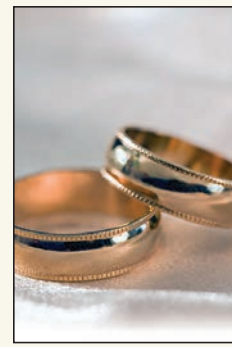




The

# Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Marriage and Family Life Supplement

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

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### LITTLE SOULS

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

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

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

By Natalie Hoefer

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

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

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

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

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

See MISCARRIAGE, page 12

## Despite critical condition, pope works from hospital room

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In a sign affirming that Pope Francis has been able to conduct work while in the hospital, the Vatican said the pope had met with the top officials of the Vatican Secretariat of State and had signed several decrees in sainthood causes.



Pope Francis

The Vatican press office said on Feb. 25 that the pope had signed the decrees the previous day during a meeting at Rome's Gemelli hospital with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and with Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, substitute secretary of state.

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

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

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

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

See related story, page 2.

For the most up-to-date information on Pope Francis' health, visit [www.archindy.org/PopeFrancis](http://www.archindy.org/PopeFrancis).

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

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

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

## Scecina students learn about Father Augustus Tolton during Black History Month

By Sean Gallagher

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

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

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

See TOLTON, page 14



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





People join Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, in reciting the rosary for Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Feb. 24. Cardinals living in Rome, leaders of the Roman Curia and the faithful joined the nighttime prayer. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

# Faithful unite in St. Peter's Square praying for Holy Father's health

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A light drizzle finally let up as hundreds of faithful headed to St. Peter's Square to pray the rosary for Pope Francis on the 11th day of his hospitalization for double pneumonia.

The wet black cobblestones shone from the bright lights illuminating the fountains and the front of the square where Pope Francis normally sits for his Wednesday general audiences. An image of *Mater Ecclesiae*—Mary, Mother of the Church—adorned with greenery and white and pink flowers took center stage.

About 27 cardinals living in Rome and dozens of members of the Roman Curia sat to the side as Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, knelt before the image, leading a recitation of the rosary at 9 p.m. (Rome time) on Feb. 24.

He first greeted those gathered by saying, "For 2,000 years, Christians have been praying for the pope when in danger or infirm.

"Since the Holy Father Francis has been hospitalized at Gemelli hospital, intense prayer has been raised to the Lord by individual faithful and Christian communities around the world," he said. Starting with this evening, "we also want to join in this prayer publicly here in his home with the recitation of the holy rosary."

Entrusting the 88-year-old pope "to the powerful intercession of most holy Mary," the cardinal said, "may she, our caring mother, sustain him in this time of illness and trial, and help him to recover his health soon."

Among the many Vatican officials was Korean Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik, prefect of the Dicastery for Clergy. He told reporters before the event that the moment of prayer was important because "you always pray for those who are not well.

"The pope belongs to all of us," he said, adding that even those who could not be in Rome were also praying at the same time. "In Korea, where it is eight hours ahead, they are praying with us."

Father Antonio Tunecas, a priest from Angola studying in Rome,

told Catholic News Service (CNS) that the prayer service was a way "to be a family of the universal Church, united with Pope Francis, united in prayer," asking God, "in his goodness, to offer good health" to the pope and that "his will be done."

Brothers Gregory Metz and John Frain, members of the Legion of Christ from Atlanta, Ga., studying in Rome, also attended the event.

Brother Gregory told CNS it was a moment to show their closeness to the pope.

Pope Francis has been important for their growth and formation, Brother John said, helping him "get out of that American bubble" and to see things in different ways.

"He's definitely been an opener of the heart to all people, to dialogue and to new ideas with an attitude of humility," Brother Gregory said. "He's been our father. Though no father is perfect, he taught me to grow in love of neighbor."

More than 50 Catholics from Wisconsin were in Rome for a Holy Year pilgrimage and they had been looking forward to seeing the pope at his Feb. 26 general audience, which has been canceled. Father Jordan Berghouse was leading the group from the parishes of St. James, St. Peter and St. Theresa.


"It's really sad. We were hoping to see him in person," Theresa Quedrora told CNS. "He is peace, love and joy."

Sara Schmitz, Kellen Otte and Aliana Perez were in Rome as part of a study abroad program with the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn.

They had only been in Rome two weeks, and they said they loved hearing so many languages being spoken among the crowd and being part of such a big event in the heart of the universal Church.

"You don't want this to be happening," referring to the pope being ill in the hospital, "but it feels we are here at a very important time. We hope he does better," Schmitz said.

Dioceses worldwide were also joining in praying the rosary for the pope and everyone facing illness. †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

### March 1–12, 2025

**March 1 – 10:30 a.m.**  
Confirmation for youths of St. Mary Parish, Greensburg; St. Joseph Parish, Shelbyville; St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Shelby County; All Saints Parish, Dearborn County; St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, Bright; St. Lawrence Parish, Lawrenceburg; and St. Maurice Parish, Napoleon; at St. Mary Church, Greensburg

**March 1 – 2 p.m.**  
Confirmation for youths of St. Nicholas Parish, Sunman; St. Peter Parish, Franklin County; St. Michael Parish, Brookville; St. Anthony of Padua, Morris; and St. Louis Parish, Batesville; at St. Mary Church, Greensburg

**March 2 – 2 p.m.**  
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

**March 2 – 6 p.m.**  
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**March 4 – 10:30 a.m.**  
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

**March 4 – 7 p.m.**  
Confirmation for youths of St. Christopher Parish, Indianapolis; St. Ann and St. Joseph parishes, Jennings County; and St. Mary Parish, North Vernon, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

**March 5 – noon**  
Ash Wednesday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**March 6 – 10 a.m.**  
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

**March 6 – 11 a.m.**  
Virtual meeting with USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis

**March 6 – 6 p.m.**  
Echo, ACE and FOCUS gathering at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

**March 8 – 10:30 a.m.**  
Rite of Election at Holy Family Church, New Albany

**March 10-12**  
USCCB Administrative Committee meeting in Washington, D.C.

## 40 Days for Life spring campaign is on March 5-April 13 in Indy, North Vernon

### Criterion staff report

While Indiana and several other states have strengthened pro-life laws, there is still a great need for prayer to end all abortion and to change the hearts of those associated with the industry.

40 Days for Life is a campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism held in the spring and fall with the purpose of turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life and bringing an end to abortion.

The spring campaign runs from March 5-April 13. Two locations in the archdiocese are participating: Indianapolis and North Vernon.

Following is information on the North Vernon and Indianapolis campaigns.

**North Vernon:** The campaign will take place near the CVS and Walgreen's stores at 14 N. State St. Both pharmacies provide and sell the drugs used in chemical abortions, which is now the most common form of abortion.

To sign up for one or more hours, go to [40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon](https://40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon).

For more information, contact

Tim O'Donnell at 317-372-0040 or [idiptionsapere@att.net](mailto:idiptionsapere@att.net).

**Indianapolis:** The campaign will take place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road. Parking is available along Georgetown Road; do not park in the Women's Care Center parking lot or at the industrial complex across from the Planned Parenthood facility.

The Indianapolis campaign's opening event will include a prayer service and rosary for life in front of the facility at 3 p.m. on March 5.

The Indiana Knights of Columbus will hold a 12-hour overnight vigil in front of the Planned Parenthood facility starting at 6 p.m. on April 4. All are welcome to join for a few minutes, an hour or more.

To sign up for one or more hours during the Indianapolis campaign, go to [40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis](https://40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis).

For additional information on the Indianapolis campaign, contact Robert Burton at [40daysforlife.indy@gmail.com](mailto:40daysforlife.indy@gmail.com).

To find other 40 Days for Life campaigns outside of the archdiocese, go to [40daysforlife.com](https://40daysforlife.com) and select "Locations." †



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# Deacons are called to selflessness, men ordained at Jubilee Mass are told

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—“Being ordained is not an ascent but a descent, whereby we make ourselves small, lower ourselves and divest ourselves,” Pope



Pope Francis

Francis said in a message to 23 men from eight countries, including three from the United States, who were ordained permanent deacons in St. Peter’s Basilica. The Feb. 23 ordination Mass at the Vatican was the culmination of a

three-day Holy Year celebration that drew thousands of deacons, plus their wives and others, from more than 100 countries to Rome for communal prayer, discussion and celebration of the diaconate. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, celebrated the Mass with 2,500 deacons and delivered the homily prepared by Pope Francis. The pope was originally scheduled to preside over the Mass, but remained hospitalized with pneumonia and was in critical condition, the Vatican said.

In his homily, the pope reflected on three essential dimensions of the diaconate: forgiveness, service and communion.

“Forgiveness means preparing a welcoming and safe future for us and our communities,” the pope wrote. “The deacon, invested in a ministry that leads him toward the world’s peripheries, must see—and teach others to see—in everyone, even those who cause suffering, a brother or sister wounded in spirit and in need of reconciliation, guidance and help.”

He asked that deacons make selfless service “an essential dimension of your

very being” and encouraged them to serve with humility, quoting the Gospel of Luke: “Do good and lend, expecting nothing in return” (Lk 6:35).

“Your greatest liturgy will be charity, and your most humble service will be your greatest act of worship,” the pope wrote.

After the Gospel reading, the ordination rite began with each candidate stepping forward as his name was called, signifying his readiness to embrace a life of service. The men then lay prostrate on the floor of the basilica, symbolizing their total surrender to God as the congregation knelt and prayed the Litany of the Saints.

In the most ancient part of the sacrament of holy orders, the candidates knelt before the archbishop, who laid his hands on their heads and called the Holy Spirit upon them. After a prayer of consecration was prayed, each newly ordained deacon was then vested with a stole and dalmatic, symbols of their ministry of service.

Among the newly ordained deacons was Bryan Inderhees from the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, who told Catholic News Service (CNS) on Feb. 21 that participating in the Jubilee of Deacons at the Vatican was a powerful reminder of the Church’s global reach and the universality of the diaconate.

“Sometimes we can get stuck in our own view of the Church in Columbus, the Church in Ohio, the Church in the United States,” he said, but the diaconate “is something that’s around the world, and this is a message from Christ as well that we need to be able to spread and share this joy for everyone.”

