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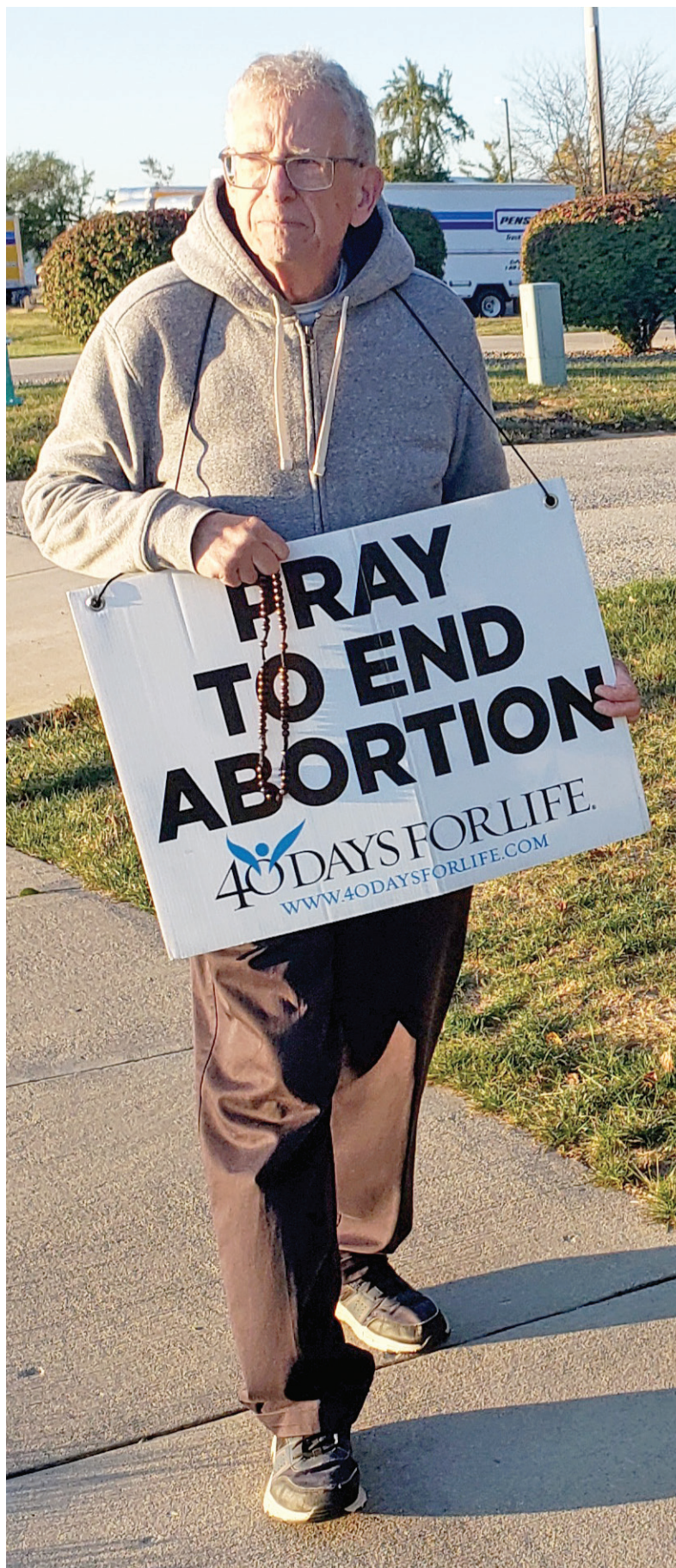
Encountering Jesus

NCYC will welcome 15,000 youths to Indianapolis this November, page 3.

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At 80, pro-life advocate steps down from role but not from cause—‘It’s too important’

By Natalie Hoefer

It’s a chilly but sunny morning as Steve Martin slowly paces the sidewalk in front of a Planned Parenthood facility on the northwest side of Indianapolis on Oct. 22.

He prays the rosary in silence as he walks, the beads gently tapping his “Pray to End Abortion” sign.

It’s not Martin’s first time to trace this path. He has been coming here to pray since 2005, when Planned Parenthood announced the construction of the abortion center—within the boundaries of his parish, St. Monica in Indianapolis.

He was head of the parish’s pro-life committee then. He still is on this October morning—but not for long. In five days, on Martin’s 80th birthday, he would pass over the reins after 49 years.

There was a time when a St. Monica pastor asked him to step down from the role.

“I told him if he could find someone else to take it over, I’d gladly give it up,” Martin recalls. “He never did.” So why step down now?

For one, there is a “young, gung-ho, pro-life activist” excited to take the reins, he says. “And 80 just sounded like a good number.”

In the nearly half century Martin spearheaded the St. Monica group, he was also active with other pro-life efforts in Indianapolis.

But there was a time—a very short time—when Martin was pro-choice.

Pro-life people ‘woke me up’

Martin grew up “in a very Catholic family” just north of the Bronx borough of New York City.

See PRO-LIFE, page 9

Steve Martin of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis prays in front of a Planned Parenthood facility within his parish’s boundaries on Oct. 22—five days before turning 80 and stepping down as St. Monica’s pro-life committee chair after 49 years. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Bishops celebrate Mass to ‘beg the Holy Spirit to inspire’ their fall assembly

BALTIMORE (OSV News)—Arriving by motor coaches, more than 320 bishops from across the United States streamed into the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore on Nov. 10, where

they donned matching vestments to celebrate Mass on the first day of their annual fall plenary assembly.

“A very, very warm welcome to everyone this morning,” Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio

(USCCB), said in his opening remarks. “This is a beautiful church, an ancient church. It is a historic church, but I think the most beautiful thing about this church is that it is a living, breathing community of mostly young adults who love the Lord.”

In his homily, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, USCCB president and archbishop of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, noted that at the beginning of their sessions, the bishops “beg the Holy Spirit to inspire” their deliberations and “renew their duty to be servants of truth.”

He spoke of the many distractions people face in the world today. He told of meeting a young airman at Fort Meade, a U.S. military base in Maryland, who asked him “how to be a saint” and where he could find the courage to live by his convictions of faith.

“I confess that I was moved by the sincerity of his question,” Archbishop Broglio said. “For me, it was a moment of hope. A young man ... seeking ways to deepen his grasp on truth.”

The way forward tends to be self-indulgent, he said. The Gospel, he continued, “does urge us to be demanding of ourselves” but asks us to

See BISHOPS, page 15

Camino journey leads to tears of joy for a couple hoping for a child

(Editor’s note: A record 499,239 pilgrims from all over the world walked the Camino pilgrimage route in northern Spain in 2024. The Criterion has invited people from the archdiocese who have made all or part of that pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain to share how that experience has influenced their life and their faith.)

Third in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

Beyond the adventure, some people come with a sense of desperation. Many come in hope—a hope rooted in their faith in God.

Kevin and Audrey Banich came with a measure of desperation, hope and faith when the young married couple decided to walk *El Camino de Santiago* (The Way of St. James) in the spring of 2018.

See CAMINO, page 8

Audrey and Kevin Banich of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis walked the *Camino* in 2018, hoping God would bless their life journey with a child. (Submitted photo)





Archbishop Charles C. Thompson speaks with Jim Evrard of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville, left, and Dan and Melissa Coffey of Holy Family Parish in New Albany during an archdiocesan United Catholic Appeal event at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County on Oct. 30. (Photo by Leslie Lynch)

UCA ‘inspires us to act with boldness’ for the sake of others, Archbishop Thompson says

By Leslie Lynch

FLOYD COUNTY—A mother flees the cross of domestic violence—and is embraced with the blessing of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities’ ministries in southern Indiana.

Residents of rural counties, young and old, bear the cross of hunger—and discover the blessing of parish food pantries.

Seminarians seeking to follow God’s call and priests who have poured out their lives in his service carry the cross of poverty—and encounter the blessing of support.

“In many ways, crosses and blessings go hand in hand,” Archbishop Charles C. Thompson noted in “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” released on Aug. 28.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the crosses borne by the needy in our archdiocese when they are met with the blessings made possible by the generosity of those who donate to the United Catholic Appeal (UCA).

Archbishop Thompson spoke with gratitude of works like these and many more made possible through the appeal at a gathering on Oct. 30 at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County.

“The theme of this year’s United Catholic Appeal is ‘Go Forth.’ This is how we continue to witness to Jesus—by our lives and our service, our generosity to all in need,” he said.

‘It all goes to the building up of our Church’

In his homily at a Mass celebrated that evening, Archbishop Thompson spoke of his surprise audience with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican during a U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops-sponsored pilgrimage he led to Italy on Sept. 23-Oct. 2 for the Jubilee for Catechists.

“I was so nervous I don’t know all I said,” the archbishop admitted. “But when Pope Leo said, ‘Tell me about the Church in your archdiocese,’ I shared with him about all we do locally, nationally. As we talked, I realized that everything I mentioned comes down to the United Catholic Appeal. [It] funds all the programs.”

He spoke of the foundational need for relationship with “the person of Jesus Christ,” not simply “knowing about Jesus.” From there, “in thanksgiving we celebrate Jesus, our hope, our salvation ... and give witness as we go forth in peace and unity.”

Jolinda Moore, executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development, spoke during a dinner that followed the liturgy.

“When you give to the United Catholic Appeal, you are extending hope to every corner of our archdiocese,” she said. “Your generosity allows us to provide for our most vulnerable through Catholic Charities ... [and] sustains the Church’s work in ways that touch lives of people that you may never meet, but who feel the impact of your generosity every day.

“It’s up to us—each of us today—to ‘go forth’ and shape the future of our Church. What we do now, the seeds we plant, will bear fruit for generations to come.”

In his remarks, Archbishop Thompson said, “The Eucharist is not the end of our worship—it’s the beginning of our mission. Strengthened by Christ’s real presence, we are sent forth from the altar to carry his love, mercy and hope to our communities ... going forth in Christ to others in word, witness and service.

“Every dollar raised for the United Catholic Appeal goes directly to ministry. We are so grateful for your support, which enables us to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of our friends and neighbors throughout the archdiocese. We are truly blessed.”

In a video about the appeal, Father James Brockmeier, rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, says that it is “easy to take those ministries for granted. All of that work that we see—and sometimes we don’t see—is supported by the United Catholic Appeal.”

Later in the video, archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic Schools Brian Disney notes that, “No matter where that money [donations to the UCA] goes, it all goes together to the building up of our Church.”



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

November 14–25, 2025

November 14 – 6 p.m. Marian University Annual Gala at JW Marriott, Indianapolis	November 19 – 10 a.m. Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis
November 15 – 10 a.m. Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus	November 19 – 3 p.m. Finance Council Meeting, Mass and dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center
November 16 – 7 p.m. Presentation and dialogue for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of <i>Nostra Aetate</i> at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis	November 20-22 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis
November 18 – 10 a.m. Clergy Pre-Advent Day of Prayer at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis	November 25 – 1 p.m. Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

A chance to say ‘I made a difference’

An aura of joy and celebration marked the event, with some attendees driving more than an hour to hear Archbishop Thompson give his update on ministries made possible through UCA funding.

The smiles of Theresa Adams and Dorothy Beckman, members of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton, radiated their enthusiasm.

“I loved hearing about Archbishop Thompson’s talk with Pope Leo,” said Adams. “It was so exciting!”

Referring to Catholic Charities, Beckman added, “We appreciate all they do for older people.”

Juanita Brockman of St. Michael Parish in Bradford expressed appreciation for the role of the UCA in supporting Catholic Charities food pantries throughout the archdiocese.

She said the Tri-Parish Food Pantry located at St. Michael “has seen double the usage in the past few months. We’ve also seen triple the donations.”

Noting that other local pantries are responding to similar increases in need, “We each just need to do what God has called us to do,” she said.

