Chapel.

"Let us ask the Lord that they grow in the faith, a true humanity [and] in the joy of family," he said in his brief homily at Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord on Jan. 12.

Like last year, Pope Francis led the baptismal prayers and poured the water over the heads of the infants and was assisted in anointing the babies.

When an infant was accompanied by an older sibling, the pope would help the older child make the sign of the cross on the infant's forehead after he and the parents performed the ritual.

After the fathers lit their child's candle from the Paschal candle during the Mass, the pope told the parents to always keep the candle in their homes as a reminder of the day.

"And when there is some kind of problem or difficulty, light the candle to ask the Lord for grace for your family," he said.

Surrounded by Michaelangelo's stunning frescoes in the chapel, the pope thanked the parents, who are Vatican employees, for bringing their children to be baptized. As he normally does at baptisms, the pope encouraged the parents to do what they had to do to make sure the babies were comfortable.

"If they are hungry, nurse them, so they don't cry. If they are too hot, change their clothes," he said. What is important is that "they feel at ease because today

they are in charge and we have to serve them with the sacrament, with prayers."

In his *Angelus* address later, he told the crowd gathered in the square that "today's feast makes us contemplate the face and the voice of God, which are manifested in Jesus' humanity.

"So, let us ask ourselves: do we feel loved? Do I feel loved and accompanied by God, or do I think that God is distant from me? Are we capable of recognizing his face in Jesus and in our brothers and sisters? And are we accustomed to listening to his voice?" the pope said.

He also asked Catholics who did not know or remember the date of their baptism to find out.

The date is important, he said, and it should be celebrated "as if it were a new birthday: that of our birth in the Spirit of God." †

# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Church conducts thorough investigations on purported miracles

By Michael O'Neill

(OSV News)—What is a miracle? By the very etymology of the Latin root of word “*mirari*”—to be amazed—it seems to be a rare, inexplicable blessing that is an occasion of God’s benevolent interference in our lives. These special moments go beyond the upending of our expectations or mere marvels, and they are common to all of us—or at least the seeking of them.

We all pray for miracles of one sort or another. Perhaps a sports fan prays for an impossible Hail Mary pass at the end of a football game or a student begs God to pass a test that he expects to fail. Someone who despairs of finding a lost wallet might desperately beseech St. Anthony of Padua for some help. We hope for that dream job or pray to be lifted from a financial difficulty by some sort of divine intervention.

In times of the serious illness of loved ones, we approach God in great faith with our desperate plea that their lives might be spared. Sometimes the little coincidences of daily life seem to be miraculous reassurances that we are always under the care, protection and watchful eye of a loving Father.

As Catholics, our own miracle stories, big and small, are all woven into the vast tapestry of a faith tradition that embraces supernatural events and celebrates them in ways that we may not even realize.

For any of us that wear a Miraculous Medal or scapular in any of its various colors, we are indirectly recalling the time-honored apparitions of the Virgin Mary in which these sacramentals find their origins. Even the most famous of all sacramentals, the rosary, comes from a foundational miracle story that St. Dominic received in a vision in 1208.

Our entire faith rests on the reality of two great supernatural events: the Incarnation and the Resurrection. All around the world, Catholics experience miracles every hour of every day at Mass when bread and wine are truly transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Even skeptics who dismiss supernatural events outright like famed 18th-century Scottish philosopher and atheist David Hume who argued that “miracles are impossible because miracles can’t happen” still need to have an explanation for the inexplicable.

However, when it comes to validating healing miracles that are used in the canonizations of saints or those that pass the scrutiny of the Lourdes Medical Commission at the famed site of the 1858 apparitions of Mary to St. Bernadette Soubirous, the criteria used by the Church to determine them to be medically inexplicable are extremely strict.

For a cure, for example, to be considered miraculous, the disease must be serious and impossible (or at least very difficult) to cure by human means and not be in a stage at which it is liable to disappear shortly by itself. No medical treatment must have been given, or it must be certain that the treatment given has no reference to the cure. The healing must be spontaneous, complete and permanent.

Because of these nearly impossible standards, the Lourdes Medical Commission, while documenting more than 8,000 extraordinary cures, has only validated 71 of them. When the Vatican investigates a miracle worked

through the intercession of a would-be saint as part of the evaluation of whether this person has lived a life of heroic virtue and is with God, interceding for us, the same set of rules is employed.

Medical miracles by themselves are difficult to validate with so many strict guidelines, but in canonization causes, an additional difficulty lies in that the prayers to a potential saint must be only directed exclusively to that singular person (not to other saints in addition). It almost seems to be a miracle that they find any miracles suitable for use in canonizations. The medical commission for the Congregation for the Causes of Saints includes more than 60 doctors in various specialties. At the local level, the investigation is led by a canon law judge (ordinarily a priest) and a doctor uninvolved in the case appointed by the bishop. These two gather evidence regarding the purported miracle that is then sent on to the Vatican.