Inderhees said the expansive role of the diaconate in the United States, where some 40% of the world’s 50,000 permanent deacons minister, serves as a model for the wider Church.



Deacon candidates lie prostrate during an ordination Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica during the Jubilee of Deacons at the Vatican on Feb. 23. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

“Here’s a way that we’ve found that we can take advantage of men who have this calling,” he said. Through the diaconate, “almost all of us who have already been married can support the clergy, support the Church, support our priests, while still living both the sacred life and our lives as married men.”

His wife, Emelie, said that supporting her husband during his formation while raising their three children was a challenge, but ultimately one that enriched the spiritual life of her whole family.

“When he was called to formation, I think one of my biggest fears was growing apart,” she told CNS. “One of my biggest goals as he went through formation was how do we grow together, how do we grow stronger, because I didn’t want him to grow in his faith and for me to grow stagnant.”

She stressed that maintaining a balanced schedule and seeking guidance from a spiritual director helped their family stay grounded. “It’s about stopping and paying attention to the day-to-day schedule, so you can make time for the things that matter in family life,” she said.

Deacon Stephen Petrill, formation director for deacons in the Diocese of Columbus, emphasized the distinct role of the diaconate, describing it as “a vocation of service, not a stepping stone to priesthood.”

“Ministry is about serving others, not seeking status,” he said. “A deacon is called to seek the lowest place, to help without seeking recognition. We’re here to serve the Church and the world, standing as a bridge between the laity and the clergy.” †

## This Lent, compare your life to a migrant’s life, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis urged Christians to examine their consciences in Lent by comparing their daily lives to the hardships faced by migrants, calling it a way to grow in empathy and discover God’s call to compassion.

“It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or foreigner, to learn how to sympathize with their experiences and in this way discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father,” the pope wrote in his message for Lent 2025.

The message was released by the Vatican on Feb. 25.


Reflecting on the theme “Let us journey together in hope,” the pope said that Lent is a time to confront both personal and collective struggles with faith and compassion.

Comparing the Lenten journey to the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt, he recalled “our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

“A first call to conversion thus comes from the realization that all of us are pilgrims in this life,” he wrote. “Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either immobilized by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone?”

Christians, he said, should reflect on whether they are open to others or focused only on their own needs.

The pope called on Christians to journey together in hope toward Easter, living out the central message of the Jubilee Year: “Hope does not disappoint.” †



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OPINION



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher*
Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*  
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial



Migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. walk into a temporary humanitarian respite center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in McAllen, Texas, on April 8, 2021. (osv News photo/Go Nakamura, Reuters)

Our primary concern must be to ensure the human rights and dignity of all

Earlier this month, Pope Francis took the unusual step of writing to the bishops of the United States about the Trump administration’s policies regarding deportation of illegal immigrants. Noting that “this is not a minor issue,” the pope outlined 10 points for prayerful consideration by the bishops as they minister to the people who are affected by these actions.

The pope does not question the administration’s right to enforce our nation’s laws or to regulate immigration in an orderly way. He also acknowledges that individuals who commit crimes—in their country of origin or in the United States—must be dealt with according to the law. However, he expresses grave concern for immigrants who are unfairly associated with criminals and whose human rights and dignity are threatened by mass deportations.

Quoting the 1952 apostolic constitution of Pope Pius XII, “*Exsul Familia*,” which is considered to be the “magna carta” for the Church’s teachings on the treatment of immigrants, Pope Francis writes:

*The family of Nazareth in exile, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, emigrants in Egypt and refugees there to escape the wrath of an ungodly king, are the model, the example and the consolation of emigrants and pilgrims of every age and country, of all refugees of every condition who, beset by persecution or necessity, are forced to leave their homeland, beloved family and dear friends for foreign lands.*

We are called to recognize the faces of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in those who are forced to leave their homelands because of political violence, economic instability or religious persecution. Our response should never be one of racism, intolerance or indifference. These are our sisters and brothers, who, like the Holy Family, have been forced to leave their homelands for a better life.

Our primary concern must be to ensure the human rights and dignity of migrants who are not nameless, faceless people who have “invaded” our country. They are our sisters and brothers in Christ. Their fraternal relationship with us places demands on us, challenging us to receive them as we would receive the Lord himself.

The Holy Father says:  
*I have followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United*

*States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations. The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality. At the same time, one must recognize the right of a nation to defend itself and keep communities safe from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival. That said, the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness.*

Our nation’s right to self-defense and to the regulation of processes for immigration does not justify the inhumane treatment of people who have come here in search of freedom and the chance to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Pope Francis urges us to discover the proper response to our migrant brothers and sisters by “meditating constantly on the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan’ [Lk 10:25-37]” and, by sharing the love that “builds a fraternity open to all, without exception.” He concludes his letter with an appeal to Our Lady of Guadalupe:

*May the “Virgen Morena,” who knew how to reconcile peoples when they were at enmity, grant us all to meet again as brothers and sisters, within her embrace, and thus take a step forward in the construction of a society that is more fraternal, inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all.*

Regardless of our political philosophy, all Catholics should be advocates for a society that respects the dignity of all. We should let our government officials know that we cannot tolerate any actions that violate the basic human rights of men, women and children who have come to our country in search of the same liberty, justice, and equality that we believe are the God-given rights of all.

May our Blessed Mother, who was herself a migrant, inspire us to safeguard the rights and dignity of all members of God’s family.

—Daniel Conway

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

What do we owe each other? Readers share their thoughts—and the gift of a smile

The woman’s answer made me smile. Her answer came in response to a question I asked readers of



*The Criterion*—a question originally posed by Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd when he became the 18th president of the University of Notre Dame last year.

Seeing how people in our country have increasingly become divided, Father Dowd sought a positive path of common ground going forward, asking, “What do we owe each other?”

When Vickie Ernestes saw that question in *The Criterion*, the member of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County felt compelled to share what she described as her first reaction to the question.

“It’s pretty short and simple,” she began in her e-mail. “I believe we owe each other smiles—smiles of recognition because we are all children of the same Father, God. Not everyone will smile back, so you may not know how your smile affected them, but don’t let that keep you from smiling.”

Ernestes then described the impact that smiles have made at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in North Vernon where she volunteers.

“‘It takes a lot of volunteers to staff a thrift store, so I know a lot of folks who smile,’” she noted. “Our little store is one of the happiest places in town. As Vincentians, we strive to see the face of Christ in everyone we meet, and that’s the main reason we smile so much. Most of our customers must see the face of Christ in us because most of them smile a lot, too. Smiling is not too difficult. Just give it a try. God is watching you, and he’s smiling, too.”

The responses of other readers also made me smile.

When we invited people to share their responses to “What do we owe each other?”, we said their answers could range from one word to a personal story. Dave Stuhldreher of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis came the closest to the one-word possibility when he succinctly and profoundly responded, “Our Best.”

Melissa Douglas of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood focused on the gift of patience, noting, “Patience helps us to be a better listener of our neighbor. Patience slows us down and opens our heart to the Holy Spirit who knows what our neighbor needs to hear.”

For John Kreuzman, the path to unity starts with an emphasis on respect.

“‘It would be a much better world if we could reach some type of common ground and be respectful of each other’s lives,’” says Kreuzman, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. “We don’t always have to agree, but we should find a way to love each other.”

In his thoughtful consideration of the question, Stephen Kappes of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech

Grove shared two guiding approaches for all of our relationships.

“‘We owe each other our deep presence, that willingness to walk with those who are entrusted by Divine Providence into our care,’” he noted.

“‘We owe each other kindness wrapped in empathy,’” he added.

My response to the question focuses on the virtues of dignity, grace and forgiveness.

As our faith tells us that we are all made in the image and likeness of God, we should treat each other from that common bond of dignity.

As we are all imperfect, we need to give each other—and ourselves—grace, accepting our and others’ limitations while also helping each other grow toward the people God wants us to be.

As we strive to be the people God wants us to be, we all need to forgive others for the times they hurt us and fall short of our hopes for them. We also need to forgive ourselves—

and make amends—for the times we hurt others and fall short of our hopes for us.

And one more thought about what we owe each other. Often, it involves making a conscious effort to say “thank you” more.

Now, what do *you* think we owe each other?

It’s time for each of us to live our answer.

(John Shaughnessy is assistant editor of *The Criterion*. He can be reached at [jshaughnessy@archindy.org](mailto:jshaughnessy@archindy.org).) †

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.

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ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Make Lent a time to renew your spirit, draw closer to Christ

*When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Mt 6:6)*

Ash Wednesday is next week, and with it, Lent begins. Although Lent is a penitential season, it should not be a gloomy time for Christians.

Lent prepares us for the joy of Easter by reminding us that Christ has conquered sin and death. We fast, pray and give alms during this holy time of year not because we are sad or depressed, but because Jesus has shown us that self-sacrificing love is the only way to experience lasting joy.

In the first reading for Ash Wednesday from the Book of the Prophet Joel (Jl 2:12-18), we learn that the Lord is “slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment” (Jl 2:13).

This is great news. It means that if we atone for the sins we have committed, we will experience God’s love and forgiveness instead of his justifiable wrath. We do not deserve God’s kindness to us, but he never hesitates to surround us with his grace

and to welcome us back to his presence.

In the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 51), we cry out to the Lord:

*Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. (Ps 51:3-4)*

Then we ask him to purify us and fill us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

*A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. (Ps 51:12-13)*

Ash Wednesday is a day for cleansing and spiritual renewal. It is a time when we acknowledge that we are “dust,” fashioned from the earth and bound to return there, except for the grace of God which has created us in his own image and destined us to be united in the everlasting glory of his heavenly home.

The second reading (2 Cor 5:20-6:2) invites us to be reconciled to God because of the mission that we received when we were baptized. We are “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20), St. Paul tells us.

As missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, we are challenged to let go of everything that holds us back or prevents us from joyfully proclaiming his Gospel: “Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). Lent is an opportunity to renew our spirits and to rid ourselves of whatever gets in the way of our conversion to Christ and our ability to carry out the mission he has entrusted to our care.