Several members attended from St. Anthony of Padua Parish in

Clarksville, including Galley Collins and his wife Linda.

“We really enjoyed the opportunity to experience Mass and share supper with the archbishop,” said Galley. “It was wonderful to hear about all of the programs supported by the [archdiocese’s] annual appeal.”

Jim Wathen and his wife Rose were excited to have the event at their home parish of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs.

“I used to work for the archdiocese and got to see firsthand how they spent the money,” said Jim. “I was very impressed by Catholic Charities and their work getting people off the streets and into [shelters]. If people in southern Indiana knew how the money was spent, they’d give a lot more.”

The couple’s fellow parishioner, James Andres, appreciates that a large portion of the UCA’s \$6.3 million goal will go toward the formation of priests. Donating to the appeal, he said, gives him a chance to say, “I made a difference.”

(Leslie Lynch is a freelance reporter for The Criterion and is a member of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville. For more information about the United Catholic Appeal, go to www.acrossthearch.org/uca/home.) †


‘Adoration Summit’ set for Nov. 29 at St. Louis Parish in Batesville

The Batesville Deanery will host an “Adoration Summit” from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Nov. 29 at St. Louis Church, 13 St. Louis Place, in Batesville.

Home of six perpetual adoration chapels, the Batesville Deanery hosts the event to encourage and deepen the faith of people who take part in eucharistic adoration.

This year’s summit will feature Mass, testimonies from eight seminarians who are members of parishes in the Batesville Deanery and a presentation by Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration Sister Mary Peter Ruschke, formerly a teacher at St. Louis School. Lunch is also included for all who register to take part in the summit.

To register, call 317-398-8227 or go to tinyurl.com/BatesvilleAdoration. †



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‘My biggest hope is that they just really encounter Jesus’: NCYC will welcome 15,000 youths to Indianapolis

By John Shaughnessy

Even as she’s in the midst of a crush of last-minute details to take care of, Rachel Gilman’s excitement still shines through as she talks about the upcoming National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 20-22.

The eyes of the director of youth ministry for the archdiocese light up in anticipation when the conversation turns to Pope Leo XIV’s live, digital interaction on Nov. 21 with the more than 15,000 youths from across the country who will attend the conference. It will include a 45-minute dialogue between the pope and a selected group of teenagers.

She also smiles widely when she notes that 63 groups and 1,526 youths from the archdiocese will participate in the national conference, an increase of more than 400 teenagers from the 2023 NCYC in Indianapolis.

Then her smile gives way to a serious expression when she is asked about her main hope for all the youths at the conference.

“My biggest hope is that they just really encounter Jesus,” Gilman begins. “That there’s some kind of spark or growth or discovery of what a relationship with Christ really is—and the love that he has for them individually, as who they are. I would love for every one of our youths to walk away and to deeply know, ‘I am loved by God, and I have a purpose.’ I think NCYC has the power to do that.”

She pauses for a moment before adding, “But not just have that experience, but also the desire to go and live it out, too. To not just let it stay at NCYC, but to see how it can be incorporated into their everyday life experience. And how walking in the footsteps of Christ would make their life better—for them to put that into action.”

Gilman shared that hope during a conversation with *The Criterion*, in the days leading up to the biennial conference, which is being held in Indianapolis for the eighth time since 2011.

Here is a slightly edited version of that conversation.

Q. You noted that there are 400 more young people from the archdiocese who will be attending NCYC this year. What does that say about the conference and what the conference hopes to create for them?

A. “People are really excited about it. It’s clearly a priority for a lot of our parishes. There’s a sense of urgency and the desire to be a part of something like this. To be a part of something where people are coming from all over the country. And the magnitude of the event.

“Our youth hear from someone who’s been there before, or the parish has a history of going. There are the stories that come out of it—of transformation, of growing in relationship with Christ—and that gets passed on. There’s the feeling like, *I have to go. I only get two chances in high school since it’s every other year.*

“[They] see that youth who are older than them come back and they’re on fire for their faith. Or it’s a sibling who comes back to the family, and they’re on fire. They’re witnessing, and they’re sharing what they got to do.

“For most youth, the grab is, ‘Oh my gosh, that sounds like fun!’ But I do think the reason groups keep coming back and youth are interested is because it’s deeper than just the fun. They don’t just come back and say, ‘That was so much fun.’ They say, ‘Oh my gosh, I went to reconciliation, and I had the best confession I’ve ever had in my life. I feel like a different person.’ Those are the stories that are shared.”

Q. Talk about the impact of Pope Leo XIV sharing a message with the youths in attendance.

A. “There’s definite excitement. It was so cool when they announced it, to see the impact of the ticket sales for NCYC. In one month, they were all gone. In talking to so many of our group leaders, hearing from the pope is always a huge highlight whenever we review what’s going to happen.

“People feel really special that our pope is not just sending a message or a recording, he’s going to join us live. People are like, ‘This is amazing. We’re so lucky we get to have this opportunity.’ ”

Q. The theme for the conference is, “I Am.” Talk about that theme and its meaning for you.

A. “I really like it. From what I can tell, it’s really inviting our youth to think about their identity in Christ. They have this great promo video that really breaks open all the ways their identity is tied to God. Like, *‘I am anointed through*



Rachel Gilman, left, director of youth ministry for the archdiocese, and Avery Shewmaker, coordinator of youth ministry for the archdiocese, model some of the spirit wear that the 1,526 youths in the archdiocese will wear during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 20-22.

(Photo by John Shaughnessy)

confirmation.’ *‘I am loved because we were created by God.’*

“I love the open-endedness of ‘I Am.’ Discovering how God fills in the blank for them in their lives is a really cool theme. Youth want to know who they are, and they’re still discovering that. To be able to have a space to say, ‘In you trying to discover who you are, God also gives you definitions of who he sees you to be. And they’re all awesome.’ God has gifted all these things to us because of his relationship with us. I’m really excited to see how they develop that over three days.”

Q. What else are you looking forward to about the conference?

A. “I do think it’s really special for the archdiocese to gather in this way, within a national conference. Personally, I really look forward to the times when the archdiocese hosts different elements of it. We have a pre-rally on Thursday and a Mass. Then we do a processing time on Saturday after it’s over. It’s so cool to see all our kids together, sharing those experiences. And seeing other kids from other parishes.

“So not only are they getting the impact of, ‘Hey, I met some kid from Alaska,’ but they’re also like, ‘Hey, this person is just 20 minutes down the road, and we’re part of the same archdiocese.’ Personally,

I think those moments are really, really special. And we don’t get that often, that excuse to come gather all together like that. It just brings joy and energy into all our youth ministry programs.”

Q. Talk about what the people in the parishes across the archdiocese can do to support the youths during the conference—and after it ends.

A. “Number one is always prayer. Especially praying by name for the people they know who are going. Also pray for all the adults who are going because they have a crucial role in the experience as well.

“It’s also being open to supporting youth when they come back to the parish afterward. Even thinking about, ‘How do we create spaces for youth to grow in our parishes?’ And all the individual ministries in the parishes asking themselves, ‘How can we embrace them in what we’re doing?’

“There’s a natural excitement that comes from having an experience like this. And a parish can really capitalize on that by saying, ‘You’re really welcome here.’ And then to have avenues for our youth and create spaces for them where they can continue on diving into their faith when they get back.” †

Indianapolis Council of St. Vincent de Paul Society seeks new president

Special to *The Criterion*

The Indianapolis Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) is inviting nominations for the position of council president for the 2026–29 term.

As current president Paul Ainslie completes his six years of service, the council seeks a faith-filled leader devoted to serving those in need and experienced in the Vincentian way.

The council president serves as the chief servant leader of the society’s Indianapolis council, ensuring that all works of charity reflect the Society’s Rule, Catholic values and spiritual mission of seeing Christ in the poor.

The president provides leadership, spiritual guidance and strategic direction to the council’s programs, committees and conferences across central and southern Indiana.

Candidates should be:
—**A practicing Catholic**, active in the life of the Church.

—**An active Vincentian**, with at least three to five years of service.

—**A proven leader** with strong communication and organizational skills.

—**Grounded in the Society’s Rule** and committed to Vincentian spirituality.

The council president serves a three-year term, which is renewable once. The election follows a process of

nomination and spiritual discernment among the council’s voting body.

Those who feel called to serve—or who wish to nominate someone—are invited to submit a name, contact

information and a brief statement of qualifications by Dec. 15 to candidate@svdpindy.org. For more information or a full position description, contact Pat Jerrell at pjerrell@svdpindy.org. †

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Editorial

Spirituality of stewardship encourages us to live lives of gratitude

November is often called Gratitude Month and is a time of thanksgiving and of generous sharing.

In November 1992, the bishops of the United States published a pastoral letter titled “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response.” Its purpose was to introduce Catholics to a new way of understanding the importance of gratitude, accountability and generosity as expressions of Christian discipleship.

The stewardship pastoral was drafted by an ad hoc committee of bishops chaired by the late Seattle Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy. After several years of consultation and discussion, prompted by financial challenges facing many Catholic parishes and dioceses in the 1980s, the members of the ad hoc committee concluded that the Church’s financial health depends on the spiritual vitality (holiness) of its people. This led to the counterintuitive insight that if Church leaders place fundraising or money before the conversion of minds and hearts, they will not achieve their financial goals.

Unfortunately, when many Catholics, including some bishops and pastors, hear the word “stewardship,” they immediately think of money or fundraising. “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” takes a different approach. The definition proposed by the bishops calls attention to the spirituality of stewardship.

According to the pastoral letter, “A Christian steward is one who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them generously with others, and returns them to the Lord with increase.”

These four characteristics or virtues flow from a basic understanding that the core of stewardship is the recognition that, everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God to be taken care of responsibly and generously shared. We are not owners. We are but trusted stewards. If we can apply this principle to everything we do in life, we will give a powerful witness to the practical importance of Christian stewardship on our daily lives.

The pastoral letter teaches that gratitude and generosity are contagious. If we say thank you to God and others frequently, the effect on us and others will become readily apparent. The same is true of generous giving: the more we do it, the more we like it, and the more it transforms our attitude from one of stinginess or greed to a mindset of grateful sharing.

Our western culture suffers from excessive isolation and individualism. Stewardship teaches us to share generously with others (as God has shared himself with us). The more we share, the less lonely we are and the more we experience ourselves as sisters and brothers in Christ.

Focusing on money rather than the spirituality of stewardship is by far the most common mistake Church leaders make. Money is important, but only after we acknowledge stewardship as a



Students of St. Anna Mission in Kyedikyo, Uganda, greet Msgr. Patrick Sheedy, pastor of Blessed Trinity Parish in Ocala, Fla., during his February 2022 visit to survey the progress of the construction of their new school. Father Pat, as he is best known, shepherds a stewardship-minded parish that has a vibrant mission in Uganda. In 2024, the school’s enrollment was close to 400. (OSV News photo/courtesy Msgr. Patrick Sheedy)

way of giving back to God what belongs to him in the first place.

“Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” argues that an attitude of gratitude, accountability, generosity and the willingness to give back with increase is essential to accepting stewardship as a way of life. If these values are reflected positively in the minds of Catholics, inspired by their pastoral leaders, the parish and diocese will flourish. If these values are not reflected in the parish or diocesan community, it is unlikely that stewardship will take root there.

The pastoral letter’s description of a Christian steward is the key to understanding the spirituality of stewardship. Spiritual motivation should always be preferred to simple volunteerism or to the pragmatism of fundraising practice. As Church, we are not just “doing good.” Our mission is God-given, and our parishes and dioceses exist to change hearts and save souls.

The late Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein used to say that our first priority is mission, but there can be no mission without money. Good stewardship does not shy away from talking about the Church’s need for money to carry out its mission, but it refuses to put the cart before the horse. We urge Catholics to be responsible stewards of all God’s gifts—spiritual and material. Then we invite, and challenge, everyone to share generously all their gifts.