The Church has always been enriched by the fruits of miracles. The prodigies produced by Christ established his divinity and attracted disciples to him. The Apostles were emboldened with a mandate to work miracles in establishing the Church. The Roman emperor Constantine first was inspired to legalize Christianity in the year 312 after witnessing a vision in the sky of the IHS Christogram.

Throughout the ages, religious orders like the Servites and Mercedarians have sprung out of the mystical experiences of their founders. In addition to marking thaumaturgical (wonderworking) saints on feasts throughout the year, we celebrate the supernatural throughout the Roman calendar with commemorations for Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Some of the most breathtaking churches of the world



Philip McCord, then an employee of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, gestures at his right eye while speaking during a Feb. 22, 2006, press conference at the sisters’ Providence Hall. A day earlier, the voting members of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of the Saints voted to affirm the finding of the medical and theological commissions of that body that there was no natural explanation for a healing of an ailment in McCord’s right eye that happened shortly after he prayed to Blessed Mother Theodore Guérin in January 2001. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

have a supernatural foundation, with four of the largest 12 places of worship (by square footage) in Christendom tracing their origins to an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Countless numbers of people each year go on pilgrimage to sites of miracles throughout the world, including the millions of sick who seek healing at the waters of Lourdes, and the believers who come at times on their knees to venerate the prodigious image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

Additionally, millions of

conversions are owed to this vision on Tepeyac hill, as well as to the Miraculous Medal and other devotions that have stemmed from miraculous beginnings.

For all the excitement that miracles can bring, Pope Francis has encouraged us to not think of God as “a magician, with a magic wand.” Miracles can be a source of inspiration for an enlivened relationship with Christ, but it is important to not engage in a distracted pursuit of the latest claim of supernatural phenomena or a modern day Gnosticism, seeking secret knowledge at the expense of an authentic practice of faith grounded in Christ. The Church seeks to safeguard the faithful by conducting serious investigations into credible miraculous claims and providing judgments and recommendations on how we should approach these specific instances of the seemingly miraculous.

For the skeptics who might suggest that the Church has something to gain by promoting every dubious alleged event in order to attract people back to the pews or inspire people to spend money buying religious paraphernalia at a new shrine, the reality is that the entire unspoken goal of these investigations is to shut down the distraction and prove that nothing miraculous is in fact occurring to return people to a more grounded practice of the faith. Likewise, the investigations are so rigorous that very few claims have even the potential of being considered to be supernatural events.

Most interestingly, even in cases of thoroughly investigated and approved miracles like the famed apparitions at Lourdes and Fatima, the Church does not require Catholics to believe in these events or incorporate the devotions into their lives of faith.

(Michael O’Neill is a miracle researcher, author and host of the weekly radio program “The Miracle Hunter” on Relevant Radio.) †



A pilgrim receives water to wash his face at the Lourdes Sanctuary baths on Aug. 14, 2024. Countless numbers of people yearly go on pilgrimage to sites of miracles throughout the world, including the millions of sick who seek healing at the waters of Lourdes. (OSV News photo/courtesy Lourdes Sanctuary)

## Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

## Ringing in a new year with the wondrous gifts of joy, hope and love

As I reflect on welcoming the new year, I'm reminded of the cherished tradition of ringing bells in our Catholic faith.

In our Church, bells create a joyful noise to honor the Lord during Mass. They also serve to announce important messages, commemorate significant events, alert us to safety concerns or simply mark the passage of time.



As we "ring" in 2025, let us reflect: What do we want to celebrate, accomplish and prioritize in the year ahead? What will the bells ring for in your life this year?

At Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we're ringing in the New Year with "joy." We celebrate the dedication of the incredible men and women in our programs and ministries who serve the frail, the poor, the forgotten and the struggling. Their unwavering commitment to acts of charity inspires us, and we honor their many achievements in 2024.

We're also ringing in the New Year with "hope." Even

in the face of unexpected challenges, we are called to be a source of hope in difficult times. As the hands and heart of Jesus, we look forward with hope as we continue to address the struggles of those in need throughout our archdiocese.

I often think of the opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a novel by Charles Dickens: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." In our own time and place, we see two communities existing side by side—one experiencing abundance and opportunity, while the other is gripped by persistent poverty.

When we look beyond the surface, we see these "hidden cities" in our midst: families trapped in cycles of hopelessness, burdened by stress that tears them apart. Christ's message is clear: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mt 22:39; Lv 19:18).

When you support ministries like Catholic Charities or the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, you help us live out that call to love. Together, we serve the most vulnerable among us—those affected by homelessness, unemployment, lack of education and limited resources. Through our collective efforts, we bring Christ's love to thousands of our neighbors.

Lastly, we're ringing in the New Year with "love." Pope Francis reminds us that to love and serve others is to love and serve Christ. He calls us to walk alongside all our neighbors, not just those who look, speak or pray like us. This includes migrants and refugees—men, women and children fleeing war, poverty and persecution. These vulnerable individuals are also children of God, deserving of dignity, compassion and love. As a Church, we answer this call to encounter, accompany and support them on their journey.