Finally, the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday (Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18) counsels us to be humble and pure of heart in our witness to Christ. What we do, and the way we do it, must never be ostentatious. As Jesus tells his disciples:

*Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret.*

*And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Mt 6:1-4)*

The mission that we have been given will not make us wealthy, famous or powerful. We do not “perform righteous deeds” so that we can be seen to be holy. Ours is a mission of love and service that is best carried out in secret. God the Father knows who we are and what we are doing in Jesus’ name. He will repay us with his loving kindness.

As we prepare to celebrate Ash Wednesday and begin the holy season of Lent, let’s remember that God is merciful and that he welcomes our repentance and conversion. The prayer, fasting and almsgiving that we are invited to do all year long are especially important during Lent. The Church gives us this penitential time as a gift—to help us reorient our lives and return to the Father by following in the Son’s footsteps and by submitting to the graces of the Holy Spirit.

During this 2025 Jubilee Year, let’s think of Ash Wednesday as a Holy Door that leads to the special gifts and graces of Lent. May the Holy Trinity strengthen and renew us during the next six weeks as we prepare for Easter joy. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Hagamos de la Cuaresma un tiempo para renovar el espíritu, y acercarnos más a Cristo

*Cuando ores, entra en tu aposento, y cuando hayas cerrado la puerta, ora a tu Padre que está en secreto, y tu Padre, que ve en lo secreto, te recompensará. (Mt 6:6)*

La semana que viene es Miércoles de Ceniza que marca el inicio de la Cuaresma. Aunque se trata de un tiempo de penitencia, no debe ser una época sombría para los cristianos.

La Cuaresma nos prepara para la alegría de la Pascua recordándonos que Cristo ha vencido al pecado y a la muerte. Ayunamos, rezamos y damos limosna durante este tiempo santo del año no porque estemos tristes o deprimidos, sino porque Jesús nos ha mostrado que el amor abnegado es la única manera de experimentar una alegría duradera.

En la primera lectura del Miércoles de Ceniza, tomada del libro del profeta Joel (Jl 2:12-18), descubrimos que el Señor es “lento para la ira, abundante en misericordia, y se arrepiente de infligir el mal” (Jl 2:13).

Esta es una excelente noticia ya que significa que si expiamos los pecados que hemos cometido, experimentaremos el amor y el perdón de Dios en lugar de su ira justificable. No merecemos la bondad que Dios nos dedica, pero Él

nunca duda en rodearnos de su gracia y acogernos de nuevo en su presencia.

En el salmo responsorial (Sal 51), clamamos al Señor:

*Ten piedad de mí, oh Dios, conforme a Tu misericordia; conforme a lo inmenso de Tu compasión, borra mis transgresiones. Lávame por completo de mi maldad, y límpiame de mi pecado (Sal 51:3-4).*

Luego le pedimos que nos purifique y nos llene de los dones del Espíritu Santo:

*Crea en mí, oh Dios, un corazón limpio, y renueva un espíritu recto dentro de mí. No me eches de Tu presencia, y no quites de mí Tu Santo Espíritu (Sal 51:12-13).*

El Miércoles de Ceniza es un día de purificación y renovación espiritual. Es la época en la que reconocemos que somos “polvo,” provenientes de la tierra y a la cual volveremos, excepto por la gracia de Dios, que nos ha creado a su imagen y nos ha destinado a estar unidos en la gloria eterna de su hogar celestial.

La segunda lectura (2 Cor 5:20-6:2) nos invita a reconciliarnos con Dios gracias a la misión que recibimos al ser bautizados; somos “embajadores de Cristo” (2 Cor 5:20), nos dice san Pablo.

Como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo, tenemos el reto de desprendernos de todo lo que nos frena o nos impide proclamar con alegría su Evangelio: “Ahora es ‘el tiempo propicio’; ahora es el día de salvación” (2 Cor 6:2). La Cuaresma es una oportunidad para renovar nuestro espíritu y despojarnos de todo lo que obstaculiza nuestra conversión a Cristo y nuestra capacidad para llevar a cabo la misión que Él nos ha confiado.

Por último, la lectura del Evangelio del Miércoles de Ceniza (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18) nos aconseja ser humildes y puros de corazón en nuestro testimonio de Cristo. Lo que hacemos, y la forma en que lo hacemos, nunca debe ser ostentoso. Tal como Jesús les dice a sus discípulos:

*Cuidense de no practicar su justicia delante de los hombres para ser vistos por ellos; de otra manera no tendrán recompensa de su Padre que está en los cielos. Por eso, cuando des limosna, no toques trompeta delante de ti, como hacen los hipócritas en las sinagogas y en las calles, para ser alabados por los hombres. En verdad les digo que ya han recibido su recompensa. Pero tú, cuando des limosna, que no sepa tu mano izquierda lo que hace tu derecha, para que tu limosna sea en secreto; y tu Padre, que ve en lo secreto, te*

*recompensará (Mt 6:1-4).*

La misión que se nos ha encomendado no nos hará ricos, famosos o poderosos. No “practicamos justicia” para que nos vean como santos; la nuestra es una misión de amor y servicio que se lleva mejor en secreto. Dios Padre sabe quiénes somos y qué hacemos en nombre de Jesús y nos recompensará con su amorosa bondad.

Mientras nos preparamos para celebrar el Miércoles de Ceniza y comenzar el tiempo santo de la Cuaresma, recordemos que Dios es misericordioso y que acoge con agrado nuestro arrepentimiento y conversión. La oración, el ayuno y la limosna que se nos invita a hacer durante todo el año son especialmente importantes durante la Cuaresma. La Iglesia nos regala este tiempo penitencial para ayudarnos a reorientar nuestra vida y volver al Padre siguiendo las huellas del Hijo y sometiéndonos a las gracias del Espíritu Santo.

Durante este Año Jubilar 2025, pensemos en el Miércoles de Ceniza como una Puerta Santa que conduce a los dones y gracias especiales de la Cuaresma. Que la Santísima Trinidad nos fortalezca y renueve durante las próximas seis semanas, mientras nos preparamos para la alegría pascual. †







# A tradition marking 50 years continues to touch people’s lives

By John Shaughnessy

Marilyn Ross marvels at this tradition—especially the way it started among a small group of everyday people and how it has become an annual effort in the United States to fight one of the world’s greatest problems.

“First of all, it shows how the Lord works,” Ross says. “He doesn’t need to start or even end with big things. He uses us where we are.”

She then shares a story that began 50 years ago—when a group of Catholics in Allentown, Pa., were watching televised scenes that touched their hearts and left them wanting to do something for the people they saw on the screen.

“That was back in the day when people gathered around the television at night,” Ross recalls. “They saw these films from Africa showing the hunger people were living in at the time. That was their incentive to help these people halfway around the world.”

That moment led to the creation of small, cardboard boxes to save money to help people devastated by hunger—an effort that was the beginning of “CRS Rice Bowl.” Now, in its 50th year, this Lenten

initiative of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has raised \$350 million to support people facing hunger around the world and here in the United States.

“There’s a global and a local aspect to Rice Bowl,” says Ross, who coordinates the effort in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “Seventy-five percent of what is raised goes overseas with CRS for their work, and 25 percent can be retained in the local diocese for local hunger relief and humanitarian efforts. That’s what we do here. With the 25 percent, we make grants to local humanitarian organizations. In the past few years, they’ve all been related to fighting hunger.”

Grants have been made to soup kitchens, food pantries and different conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul across the archdiocese, including at St. Joseph University Parish in Terre Haute, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis, and at Ross’ parish, Our Lady of the Greenwood in Greenwood.

“I think of little children and big children who can get really excited about this,” Ross says. “In my own parish, I stand around on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and on Ash Wednesday after all of our services, distributing

Rice Bowls. And to see the excitement of some of these children—and adults, too. They want their Rice Bowls. They’re excited to get them because they know it makes a difference.

“When our parish has gotten a grant in the past few years for our food pantry, they publicize it in our bulletin, so people can see the direct connection—we’re helping people abroad who need it and we’re helping people here.”

Ross notes how Catholic Relief Services not only works to alleviate hunger around the world but how it provides immediate emergency responses to people in countries devastated by hurricanes, tsunamis and other natural disasters. CRS also provides educational and agricultural resources to help people create sustainable ways of feeding their families.

“Of course, we want to raise more funds to help CRS continue their work,” Ross says. “It’s also about raising people’s awareness of what’s going on around the world. We get so caught up in the politics of what’s going on that we forget about the people, the individual person, which our Church is very much about. It’s not just as a group, it’s who we are as individuals and our relationship with the Lord.”

Beyond the use of Rice Bowls, CRS provides online resources to help people form a deeper spiritual connection



Now in its 50th year, CRS Rice Bowl continues its Lenten tradition of raising funds to support people experiencing hunger around the world and in the United States. (Submitted photo)

with Christ and others during Lent. At [crsricebowl.org](https://crsricebowl.org), Lenten prayers, devotions, recipes and short videos are available in both English and Spanish. So are lesson plans for parents, educators and catechists to help students in grades 1 to 12 grow in that spiritual connection.

They’re all parts of a Lenten tradition that began humbly 50 years ago, a tradition that only requires giving from the heart.

“I have Rice Bowls, but people don’t need them,” Ross says. “They can use a jar. It can be a family thing. That’s one of the things we really like to see happen.”

The tradition is also founded on a belief that is timeless.

“It shows how God can use us as individuals,” Ross says. “He wants us as individuals to reach out to others.”

(For more information or to receive Rice Bowls, contact Marilyn Ross at [mross@archindy.org](mailto:mross@archindy.org) or call her at 317-236-7326.) †



‘I think of little children and big children who can get really excited about this. In my own parish, I stand around on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and on Ash Wednesday after all of our services, distributing Rice Bowls. And to see the excitement of some of these children—and adults, too.’