The spirituality of stewardship encourages us to believe that if we have truly lived lives of gratitude, accountability, generosity and the willingness to give back to the Lord with increase, our legacy will be one of good and faithful stewardship.

We may not be wealthy, famous or powerful, but all that we have, and all that we are, will give witness to the good and gracious God whose faithful stewards we have tried to be.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Richard Corona

What is the purpose of a single flower?

I’ve been a catechist at St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis for the past 11 years, currently teaching family formation—confirmation students as well as Order of Christian Initiation for Children (OCIC) for students in sixth through 12th grade.

Each year, I have my students complete a free-flowing writing assignment in class answering the question, “What is the purpose of a single flower?”

Unbeknownst to them, their writing becomes a mystical letter from God describing his purpose for each of them.

As humanity is able to see further and further into the mystery of the universe, we should never forget that God created it so that we might come to know him and his love for us. If we take the time, in quiet space, to reflect on nature and perhaps on something as small and simple as a flower, we discover how God bursts with eagerness to talk with us. Each of us are his most precious flower—as only he can will.

Each year, as I read my students’ writings to create a compilation of some of each of their statements, I’m never disappointed to hear a new message from God through my students.

Here are some of the responses to my question from OCIC students and members of family formation-confirmation group this year:

—The purpose of a single flower is to show there is always hope in life.

—With a single flower you can make many and of all types.

—The purpose of a single flower is to gift someone.

—The purpose of a single flower is to grow to its full potential; when it does, that flower can help make new flowers.



—Flowers are symbols of beauty and God’s love. Flowers need rain like we need love. The sun for flowers is like hardships for us. It may be hot, but we will eventually grow from it.

—The purpose of a single flower is to show you hope and resilience. A flower blooms every year just to die, but while it blooms it shows you there is light at the end of the tunnel.

—A single flower in the middle of a green field is beautiful. It fought for the spot it is in. God is always going to protect the tiny little flower in a field of green.

—Kids like to bring parents a flower with a smile and a laugh; so, a flower reminds one of good times with family.

—God gave every living thing a purpose to live on this planet—a purpose to make a difference in this large world. It doesn’t matter how big or small.

—The purpose of a single flower is to give us life, and it shows us how life is when you need water for it to grow; and our water is God.

—The colors of flowers vary just like our colors of skin, hair and eyes.

—There are many flowers, but we all serve the same purpose to help the environment around them.

—Flowers need resources to grow. Just like the flower, we need resources to grow. Those resources can be people we know and trust who can help us grow in our faith in God, like parents and friends.

—A single flower as a gift is more special because you had to hand pick it, so it means more and has more behind it.

—As God’s most precious flower, we each have a purpose. He hand-selected and created us as a gift for others—to share with others the beauty of his love, that we may come to know that we need him. And that death is not the end.

(Richard Corona is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.) †



A daffodil is seen near a statue of Christ at Sacred Heart Church in Prescott, Ariz., on March 24, 2024. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Let's place our trust in Jesus, who will come again in glory

All that you see here—the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down. (Lk 21:6)

The Gospel reading for the Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Lk 21:5-19) can be described as apocalyptic. The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of both religious and socio-economic life for the Jewish community. For the Jews of Jesus' time, his words predict a complete collapse of the world as they understood it—both in Jerusalem and in the diaspora.

Jesus was a devout Jew. He didn't relish the idea that the Temple would be destroyed. But he knew that dramatic change was the inevitable result of his saving mission.

Following his passion, death and resurrection, the center of religious life would change. God would no longer be housed in a building in Jerusalem "adorned with costly stones and votive offerings," but in the person of Jesus Christ and in his Church, the Body of Christ sent by the Holy Spirit to the ends of the Earth. (Lk 21:5)

Naturally, the people who heard this apocalyptic warning were astounded

and they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" (Lk 21:7) Jesus' response cannot be considered consoling. He says:

See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end. (Lk 21:8-9)

We do not know the day or the hour. Anyone who tries to tell us that he is the Second Coming of Christ, or that she knows exactly when the end time will be, is delusional. God alone knows what the future holds for us. Terrible things may happen. "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky" (Lk 21:10-11). But our response, as missionary disciples of Jesus, must be to place our trust in him and to discern God's will for us here and now.

The first reading for this Sunday

from the prophet Malachi is a warning we must heed:

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the Lord of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays. (Mal 3:19-20)

Yes, terrible things will happen—indeed, they are happening now in many different places in our world. But we who fear the name of the Lord, and who have been baptized into his death and resurrection, know that Jesus, "the sun of justice" will arise and that his healing power will be extended to all the ends of the Earth.

It sounds funny to say that we should expect things to get much worse before they get better, but isn't that exactly what our Lord is telling us in Sunday's Gospel? "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name" (Lk 21:12). The cost of discipleship is

real. We must follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross. We must learn how to die before we can live eternally with him.

But even in these challenging words of prophecy there is great hope:

You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives. (Lk 21:16-19)

"Not a hair on your head will be destroyed," our Savior tells us. "By your perseverance you will secure your lives" (Lk 21:18-19).

If we surrender our egos, our fears and our need to be in control of our lives and the world around us, we will not be harmed. If we lose ourselves in the loving arms of Jesus, he will guarantee not only our survival but our experience of abundant life in and through him.

As we enter into the final weeks of the Church's liturgical year and prepare to begin again on the First Sunday of Advent, let's place all our trust in Jesus, the risen "sun of justice," who has promised us that he will come again in glory. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Pongamos nuestra confianza en Jesús, que vendrá de nuevo en gloria

Llegará un día en que no quedará piedra sobre piedra de todo eso que ustedes están viendo. ¡Todo será destruido! (Lc 21:6)

La lectura del Evangelio del XXXIII domingo del tiempo ordinario (Lc 21:5-19) puede describirse como apocalíptica. El Templo de Jerusalén era el centro de la vida religiosa y socioeconómica de la comunidad judía. Para los judíos de la época de Jesús, sus palabras predecían un colapso total del mundo tal y como lo conocían, tanto en Jerusalén como en la diáspora.

Jesús era un judío devoto y no le agradaba la idea de que el Templo fuera destruido. Pero sabía que el resultado inevitable de su misión salvadora era que sobrevendría un cambio drástico ya que luego de su pasión, muerte y resurrección, el centro de la vida religiosa cambiaría.

Dios ya no se alojaría en un edificio de Jerusalén "adornado con piedras costosas y ofrendas votivas," sino en la persona de Jesucristo y en su Iglesia, el Cuerpo de Cristo enviado por el Espíritu Santo hasta los confines de la Tierra. (Lc 21:5)

Naturalmente, la gente que escuchó esta advertencia apocalíptica quedó estupefacta y le preguntó: "Maestro, ¿cuándo sucederá todo esto? ¿Cómo

sabremos que esas cosas están a punto de ocurrir?" (Lc 21:7). La respuesta de Jesús no puede considerarse reconfortante; les contestó:

Tengan cuidado, no se dejen engañar. Porque vendrán muchos en mi nombre, diciendo: "Yo soy" o "El momento ha llegado." No les hagan caso. Cuando ustedes oigan noticias de guerras y revoluciones, no se asusten. Aunque todo eso ha de suceder primero, todavía no es inminente el fin. (Lc 21:8-9)

No sabemos ni el día ni la hora y aquel que intente decírnos que él es la Segunda Venida de Cristo, o que sabe exactamente cuándo será el fin de los tiempos, sufre de delirio. Solo Dios sabe lo que nos depara el futuro. Pueden ocurrir cosas terribles. "Se levantarán unas naciones contra otras, y unos reinos contra otros; por todas partes habrá grandes terremotos, hambres y epidemias, y en el cielo se verán señales formidables" (Lc 21:10-11). Pero nuestra respuesta, como discípulos misioneros de Jesús, debe ser depositar nuestra confianza en él y discernir la voluntad de Dios para nosotros aquí y ahora.

La primera lectura de este domingo del profeta Malaquías es una advertencia a la que debemos prestar atención:

Porque está llegando el día, ardiente como un horno, en que todos los soberbios y todos los que actúan con maldad serán como paja. Ese día, que ya se acerca, los abrasará hasta que no quede de ellos ni rama ni raíz—dice el Señor del universo. Sin embargo, para ustedes, los que honran mi nombre, se levantará el sol de justicia trayendo curación en sus alas. Entonces saldrán saltando como los terneros del establo. (Mal 3:19-20)

Sí, ocurrirán cosas terribles; de hecho, están ocurriendo ya en muchos lugares del mundo. Pero nosotros, que tememos el nombre del Señor y que hemos sido bautizados en su muerte y resurrección, sabemos que Jesús, "el sol de justicia," se levantará y que su poder sanador se extenderá a todos los confines de la Tierra.

Suena contradictorio decir que debemos esperar que las cosas empeoren bastante antes de que puedan mejorar, pero ¿acaso no es eso lo que nos dice nuestro Señor en el Evangelio del domingo? "Pero antes que todo eso suceda, a ustedes les echarán mano, los perseguirán, los entregarán a las sinagogas y los meterán en la cárcel. Por causa de mí los conducirán ante reyes y gobernadores" (Lc 21:12). El costo del discipulado es real. Debemos seguir

Jesús en el camino de la cruz; debemos aprender a morir antes de poder vivir eternamente con él.

Pero incluso en estas desafiantes palabras de profecía hay una gran esperanza:

Hasta sus propios padres, hermanos, parientes y amigos los traicionarán; y a bastantes de ustedes les darán muerte. Todos los odiarán por causa de mí; pero ni un solo cabello de ustedes se perderá. Manténganse firmes y alcanzarán la vida. (Lc 21:16-19)

"Ni un solo cabello de ustedes se perderá," nos dice nuestro Salvador. "Manténganse firmes y alcanzarán la vida" (Lc 21:18-19).

Si renunciamos a nuestro ego, a nuestros miedos y a nuestra necesidad de tener el control de nuestra vida y del mundo que nos rodea, no sufriremos ningún daño. Si nos perdemos en los brazos amorosos de Jesús, él garantizará no solo nuestra supervivencia sino nuestra experiencia de vida abundante en él y a través de él.

Al entrar en las últimas semanas del año litúrgico de la Iglesia y prepararnos para comenzar de nuevo el primer domingo de Adviento, pongamos toda nuestra confianza en Jesús, el "sol de justicia" resucitado, que nos ha prometido que volverá con gloria. †

Bishops with local ties offer ways of fostering communion, overcoming polarization at Saint Meinrad conference

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—As he reflected on the polarization in the United States and even the Church, Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin recalled a story that provides a possible path to understanding and communion.

He noted how in the 1980’s, President Ronald Reagan, a Republican, and Thomas “Tip” O’Neill, a Democrat and Speaker of the House during that time, could “sit down, maybe over a couple of adult beverages after hours and ask each other, ‘What can we do together for the country?’ ”

“I don’t believe those conversations would happen any longer,” said Cardinal Tobin, archbishop of Newark, N.J., and former archbishop of Indianapolis. “And they have an effect on the way we live in the body of Christ.”

Cardinal Tobin shared that story as he took part on Nov. 4-6 in “Deepening Communion in a Polarized World,” a conference hosted by Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and co-sponsored by the seminary and the Glenmary Home Missioners religious order.

Bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious and lay Catholics from across the country participated in the three-day event, including Seattle Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, formerly a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Relationships modeled on the Trinity

In his service in leadership of the Redemptorist order, Cardinal Tobin said he saw divisions in the Church in Chile and eastern Europe that were rooted in broader societal and political trends.

He noted in a session at the conference on Nov. 5 that he’s also experienced such divisions within the Church while serving as a bishop in the U.S., both among his brother bishops and in the faithful as a whole.