The bells of Catholic Charities are ringing loudly in 2025! Let's ring them far and wide. We invite you to join us in bringing your passion, care and commitment to our mission this year. Together, we can strengthen families and help Indiana's most vulnerable achieve self-sufficiency.

Thank you for walking this journey of service with us. Here's to a New Year filled with joy, hope and love!

(David Bethuram is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Catholic Charities. You can contact him at [dbethuram@archindy.org](mailto:dbethuram@archindy.org).) †

## "It Is Good"/Elizabeth Scalia

## Being human is one of many challenging tasks for us in 2025

"You are not being asked to be anything other than human ..."

That was uttered by a colleague during a meeting. It was a mere aside to the room, but my lectio-antenna prompted me to write down the words before I lost them, for the truth seemed almost unbearably poignant in its plainness—so simple that we routinely miss it, as we do with most heavenly pleas.



It hit me with the same sorrowful simplicity as Jesus' lament to Jerusalem, "How often have I longed to gather your children together," (Mt 23:37) or the watchful ache of Eleanor Rigby's "Ah, look at all the lonely people."

True to my antenna, the words have echoed through my brain, and informed my prayer lists, acting like an acid or a cleansing agent dissolving so many newsy distractions down to this stark reality: You are not being asked to be anything other than human.

This column was meant to be a bit of a new year advisory, a heady warning about all the "troubling trends to look out for in 2025," and heaven knows there are enough alarming currents sweeping all around us.

One in particular has enough undertows to sink the whole society: the story of Luigi Mangione, his alleged murder of United Health Care CEO Brian Thompson and the ensuing hero worship, of him—demonstrated by the "holy" candles, card games, T-shirts and more being snatched up by admirers who probably think themselves opposed to capitalism but still need to display the season's assassination chic.

There are enough tentacles reaching out from this Kraken of a story to concern anyone capable of reason, but the most troubling is the recent poll out of Emerson University showing that 41% of voters aged 18-29 find Mangione's alleged cold-blooded action an acceptable means to an end.

Perhaps too many modern children, raised on "Assassin's Creed," were denied access to the fairy tales and fables of old, which for generations gently honed our abilities to see "here be monsters," and "be careful what you wish for," in the social maps.

The assassination swagger of elite vigilantism is just one trend we must watch out for and resist in 2025, along with these others, some of which it connects to:

- Increased social fragmentation and isolation;
- Increasingly closed (and echo-chamber enclosed) human minds;

- Worldwide government and economic instabilities;
- Continued neglect of a growing mental health crisis;
- Artificial Intelligence's influence for better and much worse;
- The growing obliviousness to God working in our world;
- The weird collective yawning over society's utterly confused, endlessly debased use of sexualities, sexual movements and just plain sex to fill voids and find meaning.

When a 23-year-old girl can monetize her decision to dehumanize herself and 100 men during an empty, loveless, joyless 24-hour sex-fest, only to later announce (to the shrugs of many) her ambition to try it again, only with 1,000 men, then what is there to say but that we are living in an age of irreligious and existential benumbed ennui, one that is sinking the world into a muck of diabolical disorientation from which it may not be able to rescue itself.

But you don't need to read about that, here—you're reading about it everywhere else. Instead, let's bathe in some incoming tides that portend something positive—something we can thrill-ride with a bit of hope.

Like the fact that Bible sales are up, though no one seems to know why.

Like the fact that old miracles and newer ones are being currently recognized, tying together past and present in a demonstration of the continuum of God.

Like that even the smallest-seeming of recent miracles—"small" only because in our minds we are so quick to say "surgery could have seen to it"—reminds us that healing comes unexpectedly, that nothing is too small to pray for, nothing is too iffy to bring to the communion of saints for intercession, and brings the (colossally important) communiqué that absolutely no hurt, no injury or inconvenience is so slight as to be beyond God's caring, or God's action.

That is something else we too easily forget.

So, we enter 2025 after a careening, mad season of confusion, hate, deceit and instability. The sense that things are vastly off-kilter and that centers are not holding is almost palpable.

But amid all that is teeming and roiling, it is good, and solemnly vital, for us to remember this: We are not being asked to be anything other than human. The task before us, then, is to define and model to the world exactly what "being human" means.

(Elizabeth Scalia is editor at large for OSV. Follow her on X (formerly known as Twitter) @the anchoress.) †

## "Media Mindfulness"/Sr. Hosea Rupprecht, F.S.P.

## Being 'pilgrims of hope' during the jubilee year in the digital landscape

The Jubilee Year 2025 is upon us, and Pope Francis has asked that we all attempt to be "pilgrims of hope" to witness to the love and power of Jesus Christ in the world today. What does that mean in practical terms? How am I to be a pilgrim of hope to the world?



The Oxford dictionary defines a pilgrim as one who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons. Pilgrim can also mean one who journeys through life. This is the aspect of "pilgrim" that's captured in "pilgrims of hope." We are all pilgrims on the journey of life, looking forward to being with God

forever in heaven once our earthly life is over.