—Marilyn Ross, who coordinates CRS Rice Bowl efforts in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

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# Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

## Batesville Deanery

March 7, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Martin campus of All Saints Parish, Dearborn County  
 March 11, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg  
 March 18, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg  
 March 21, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora  
 March 21, 9 am.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville  
 April 1, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville  
 April 4, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Martin campus of All Saints Parish, Dearborn County  
 April 8, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville  
 April 8, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church of St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County  
 April 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County  
 April 9, 6-8 p.m. at St. Maurice, Napoleon  
 April 10, 6-8 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhousen  
 April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville  
 April 11, 6-8 p.m., St. John, Osgood  
 April 11, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora  
 April 16, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:  
 Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. and Saturdays 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan  
 Saturdays after 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Nicholas, Ripley County

## Bloomington Deanery

March 20, 6-7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville  
 March 26, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer  
 April 1, 7-9 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul  
 April 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville  
 April 16, 6-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

## Connersville Deanery

March 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty  
 March 20, 6 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle  
 April 11, 5:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Richmond

## Indianapolis East Deanery

March 20, 7 p.m. for St. Therese of the Infant Jesus

(Little Flower) and Our Lady of Lourdes at Our Lady of Lourdes, sacrament in English and Spanish  
 March 27, at St. Mary, sacrament in English and Spanish  
 April 10, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit, sacrament in English and Spanish

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the East Deanery are as follows:  
 Second and fourth Sundays after 10 a.m. Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

## Indianapolis North Deanery

March 23, 2 p.m. at St. Matthew the Apostle  
 March 24, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X  
 March 25, 7 p.m. at St. Joan of Arc  
 April 14, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., no appointment needed

## Indianapolis South Deanery

March 12, 7 p.m. for St. Jude and St. Mark the Evangelist at St. Mark the Evangelist  
 March 22, 8:30-10 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood  
 April 1, 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
 April 3, 6:30 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, and Good Shepherd at Holy Name of Jesus  
 April 8, 6-7 p.m. at St. Ann  
 April 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Barnabas  
 April 16, 6-9 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

## Indianapolis West Deanery

March 27, 6:30 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg  
 April 9, 6 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville  
 April 12, 7 p.m. for St. Gabriel the Archangel, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Monica at St. Monica

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the West Deanery are as follows:  
 Wednesdays of Lent (excluding Holy Week), 6-7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville  
 Fridays of Lent (excluding Good Friday): 4-5 p.m. at St. Christopher; 5-6 p.m. at St. Monica; 6-7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel

## New Albany Deanery

March 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg  
 March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville  
 March 18, 6 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford  
 March 26, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany  
 April 3, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County  
 April 7, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight  
 April 10, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

## Seymour Deanery

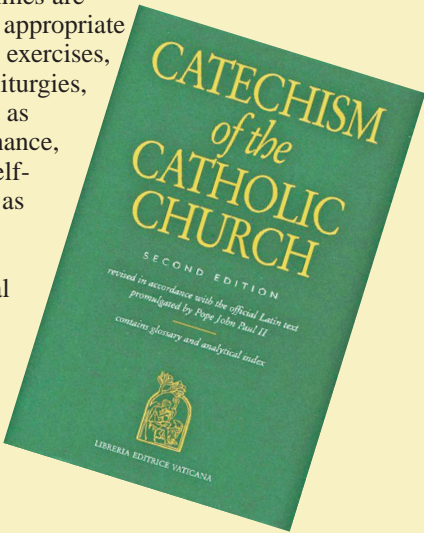
March 26, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus  
 April 1, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour  
 April 2, 6 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace

# What the Catechism says about Lent

The season of Lent is mentioned in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in various sections.  
 It is brought up in #540 in the section that explains Christ’s public ministry.  
 In #1095, Lent is discussed in regards to the way in which the Church, especially in its liturgy, sees Christ prefigured in various ways in the Old Testament.  
 Finally, in #1438, the penitential nature of Lent is discussed in the section on the sacrament of reconciliation.

#540 “Jesus’ temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him (see Mt 16:21-23).  
 “This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: ‘For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning’ (Heb 4:15). By the solemn forty days of Lent, the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.”  
 #1095 “... the Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the ‘today’ of her liturgy. But this also demands that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this spiritual understanding of the economy of salvation as the Church’s liturgy reveals it and enables us to live it.”  
 #1438 “The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church’s penitential practice.

“These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential pilgrimages, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing [charitable and missionary works].”



(To read the Catechism of the Catholic Church online, log on to [www.usccb.org/catechism/text/](http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/).) †

# Lenten disciplines include fasting, almsgiving, prayer

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years and older on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Ash Wednesday is on March 5.  
 Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. Those who are bound by this may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.  
 The special paschal fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged for Holy Saturday.  
 By the threefold discipline of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, the Church keeps Lent from Ash Wednesday until the evening of Holy Thursday, which is on April 17. †



# FISH FRIES

continued from page 6

## March 7, 28, April 4, 11

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane, New Albany. **Lenten Fish Fry**, 4-7 p.m., fish dinner: two pieces of fish, two sides, drink, \$12; shrimp dinner: six shrimp, two sides, drink, \$12; fish-shrimp combo: one piece of fish, four shrimp, two sides, drink, \$13; kids’ fish dinner: one piece of fish, one side,

drink, \$8; kids’ pizza dinner: one slice (cheese), one side, drink, \$8. Information: 812-944-1184, [cwhite@olphna.org](mailto:cwhite@olphna.org).

## March 14

St. Anthony Parish, 4773 Church Road, Morris. **St. Nicholas and St. Anthony Faith Formation Fish Fry**, 4:30-7 p.m., hand-breaded cod, French fries, mac and cheese, green beans, coleslaw, cookie, \$15. Information: 812-623-2964, [communications@stnicholas-sunman.org](mailto:communications@stnicholas-sunman.org).

Sacred Heart of Jesus, 610 S. 6th St., Clinton. **Jonah Fish Fry**, 4-7 p.m., four pieces of fish, coleslaw, baked beans, applesauce, bread, tea or lemonade, \$12 adults, \$6 ages 12 and younger, extra fish \$2 each, donations for desserts, carry-out available. Information: 765-832-8468, [sacredheartclinton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sacredheartclinton@sbcglobal.net).

## March 7, 21

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, south gym, 7575 Holliday Dr.

E., Indianapolis. **Lenten Fish Fry**, 5:30-8 p.m., baked or fried fish, grilled cheese, mac and cheese, coleslaw, green beans, salad bar, rice; prices in advance: \$16 adult, \$6 ages 7-14; prices at door: \$20 adult, \$8 ages 7-14, ages 6 and younger free. Information: 317-259-4373, [matkins@stluke.org](mailto:matkins@stluke.org).

St. Boniface Parish Center, 11715 E. County Road 1550 N., Fulda. **Lenten Fish Fry**, 3-7 p.m. CT, \$15 fish dinner includes 2 half-pound fish

filets and two sides, pre-order for \$14 by noon Monday of fish fry week. Information: 812-357-5533, [info@myparishfamily.church](mailto:info@myparishfamily.church).

## March 28, April 4, 11

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, gymnasium, 1842 E. 8th St., Jeffersonville. **Fish Fry**, 5-7 p.m., adult dinner \$16, senior dinner \$13, kids’ dinner \$10, sandwich \$8, cheese pizza \$3. Information: 812-282-2677, [micalascott@yahoo.com](mailto:micalascott@yahoo.com).

## April 4

St. Bridget of Ireland, 404 E. Vine St., Liberty. **Drive-through Fish Fry Dinner**, 5-7 p.m., prices TBA. Information: 765-825-8578, [secretary@stgabrielconnserville.org](mailto:secretary@stgabrielconnserville.org).

## April 18

St. Mary Parish, 7500 Navilleton Road, Floyds Knobs. **Good Friday Fish Fry**, 4-6 p.m., prices and menu TBA. Information: 812-923-5419, [parish.navstar@gmail.com](mailto:parish.navstar@gmail.com). †



# Marriage and Family Life Supplement

A special section of The Criterion celebrating Christian marriage

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

By Natalie Hoefer

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

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

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

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

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

Rea also notes that married couples “are meant to be in communion as man and wife, but also with others as man and wife—other couples with struggles, those in the same season of life, those who’ve been through those seasons.

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

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

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

### ‘Resetting, putting Christ at the center’

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

“We broke young adults into three groups—college,



Nathanael Rea



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

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



Claire Keck

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

See MINISTRY, page 13

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

By Gabriela Ross

“No one in the Church is talking about this—I feel so alone.” I hear that often in my pastoral work serving marriages and families, usually during phone conversations with individuals who have called the archdiocese looking for support. Whether they were referred by their pastor or found us by searching online, they call looking for understanding and hope.

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

During the call, he mentioned how

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

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

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

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

supported in renewing this ministry.

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

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

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

opportunities to strengthen and renew marriages in their communities.

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

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

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



# Wedding Announcements

## Altier-Scott



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

## Annee-Asher



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

## Bell-McKay



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

## Blair-Collom



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

## Callaway-Gates



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

## Chapman-Vuoncino



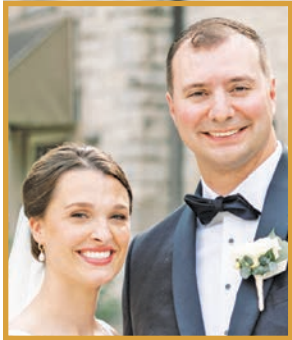
Erin Claire Chapman and Michael Salvatore Vuoncino will be married on May 10 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of J and Mary Claire Chapman. The groom is the son of Louis and Maria Vuoncino.

## Crabtree-Adams



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

## Dury-Goethe



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

## Gahimer-Mitchel



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

## Gies-Krier



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

## Harton-Kassell



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

## Horvath-DeLeon



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

## Johnson-Michael



Mary Johnson Michael and Robert Gerard Michael had their marriage convalidated on Oct. 26, 2024, at St. Matthew the Apostle Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Ed and Dolores Johnson. The groom is the son of Joe and Rita Michael.