Overcoming divisions requires a nuanced approach, Cardinal Tobin advised.

“My experience tells me that polarization is not an issue that you can come at head on,” he said. “You have to come at it at a 45-degree angle, because if we come at head on, conversation is entirely defensive.”

To make conversation among Catholics of differing views a way to foster communion, Cardinal Tobin suggested taking an approach promoted by the late Pope Francis during the last several years of his leadership of the Church: synodality.

It’s a method of conversation marked by prayerful listening, times of silent reflection and an openness to be led by the Holy Spirit. Synodality also emphasizes all Catholics embracing their co-responsibility for the Church’s mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

“It’s not a goal,” Cardinal Tobin said. “It’s a technique. It’s a relationship. I think it has many different wonderful theological roots.

“We often remain on an ethical level. We have to go to the anthropological and theological level if we really want to develop models of relationships that are centered on the image of the Trinity—one God, three persons, three person who are constantly communicating . . . ”

Communication in the Church that would deepen communion among the faithful requires “the obligation to listen,” Cardinal Tobin said.

“We need to train ourselves to listen, to listen to others without putting them in boxes,” he said. “Has it ever occurred to you that some of the questions we ask determine where that person is? ‘What books do you read?’ ‘What newspapers do you read?’ ‘What websites do you visit?’ ”



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, archbishop of Newark, N.J. and former archbishop of Indianapolis, elevates a chalice during a Nov. 5 Mass at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad. The liturgy took place during a conference titled “Deepening Communion in a Polarized World” co-sponsored by Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology and the Glenmary Home Missioners religious order. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Such an approach to quickly judging a person, Cardinal Tobin continued, is “actually a reversal of the resurrection of Lazarus.”

“We’re creating a tomb . . . and shoving a living human being into it and rolling a stone in front of it,” he said. “Jesus calls people out of their tombs. And we can do that too—if we listen.”

In concluding his remarks at the conference, Cardinal Tobin described three “opponents of polarization.”

The first was self-criticism, which he described as “the price of admission of anyone who wants to deal seriously” with the problem of polarization.

The second is the ability to identify where people of faith can have “legitimate differences.”

“Healthy pluralism is also an enemy of polarization,” Cardinal Tobin said. “Differentiate, as much as you can, opinion from fact.”

Finally, he emphasized the role of the papacy in the Church to foster unity among the faithful.

“For Catholics, Peter is the focus and font of ecclesial communion,” Cardinal Tobin noted. “There can be no overcoming polarization for us, and achieving consensus, that leaves one at odds with the magisterium.”

Learning how to build God’s kingdom

While Cardinal Tobin reflected on ways to promote conversations in the Church that reflect the image of the Trinity, Archbishop Etienne invited his listeners to give thought to another icon: Christ on the cross.

For him, this is an image of “the Lord embracing humanity in an effort to bring them closer to his heart, in an effort to bring things to the center, to himself.”

To build real communion in the Church, Archbishop

Etienne said, “we must draw everyone’s attention to Christ, who is our source of unity and communion. To be associated with Christ leads to mission—his mission. By baptism, we receive not only a share in the life of the risen Jesus, but also a share in the responsibility for his mission.

“God, through his Son, chose to enter into the human family by means of the incarnation. This must be a part of our posture: a willingness to draw near to one another.”

Like Cardinal Tobin, Archbishop Etienne participated in the two meetings in 2023 and 2024 of the Synod of Bishops on synodality. For him, synodality is a key means to overcome polarization and foster communion.

Archbishop Etienne said his experience at the synod meetings helped him to value greatly “the beauty of the synodal process of dialogue and listening.”

“... It allows people with divergent opinions to first discover the other as another human being, to build a relationship,” he said. “It is difficult to speak disrespectfully of one with whom you have a relationship.”

Archbishop Etienne’s experience of the synod meetings also convinced him of “the need for the world basically to go on retreat,” a remark which drew laughter from the conference participants.

“We need to renew our relationship with God, with Jesus, and to familiarize ourselves even more and be open more to the properties of the Holy Spirit.”

Renewing relationships with God can help people be open to better relationships with other people, Archbishop Etienne suggested.

He said that, for there to be hope for the faithful to resolve differences, they first need to build up relationships among each other.

“Our Church and our culture benefit greatly when we are capable of a variety of relationships,” Archbishop Etienne said.

That can be difficult, however, when some groups of the faithful have been hurt at the hands of other groups. He’s met with representatives of such hurt groups—victims of clergy sexual abuse, Native Americans and Black Catholics—in his ministry of leading the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Allowing such conversations as a means of healing, Archbishop Etienne said, “requires patience, compassion and a great deal of love and understanding.”

At the same time, he recognized from his own experience that there is “a personal toll” for Catholics who try to foster such conversations.

“Self-care is important, because truly listening takes real energy and time,” Archbishop Etienne said.

The hope for the fruit from such difficult conversations convinces Archbishop Etienne to go forward with them, despite the challenges that go with them.

“We as a human family must learn to coexist in order to thrive,” he said. “... Let’s embrace our present reality while cultivating hope and optimism and always being mindful of Christ, who is our common denominator.

“We learn from him how to be attentive to the other, how to be merciful and compassionate. In short, we learn how to build the kingdom of God.” †



During a Nov. 5 session of a conference titled “Deepening Communion in a Polarized World” at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, center, archbishop of Newark, N.J. and former archbishop of Indianapolis, is joined in laughter by conference facilitator Dr. Amy Uleman, left, and Seattle Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, right, formerly a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

St. Bridget’s ‘Bethlehem Experience’ hopes to instill ‘true meaning of Christmas’

By Natalie Hoefler

Jane Jolliff fondly remembers the time 30 years ago during Advent when she took her young children to see the city of Christ’s birth—in Ohio.

Granted, it was a re-creation of what Bethlehem looked like 2,000 years ago. But the experience made a lasting impact. “It was so realistic and lifelike,” says Jolliff, a member of St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty. “It just gave a deeper, richer understanding of the time of Christ’s birth, a whole new appreciation of the simplicity around Christmas.”

For three decades, a desire to create a local Bethlehem experience has been building in Jolliff’s heart.

This year that desire has become a reality. With help from five other Christian faith communities, St. Bridget is sponsoring a free Bethlehem Experience at the Union County 4-H Fairground in Liberty on the evening of Dec. 6.

A project based on faith, community—and research

The event springs from two foundations of the parish’s “See the Light, Be the Light” capital campaign.

“The campaign has four pillars: financial, children, community and spiritual,” Jolliff explains. “We’re offering this [event] as part of the spiritual and community pillars.”

She heads the spiritual portion of the campaign. Her good friend and fellow parishioner Kelly Finch leads the community side.

“We’re like two peas in a pod, and we like challenges,” says Finch. “When Jane told me about the idea, I thought it was great.”

To engage the community, “We reached out to all the churches in Union County in late May to see if they wanted to participate,” says Jolliff. Four faith communities agreed, as well as one in neighboring Wayne County.

The team, including other members of St. Bridget, began planning in June.

“I had already been doing research on what was in the town of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus’ birth,” says Jolliff. “When I first started to talk about it [with the team], they saw my excitement. The further I researched and the more things we could offer, the more excited I got!”

The re-created Bethlehem will be constructed in the Union County 4-H Fairground’s cattle barn. Pop-up tents will be decorated to look like storefronts of merchants and tradesmen.

“There’ll be storefronts for tax collectors, grains, breads, basket weavers, silversmiths, carpenters, textiles, pottery and more,” says Jolliff. “There will be Roman soldiers, census takers, grape-stompers, townspeople and shepherds bringing in their sheep,” although unlike in Christ’s time, the sheep will have halters for safety, she adds.

There will be other animals as well at the Bethlehem Experience’s live Nativity scene, complete with the Holy Family and singing angels.

Jolliff has been busy sewing simple costumes appropriate to the time to enhance the authenticity. Hot chocolate and cookies will add to the festive feel.

“We’re trying to keep it simple, since this is our first year,” she says. “But we hope to expand what we offer in the future.”

Finch is on board with continuing the event.

“We want this to be a spiritual thing for people to do every year, to become a family tradition to experience Bethlehem every year.”

Showing ‘the true meaning of Christmas’

Through the months of preparation, there have been many “God moments,” say the two women.

“We might need something, and it’s like, ‘Ask and ye shall receive,’” says Finch.

Jolliff agrees. “I’d say, ‘I’d like to—’ whatever it is, and someone always says, ‘We can do that’ or ‘We know someone.’ ”

She recalls the weekend she announced the project at the parish’s Sunday Mass.

“There was a family, we don’t even know where they’re from,” says Jolliff. “They donated \$3,500 to the parish, and \$1,000 of that is going toward the Bethlehem Experience. And these people were just visiting!”

She says she has been praying for Mary’s intercession that the project will “make people’s lives more spiritual, more authentic, and for them to realize [Christmas is] not about gifts.”

Finch agrees.

“Christmas has become so commercialized,” she says. “This is a great way to bring all of the community’s churches together. It’s a way for us to show people what the true meaning of Christmas is.

“Even if it changes one person’s perspective, it will be worth all of it.”



Jane Jolliff, left, Bev Wiwi, Kelly Finch and Dianne Dudley, members of St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Liberty, pose with items that will be used in the Bethlehem Experience the parish is sponsoring at the Union County 4-H Fairgrounds on Dec. 6. (Submitted photo)

(The Bethlehem Experience will take place at the Union County 4-H Fairgrounds, 411 E. Union St., in Liberty, from 5-9 p.m. on Dec. 6. Parking is available at the fairgrounds, or visitors may park near the Liberty courthouse square for free shuttle service to the

event. Entrance to the re-created town of Bethlehem will be staggered in groups roughly every 20 minutes. Dress according to the weather. The event is free, but donations are welcome. For more information, contact Jane Jolliff at 765-969-4388 or janeljolliff@hotmail.com.) †

PRO-LIFE

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He was a young, married father working as a computer programmer for IBM in White Plains, N.Y., when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion with its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

“I thought it was a good thing,” Martin admits. His mindset was that “the Catholic Church has to wake up and come into the modern age.”

After listening to a pro-life speaker, he began to change his mind.

“She always had the right argument, and the pro-choice speaker just wanted to throw the child away because a woman didn’t want it,” Martin recalls. “I thought, ‘Well, that’s not a good argument.’

“And the more I listened, no one on the pro-choice side made sense. They seemed so utilitarian: ‘If having a kid works for you, do it. If not, get rid of it.’

“The pro-life speakers always sounded better—more loving, more reasonable—to me. It was the pro-life argument conveyed by articulate pro-life people that woke me up.”

Within six months of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Martin was full-on pro-life.

A job transfer took him and his family to Indianapolis a few years later. He moved in November 1975 to look for a home, and his wife Virginia (“Ginny”) and their three children joined him in February 1976. (He notes that their “fourth child—twin girls,” were born later.)

The family settled within St. Monica Parish. Martin, wasting no time getting involved, began teaching eighth-grade faith formation classes.

And when he was asked that same year to chair the parish’s pro-life committee, he said yes.

A ‘boundless’ passion

Martin’s pro-life efforts quickly reached beyond St. Monica. The journey started in 1976 when he took his faith formation students to hear a pro-life speaker, and a sign-up sheet was passed around for a newly formed speakers bureau.

“I love being in front of people, and I love to talk,” says Martin, who acted in plays in high school and college.

Nevertheless, his first speaking engagement “was a disaster,” he says. “I remember getting home and telling my wife, ‘I’m never doing that again!’ ”

But he did—for 40 more years, even serving as head of what is now known as the Right to Life of Indianapolis Speakers Bureau for a time. One of his more

memorable talks was an appearance on a local talk show to support the pro-life side in a situation in Bloomington that drew national attention in 1982, now known as the “Baby Doe” case.