There are many complexities to the journey of life. We may sometimes be tempted to fall into nostalgia about "simpler times" or "the way things used to be."

One aspect of 21st-century life that can complicate the journey is the digital landscape. How can we be pilgrims of hope when it comes to the digital media culture? How do we cultivate an attitude of hope when so much media, especially social media, seems self-centered, introspective and anything but hopeful?

Even more importantly, how do we encourage the young, who are so immersed in digital everything, to buck the selfish trend and be a hopeful and faithful presence in their online interactions? The answer lies in

fostering an attitude of media mindfulness and putting some practices in place to help us out of the digital rabbit hole when we find ourselves falling in.

With some determination and effort, these suggested practices can bring us a sense of hope as we journey every single day through the digital landscape. If we, as adults, learn these practices, they can offer us hope as we endeavor to teach the young how to navigate our media world as followers of Jesus.

—Bring your faith and values to bear within the digital landscape. It takes practice, but asking ourselves if what we're doing online is helping us grow in our relationship with God and with others can give us the pause we need to look at the way we use media. Stopping every once in a while and doing an examination of conscience about our online activities can be spiritually healthy and hopeful.

—Practice discernment. Pope Francis, in many of his writings, has emphasized how crucial discernment is to our spiritual lives. Asking the Holy Spirit to help us understand what it is God wants of us is desirable in all areas of life, but especially in our digital lives. Is what I'm watching, reading, listening to, interacting with, in line with God's holiness?

—Be critical thinkers. Applying critical thinking skills to our digital lives and the messages that we get from the media we experience means that the negative aspects of media can have less influence on our ways of thinking.

When we bring media messages into conversation with the values we hold as Christians, recognizing what is good and worth keeping and what we want to discard becomes easier. This is especially hopeful for parents trying to instill responsibility in their kids for the way they use media.

—Hope implies a trust that God has things in hand, that he is in charge and is with us on the pilgrimage of life. Hopefully, we've had experiences that have shown us just how much God holds us in love. Other experiences, however, may have us wondering where God is. Using these tips gives us hope that even in our media and digital interactions, God is present and leading our life's pilgrimage.

—If our online lives are out of balance, other parts of our lives will be, too, especially our relationships, and that includes our relationship with God. Being a "pilgrim of hope" encompasses all aspects of our life journey. As we set off on this jubilee year, let's take up the challenge to incorporate the virtue of hope into our own digital landscape.

(Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies. The above prayer and other media-oriented prayers can be found in the prayer book, *Live Christ! Give Christ! Prayers for the New Evangelization available from Pauline Books & Media.*) † - -

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, January 19, 2025

- Isaiah 62:1-5
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
- John 2:1-11

The Book of Isaiah furnishes the first reading for Mass this weekend.

When this third section of Isaiah was written, the Hebrew people had just emerged from a terrible period in their history. Their homeland, divided into two kingdoms after the death of King Solomon, had been overrun by the mighty Babylonian



Empire, centered in today's Iraq.

Many died or were killed in the conquest. Others were taken to Babylon, the imperial capital. These exiles, and then their descendants, languished for four generations until political fortunes changed. The more powerful Persians conquered Babylonia.

As a result, the exiles were allowed to return to their homeland. The prophets did not see the sequence of events leading to this happy release as merely coincidental or the result of human decision-making. Rather, God provided for it. He promised to protect the people. The people upset the arrangement by sinning. Yet, despite their sinfulness, God was constant. He provided.

For its second reading this weekend, the Church presents a passage from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Leading the Corinthian Christians to genuine fidelity was a considerable challenge for Paul. In reaction to rivalries and arguments in Corinth, Paul wrote what has become a blueprint for Christian living. He reminded the Corinthians to whom he wrote that each of them had special gifts and opportunities. Such diversity was welcome since it meant that there were so many occasions for individual believers to bring the sweetness of the Gospel into the world. Paul even listed different skills and talents to make his point.

St. John's Gospel supplies the third reading.

Unique to John, the miracle at Cana

in Galilee was the first recorded of the Lord's miracles. It marked the beginning of his public ministry.

The emphasis usually lies upon the marvel of the changing of the water into wine. This indeed was remarkable, but the story has other powerful lessons.

A great lesson is about Mary. John's Gospel never names her. It always simply refers to Mary as "the mother" of Jesus (Jn 2:1). This is a message suggestive of her unique role as the Lord's only earthly parent by blood.

The response of Jesus to the obvious embarrassment of the host in not having enough wine for the guest can be puzzling. Was the Lord indifferent to the host's distress? His reply only stressed that the messianic mission was not to provide for human needs, but to draw all to God and to eternal life.

As Mary enters the picture, the mission of Jesus begins. In John's Gospel, Mary is the first to proclaim that salvation awaits in the Lord. He is the hope of the world. He brings life. Her advice is simple, but profound. Do whatever the Lord says. He never fails.

## Reflection

The Church celebrated the feast of the Nativity of the Lord at Christmas, rejoicing in the birth of Christ in time and space. In observing the feast of the Epiphany, the Church joyfully proclaimed to us that the Lord came to show all of us the unlimited love of God for us. The feast of the Baptism of the Lord told us that Jesus lived and eventually died for us. He became one of us.