## Koscielski -Burch



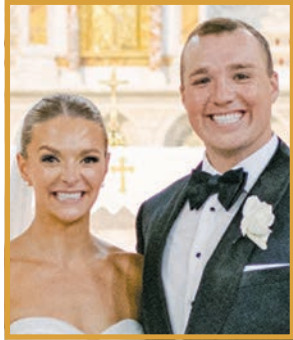
Grace Koscielski and Joel Burch were married on Dec. 14, 2024, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Paul and Amy Koscielski. The groom is the son of Joe and Angie Burch.

## Koscielski -Kirch



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

## Lennon-Sprecher



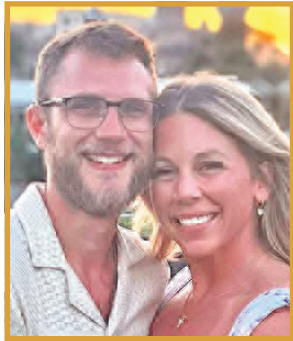
Colleen Teresa Lennon and Nicholas David Sprecher were married on Oct. 5, 2024, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Kevin and Teresa Lennon. The groom is the son of Steven and Stacy Sprecher.

## Lipsey-Gottschall



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

## Love-McCarthy



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

## McDaniel-Bohman



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

## Picchione-Bushman



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

## Riedford-Curry



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

## Roller-Egan



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

## Schulte-Reynolds



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

## Stonner-Fox



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

## Sullivan-Weingart



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

## Umana-Olexa



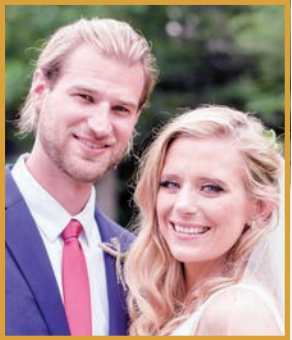
Erika Lynn Umana and Joseph Michael Olexa III will be married on June 21 at St. Mary Church in Indianapolis. The bride is the daughter of Greg and Kristy Umana. The groom is the son of Joseph, Jr., and Ann Olexa.

## Ward-Meyer



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

## Whitaker-Gabehart



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

## Wichern-Ditzler



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

## Wilderman-Lutgring



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

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

### Criterion staff report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To register, go to [oicmarriage.org/seminar-info](https://oicmarriage.org/seminar-info). For more information, call 317-600-5629, e-mail [info@OICIndy.com](mailto:info@OICIndy.com) or go to [oicmarriage.org](https://oicmarriage.org).

**Parish-led marriage preparation retreats** in Spanish are available throughout the archdiocese. For a current list, go to [tinyurl.com/PrematrimonialesEnEspanol](https://tinyurl.com/PrematrimonialesEnEspanol).

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

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

For more information or to register, go to [tinyurl.com/Pre-CanaOnline](https://tinyurl.com/Pre-CanaOnline). †



# MISCARRIAGE

continued from page 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ‘Having that grave gives them a visual’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ‘Room to help more families’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ‘Getting supplies out there’

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

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

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

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

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

Harpring felt called to fill that need.

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

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

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

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

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

## ‘A very humbling experience’

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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



# Archbishop Thompson will celebrate Wedding Anniversary Mass on Aug. 24

Criterion staff report

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

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

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

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

For additional questions, contact Claudia Corona at 317-236-7310 or [ccorona@archindy.org](mailto:ccorona@archindy.org). †

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



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

Criterion staff report

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

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

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

The wedding announcement form is online at [cutt.ly/CriterionWeddings](https://cutt.ly/CriterionWeddings).

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

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

## MINISTRY

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

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

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

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

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

Formation, community life ‘start in the home’

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

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

The Three Great Dates series has provided that opportunity.

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

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

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

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

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



Kelli Reutman

**‘Our job is to sow seeds’**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

in mind what works for each community might differ:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

‘This has been all God’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(For more information on Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, go to [www.covenantresources.org](https://www.covenantresources.org).) †

## Office of Marriage and Family Life website offers miscarriage resources

By Natalie Hoefer

The website for the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life offers several miscarriage-related resources at [marriageandfamily.archindy.org/miscarriage](https://marriageandfamily.archindy.org/miscarriage).

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

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

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

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



# TOLTON

continued from page 1

“I think what makes Black History Month so special is the fact that we can raise up to our awareness people who normally would not be in our history books, but people who have made a contribution to the fabric of American life anyway,” Bishop Perry said in his presentation to the student body. “And I like to think that Augustus Tolton is one such person.”

## Frome slavery to the priesthood

He shared the story of Father Tolton, whom he often referred to as “Gus” in his presentation. Father Tolton was born into slavery in 1854 in Missouri. Baptized as a Catholic as an infant, Father Tolton escaped with his mother and siblings to freedom in Quincy, Ill., in 1863 during the Civil War.

While experiencing much racism in his new home, Tolton eventually received a good education at St. Peter Parish in Quincy.

“Gus could learn to read and write there,” Bishop Perry said. “These surroundings turned out very positive for Gus. He could even sit in the front row of the church with his fellow classmates. He had new friends. The church members seemed not to care about the color of his skin. In God’s eyes, they were all friends.”

Growing in his faith at St. Peter, Father Tolton eventually felt a call to the priesthood. But because of his race, he was denied entry into all seminaries in the U.S. to which he applied.

Father Tolton was eventually accepted as a seminarian at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome. Ordained a priest in Rome in 1886, he returned to minister in Quincy. “No one in America had seen a priest’s collar on the neck of a Black man before,” Bishop Perry said. “For whites, it was a strange sight, and for Blacks, it was a news sensation.”

Continuing to experience racial prejudice in Quincy as a priest—just as he had as a child—he was later invited by the archbishop of Chicago to serve there.

At St. Monica Parish on the city’s poor south side, Father Tolton welcomed worshippers of all races. “Anyone and everyone could sit and kneel and pray together and receive holy Communion from his hands,” Bishop Perry said. “He assisted former slaves to settle in a new life, [and] helped Blacks adjust to the realities of post-war emancipation realities that meant life was hard and uncertain for many.

“Father Gus wanted to help make our country a better place where all people can feel at home in our Church regardless of who they were.”

Although Father Tolton continued to experience racism in Chicago as he had elsewhere, Bishop Perry explained that the priest “never said anything untoward to anyone. He only showed people the Bible and taught them how we should all treat one another as brother and sister in the name of Christ.”

During a heatwave in Chicago in the summer of 1897, Father Tolton collapsed while walking back to his home and died on July 9. He was 43.

**‘He lived life as Jesus would want us to’**

Bishop Perry went on to explain how the beatification and canonization cause of Father Tolton was launched in 2011. In 2019, Pope Francis declared him “venerable,” the second of four stages in the Church’s process of declaring a person a saint.

Saying that Father Tolton demonstrated holiness by living “a Christian life amidst the harsh realities of [his] time, the ordered separation of the races,” Bishop Perry showed the Scecina students how the priest’s example is one they can emulate today.

“He lived life as Jesus would want us to,” Bishop Perry explained. “Many find him an example of how to live as a good man, a great Christian in his service to God, to the Church and the people of all races, doing unto others as we would have them do to us, a golden rule.”

Father Tolton continues to show how faith can help people today overcome hardship, Bishop Perry noted. “For Father Tolton, you would figure the word ‘no’ was probably slammed in his face more often than the word ‘yes,’ ” he said. “But Tolton never retaliated with any anger. He suffered internally from self-doubt and the disrespect of others, but he took this to God with his prayers and his tears and kept serving others as a good priest.”

Speaking directly about their lives as high school students, Bishop Perry suggested that Father Tolton can encourage them to “make sure that you include everyone in your friendship, to have an eye for the stranger and the one excluded from the crowd.

“ ... If you come upon someone who is alone and without friends, invite him or her into your circle of friends,” Bishop Perry shared. “That’s what Christians do. Make everyone you come in contact with feel comfortable. It’s the way of Jesus.”

**‘I felt inspired’**

Speaking with *The Criterion* after celebrating Mass with the students, Bishop Perry explained why in retirement it continues to be important for him to travel to schools far beyond his home archdiocese, like Scecina, and that such visits are “energizing” for him.

“It’s important for our Catholic young people to plug into the whys of what we do and believe, and the personages who really left these steppingstones for us in hopes that these young people can do a little bit better than we’ve done,” he said.

Ashaundi Copeland is a sophomore at Scecina and a member of its fledgling Black Student Union. She was glad to learn of Father Tolton.

“To know Black history is a huge part of my culture. I



Bishop Joseph N. Perry, a retired auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, elevates a chalice during a Feb. 18 Mass at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis. Father Douglas Hunter, left, pastor of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, concelebrates the Mass. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



Journee Thomas, left, Mariana Gonzalez and Stephany Orozco Jimenez lead singing during a Feb. 18 Mass at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis.

felt very inspired,” she shared. “It makes me really want to help Scecina know more about Black history, which a lot of people don’t know about because it’s not been popular.”

Ian McKiernan, a Scecina junior and a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis, saw in Father Tolton’s story lessons for him to take to heart today.

“There are wars always happening and hatred toward certain people and groups,” he said. “These stories that we learn are important because they teach us what we can do. Being kind is something I always try to do. It doesn’t matter what you look like or who you are, just be kind.”

Ben Potts, Scecina’s director of campus ministry, had known Bishop Perry when he previously ministered in the Archdiocese of Chicago. So, he was glad to welcome him to Indianapolis and grateful for the message he shared with the students to whom he ministers.

“I hope it reinforces the universal call to holiness, that, no matter where you’re coming from, God has great plans for you,” Potts said. “As long as you’re open to it, God will lead you in the right direction.” †

## ‘Ukraine will rise’ as ‘Russia brings death,’ say Ukrainian Catholic bishops

(OSV News)—As Ukraine marks the third anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops are affirming Ukrainians’ belief in “the triumph of God’s truth”—and the recognition that “true peace cannot exist without justice.”

“Even amidst sorrow and ruin, we remain a people of hope. We believe in the resurrection, for we know: God is with us—with the persecuted, the oppressed, the mourning, and the suffering,” said the permanent synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in a Feb. 24 appeal signed by Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, patriarchal head of the UGCC.