Martin’s involvement in the pro-life movement in Indianapolis continued to grow.

Whether it’s the former Committee for the Preservation of Life and the Right to Life of Indianapolis organization it later became, Great Lakes Gabriel Project, Life Chain, Birthline, the Indiana March for Life or praying at abortion centers throughout the city—if it was in Indianapolis and had to do with protecting the lives of the unborn and helping mothers in need, Martin has been involved with leading, volunteering or supporting the effort.

One effort he especially embraced was 40 Days for Life. Started in Texas in 2004, the project involves 40-day spring and fall campaigns of peaceful prayer in front of abortion centers.

When 40 Days for Life went national in 2007, Martin spearheaded St. Monica’s involvement. After all, the site for the Indianapolis campaigns was the state’s largest abortion center—the Planned Parenthood facility in the parish’s boundaries.

He even organized the Indianapolis campaigns in general for several years. When Sheryl Dye took on that role after Martin, she says he left “big shoes to fill.”

On St. Monica’s assigned days during the campaigns, Martin is “frequently out there himself if a slot isn’t filled,” says Dye, coordinator for the Indianapolis North affiliate of Sidewalk Advocates for Life. “His passion for that project is boundless.”

Eric Slaughter agrees.

Like Martin, the member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis is a highly involved pro-life advocate and leader in his parish, the archdiocese and other organizations and ministries.

“I always admired [Martin’s] commitment to share the truth about life and the duty we have to not only protect [the unborn] but to help the mothers in need of assistance,” says Slaughter.

He sees Martin “at just about every pro-life event, fundraiser and prayer vigil.” And Slaughter says whenever he needs help with a pro-life event, he can “count on Steve” to pitch in.

“Just knowing that Steve is there continuing to serve the Lord has inspired me to keep going.”

‘The right message’ will move people Martin has been honored for his

pro-life work. He received President George H. W. Bush’s Daily Point of Light Award in 1992 for his defense of the unborn and the archdiocese’s Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Pro-Life Award in 2003. He and Ginny were awarded the Charles E. Stimming Sr. Pro-Life Award from Right to Life of Indianapolis in 1988.

But in the end, says Martin, “I don’t want an award. I want to go to heaven and hear God say, ‘Steve you worked to save lives.’ ”

It’s work where “you plant seeds but don’t often see results,” he admits.

But there are a few times he was blessed to see the fruit of his labor.

Like the waitress Martin met at a Dunkin’ Donuts coffee shop in Chicago while he was on business, who decided not to have an abortion after reading material he gave her.

Or the woman he found sobbing in her car at St. Monica after watching a film he showed of an actual abortion.

“She said she had no idea that’s what abortion looks like,” says Martin. “She was converted to the pro-life cause for the rest of her life.”

And there was the late Clara Green, a local pro-life advocate who received the same three awards as Martin.

“She told me she got so involved [in the pro-life movement] because of a talk I gave at St. Monica,” Martin says. “If you get the right message out, people will be moved.”

One of the greatest fruits Martin has seen from his years of witness is the pro-life work of the Martins’ twins, Sarah Pitlyk and Mary Catherine Martin. Both served for a time as lawyers for the national, pro-life Thomas More Society non-profit law firm.

Pitlyk was appointed judge of the U.S. Eastern District Court of Missouri in 2019 by President Donald J. Trump “because she was a pro-life lawyer,” says Martin.

And Mary Catherine recently defended the pro-life position before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case opposing the inclusion of an abortion resolution on the Missouri voting ballot.



At a rally outside the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis, Steve Martin dons the yellow vest he wore while helping with traffic flow during the Indiana March for Life on Jan. 22, 2020. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

The justices ruled to include the resolution. But Martin says his heart burst with pride as Mary Catherine spoke with reporters on the courthouse steps “saying everything I’ve said” in defense of life.

‘I can’t go away—it’s too important’

Martin retired from his job at 69. But his work to defend the unborn and help moms in need continued, even after the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision in 2022 overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

“When *Roe* was overturned, I was in tears,” he says. Pro-life advocates “were just happy, happy, happy. But we knew our work wasn’t over, because the fight was now state by state.”

Tears well in his eyes as he considers the number of abortions happening in the U.S. every day—2,900, according to a June report by the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute.

Whether it’s 2,900 or one, as long as abortion exists, Martin will continue his pro-life efforts at 80 and beyond, even if no longer as St. Monica’s pro-life committee chair.

“I can’t go away—it’s too important,” he says. “Hearts have to change. Abortion has to become unthinkable.”

And so his work continues. As Martin paces and prays in silent witness in front of the Planned Parenthood facility on Oct. 22, his head turns as a car horn blares. The driver shouts some obscenities, adding a hand gesture for good measure.

Unfazed, Martin laughs as the car speeds away.

“Well, that’s one negative honk,” he says with a grin. “We’ll see if I can tally up more positive than negative ones before I’m done.”

Then he bows his head again and continues to walk and pray. †



Audrey and Kevin Banich are all smiles in a family photo with their son James and their daughter Josephine. (Submitted photo)

CAMINO

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“The reason my wife and I decided to walk the *Camino* was because we were struggling with infertility and had come to the point where the only path forward was to surrender it completely to God,” says Kevin, the principal of Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

“There were no more options available within our Catholic faith. We were coming to terms with the possibility of never having biological children of our own and trying to accept whatever plan God had for us. Because of that, we chose to make a pilgrimage and offer up all of those prayers along the Way.”

For five days during the school’s spring break of 2018, the couple walked along a *Camino* route in Spain from Sarria to Santiago for 73 miles.

“It was humbling to walk the *Camino* knowing that pilgrims were coming from all over the world carrying their prayers with them,” says Audrey, a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis with her husband. “For us, we walked with the weight of infertility on our shoulders.” James notes, “Along the journey, we lit a candle in every church and chapel from Sarria to Santiago, praying for a child.”

When they reached the shrine of St. James at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, they prayed there, too.

“One of our favorite moments came at the end of the journey—attending Mass at the Cathedral and witnessing the swinging of the *botafumeiro* [a giant incense thurible that is swung from the ceiling of the cathedral with long ropes],” Kevin says. “To celebrate the Eucharist alongside

pilgrims from all over the world was deeply moving.

“It brought us to tears.” Their tears flowed even more for a different reason in early 2019—tears of complete joy.

“Little did we know that less than a year after completing the *Camino*, in January 2019, we would welcome our son, James, into the world,” Kevin says. “A *Camino* miracle? We believe so! That is why he is named after St. James. God answered.”

Audrey adds, “The miracle of our son is proof that the pilgrimage led us exactly where we were meant to be!”

Earlier this year, the couple added to the blessings of their family with the arrival of their daughter Josephine. “Just as James has his own special story, so does Josephine,” Kevin says. “We chose adoption through St. Elizabeth [Coleman]. She was born on March 1, and she is such a blessing in our lives that it is impossible to put into words.”

Kevin views parenthood—like a journey on the *Camino*—as a journey of the heart and the soul.

“Elizabeth Stone once said, ‘Having a child is like having a piece of your heart walking around outside of your body.’ ” Kevin notes. “Being a parent brings an incredible amount of honor, pride, pressure and stress. Every phase of life for a child comes with new milestones, memories and challenges for their parents.

“I always remind our students, parents and even my own family to give each other grace. No one is perfect. We were called to live a life where faith and growth matter more than perfection—a life that invites us to walk with one another through the hard moments just as much as the joyful ones, drawing closer to Christ each step of the journey.” †

By John Shaughnessy

As he walked nearly 500 miles along the *Camino*, Deacon John McShea continually experienced moments when he felt that God was looking out for him.

After one long day on the road, McShea faced an evening when his reservation at a hostel had been

canceled. Not knowing where he would rest and sleep, he approached an old church building, desperately hoping he would be welcomed there.

“The Hospital San Nicholas was full, but they made room for me,” recalls McShea, noting that it was “a 1,000-year-old church building with no electricity and no Wi-Fi that was run by an Italian confraternity.”

“I was welcomed and fed dinner. Afterward, we prayed and sang together. I felt that God was holding me in his arms.”

He had the same feeling on another day during his journey from Sept. 1 to Oct. 5 in 2023.

“Every day, I visited churches and prayed,” says the deacon, who serves at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. “Several towns had pilgrim Masses in the evenings. One hot Sunday, I was walking through a small town and heard out-of-tune, clanging church bells. I followed the commotion and asked, ‘*Es misa ahora?*’ (‘Is Mass now?’) The answer was *Si*, so I dropped my backpack and trekking poles in the back. I was blessed.”

All his experiences were tied to the prayer he made every day: “Lord, fill me with your love and



Deacon John McShea takes a selfie during his nearly 500-mile journey on the Camino in 2023. (Submitted photo)

‘I felt that God was holding me in his arms’

light so that they will say, ‘He is with God, let us walk with him.’ ”

That prayer also led to two defining moments when he reached the shrine of St. James at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

“On the *Camino*, you need your passport to check into the *albergues* [hostels] and you also need to present a ‘credential,’ which is a passport that gets stamped at the *albergues*, churches and cafes,” McShea notes. “These stamps prove that you walked the *Camino*, and you are awarded a certificate of completion at the pilgrim office in Santiago.

“When the volunteer at the pilgrimage office presented me with my certificate, I cried with relief and joy for having completed the 800-kilometer journey.”

His relief and joy turned to awe and inspiration when he soon stowed his backpack and entered the Cathedral de Compostela.

“I had been told that they would probably not swing the giant *botafumeiro*—a giant, incense thurible that is swung from the ceiling of the cathedral with long ropes. I arrived about 45 minutes early for the afternoon Mass, expecting to be able to spend some time in quiet prayer. However, the cathedral was packed. Even the standing room was filled.

“I looked across the cathedral and saw a pillar, so I wove my way through the crowd and found myself directly in front of the sanctuary. Mass was beautiful, and afterward they swung the *botafumeiro*, filling the giant cathedral with incense!

“It was a blessing.” †

Conference emphasizes ‘the world needs authentic women’s love’

By Jennifer Lindberg

For 250 women accustomed to pouring love into their families and communities, the Marian Authentic Women’s Conference was a sacred pause—a time to rest and be renewed.

“God is so within us,” said Jennifer Lewis, a member of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington. “Sometimes you feel so alone, and this is a good reminder that you are not.”

Lewis joined hundreds of women on Oct. 25 at Primo Banquet Hall in Indianapolis for the Marian Authentic Women’s Conference. The event offered not only inspiring speakers but also the grace of sisterhood.

“When 250 women are in a room, someone has something you need,” joked emcee Katie Klee of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis.

Yet, it is the sharing of those needs and desires with other women that helps instill a vocation of love, a message emphasized by the day’s three speakers:

“Let yourself be loved,” urged author Claire Dwyer.

“There is a mystery of God revealed in femininity,” said Father Patrick Schultz.

“Share your gifts with the world to live the mission the Lord gave you,” added author Emily Wilson.

‘God put this on my heart’

The conference grew from a nudge of the Holy Spirit that led Lisa Brassie of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis to found LOVE Ministries—an acronym for Living Our

Vocations Everyday.

“God put this on my heart,” Brassie said. “It’s needed. We need a place to come together.”

And come together they did—women from parishes large and small across the archdiocese and throughout the state—drawn by faith, friendship and the simple truth that to be loved is to remember who we are in the eyes of God.

Gatherings like these create space for “human connections,” said Anna Seacat of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. “There is nothing like face-to-face connection. Praying together and listening together is like a haven and a respite.”

‘The world needs authentic women’s love’

Father Schultz, administrator of St. Bartholomew Parish in Middleburg Heights, Ohio, said women’s conferences serve as heavenly reminders of God’s love.

“Women are so beaten down by the every day,” he said. “This [conference] reminds them that they are enough, they are doing enough, and that they are good and loved.”