This weekend, in the words of Isaiah, the Church declares that earthly life would be beautiful if we all loved God in return.

How do we love God? The story of Cana tells us. Jesus teaches us that no human situation should distract us from the fact that acknowledging God is our destiny and that our only hope is in God.

Mary instructs us that we can go to Jesus with any worry. A new day has come. Jesus has come! Go to the Lord. Trust the Lord. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, January 20

St. Fabian, pope and martyr  
St. Sebastian, martyr  
Hebrews 5:1-10  
Psalm 110:1-4  
Mark 2:18-22

### Tuesday, January 21

St. Agnes, virgin and martyr  
Hebrews 6:10-20  
Psalm 111:1-2, 4-5, 9, 10c  
Mark 2:23-28

### Wednesday, January 22

Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17  
Psalm 110:1-4  
Mark 3:1-6

### Thursday, January 23

St. Vincent, deacon and martyr  
St. Marianne Cope, virgin  
Hebrews 7:25-8:6  
Psalm 40:7-10, 17  
Mark 3:7-12

### Friday, January 24

St. Frances de Sales, bishop and doctor of the Church  
Hebrews 8:6-13  
Psalm 85:8, 10-14  
Mark 3:13-19

### Saturday, January 25

The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle  
Acts 22:3-16  
or Acts 9:1-22  
Psalm 117:1b-2  
Mark 16:15-18

### Sunday, January 26

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10  
Psalm 19:8-10, 15  
1 Corinthians 12:12-30  
or 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27  
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

## Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

### Those who are baptized are brought into a close relationship with Christ

Some Evangelical friends were recently quizzing me on the Catholic understanding of baptism. They were especially asking about Jesus' baptism, and whether this indicates Jesus had some sin or sins of which he needed to repent. They had the same question regarding infant baptism, as infants would seem to neither be able to understand the rite, nor have any sins to "wash away" in the first place. (Indiana)



Looking at the second part of your question first, you could share with your Evangelical friends one of the main scriptural justifications for infant baptism. It is found in the Acts of the Apostles, which describe whole households being baptized, which presumably included infants and young children (See Acts 16:33).

Catholics also believe that sacraments function in a primarily objective way, in the sense that they are not dependent on the emotional state or perfect understanding of the one receiving them in order to "work."

But to dig a little deeper, although of course infants are not capable of committing any sins themselves, there are still many benefits for a baptized infant.

Like all of humanity (save Our Lord and his Blessed Mother) infants are bound by original sin—that is, the first sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which radically wounded humanity's fundamental relationship with its Creator.

As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and

turns a man back toward God" (CCC, #405). So, for infants innocent of any personal sins, baptism still has the great benefit of freeing them from the ultimate consequence of original sin, meaning that a baptized infant becomes able to receive the inheritance of eternal life with God in heaven. Baptism also eases some of the other consequences of original sin—such as the inclination to evil called concupiscence—by giving the baptized the grace to resist temptation.

Perhaps more profoundly, the Church teaches that baptism unites us more closely to Christ, and is a way of personally sharing in his passion, death and resurrection. St. Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans: "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection" (Rom 6:4-5).

And in a marvelous way, through this closer configuration to Christ, we are brought into a relationship to God in Christ that goes beyond our original identity as mere creatures. That is, we become adopted sons and daughters of God (See CCC, #537).

On a practical level, through Catholic baptism, infants become members of the Catholic Church, which, among other things, qualifies them to receive the other sacraments. As the *Code of Canon Law* tells us: "By baptism one is incorporated into the Church of Christ and constituted a person in it, with the duties and the rights which, in accordance with each one's status, are proper to [Catholic] Christians" (#96).

Turning to the baptism of Jesus, Jesus was, of course, sinless and did not need baptism in the same way that you or I do. But as the catechism explains: "The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' [Jn 1:29]. Already he is anticipating the 'baptism' of his bloody death. Already he is coming to 'fulfill all righteousness,' that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins" (Mt 3:15, #536).

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

## My Journey to God

### Listen To God

By Gayle Schrank

We are learning  
About history  
Through the lens  
Of many victims  
So many people  
Need hope and healing  
To cure our ails  
And their symptoms  
We should not  
Let our feelings betray us  
The divine love within  
Will uphold  
When seeking justice  
And looking for hope  
With merciful hearts  
Let us be bold  
The one thing  
We must always remember  
Is God's perfect love  
For you and me  
All other love  
Is wanting  
Listen to God  
And help those in need



(Gayle Schrank is a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton. Photo: On July 18, 2024, during the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, participants prepare meals for Million Meal Movement to be distributed to those suffering from hunger in Indiana.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

# Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

**ANDREWS, John D.**, 97, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Husband of Marilyn Andrews. Father of Jeanne Collins, Cathy Johnson, Diane York and Scott Andrews. Stepfather of Bob, Jim, Mike and Rick Zieles. Grandfather of nine. Step-grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 13.