The bishops, currently meeting in Canada, reflected in their message on the Feb. 24, 2022, launch of the attack, which continues aggression Russia initiated in 2014 with assaults on Ukraine’s Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The war has twice been declared a genocide in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights.

Since the 2022 invasion, at least 174,000 to 420,000 people have

been killed during Russia’s war, with civilian deaths reported to be severely undercounted, according to research by Sweden’s Uppsala University. Those numbers do not include the 14,200-14,400 slain from 2014-2021, as estimated by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Currently, 3.7 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine, with 6.9 million seeking refuge abroad, “unable to return to lives and livelihoods that no longer exist,” the U.N. stated in January.

At least 19,546 Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported by Russia—although that number could be more than 700,000, according to Russian child commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, who along with Russian leader Vladimir Putin is the subject of one of six International Criminal Court arrest warrants for war crimes.

Russian forces have also systematically tortured, sexually violated and executed Ukrainian civilians and combatants. Among the atrocity survivors are a rape victim that OSV News interviewed in June 2023 in a village near Kyiv, and UGCC priests Father Ivan Levitsky and Father Bohdan Geleta, released in June 2024 from 18 months of captivity during which they were “mercilessly tortured,” as Major Archbishop Sviatoslav has previously said.

“The destruction, suffering and trauma

inflicted upon our nation are staggering,” and Ukraine has “become a nation on the Way of the Cross,” said the UGCC bishops in their appeal.

“Even if the war ended today, decades would be required to rebuild what has been damaged or destroyed: 3,500 school and university buildings, over 1,200 hospitals, 670 churches, thousands of kilometers of roads, hundreds of thousands of homes, power stations and factories,” they said.

Russia has brought “death, devastation and the eradication of religious freedom,” said the bishops, noting that 67 pastors of various Christian churches have been killed, with “clergy and faithful of various confessions” severely repressed by Russia—which has demanded that Christians in occupied Ukraine, including Catholics, yield to the Russian Orthodox Church.

While Ukrainians have ‘learned to navigate the harsh realities of full-scale war’—saving lives, rebuilding after attacks and remaining “connected across borders”—the scars of Russia’s war run far deeper than the “craters from rockets, mines and drones,” said the bishops.

“Even more difficult will be the restoration and healing of lives shattered by war,” they said, pointing to the “grievous wounds” and “unseen pain of trauma” suffered by an untold number of Ukrainians.

Compounding that anguish is Russia’s

militaristic re-education of captured Ukrainian children, who “are being raised to hate their homeland,” said the bishops, referring to Russia’s indoctrination of such children, many of whom are made to assemble Russian weapons and even, as teenagers, fight against Ukrainian soldiers.

With the war “a test of our humanity,” Ukrainians have responded “with self-sacrifice and resolve,” said the bishops, who expressed “deep reverence and gratitude” for Ukraine’s defenders, as well as “heartfelt gratitude to Catholics around the world” and thanks for “the solidarity of people of goodwill.”

Yet as calls for a ceasefire and peace deals accelerate, the bishops warned that “Ukraine is not merely a land—it is its people.

“It is for their dignity and freedom that our best sons and daughters lay down their lives. And they do so not only for Ukraine but for the dignity and freedom of all people,” they said. “This heroic sacrifice must never be forgotten, diminished, or betrayed.”

As “the voice of the persecuted,” the bishops said that they would ensure “in no peace agreement, in name only, will our faith, dignity, or freedom become a bargaining chip.

“True peace cannot exist without justice. An unjust truce is a criminal mockery that will only lead to greater injustice and suffering,” they continued. †



Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk



# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## Efforts at promoting Christian unity continue today

By D.D. Emmons  
Second of two parts

(OSV News)—Ecumenical Councils since the Council of Nicaea 1,700 years ago have both sought to strengthen and renew the Church, and have also been the occasion for further divisions among Christians, as was explored in last week’s article.

Despite the many differences there have been and continue to be between Churches in the East and West, there have been efforts to unite the one Church founded by Christ.

### Unsuccessful attempts at reunification

During the Middle Ages, there were two ecumenical councils that addressed reconciliation: Lyons II in 1274 and the Council of Florence in 1438-45. Attendees at both councils signed agreements that could have had a positive impact on the East-West differences. But in both instances, after the councils, Eastern bishops rejected the agreements. Florence was especially notable and reflects the attitudes of the time.

By the beginning of the 15th century, Ottoman Turks were overrunning the Byzantine Empire and closing in on Constantinople. There was no way the Greeks could stop the Turks’ takeover without help. So, the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, who ruled from 1425-48, sought military and economic assistance from the West. The emperor, along with Constantinople Patriarch Joseph II, knew that assistance from the West would have to be preceded by a compromise on the differences between the Eastern and Western Churches.

Eventually, political and religious leaders from East and West met at Florence, Italy, in 1438 with the primary intention of reunion between the two Churches. From the beginning, this was not an ideal council.

Arriving in Italy, Patriarch Joseph was told that he was expected to kiss the shoe of Pope Eugenius VI at their initial meeting. Joseph refused. The seating arrangement during the council sessions provided the pope with an elevated and more ostentatious seat than that for the Greeks.

While the pope had agreed to pay all expenses for the visitors, payments seemed to be always late and sometimes with stipulations. Despite the tension, attendees did find compromise solutions for the issues of the *filioque*, Communion bread and papal primacy.

An agreement was signed, but many of the Eastern Churches refused to accept the agreements, and Emperor John became very unpopular. In less than six months, the Turks captured Constantinople. A new patriarch of Constantinople installed by the Turks rejected all the agreements from the Council of Florence. Everything was pretty much back to square one, and the next meeting between the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople wouldn’t take place for another 500 years.



Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras attend a prayer service in Jerusalem in January 1964. Their meeting was a historic event in the promotion of unity between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches in the 20th century. (CNS photo/Giancarlo Giuliani, pool)

### Recent efforts to promote Christian unity

Pope St. John XXIII, bishop of Rome from 1958-63, was the catalyst in the Catholic Church for 20th and 21st century efforts at reconciliation between the Churches. He called for the Second Vatican Council, which included a framework proposed to bring an end to the long estrangement between Eastern and Western Churches.

The council Fathers responded with a document called the “Decree on Ecumenism,” stating: “The restoration of unity among Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council” (#1).

Later in the decree, the bishops noted that “this holy Council solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, while remembering the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to the disciplines proper to them, since these are better suited to the character of their faithful, and more for the good of their souls” (#16).

This approach of respect for traditions and customs peculiar to particular Churches has strengthened the unity of the Latin Church in the West with the various Eastern Catholic Churches. Although unity with Orthodox Churches has still not been achieved, some progress has been made.



Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople kiss the Stone of Unction in Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulcher on May 25, 2014. The two leaders marked the 50th anniversary of the meeting in Jerusalem between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. (CNS photo/Grzegorz Galazka, pool)

While Vatican II was taking place, for the first time in more than 500 years, a pope met with the Ecumenical Patriarch from the Orthodox Church. It took place on Jan. 5-6, 1964, on the Mount of Olives in the Holy Land between Pope St. Paul VI and Constantinople Patriarch Athenagoras.

Pope Paul reportedly said to the Patriarch that their “unity should not have been broken.” The leaders of the two Churches prayed that their encounter would be a prelude to more such meetings. Indeed, every pope since Paul VI has reached out, responded to and met

with patriarchs from Orthodox Churches.

On more than one occasion, while celebrating Mass in the presence of an Orthodox patriarch, different popes have professed the creed in Greek and without the *filioque* clause.

### Complicating factors among Orthodox Churches

Historically, the Patriarch of Constantinople has been considered first among the Eastern patriarchs but has influence over far fewer members than the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, which includes more than half of all Orthodox Christians.

In a complicated series of events in 2018, the Russian Orthodox Church broke communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Holy See acknowledges the role of the Patriarch of Constantinople while also maintaining ecumenical relations with the Russian Orthodox Church.

In October 2021, and indicative of the continuous reconciliation efforts being made, Pope Francis had a private session with the members of the St. Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group. This group, seeking common solutions to Church division, is part of a larger Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

During the session, the Holy Father praised the work of the group and touted their identified task: “to seek together ways in which the different traditions can enrich one another without losing their identity.” Pope Francis continued, “In this spirit, your discussions center on appreciating how differing aspects present in our traditions, rather than giving rise to disagreements, can become legitimate opportunities for expressing the shared apostolic faith.”

The working group is only one of the many reconciliation efforts since Vatican II, including the Catholic Church’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, founded by Pope John XXIII during Vatican II. Also, as part of each liturgical year, the Church calls Catholics to an annual week of prayer for Christian unity. This week of prayer begins every year on Jan. 18.

Given that the Great Schism has lasted close to 1,000 years, the reconciliation results during the last 60 years have been monumental: overcoming language barriers, opening lines of communication, forming joint commissions and working groups, exchanging visits and popes and Orthodox patriarchs praying together in liturgies—all setting the stage for an ultimate goal of one Church. But this journey is not easy and can only be accomplished through the power of its protagonist: the Holy Spirit.

(D.D. Emmons writes from Pennsylvania.) †



Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Grind of Lent, and of life, finds fulfillment in a symphony of joy

For more than 10 years now, each of my five sons in turn have taken piano or guitar lessons. Most of the time, my wife Cindy has been the one to take our boys to their weekly 30-minute lessons.



As our younger children have gotten older, with Colin being the youngest at 11, our family’s life has gotten busier. So, it wasn’t surprising recently when Cindy wondered aloud to me if maybe it was time for music lessons to be put to the side.

Philip is the last of our children still taking lessons, switching to guitar after studying piano for several years.

Cindy understandably thought that this might be a way to ease our burdened family schedule. After all, Philip is 15 and has already reaped many benefits from honing his musical talents. Maybe that was enough.

But one recent evening, Philip was working in our living room through the chord progression of the song “Take Me Home, Country Roads” and, knowing the song

pretty well myself, I sang it as he played. As we repeated it a few times, and Philip got more comfortable with the chords, I started to sing with real gusto.