Father Schultz reminded the women that the love of Christ is ever present.

“Love does not tolerate you—it is obsessed with you,” he said. “It never takes time off from you. [Christ] is always actively pressing in with infinite tenderness.”

He invited the women to surrender to the love of Christ and be open to it, because Christ reveals love through women.



Catholic author Claire Dwyer, right, speaks with women during the Marian Authentic Women’s Conference at Primo Banquet Hall in Indianapolis on Oct. 25.



Catholic author and YouTube influencer Emily Wilson gives a talk during the Marian Authentic Women’s Conference at Primo Banquet Hall in Indianapolis on Oct. 25. (Submitted photos by Jennifer Lindberg)

“The world needs authentic women’s love,” he said.

‘Let yourself be loved’

Part of that surrender, Dwyer noted, is learning to let oneself be loved—and to care for oneself as a woman.

Dwyer, author of *The Present Paradise: A Spiritual Journey with St. Elizabeth of the Trinity*, said the saint taught her how to receive love and how to nurture herself.

She learned this the hard way—during a miscarriage, when she was afraid to call her doctor on the weekend. That instinct to always care for others, she realized, can become unhealthy.

In her conversations with women, Dwyer often encounters a lack of trust—a fear of being “too much,” and a belief that self-care is selfish.

Instead, she said, it’s a *both/and*.

“Humility supports our foundation of deep worth,” Dwyer said. “We can do nothing without God. But we are made in his image—and we need to take care of ourselves. Let yourself be loved.”

Give your vulnerabilities to Christ

Emily Wilson, a Catholic YouTube influencer and author of *Go Bravely: Becoming the Woman You Were Created To Be*, reminded the women to honor their gifts and talents, seen or unseen, because “your good and beautiful work is your vocation, even if no one sees it except Jesus.”

She noted that women “have an allergy to vulnerability.”

It is that very vulnerability, she explained, that enables women to give love. She urged the participants to name their vulnerabilities—their hurts and betrayals—and give them to Christ.

Father Schultz also addressed the deep need for healing. He told the women that Jesus “looks at you with infinite love and wonder. You are part of his dream for the world.”

He encouraged the participants not to remain locked in shame or fear, but to open their hearts to God’s tender mercy. And perhaps, he added, they needed to hear an apology to begin that healing.

“I am so sorry for the ways you have not been loved, honored well, cherished or revered,” Father Schultz said. “It wasn’t supposed to be that way.”

Instead, he reminded them, “He loves to love you.” Christ’s love, he added, has the power to transform every wound.

He ended with a simple truth: “Love says, ‘I will have a place for you.’ Christ stands before your heart—ravished, poor, a beggar before the beauty of your love—and says, ‘Will you be a home for me, so I can make you a home for others?’ ”

(The next Marian Authentic Women’s Conference will be held on Oct. 17, 2026, at Primo Banquet Hall in Indianapolis. Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.) †

Listening sessions reveal laity is eager to share in mission of the Church

By Deacon Thomas Hosty

Special to The Criterion

In August, the archdiocese conducted listening sessions to hear from the laity about its understanding of their role in the Church. Those who participated expressed a solid understanding of their baptismal identity, understanding they are called by Christ to help form other disciples of Christ. They further showed an eagerness to share in the co-responsibility in the life and mission of the Church.

The listening sessions, held on Aug. 12 at Our Lady

of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood and on Aug. 27 at Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality in Mt. St. Francis, were the result of a request in April by Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn., who leads the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

He asked Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, as well as other bishops in the U.S., to conduct the sessions within their dioceses so that the Church could discover how the people of God understand the baptismal identity and co-responsibility of the laity within the life and mission of the Church.

Bishop Barron’s committee hoped that by conducting these diocesan listening sessions, not only with the laity but also with other Church leaders, that they could better learn what needs to be addressed in a new U.S. bishops’ pastoral document on the role of the laity.

With that in mind, listening sessions with the laity were conducted in the northern and southern portions of the archdiocese. There were also listening sessions with members of the clergy, religious, leaders involved in the formation of

the laity and leaders of lay movements. The archdiocese also sought to be inclusive of the many cultures present in the local Church.

Some of the most important takeaways from these listening sessions include:

- The laity understood by virtue of their baptism that they share in the co-responsibility in the life and mission of the Church, and they are eager to do so with guidance by the Holy Spirit.
- The laity understand formation is key and must be ongoing.
- Inviting the laity into formation and providing busy families flexible opportunities for formation are important.
- The laity and the clergy understand that priests cannot carry out all the work of the Church, including the formation of the laity, and thus the laity must step up to share a greater role in both the mission of the Church and the formation of the laity.
- Both the clergy and leaders who conduct formation agree laity formation can always be improved.
- There may also be opportunities for lay movements to grow stronger bonds with the Church overall, which would positively impact their ministry work.

In October, the results from the archdiocesan listening sessions were submitted to Archbishop Thompson and Bishop Barron’s committee.

(Should anyone have any questions, those can be submitted to Deacon Thomas Hosty, director of the archdiocesan Department of Pastoral Ministries, at thosty@archindy.org.) †



Parishioners participate in an Aug. 27 listening session at Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality in Mt. St. Francis. (Submitted photo by Paul Schellenberger)

SIMPLY CATHOLIC



“The Last Judgment” by Michelangelo is pictured in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Museums in this Feb. 21, 2020, file photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Divine justice demands particular and general judgments after death

By Paul Thigpen

(OSV News)—Stretching out across the altar wall of the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel is Michelangelo’s magnificent fresco “The Last Judgment.”

Homilies about Judgment Day are rare these days, so even Catholic visitors to the chapel may sometimes puzzle over the arresting images of the fresco—not to mention the scriptural passages that inspired the work.

In particular, Catholics often wonder why the Church teaches that human beings undergo two judgments: one at the death of the individual, and one at the end of the world. Why would divine justice require a second judgment?

To answer that question, we must understand more fully what takes place in each judgment.

The Church affirms that one day each of us will be called to account for our life, with Christ as our judge. That moment arrives at death. “It is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27).

Death puts an end to the time the individual has been granted for embracing God’s grace or rejecting it. The person’s decision for or against God is ratified, so to speak, by God himself.

This first, individual judgment is known as the particular judgment. The soul of the deceased, without its body, goes to hell or to heaven, and for those who are heaven-bound the journey may involve the cleansing preparation process called purgatory (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1022).

What is left, then, for God’s justice to accomplish? Just as the time of reckoning arrives at last for the individual, so it does for the world as a whole. This future day will bring the end of the present age with what the Church calls the general judgment. On that day, as the Creed proclaims, Christ “will return in glory to judge the living and the dead” (see Mt 25:31-46; Rv 20:11-13).

Why is Christ returning to Earth? To bring human history to a just conclusion, so that, as the Creed continues, “his kingdom will have no end.” Divine justice in its fullness requires that this world’s wrongs be made right. It demands a definitive end to the power of evil. So, the outcome of Christ’s return is the termination of human evil-doing on Earth, when hell and its human allies will be utterly vanquished, and God will be “all in all” (see 1 Cor 15:23-28).

But there’s much more. At death, the body and soul of the individual are separated. At Christ’s return, before the general judgment, the souls of the dead will be reunited with the bodies they had in their life on Earth (see Jn 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:12-23, 51-57). Because of this

general resurrection, the bodies of the blessed will be able to take part in the joys of heaven, while the bodies of the damned will have to endure their share of the torments of hell.

Once souls and bodies are joined again, Christ, our judge, will call all people to account in the most public of judgments. “There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops,” Jesus warned (Lk 12:2-3). When the Lord comes again, St. Paul declared, “He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts” (1 Cor 4:5).

Why must this reckoning be public? When we confess all the details of our lives before Christ and the rest of the human race, and when others do the same in our presence, we will all be forced to recognize and admit the full effects on others of what we have done and what we have failed to do. Justice requires such recognition and admission.

Yet mercy plays a role here as well. To face the truth and confess it, drinking the cup of shame all the way to its dregs before a watching world, will be a painful reckoning. But for the friends of God, it can serve as part of the purging process necessary to prepare them for heaven.

At the same time, on that day God’s friends will find it easier to forgive. As the full picture of their lives is unveiled, they will finally come to appreciate the struggles of those who offended them: the burdens they had to carry, the wounds they suffered from the sins of others and the limitations placed on them by circumstances hidden to view.

Another important consequence of this public judgment is that it will reveal to everyone the love and wisdom of God’s providence in all things. How many times in this life, when adversity tests us, are we tempted to wonder whether God really cares for us, or whether he truly knows what he’s doing? In the Last Judgment, we will be able to see all the factors in God’s determinations, all the aspects of his plan.

On that day we will be able to say to him: “At last I understand. Your dealings with me finally make sense to me. When bad things happened, I needed faith to trust that You had not abandoned me. But now my faith has become sight.”

Justice demands that divine providence be vindicated. The general judgment provides such vindication.

When Christ came to Earth the first time, an essential

aspect of his mission was revelation—to show us the truth about God, ourselves and our world. His mission is not complete, then, until the truth is fully revealed to every human being and fully acknowledged by every human being and every angel, fallen or unfallen, as well.

In this present life, throughout human history, those who have rejected God and his truth typically resist admitting their errors and deceit. But on that last day, they will have no choice but to do so.

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,” insisted St. Paul, quoting the prophet Isaiah: “ ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall give praise [or confess] to God.’ So [then] each of us shall give an account of himself [to God]” (Rom 14:10-12).

To praise God is to speak the truth about who he is, to declare his wonderful attributes. To “confess” (an alternate translation) means literally to agree with, to “say the same thing as” God. Both translations point to the same reality: In the end, every one of us will have to recognize God as the almighty Lord of all things. Every one of us will have to acknowledge the truth about God, ourselves and our world—whether we like it or not.

This, too, is a part of justice. We owe it to ourselves and others to think and say what corresponds to reality.

Consider how many people throughout history have been terribly wronged, but the wrongdoing has been covered up or denied. They wait for Judgment Day because they want the truth to be told, to be shouted from one end of the cosmos to another.

And so they should. Could God be truly just if, in the end, he allowed the terrible truth to remain hidden forever and permitted the world to maintain its malicious lies?

Those who have done wrong may go to hell adamantly refusing God’s forgiveness. But before they go to their damnation, they will be required to admit to God and to the world the truth about their wrongdoing. The general judgment must happen because truth must triumph.


The general judgment will be a day of divine wrath revealed against wickedness. On that day, the friends of God as well as those who have made themselves his enemies will have ample cause to tremble.

Nevertheless, it will also be a day of joyous celebration for those who love justice, who love truth and who love the Lord Jesus. We, too, should look to the day when the divine Judge will return to set the world aright. Longing for his appearance, we can join the ancient Christians in their fervent prayer: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rv 22:20).

(Paul Thigpen, Ph.D., is an award-winning journalist and a best-selling author.) †

Faith in History/Sean Gallagher

Column will focus on Church doctors and their relevance for us today



On Nov. 1, Pope Leo XIV named St. John Henry Newman the newest doctor of the Church. The designation was made in response to requests following his canonization in 2019 made by groups of bishops around the world, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Doctors of the Church are a select group of saints recognized for their significant contribution through their writings to the understanding of the faith and how it is lived out by the faithful around the world.

Newman became the 38th doctor of the Church and the first named by Pope Leo.

The category among the saints of doctors of the Church was created by Pope Gregory VIII in 1298 at a time when the process by which the Church declared people as saints began to become more formalized and directed by the papacy.

The title of “doctor” has long been a way to refer to a person who is a highly regarded teacher. Continuing today, teachers and professors who have earned doctorate degrees are still known as “doctors.”

Prior to 1298, prominent theologians in the early centuries of the Church were known in Church tradition in an informal way as “Church fathers.” Many such writers in the early Church have that title. But there are four saints from the western Church and four from the eastern Church who became known as the principal Church fathers.