**BOYD, Rebecca J.**, 73, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, Dec. 23. Wife of Gene Boyd. Mother of Gina Fisher. Grandmother of three.

**BOYLE, Michael J.**, 87, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Nov. 28. Father of Eileen Fisher, Marylou Gasiorowski, Catherine Kervan, Sandra Theut, Mike and M.T. Boyle. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of 12.

**CLOUSER, Michael**, 75, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Jan. 1. Husband of Jill Clouser. Father of Kelly Rose and Christopher Clouser. Brother of Carol Crist, Mary Lee and George Clouser. Grandfather of two.

**DEUTSCH, Janet M.**, 83, St. Michael, Brookville, Jan. 3. Mother of Amy Kersey, Lisa Strine, Eric and Scott Deutsch. Sister of Joyce Lovins and John Knect. Grandmother of six.

**FELDPAUSCH, Mary L.**, 77, St. Pius V, Troy, Jan. 1. Wife of Ronnie Feldpausch. Mother of Keith and Kevin Feldpausch. Sister of Bob, Greg, Jerry, Mark, Mike, Phil and Roger Fella and Phyllis. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of one.

**FISHER, Frances B.**, 96, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 14. Mother of Ann Lees, James and Thomas Fisher. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of seven.

**GAYNOR, Louise**, 84, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Dec. 17. Mother of Casey, Coley, Duffy, Grady and Toby Gaynor. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of one.

**GODWIN, Sheila**, 77, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Oct. 23. Mother of Michele Cook. Sister of Norma Ettling and Suellen Roberts. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of one.

**GOLD, Judith K.**, 85, St. Mary, North Vernon, Dec. 27. Mother of Mark Bonnewell. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of six.

**GUIGNARD, Shirley**, 89, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 11. Mother of Randal, Richard and Robert Guignard. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of one.

**HARPENAU, Gerald**, 80, St. Pius V, Troy, Dec. 1. Father of Lisa Wade and Kevin Harpenau. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of two.

**HART, William R.**, 88, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, Dec. 16. Husband of Mary Kay Hart. Father of Ann Evans and Jeff Hart. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of four.

**HOLLIS, Barbara**, 80, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Oct. 14. Mother of Angela Kern, Tom III and Todd Hollis. Sister of Nancy Baldwin and Lawrence Fisk. Grandmother of eight.

**KAESTNER, Geraldine**, 91, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Dec. 20. Mother of Andrew Jansing-Kaestner. Sister of Dennis Schuyler. Grandmother of two. Great-

grandmother of one.

**KNIGHT, David**, 82, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Nov. 10. Husband of RoseAnn Knight. Father of Lisa Boone, Cathy, LeeAnn and John Knight. Brother of Karen Lovan, Teresa Popp and Jacqueline Thomas. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of two.

**KNOTT, David**, 66, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Nov. 14. Husband of Lisa Knott. Father of Megan Treesh, Sara, Andy and Eric Knott. Grandfather of 10.

**KUHN, R. Marjorie**, 97, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County, Dec. 23. Mother of Nancy Koerner and Peggy Roell. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of eight. Great-great-grandmother of four.

**LAFRANCE, Steven W.**, 59, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 8. Husband of Susan LaFrance. Father of Gabrielle and Nicholas LaFrance. Brother of Karen Kennedy, Kevin and Mark LaFrance.

**LAMAR, David**, 64, St. Pius V, Troy, Nov. 20. Father of Rachel Lamar. Brother of Doreen Lamar.

**MCCLAIN, Janet L. (Heinzelman)**, 77, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 22. Wife of Herb McClain. Mother of Sandy Bird, Jennifer Pearson and Jeff Harris. Sister of Rita Fenton, Rose Mather, Mary Pardue, Bob, Dave, Jim and John Heinzelman. Grandmother of seven.

**MOORMAN, John T.**, 89, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 10. Father of Dale, Gary and Mark Moorman. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of two.

**MUNCIE, Marian**, 91, Annunciation, Brazil, Nov. 27. Wife of Paul Muncie. Mother of Mary Berman, Anita Pusateri, Pauline Sneath, Janet Stump and Linda West. Sister of Donna Dwyer-Downing. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of four.

**PENNYCUFF, Ruth A.**, 84, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, Dec. 16. Mother of Mary Kay Hildebrand and Paul Penny cuff. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of four.

**PIES, Michael R.**, 78, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bright, Dec. 10. Husband

## Honoring the Black Nazarene



**Filipino Catholics jostle to touch the carriage carrying the statue of the Black Nazarene during an annual procession on Jan. 9 on its feast day in Manila. The wooden statue, carved in Mexico and brought to the Philippine capital early in the 17th century, is cherished by Catholics, who believe that touching it can lead to a miracle. (OSV News photo/Eloisa Lopez, Reuters)**

of Linda Pies. Father of Tammy Eppinghoff, Matthew and Michael Pies. Brother of Nancy Wilberding and James Pies. Grandfather of six.