After we finished the song one last time, Cindy, who had been working nearby in our kitchen, came into the living room with tears in her eyes. Hearing Philip playing so well and him and me making music together so joyfully helped her poignantly realize anew why it was still good for us to be taking him weekly to his lessons.

This wasn’t the first time that beautiful music has filled our family home through the years. But this time it came at a providential moment for us. It helped Cindy and me see how God leads us to many blessings through the grind of being committed, day in and day out, to the good of our boys.

There are so many days when parents don’t see the payoff from such a commitment. And to be honest, God gives us no assurance that we’ll ever see the fruits of our labors in this life.

But he does promise that if, with the help of his ever-present grace, we remain faithful to him through that daily grind that life so often is, we will experience a symphony of infinite joy in his heavenly

home where he will welcome us into his great family of faith.

And not only that, we’ll take up our own part in the music of this family that will be beautiful beyond our imagining. It will be a part for which God has prepared us through the endless music lessons we experience, in the ups and downs in being faithful through life to the vocation for which he has created us.

The season of Lent that the Church will begin next week can be an image for us of this grinding journey through life. It can feel so long at times, and the sacrifices we embrace on Ash Wednesday can seem difficult and without much reward along the way.

But God lovingly invites us to fidelity to the challenges of Lent that come at us day to day, hour to hour or even minute to minute. He’s there to help us every step along the way with his loving grace. And then there’s the promise that we’ll experience the joy of Christ’s resurrection at the end of it.

So, start your journey through Lent knowing that, while it will be filled with one lesson after another in humility and lots of practicing of the virtue of sacrifice, it will all end in us taking our part in singing a beautiful Easter alleluia. †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Wanted: Your questions about ecumenical and interreligious topics

From time to time—and mostly in face-to-face encounters—I receive thanks for these monthly columns.

Often, these thanks are accompanied by: “I look forward each month to your column.” Or “I find the content inviting me to explore another religion.” Or “many of the columns remind me how important it is to find a sense of oneness in our divided world.”



These encounters are gratifying and humbling.

I thank these folks. Some I ask to pray for the journey toward unity. Others I ask to pray for people of all faiths who are seeking sincerely the presence of God in their lives.

Sept. 19, 2014, was the publication date of my first column. Since then, 115 have been penned. Occasionally, guest writers such as Deacon John Cord, Anders Kilmark and Dr. Alan Bercovitz have contributed.

Choosing a topic each month can be challenging. The Christian liturgical calendar provides ideas. Current events—local, national or worldwide—are often a driving force. An important anniversary in the life of the Church begs to be noted. Or an exotic aspect of another religion’s festival may lead to connections to one of our own.

Once decided upon, the topic may roll across the keyboard toward its 575-word limit. Or it may be a slow bleeding of ideas searching for coherence. More often than not, research is required.

Then, there is attention to the details that connect with our lives (the familiar) so that the less familiar will rise from the page with more receivable meaning.

The hardest part of writing is simplicity of style and clarity. Simple, short sentences are preferred. A unique turn of phrase may be tolerated, but only if it contributes to the readers’ understanding and enjoyment.

Back to the 575-word limit. Some complex topics require more words. (Thank you, *Criterion* editors!) More than not, shortening of paragraphs becomes necessary.

Admission that the column is an introduction of an idea must be repeated by the editor bird on my shoulder. A final invitation for the reader to explore further may be the best solution to soften the complexity.

Behind all of this parsing of words and smithing of thoughts is this—speaking to truth:

—The truth of similarities and common origins. The Golden Rule comes to mind.

—The truth of cultural, historical and geographic context. Eastern grasp of the human condition vs. Western grasp is an example.

—The truth of seeking the divine, that which is greater than the self or the collective, as a catechism imperative.

—The truth of religion, its organized patterns of behaviors, values, ideals, beliefs and virtues that bring about a direction for living life.

—The truth that truth itself is not the sole possession of one but a shared journey.

—The truth of the uniqueness of the Christian religion, that only in Christ has God approached humankind directly and brought about the gift of universal salvation.

—The truth that other religions share some part of the truth. From there, we begin our search in life together.

Nearly 11 years in, it’s time for me to ask you, the reader: Is there an ecumenical or interreligious topic that is of interest to you? If so, send me an e-mail at [rginther@archindy.org](mailto:rginther@archindy.org). If a column springs forth, wonderful. If some direction to sources you can explore is better, I will try to provide.

And thank you for your continued reading!

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

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Faith at Home/Laura Kelly Fanucci

Our family and our faith are where we learn to serve the least among us

Ask any parent who launched their child only to have them return home, or encouraged them through rehab only to watch them relapse. Ask any adult child who has welcomed their parent into their home as



aging, illness or disability demands. Ask couples who have blended families after divorce or the death of a spouse. Ask families who have weathered unexpected and devastating medical complexities.

Family life is no straight line soaring upward to success. It rises and falls, dips and doubles back, twists and turns in directions we never saw coming. But family is the way that we learn to love, serve and humble ourselves over and over again to care for Christ in our midst.

In families, we are constantly called to rearrange our lives around the ones who need the most help: a newborn baby, a sick child, a broken leg, a stomach flu, a broken heart, a job loss, a new diagnosis or a mental health crisis.

But the school of love that is family life is not simply meant to produce a “finished product,” especially if we hold up able-bodied, successful, healthy and independent adults as the only goal.

Instead, we are called to care for the least among us all life long.

In the Old Testament, God keeps calling the people to care for the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. These three categories were the weakest, the overlooked and the powerless: the least among us. Through the prophets and leaders, God reminds the people over and over again to show special attention, love and mercy to the ones who lack status, influence or resources: “For the Lord, your God, is the God of gods ... who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the resident alien, giving them food and clothing. So you too should love the resident alien” (Dt 10:17-19).

Jesus makes the call to care for the vulnerable ever clearer in the Gospels, when he identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also teaches that families were created to care for the vulnerable—and also to call societies in turn to care for those in need: “The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and

the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: ‘Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world’ ” (#2208).

This is how families work toward the kingdom of God. We clean up when kids get sick, and we teach our children to care for creation. We make dinner every night, and we share what we can with those who need help. We fold laundry, and we show our children how to vote and contact our representatives. We cheer for each other, and we talk about the daily news in the light of faith. We pray for one another, and we pray for those who have no one to pray for them.

Families embody what it means that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. We cannot ignore the call to serve the least within our walls—and within our world. The kingdom of God demands both.

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



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

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 2, 2025

- Sirach 27:4-7
- 1 Corinthians 15:54-58
- Luke 6:39-45

The Book of Sirach is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Sirach does not appear in the King



James Bible or other translations used by most Protestant communities. So, Catholics are sometimes asked why Sirach “was added” to their version of the Old Testament. The better question would be “Why did the

persons responsible for your translation take it out?”

King James I of England (who was also King James VI of Scotland) was a Protestant and the only child of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. He commissioned a translation of the Bible that could be used by the people, in the liturgy of the Church of England.

While ecumenical councils in the past had affirmed that Sirach was inspired by God, the biblical scholars in James I’s employ preferred to use an ancient Jewish listing of inspired Scriptures. They set Sirach aside.

So, many Protestants are not familiar with a version of the Bible that includes Sirach, which is also sometimes called the “Book of Ecclesiasticus.”

As for this reading itself, its meaning is obvious in the examples of shaking a sieve, molding clay into a vessel and tending a tree until it bears fruit. Many circumstances in life do not just happen. Human activity deliberately shapes them. We create the reality of our lives by who we are and by what we do.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians gives the second reading. The pagan, greedy and licentious atmosphere of the great city of Corinth challenged Paul again and again. No one who reads the two epistles he wrote to the Church there can miss the difficulty, disappointment and exasperation that St. Paul felt in dealing with the Christians of Corinth.

He urgently and relentlessly stressed that Christian discipleship requires a radical conversion, a change of mind and heart, that sees death not as the end, but as the beginning, not as defeat but as

victory. It is not about talking the talk. It is about walking the walk.

For the Gospel reading, the Church this weekend provides a passage from St. Luke’s Gospel. The readings include a series of statements of Jesus. None leaves its meaning vague or obscure. The statements are clear and straightforward.

In Paul’s day, blind people needed guides who could see, as they do today. To extend the fact, modern automobiles have headlights so that people can drive them at night. People wear eyeglasses or contact lenses in order to see well.

People own what they do, what they say and the consequences. Pointing to the faults of others neither excuses nor erases the effects of our sinfulness or foolhardiness. We must face facts and correct faults.

Finally, sick trees do not yield rich fruit. Anyone today with an apple tree in the yard knows this.

### Reflection

Next Wednesday, the Church will observe Ash Wednesday, initiating the season of Lent. The ultimate purpose of Lent is for each of us to celebrate Easter authentically. Easter is not simply the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus after death, as majestic and glorious as it is in the entirety of human history. Instead, Easter is a personal experience of ourselves rising from the death of soul that is sin to life with the Lord.

Clay pitchers and goblets do not just suddenly spring into being. Neither does genuine union with the Lord. The clay with which we work is in our hearts and minds. With the crucial help of God’s grace, we must mold ourselves and allow God to mold us in the pattern of the Lord.

We cannot succeed by relying on hunch, guesswork, wishes, excuses or on our blurred human vision. We need a plan with a guide. We need the Lord. He is the guide.

The process requires determination, but it is far more than good intentions. We must radically, actively, commit ourselves to holiness, despite the world around us, and must cooperate with God’s ever-present grace. Hence, we approach Lent. †

## USCCB offers March 10-18 novena for those on the adoption journey

### Criterion staff report

Among St. Joseph’s many patronages are families, fathers and expectant mothers. In light of these patronages, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created an online novena to St. Joseph for those on the path to adoption, available in English and Spanish. The novena begins on March 10 and ends on March 18, the day before the saint’s feast day.

Each day of the online novena includes an intention for the day, a Scripture reading, a prayer, a petition to St. Joseph and concluding prayers.

At [cutt.ly/AdoptionNovena](http://cutt.ly/AdoptionNovena), participants can access the novena each day, register to receive it daily via text or e-mail, or download a printable copy of the novena.

The site also includes a link to parish resources, such as graphics and bulletin announcements about the novena.