The western ones are St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Gregory the Great. The eastern ones are St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom.

The first doctors of the Church, named in 1298, were the four principal western Church fathers. Although Pope Gregory VIII created this title and named four saints as doctors in 1298, there were no additional saints named as doctors until 1568 by Pope St. Pius V, who named St. Thomas Aquinas as a doctor of the Church that year.

In addition to St. Thomas having monumental influence as a theologian and spiritual writer, St. Pius may also have been moved to name him as a doctor of the Church because they were both members of the Order of Preachers, commonly known as the Dominicans.

In the following year, St. Pius named the four principal eastern fathers of the Church as Church doctors.

The number of the doctors of the Church really only

started to increase at a regular pace starting in the 18th century. Twenty-seven of the 38 doctors of the Church have been named since 1720.

Most of the doctors of the Church are men. Four women have been named as doctors of the Church since 1970. St. Paul VI named St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena as Church doctors in 1970. St. John Paul II named St. Thérèse of Lisieux a Church doctor in 1997 during the centenary of her death. Pope Benedict XVI named St. Hildegard of Bingen a Church doctor in 2012, the same year in which the 12th-century Benedictine abbess was also declared a saint.

This column is the start of a series of columns to explore the lives, writings and relevance of the Church doctors. The plan is for the series to proceed in a general chronological way according to the time in which each Church doctor lived.


That means that the next column will be about St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who died as a martyr around the year 202. He is one of the most recently named Church doctors, given that title by Pope Francis in 2022.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter and columnist for The Criterion.) †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Let’s invest in people so they can live with dignity, pursue a better future

Each year, communities across the country unite during Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (this year from Nov.16-22) to shine a light on the challenges faced by those living without stable food or shelter.



Despite the reality of their circumstances, many homeless individuals are unjustly perceived as criminals or miscreants. Beyond legal and systemic discrimination, they often endure mistreatment and stigma from fellow residents. Catholic Charities is committed to educating the public about the complex reasons people become unhoused—and how we can help without judgment or false assumptions.

For many Hoosiers living paycheck to paycheck, the struggle to meet basic needs is a daily reality. A single illness, injury or job loss can quickly spiral into poverty, hunger and homelessness. In Indiana, roughly 820,000 people live in poverty according to the U.S. Census, including one in five children. Catholic Charities agencies, Catholic parishes and organizations like the Society of St. Vincent de Paul provide vital support—offering food, shelter, medicine and hope.

I’d like to share the story of Taylor—a woman whose life demonstrates the profound impact of hunger and homelessness—and the transformative power of compassion.

Taylor spent much of her childhood facing food insecurity, poverty and periods of homelessness. She remembers days filled with fear and uncertainty, not knowing where her next meal would come from or where she might sleep that night. As a child, she couldn’t fully grasp what was happening to her family, but she knew it wasn’t how people were meant to live.

At times, Taylor felt invisible and forgotten by the world. But then, someone would show kindness: a soup kitchen worker offering two meals a day, or a food pantry

providing groceries when the month outlasted their money. These acts of generosity were more than sustenance; they were reminders of dignity.

“When someone gave me a snack and asked what I wanted to be when I grew up,” Taylor recalls, “they weren’t just feeding my body—they were nourishing my spirit. They gave me a sense of normalcy and helped me believe I had a future.”

Hunger, she explains, is a relentless force. It consumes your thoughts, limits your ability to plan, and traps you in survival mode. Without food and housing—basic human needs—it’s nearly impossible to think beyond the next hour, let alone dream of a better life.

Taylor says hunger, poverty and homelessness stole her childhood. “It took away my innocence and my sense of security. But I was one of the lucky ones. I not only survived—I learned to thrive.” Despite setbacks, she persevered with the help of many people who entered her life.

“I achieved my childhood dream of becoming a lawyer,” she says. “But millions still struggle as my family once did.”

Taylor’s success is a testament to hard work, family support—especially from her beloved grandmother—and the safety net that helped her along the way. She relied on school lunches, welfare, health benefits, food stamps, Section 8 housing, subsidized college applications, financial aid and student loans. Today, she gives back to her community, helping others find hope and opportunity.


No one makes it alone. Everyone receives help in some way. The Church and Catholic Charities remain steadfast in their mission to invest in people—so they may live with dignity and pursue a better future.

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

It is Good/Elizabeth Scalia

Parents, please, please remember you are your children’s first catechists

Several years into young motherhood, I volunteered to prepare parish second graders for their first Communion.



The weekly classes with 18 children often felt like 45-minute exercises in humility, but my goal was to ensure that when the children experienced their first encounter with the flesh and blood of Christ, they knew it really was Jesus, and that Jesus really did know them, love them, and long to be received into their bodies, hearts and minds.

Brief classes meant there wasn’t much time left to train the children in spiritual supplication, but I did guide them (week after week), through halting recitations of the “big three” prayers which form the bedrock of Catholic orisons—the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

I say “halting” because while the children remembered that we’d done this before, the prayers never flowed easily off their tongues. While I dedicated three distinct classes to teaching what all those unfamiliar and mysterious words meant, retention wasn’t happening.

So, when a mother angrily questioned why her daughter didn’t know the Our Father, I sassed back a little: “Well, I have 45 minutes a week with them. *You* have every day; are *you* teaching it to her? Are *you* praying with your kids? That’s actually your *job*, you know, to teach them how to pray by your own example. Are *you* praying?”

I’d expected a solid clap-back from the mother, but instead her eyes grew wide and she stood silently for a moment before nodding her head. “Yeah,” she considered. “I guess you don’t really have time.”

At her thoughtful response, I gentled my tone. “Kids need to see their parents praying, you know, and to be

invited to pray with them. That’s how they learn their prayers. That’s the first and most important way that they begin to learn about faith.”

By spring, that little girl was happily leading the class in recitation. One day I ran into her mother at the Stations of the Cross, and she pulled me aside. “You were right. Until we had words, I never thought about it, but it really was our role to be our kids’ first teachers. And answering their questions has helped us to learn more, ourselves!”

Parents, please: Creating Christians who are whole human beings is all of our jobs. But it’s yours first.

The parents became active in the parish, the father becoming an usher and the mom eventually picking up my class when I could no longer teach.

Fast forward 40 years and a pre-Mass plea for instructors to teach older children preparing for confirmation. Now in semi-retirement, I figured I could help.

After our first meeting, our director asked me how it went. “These poor kids, they cannot *read*!” I blurted out in honest horror. “It broke my heart to see it!”

“I know,” she acknowledged sadly. “COVID and video-schooling really left them at a disadvantage.”

“And they don’t know the Our Father or the Hail Mary! They know no prayers at all!”

“We try to remind parents to pray with their kids ... ,” she drifted off. She is a very kind woman who has been

doing this for more than 30 years. She understands how deeply parental involvement matters.

“They don’t actually *know* what a crucifix is,” I ranted. “None of them say they’ve seen a crucifix in their homes! I ended up dragging them over to the crucifix and explaining it—why it’s different from an empty cross, and why we keep it before us. One girl actually seemed a little interested, for a minute.”

“Yeah, it’s tough when they’ve been in school all day and it’s dinner time.”

That night I went to a Catholic supply site, ordering a dozen small standing crucifixes. They’re all blessed and ready to be given out at our next session. I sense a long, hard road before us.

Parents, *please*: Pray with your children, at least the “big three” prayers. Memorized prayers are foundational, giving your kids a starting point—the words with which to begin, when they find themselves really needing and wanting to turn to God.

Parents, *please*: Get a crucifix (or two!), and perhaps a statue of Mary or an icon. Place holy things around your house; explain what they are to your children, and why they are important and good to have near.

Parents, *please*: Set aside a half-hour a night when all media are silenced and *read* aloud to your children. It is a great and bonding gift to be read to; it helps spark the imagination and creates curiosity about books and stories. It helps kids build a vocabulary of self-expression and human reference that they will need in life.

Parents, *please*: Creating Christians who are whole human beings is all of our jobs. But it’s yours first.

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

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, November 16, 2025

- Malachi 3:19-20a
- 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
- Luke 21:5-19

The Book of Malachi supplies Mass this weekend with its first reading.

Malachi was not the name of the author of this book. Rather, it refers to a title, “Messenger of God,” that appears at the start of the book. It is thought that the book was written about 450 years before Christ.

As in the cases of all the prophets, the purpose of Malachi is to summon the people to greater religious devotion. This book was written, it is believed, in the aftermath of religious reforms. It probably was an effort to reinforce these reforms.

Many prophets warned people that if they did not return to a more exacting observance of religion, they would reap the whirlwind. Such is the case in this reading. One terrible day, God will come with swift and final justice. The wicked and the lukewarm will not escape.

For its second reading, the Church this weekend offers us a passage from St. Paul’s Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

In this reading, St. Paul again declares how seriously he took his vocation to be an Apostle. He says that he considered nothing else. Further, he says that he has worked day and night, in order to be an example. He was focused on his vocation and on it alone.

St. Luke’s Gospel is the source of the last reading for this weekend.

Generally speaking, in proclaiming the four Gospels at Mass, the Church teaches that we should be aware of three stages of interest. The first stage is the actual life of Jesus. The events in the Lord’s life, told in the Gospels, are important. Circumstances surrounding these events are important.

The second stage is the experience of the Christian faithful when the Gospel was written and for which the Gospel was written.

The third stage is the context that the composition of the Gospel itself creates.

Quite clear throughout Luke, and surely in this reading, is the fact that Christ and then the Church faced serious hostilities in the first-century Roman imperial world. In this weekend’s reading, Jesus warned his disciples that they would be hated simply because they were his followers. He foresaw catastrophes that occurred in time.

Most shocking of all predictions was the Lord’s announcement that one day the temple would fall. It was shocking because the temple was regarded as God’s dwelling on Earth, indeed a symbol of God himself. To say that the temple would fall could be construed to mean that God, the Almighty, the eternal, would fall.

Jesus also said that God would rebuild the temple, and the new temple, the new dwelling of God, would be himself. God will never die.

Reflection

The Gospel reading from St. Luke’s Gospel is typical of other sections of the same Gospel. It is somber and chilling. Terrible things will happen. When the Gospel was written, decades after the time of Jesus, Christians were seeing their own friends and enemies turn against them. It was a frightening sight. Christians were left alone in the face of bloodthirsty, powerful enemies.

These readings together remind us that we cannot choose our circumstances in every situation. We are at the mercy of the often uncontrollable aspects of the times and places in which we live. Circumstances in our lives can be perplexing. Others’ decisions can disturb us.

Our task as Christians, indeed our only option, is to be true to the Gospel. As Paul indicates, nothing else truly matters. Being with God for eternity is the only reason to live.

Pursuing the ideal of being with God requires deep and uncompromising commitment. We cannot hesitate. We cannot turn away. God will assist us with his ever-present grace. He will reward us with the everlasting gift of life. †

Daily Readings

Monday, November 17
St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
1 Maccabees 1:10-15, 41-43, 54-57, 62-63
Psalms 119:53, 61, 134, 150, 155, 158
Luke 18:35-43

Tuesday, November 18
The Dedication of the Basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles
St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, virgin
2 Maccabees 6:18-31
Psalms 3:2-7
Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, November 19
2 Maccabees 7:1, 20-31
Psalms 17; 118:1-4, 5-6, 8b, 15
Luke 19:11-28

Thursday, November 20
1 Maccabees 2:15-29
Psalms 50:1b-2, 5-6, 14-15
Luke 19:41-44

Friday, November 21
The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
1 Maccabees 4:36-37, 52-59
(Response) *1 Chronicles 29:10b-12*
Luke 19:45-48

Saturday, November 22
St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr
1 Maccabees 6:1-13
Psalms 9:2-4, 6, 16, 19
Luke 20:27-40

Sunday, November 23
Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
2 Samuel 5:1-3
Psalms 122:1-5
Colossians 1:12-20
Luke 23:35-43

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

The term ‘vocation’ in the Church usually refers to a person’s state in life

Q At my parish, we pray “for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.” But at the other parish in town, they pray



for “vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate, marriage and religious life.” How many vocations are there actually?