**PURYEAR, Eva Jo**, 80, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Dec. 23. Mother of Becky Ritchie, Jennifer and David Puryear. Sister of Dottie Lovins, Bill and Pat Hoessle. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of one.

**RHOTEN, Connie**, 91, Prince of Peace, Madison, Dec. 11. Mother of Becky Atkins, Ann and Drew Rhoten. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of two.

**ROTH, Gilbert**, 97, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Nov. 28. Father of Beverly Bullock, Teresa Cleveland, Nancy Isenberg, Susan Miller, Karen Schiller and Nicholas Roth. Grandfather of 10. Great-

grandfather of eight.

**SCHMOLL, Rosemary**, 82, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Wife of Ron Schmoll. Mother of Christine Bogardus, Julie Garcia, Jon and Paul Schmoll. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 17.

**SCHOUTEN, Geertruida**, 98, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Mother of Marjo Buennagel, Diane Frank, Kim O'Mara, Trudi Young, Bob, Phil, Ron, Rudy and Sjon Schouten. Grandmother of 22. Great-grandmother of 39.

**SHELINE, Donna J.**, 72, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Dec. 12. Wife of Steve Sheline. Mother of Marena Gammons, Mary SeRine and Jennifer Snyder. Sister of Mary Lou Hoggatt and Peggy Loyd. Grandmother of seven.

**STEPHENSON, Dennis A.**, 72, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis,

Dec. 12. Husband of Patricia Stephenson. Father of Ashley Ripperger, Britney, Adam, Bradley and Ryan Stephenson. Brother of Diane Stephenson-Moore, Danny and Dave Stephenson. Grandfather of 16.

**VEST, Martha**, 97, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Oct. 31. Mother of Mary McKinley and Ann Stickler. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of three.

**WHITE, Thomas J.**, 61, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 12. Husband of Karen White. Father of Lindsey Hortemiller, Molly Stirn and Thom White. Brother of Janey Lewis and Geri Schweinhart. Grandfather of 13.

**WULF, August C.**, 80, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Dec. 13. Husband of Tammy Wulf. Father of Cassidy, Bryan, Gus, Jr., and Taylor Wulf. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of four. †

According to statistics, 50% of marriages end in divorce.

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Feb 14-16, 2025

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P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410  
**317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548**  
[victimassistance@archindy.org](mailto:victimassistance@archindy.org)

## Archbishop Broglio: MLK challenges all to 'live out' solidarity and human dignity

(OSV News)—The words of slain civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. continue to challenge all “to live out the principle of solidarity and human dignity,” said the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio**

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services reflected on King’s legacy in a Jan. 10 statement ahead of the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday, which is observed on the third Monday of January and which this year is on Jan. 20.

The commemoration was created after a 32-year campaign to nationally recognize the life and work of King, a Baptist minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner who spearheaded the U.S. civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. He was just 39 years old.

Profoundly influenced by the nonviolent approach of Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi, King led campaigns to end legal segregation of Black Americans in the U.S. in the face of at-times violent opposition. Among the most celebrated of these efforts were the 1955-1956 Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott; the 1963 March on Washington, which drew more than 200,000 demonstrators; and the 1965 march from Selma, Ala., to that state’s capital in Montgomery.

King’s sermons, speeches and texts drew on his extensive theological training, and Archbishop Broglio opened his Jan. 9 statement with a quote from “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” which King wrote following his April 1963 arrest for violating an Alabama law against mass public demonstrations.

In the letter, he responded to fellow clergy members’ criticism of the civil rights campaign, declaring, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

“In reflecting on the continuing realities of racial injustice, immigrant families seeking welcome, and economic disparity, these words remind us that we are connected and responsible for each other as we seek to fulfill the dream,” said Archbishop Broglio in his statement.

The archbishop also cited Pope Francis’ address to Congress during a 2015 apostolic visit to the U.S., in which the pope recalled King’s 1965 Selma-Montgomery march.

Echoing King’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” address in Washington, Pope Francis described the Selma-Montgomery march as part of King’s “campaign to fulfill his ‘dream’ of full civil and political rights for African Americans.”

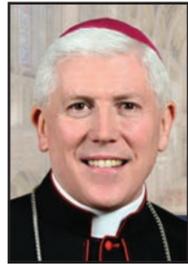
“That dream continues to inspire us all,” the pope told Congress in 2015. “I am happy that America continues to be, for many, a land of ‘dreams.’ Dreams which lead to action, to participation, to commitment. Dreams which awaken what is deepest and truest in the life of a people.”

“As we approach Dr. King’s holiday, let us be inspired by this righteous man’s work and sacrifice to create a more just society for all of God’s children,” said Archbishop Broglio. †

# Bishop: Jubilee Year gives new hope for ending, healing from abortion

(OSV News)—As the nation’s Catholics prepare to commemorate unborn children in prayer, a U.S. bishop is pointing to the Jubilee Year as a time of hope for healing from the wounds of abortion.

On Jan. 22, the Catholic Church in the U.S. marks the annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.