For those who would like to pray the novena but do not have access to the Internet, the daily intentions are as follows, concluding with an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be each day:

- Day 1: For mothers who place their children for adoption. (Ex 1:22-2:6, Ex 2:10)
- Day 2: For fathers who place their children for adoption. (Jn 3:16)
- Day 3: For family members of children placed for adoption. (Jn 15:12-17)
- Day 4: For children awaiting adoption. (Mt 19:13-14)
- Day 5: For married couples pursuing adoption. (Rom 8:14-17)
- Day 6: For adopted children. (Jn 14:16-21)
- Day 7: For adoptive mothers. (Jn 19:25-27)
- Day 8: For adoptive fathers. (Mt 1:18-21, 24)
- Day 9: For family members welcoming children through adoption. (Eph 3:14-15, 17-19) †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, March 3

St. Katherine Drexel, virgin  
*Sirach 17:20-24*  
*Psalms 32:1-2, 5-7*  
*Mark 10:17-27*

### Tuesday, March 4

St. Casimir  
*Sirach 35:1-12*  
*Psalms 50:5-8, 14, 23*  
*Mark 10:28-31*

### Wednesday, March 5

Ash Wednesday  
*Joel 2:12-18*  
*Psalms 51:3-6b, 12-14, 17*  
*2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2*  
*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18*

### Thursday, March 6

*Deuteronomy 30:15-20*  
*Psalms 1:1-4, 6*  
*Luke 9:22-25*

### Friday, March 7

St. Perpetua, martyr  
St. Felicity, martyr  
*Isaiah 58:1-9a*  
*Psalms 51:3-6b, 18-19*  
*Matthew 9:14-15*

### Saturday, March 8

St. John of God, religious  
*Isaiah 58:9b-14*  
*Psalms 86:1-6*  
*Luke 5:27-32*

### Sunday, March 9

First Sunday of Lent  
*Deuteronomy 26:4-10*  
*Psalms 91:1-2, 10-15*  
*Romans 10:8-13*  
*Luke 4:1-13*

### Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

## Low-gluten hosts may be used in the celebration of the Eucharist

**Q**I recently read your answer to the question, “Is non-alcoholic church wine valid for consecration?” In your response, you cited the canon law that discusses the “valid matter” for the celebration of the Eucharist.



This quickly brought to mind my wife’s severe celiac disorder. My question is this: Is it absolutely essential to use wheat as a component for the celebration of the Eucharist? She has been told that there must be a component of wheat and she has been offered a low gluten host in lieu of the regular host. We are a bit confused as to why a completely gluten-free host cannot be offered. Certainly Jesus would not have proposed something as important as this, that would make his followers ill?

**A**It is true that actual wheat must be used in a valid celebration of the Eucharist. But there are still ways to receive holy Communion even as a Catholic with a severe gluten intolerance.

Canon 924 of the *Code of Canon Law* addresses valid matter—that is, the physical material necessary in order for a sacrament to be valid—for both species of the Eucharist. With respect to the bread that is to become the body of Christ, the canon tells us that “the bread must be wheaten only, and recently made, so that there is no danger of corruption [i.e., spoilage].”

Because the eucharistic bread must be made of wheat, and because wheat fundamentally contains gluten, it would not seem to be possible to have eucharistic bread that was completely gluten-free.

Most of the time, when we see truly gluten-free bread products in other, non-sacramental contexts, these breads are made of some grain like rice or corn which naturally do not contain gluten. Since these grains are not wheat, they cannot be used.

Similarly, if there was a way to remove all of the gluten out of a wheat product, it would be questionable whether this would remain “wheaten” in a meaningful sense. This is most likely the reasoning reflected in the 2003 letter by the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later to become Pope Benedict XVI) from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith when it states: “Hosts that are completely gluten-free are invalid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist.”

However, this same letter goes on to note that “low-gluten hosts [partially gluten-free] are valid matter, provided they contain a sufficient amount of gluten to obtain the confection of bread without the addition of foreign materials and without the use of procedures that would alter the nature of bread.”

There are companies which produce ultra-low gluten hosts which many Catholics with celiac disease can tolerate. But even those celiacs who cannot digest even trace amounts of gluten can still receive holy Communion from the chalice. As the above-mentioned 2003 letter tells us: “A layperson affected by celiac disease, who is not able to receive Communion under the species of bread, including low-gluten hosts, may receive Communion under the species of wine only.”

Here, it’s good to point out that we as Catholics believe in the doctrine of concomitance, meaning that Jesus is fully present—body, blood, soul and divinity—in either eucharistic species. This means that a Catholic is not somehow receiving “less Jesus” if they are, for instance, only able to receive from the chalice.

(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).) †

## Submit prose or poetry for faith column

*The Criterion* invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column. Submitted pieces should not exceed 30 80-character lines or 60 40-character lines.

E-mail submissions for consideration—including name, address, parish and a telephone number—to [nhoefler@archindy.org](mailto:nhoefler@archindy.org).

Poems may also be mailed to “My Journey to God,” *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367. Please note, however, that mailed submissions will not receive a reply unless the piece is selected for publication. †







Investing with Faith/Jay Conner

Questions to ask your financial advisor about charitable giving

I believe, as Catholics, charitable giving is more than an obligation: it is a way to align our values and our community.



Values-based giving asks donors to look beyond transactional charity to engage in transformative philanthropy.

Below are some important questions you can ask your advisor to help engage your philanthropic plan. Scan the QR code at the end for concrete examples for each question:

1. What causes or organizations could best reflect my priorities?

Many advisors help their clients with charitable giving and likely have a broad knowledge of specific charities in your local area. Additionally, advisors will have outside relationships with other professionals such as CPAs, estate planning attorneys, and other business leaders who actively engage with non-profit organizations. Lastly, the archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation will gladly help you find local Catholic causes that align with your values.

2. What are the advantages of giving cash, stocks or other assets?

Charitable giving typically involves a direct gift of cash to a non-profit,

but there are tax-advantaged strategies available. Giving highly appreciated stocks with low tax basis allows the donor to give to a charity while also reducing the impact of capital gains tax. This would also apply to other appreciated assets like real estate or privately held stock shares. Hang on to your cash for daily living and give away assets that would otherwise cause a tax burden if you sold them personally.

3. Can I use a donor-advised fund (DAF) to simplify my giving?

The simple answer—Yes! Donor-advised funds are a wonderful way to set up charitable giving today and in the future. A DAF gives donors the ability to contribute cash or assets (see above) to a charitable fund operated by a sponsoring organization. The donor then makes grant recommendations to the fund to send money to their desired charity. This allows a donor to make a large contribution in one tax year, but spreads out that contribution to different charities through many years.

4. How can I maximize the impact of qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from my IRA?

If you are older than 70 1/2 years old, then you are eligible to give a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA. A QCD is a powerful way to give from an IRA without incurring income tax. The QCD must be given directly to the charity to qualify for the special tax incentive. For those IRA owners

that need to take a required minimum distribution each year (age 73 or older for 2025), the QCD does double-duty. The QCD will count toward your required minimum distribution for the year, but the amount of the QCD will not be taxable to you.

5. How can we integrate charitable giving into my overall financial plan?

There are many strategies available for giving to charity, and there is not a “one size fits all” approach. Your financial advisor will work with you to create a financial plan that incorporates planned giving as a part of your overall strategy. The first step is to let your advisor know you are interested in setting up a charitable giving plan. Your advisor will help you create a “giving budget” that is meaningful and unique to you and your family.

6. Are there ways to give now without jeopardizing my long-term financial security?

Of course! Most giving strategies require the donor to give away cash or stocks, which reduces the amount of money the donor keeps personally for their lifetime. A charitable remainder trust gives you the ability to donate cash, stocks or other assets to a trust that will ultimately go to a designated charity. The donor may receive income from the trust for a certain amount of time. After the specified time period is over, the remainder of the trust is given to the charity.

There are many ways you can

incorporate charitable giving into your overall financial plan. When giving aligns with purpose it can bring you a sense of joy and meaning, thus enriching your life and the lives of those you support. At Arena Wealth Advisors, we call it “Stepping into the Arena.” Start the conversation with your advisor today to take the first step toward purposeful giving.

(Jay Conner is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville and founder of Arena Wealth Advisors LLC in Jeffersonville, where he provides personalized wealth management and retirement planning services. Advisory Services are offered through Arena Wealth Advisors, LLC, an Investment Advisor in the State of Indiana. This information and recommendations we provide are intended for general informational purposes only and should not be considered personalized tax, legal, or financial advice. We strongly encourage you to consult with a qualified tax advisor before making any financial decisions, including but not limited to investment transactions, retirement account changes, or estate planning strategies. A tax advisor can help ensure that your decisions are aligned with your specific tax situation and financial goals.) †



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Employment

Assistant Director of Communications

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking an Assistant Director of Communications for its central office. The assistant director reports to the director of communications and will be responsible for implementing the communication strategy for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, aligning with the mission of evangelizing catechesis and the new Archdiocesan pastoral plan. This role oversees internal and external communications as well as the execution of marketing initiatives. The ideal candidate will also develop and manage content creation across all platforms, ensuring adherence to brand standards. Additionally, this position leads media relations, supports crisis communication efforts, and is prepared to step in for the Director of Communication when needed.

Qualifications include: active practicing Catholic in full communion with the Church; minimum of bachelor’s degree, master’s degree preferred in communications, public relations, mass media, marketing, journalism or related field; 10 or more years practical work experience; comfortable with various forms of electronic communications; demonstrated experience with community relations and issues management; knowledge and awareness of issues of importance in the Catholic Church; exceptional oral, written and interpersonal communication skills; knowledge of maintaining brand standards across an organization. For a complete list of requirements, go to: [tinyurl.com/archindyasstdircomm25](http://tinyurl.com/archindyasstdircomm25).

To apply, please email a resume, cover letter, and list of references to Andrea Wunnenberg, Director of Human Resources, at [awunnenberg@archindy.org](mailto:awunnenberg@archindy.org). Applications will be accepted until March 3rd with an anticipated start in April/May of 2025.

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