A This is a tricky question to answer, because in our Catholic tradition the word “vocation” can mean different things in different contexts.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin word “*vocare*,” or “to call.” A vocation is literally “a calling,” which in a Catholic sense typically means a calling from God.

The first and most foundational vocation for any Christian is our baptismal vocation, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes as “a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world” (#1533).

However, often the term “vocation” is used to describe a Catholic’s state in life, or a permanent life commitment that involves a certain role within the Church. But even here, there are a few different ways to categorize the various states in life.

One way is to distinguish Catholics between ordained clergy—that is, bishops, priests and deacons—and non-ordained laity (See canon 207 of the *Code of Canon Law*). By this standard, anyone who has not received the sacrament of holy orders would be considered “lay.”

We can also categorize states in life according to a three-fold division of: the ordained clergy, those in consecrated life, and the laity who are neither ordained nor living in a public state of consecrated life.

In this latter, more particular sense of the word “laity,” the Vatican II document “*Lumen Gentium*” describes the lay faithful as having a distinct vocational mission of their own: “They are called there [i.e., in the ordinary circumstances of

secular life] by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven” (#31).

Lay people may also be called to marriage and family life, which naturally comes with its own joys, responsibilities and potential for bearing a Christian witness to the world.

“Consecrated life” is an umbrella category that encompasses a variety of specific forms, from religious brothers and sisters engaged in active apostolates like teaching or serving the poor, to monks and nuns dedicated entirely to prayer, to lesser-known forms like secular institutes, consecrated virgins and hermits.

However, members of the faithful in all forms of consecrated life have the special vocation of imitating Christ’s own way of life more radically and be, as “*Lumen Gentium*” describes, “witnesses to the fact of a new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ,” and foretell “the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom” (#44).

Yet, even when speaking specifically about “state in life” vocations, it’s difficult to give an exact number for this since there are some instances when the various states of life can overlap.

For example, some clergy, such as permanent deacons or priests in Eastern Catholic Churches, might also be married. (Though while an already-married man might receive holy orders in some circumstances, it’s worth noting that once ordained, clergy cannot marry or re-marry if their spouse dies.) Priests can also be members of institutes of consecrated life, commonly known as religious orders, giving them a dual vocation to the priesthood and consecrated life in their community.

But it’s important to keep in mind that the concept of “vocation” is ultimately not about sorting ourselves or others into boxes, but rather is about discerning and embracing God’s will for us in our own unique life situation—whether or not that fits tidily into one of the above-mentioned categories.

In fact, many of our greatest saints “broke the mold” in their vocation stories. Some of them responded to a call to pioneer new forms of Christian life, while others obeyed God’s call to a radical Christian life amid difficult, unusual or novel circumstances.

(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.) †

My Journey to God

Pondering

By Sandy Bierly

Sitting before Jesus
Pondering times past,
So much love God gives me,
Words cannot express.

Not that long ago
I was that lost lamb.
Then I heard God’s call,
To come and follow Him.

Through the Sacraments of Love,
That the Church offers me,
I found Love, Joy, and Peace,
That the world cannot give.



(Sandy Bierly is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Photo: This holy card from 1911 depicts Christ as the Good Shepherd.) (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

BISHOPS

continued from page 1

“be eager to forgive the other when he or she asks for forgiveness. Help us listen.”

The priority in the house of prayer is the worship of God, he said, and “not the motivation of other gods.”

During the assembly, which runs through Nov. 13, the bishops are expected to talk about numerous issues, hold elections and discuss policies. Several bishops spoke with *Catholic Review*,

the news outlet for the Baltimore Archdiocese, about the days ahead for the USCCB.

Auxiliary Bishop James Massa of the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., noted that the first day of the conference was a time for reflection with Mass as well as confession and adoration scheduled to allow the bishops to quiet their own struggles in order to be open and willing.

“Immigration is top on the agenda,” Bishop Massa said. “It is a time of transition. We are electing a new president and vice president.



Bishops from around the country gather at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore on Nov. 10 for the opening Mass of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ fall plenary assembly. (OSV News photo/Kevin J. Parks, *Catholic Review*)

We need the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

“The meeting in Baltimore each year is a very important one,” added Bishop Robert M. Pipta of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma, Ohio. “The Eastern Catholic bishops are very much a part of this. We learn. We pray for one another. We really try to face some of the very real challenges in our country right now when it comes to not only our people, but all people of good will.”

“When you see the Church in diversity and unity, and Christ is proclaimed East and West, it’s beautiful,” Bishop Gregory J. Mansour of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, said.

For Bishop Bruce A. Lewandowski of the Diocese of Providence, R.I., the conference was a homecoming as the

Redemptorist was previously an auxiliary bishop of Baltimore until his appointment to Providence in May.

“The thing I’m looking forward to most about the conference this time around is being in Baltimore and seeing the people I love,” he said, between hugs and well wishes. †

Archbishop Coakley, Bishop Flores elected USCCB president and vice president

BALTIMORE (OSV News)—Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City and Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, were elected on Nov. 11 as president and vice president, respectively, of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The 2025 elections were notable because they marked the first leadership change at the conference since Pope Leo XIV, the U.S.-born pontiff, began his pontificate in May.

Archbishop Coakley, 70, has led the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City since 2011. He was born to John and Mary Coakley in Norfolk, Va., in 1955, but the family moved to Kansas 10 years later. He began seminary studies for the Diocese of Wichita in 1978. He has been serving as the USCCB’s secretary.

Bishop Flores, 64, was born to Fernando Javier Flores and Lydia Dilley Flores in 1961 in Palacios, Texas. He entered Holy Trinity Seminary, an institution associated with the University of Dallas, in 1981. He has led the Brownsville Diocese since 2010.

Archbishop Coakley was elected president on the third round of voting, and Bishop Flores on the first round for the vice presidential election.

The new president and vice president succeed the current USCCB president and vice president, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, who will complete their terms at the end of the plenary assembly. †

Employment

Donor Relations Coordinator, Office of Stewardship and Development

Position Summary
The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking a Donor Relations Coordinator to join the Office of Stewardship and Development. This vital role serves as the first point of contact for donors and prospective donors, providing exceptional service and support to those engaging with the Archdiocese and the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF).

Key Responsibilities

- Serve as the primary contact for donor inquiries via phone, email, and text.
- Support donor relations team with data entry and donor census updates.
- Process and reconcile donations, including credit card, ACH, and matching gifts.

Qualifications

- Associate’s degree required; Bachelor’s degree preferred.
- Experience in nonprofit fundraising, accounting, or donor database management.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, Teams) and Raiser’s Edge.

Send your resume and cover letter to Jolinda Moore, Executive Director of Stewardship and Development, at jmoore@archindy.org.

Catholic Philanthropic Advisor, United Catholic Appeal

Job Summary
The Catholic Philanthropic Advisor is responsible for cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major and planned gifts in support of the ministries of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. This role plays a key part in advancing the mission of the United Catholic Appeal by aligning donor interests with ministry needs and fostering a culture of gratitude and generosity.

Key Responsibilities

- Manage a portfolio of donors and prospects to secure major and planned gifts.
- Develop and implement donor engagement strategies, including events and outreach.
- Collaborate with colleagues to promote a unified fundraising vision across the archdiocese.

Qualifications

- Practicing Catholic in good standing and active member of the Church.
- Bachelor’s degree required; advanced degree or certification preferred.
- Minimum of three years of experience in fundraising, development, or related fields.

To Apply: Send a cover letter and resume to Jolinda Moore, Executive Director of Stewardship and Development, at jmoore@archindy.org.

Classified Directory

For advertising rates call (317) 236-1585.

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Employment

Special Events Coordinator, United Catholic Appeal

Job Summary
The Special Event Coordinator is responsible for planning and executing archdiocesan events that reflect the mission and values of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. This role ensures events align with organizational goals, approved budgets, and compliance standards. Events range from pilgrimages and donor gatherings to employee functions and clergy celebrations.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop and manage event plans, timelines, and budgets.
- Coordinate logistics including venue selection, catering, permits, contracts, rentals, parking, signage, tech support, and security.
- Process payments, track sponsorships, and manage financial reporting.

Qualifications

- Bachelor’s degree in event management, hospitality, or related field.
- 3–5 years of experience in event coordination preferred.
- Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills.

To Apply: Send a cover letter and resume to Jolinda Moore, Executive Director of Stewardship and Development, at jmoore@archindy.org.

Archdiocese of Indianapolis Maintenance Technician

This full-time, hourly, position is responsible for the maintenance of several buildings.

Duties include:

- Completing repairs, preventative maintenance and maintenance tasks on buildings and grounds.
- Responding, in a timely manner, to internal equipment repair needs.
- A verifiable background in building maintenance.
- A working knowledge of all building systems and components.
- The ability to evaluate and repair existing equipment.
- The ability to work with contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.
- An ability to work with the Archdiocesan staff.
- Basic computer skills.
- Good organizational and communication skills.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume to: bburkert@archindy.org.

“The *United Catholic Appeal* is one of the clearest expressions of what it means to be one Church. Through our shared commitment, we Go Forth to bring Christ’s presence into every life, every home, and every corner of our archdiocese.”

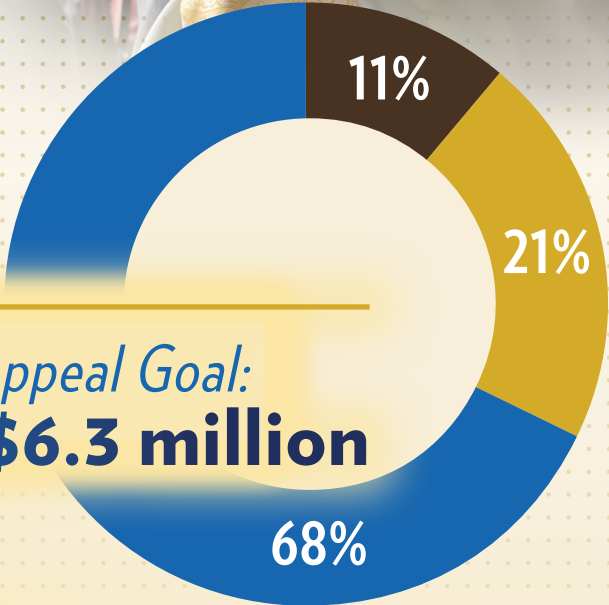
+ Charles C. Thompson

+ Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
 Archbishop of Indianapolis

Together, we *Go Forth*— united in purpose, grounded in faith, and committed to sharing God’s love with the world. *Thank you for walking with us.*

2026

United Catholic Appeal Goal:
\$6.3 million



Teaching **\$4.3 million**

- 37% | Caring for active and retired priests
- 30% | Providing education, tuition assistance and care for seminarians
- 16% | Providing Catholic school leaders catechetical formation and support resources as they model and teach the faith to students
- 11% | Forming catechetical leaders and catechists
- 6% | Forming deacons to serve the Church

Shepherding **\$1.3 million**

- 33% | Forming and walking beside young adults seeking the faith
- 25% | Upholding the sacredness of marriage and family life and supporting and strengthening families
- 20% | Celebrating and affirming cultural diversity in our church
- 9% | Guidance and support for youth ministry
- 8% | Promoting the dignity of life
- 5% | Welcoming and including people with disabilities

Serving **\$700,000**

- 100% | Providing services through Catholic Charities in central and southern Indiana



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