Bishop Daniel E. Thomas

The date recalls the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, which legalized abortion nationwide. Those rulings were overturned by the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which returned the issue of abortion from the federal to the state level.

In the wake of *Dobbs*, overall U.S. abortion rates appear to have increased slightly, with medication-induced abortions representing the majority (63%), according to the Guttmacher Institute. The same organization also noted that as of 2022, the annual global total for abortions was approximately 73 million.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* describes the Jan. 22 day of prayer as a time to pray “for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life” and to undertake “penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.”

That aim takes on an even deeper meaning as the universal Catholic Church celebrates the 2025 Jubilee Year, the theme of which is “Pilgrims of Hope,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in a statement released by the USCCB on Jan. 13.

“As we prayerfully continue the essential work of restoring full legal protection of all preborn children and supporting parents facing difficult pregnancies, we also recognize our need for asking forgiveness and healing from the Lord for when we have given in to the culture of death,” said Bishop Thomas, who will be among the speakers at the 52nd annual March for Life in Washington on Jan. 24.

The theme this year is, “Life: Why We March,” which reminds us of the basic truth that every human life has inherent human dignity from conception to natural death.

The Catholic Church, the bishop said, teaches that “human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception,” and that abortion “willed as either an end or means is gravely contrary to the moral law.”

Bishop Thomas said those who have been involved in abortion—which “inflicts deep and lasting wounds on society” and “more directly on individuals and families”—should recall that “no sin is beyond” the Lord’s “unfathomable mercy.”

“Jesus greatly desires our repentant hearts and invites us into an encounter with him,” said Bishop Thomas in his statement. “For Catholics, the sacrament of reconciliation is always available for those seeking God’s forgiveness, hope and peace.”

He noted that many who have been involved in abortion—some of whom have been “pressured or coerced” into ending the lives of their unborn children—experience an “often-silent grief” and “despair of being worthy of the love and forgiveness of God and others.”

“To the parents of children who have died by abortion, I am deeply sorry for your loss,” said Bishop Thomas in his statement. “Know that our Lord loves you as his daughters and sons no matter your actions.”

The Jubilee Year offers a fresh opportunity to trust in God’s mercy and to be healed in hope, said the bishop.

“As we celebrate this jubilee year as ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ Pope Francis invites us to experience God’s love ‘that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ,’” he said, quoting “*Spes Non Confundit*” (“Hope Does Not Disappoint”), the papal bull issued by Pope Francis in May 2024 announcing the 2025 jubilee year.



Pro-life demonstrators carry a banner past the U.S. Supreme Court during the annual March for Life in Washington on Jan. 20, 2023. Speakers this year will address the theme, “Life: Why We March,” which reminds us of the basic truth that every human life has inherent dignity from from conception to natural death. (OSV News photo/Jonathan Ernst, Reuters)

“Hope allows those who have been involved in abortion to turn to God and repent, confident that he will forgive and make them whole,” said Bishop Thomas.

“This January 22 and beyond, we need to be reassured that Jesus himself, who is the source of our hope, was first wounded for our offenses, and suffered for every sin of ours, including abortion,” he said. “Please join me in praying that God will fill the hearts of mothers and fathers suffering the emotional and psychological wounds from abortion with the hope of forgiveness that only he can give.”

Bishop Thomas also invited those suffering from the wounds of abortion to “seek support from the Church’s compassionate and confidential ministries,” including the national Project Rachel Ministry, diocesan healing ministries and parish supports.

(For more information on Project Rachel Ministries for post-abortion healing, visit [www.HopeAfterAbortion.org](http://www.HopeAfterAbortion.org) or [www.EsperanzaPosAborto.org](http://www.EsperanzaPosAborto.org).) †

## National March for Life speakers on Jan. 24 to include DeSantis, Toledo bishop

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Gov. Ron DeSantis, R-Fla., and Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, will be among the speakers at the 52nd annual March for Life, the group said on Jan. 9. The 2025 march and rally is scheduled for Jan. 24 on the Washington Monument grounds in Washington.

DeSantis, a Catholic who ran an unsuccessful bid for the 2024 Republican

presidential nomination, signed abortion restrictions in Florida during his tenure. Florida was one of just three states that had abortion-related ballot measures in 2024 where voters did not reject restrictions.

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life Education and Defense Fund, issued a statement thanking the speakers for their participation in the event, which they describe as the world’s largest annual human rights demonstration.

“We are overjoyed to welcome these inspiring pro-life leaders at this year’s 52nd March for Life,” Mancini said. “For the past 52 years, the [national] March for Life has powerfully witnessed to the tragedy of abortion, while calling for

stronger protections for women and the unborn. This year’s speakers will address the 2025 theme—‘Life: Why We March,’ which reminds us of the basic truth that every life has inherent human dignity from the start. †

## Classified Directory

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We are proud to announce Glenn and Laura Jo Tebbe as the 2025 Legacy Gala honorees! We look forward to celebrating the Tebbes' lifelong commitment to faith, service, and Catholic education. Come celebrate this very special honor with them.



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