



The Criterion

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Twenty Something

Whispering pines and an opportunity to listen for the Holy Spirit, page 12.

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An amazing gift of friendship between Dr. Lynell Chamberlain, left, and Elizabeth Yetter has its roots in their shared faith in God. The friends pose for a recent photo at St. John Paul II Church in Sellersburg. (Submitted photo)

As a woman prepared for her death, she received a miracle of faith, hope and love

(One in a continuing series of stories about "Pilgrims of Hope" in the archdiocese)

By John Shaughnessy

Elizabeth Yetter had reached a breaking point—getting the kind of devastating news that would challenge nearly all of us, leaving her shaken and scared.

She had long tried to take care of her health, staying active by walking and exercising. Then came a time when she felt exhausted just doing her regular chores.

She went to her doctor, who ordered blood tests that

revealed her white cell count was elevated, which led him to send her to a hospital to be checked further.

There, she learned she had cancer.

"I was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia [AML], which is very aggressive," says Yetter, a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. "I was overwhelmed. It was scary to think I was going to die."

In that moment in July of 2024, she prayed for a miracle.

Seventeen months later, the 73-year-old Yetter believes she has received one, a miracle touched by friendship, faith, love and hope.

See **MIRACLE**, page 8

The hope of the Camino: To walk closer to God and others

(Editor's note: The Criterion has invited people from the archdiocese who have made all or part of the Camino pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, to share how that experience has influenced their life and their faith.)

Fifth in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

Before the four friends began their journey on the *Camino*, they all embraced the succinct advice that Jane Blanchard shared in her book, *Women of the Way: Embracing the Camino*.

"Don't come to the *Camino* looking for answers," Blanchard advised. "Come with an open heart."

Beth Reel, Stephanie Okerson, Michelle Roberts and Kim Striby—all

See **CAMINO**, page 9

Kim Striby, left, Michelle Roberts, Beth Reel and Stephanie Okerson—all educators at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis—traveled the *Camino* together. (Submitted photo)

Ecumenism is not 'absorption or domination,' but sharing gifts, pope says

ISTANBUL (CNS)—As he had done throughout his visit to Turkey, Pope Leo XIV spent his last morning in the country reaffirming the Catholic Church's commitment to the search for Christian unity.

The key symbol of that was the pope's presence at the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople on Nov. 30, the feast of St. Andrew, patron of the patriarchate.

For decades, popes and patriarchs have sent delegations to each other's patronal feast celebrations—the Vatican's celebration of the feast of SS. Peter and Paul on June 29 and the patriarchate's celebration of St. Andrew's feast on Nov. 30.

St. Peter and St. Andrew were brothers and were the first of the 12 Apostles to be called by Jesus.

After the liturgy, the pope and patriarch went to a balcony where they jointly blessed people gathered below.

Holy Father also visits Lebanon, page 3.

Patriarch Bartholomew had been present at most of the events on Pope Leo's itinerary in Turkey, including the meeting in Ankara on Nov. 27 with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and government and civic officials. The patriarch hosted the commemoration of the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea on Nov. 28, and he attended Pope Leo's Mass for the country's Catholic communities on Nov. 29.

At the liturgy on Nov. 30 in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George, Pope Leo spoke about how for 60 years Catholics and Orthodox have followed

See **TURKEY**, page 9



Marriage is an exclusive union requiring 'tender care,' Vatican says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The foundation of sacramental marriage is the unity of the spouses, a bond so intense and grace-filled that it is exclusive and indissoluble, said a document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The document, “*Una Caro*” [One Flesh]: In Praise of Monogamy. Doctrinal Note on the Value of Marriage as an Exclusive Union and Mutual Belonging,” was released only in Italian by the Vatican on Nov. 25. Pope Leo XIV approved its contents on Nov. 21 and authorized its publication.

“Although each marital union is a unique reality, embodied within human limitations, every authentic marriage is a unity composed of two individuals, requiring a relationship so intimate and all-encompassing that it cannot be shared with others,” the document said.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the doctrinal dicastery, wrote in the document’s introduction that the dicastery wanted to draw from Scripture, theology, philosophy and “even poetry” to explain why it is best to choose “a unique and exclusive union of love, a reciprocal belonging that is rich and all-embracing.”

The poets quoted included Walt Whitman, Pablo Neruda, Emily Dickinson and Rabindranath Tagore.

The dicastery said it issued the note in response to requests from the bishops of Africa where polygamy is still practiced, as well as because “various public forms of non-monogamous unions—sometimes called ‘polyamory’—are growing in the West.”

“Polygamy, adultery or polyamory are based on the illusion that the intensity of a relationship can be found in the succession of faces,” the document said. But “as the myth of Don Juan illustrates, numbers dissolve the names; they disperse

the unity of the loving impulse.”

While the Church, its theologians, pastors and canon lawyers have written much about the indissolubility of the marriage bond, the note said, there has been less official reflection “on the unity of marriage—meaning marriage understood as a unique and exclusive union between one man and one woman.”

The doctrinal dicastery insisted that sacramental marriage is forever and that openness to procreation is an essential part of marriage, but it also said the purpose of the doctrinal note was to focus primarily on the unitive aspect of marriage.

While there are examples of polygamy in the Old Testament, many other passages celebrate the love found in an exclusive, monogamous relationship, it said. And the Song of Songs uses the language of a lover and beloved allegorically to refer to the relationship of God with his people—a relationship that is unique and exclusive.

In the Gospels, it said, Jesus exalts faithful, lifelong monogamy, pointing back to God’s “original plan” that a man and a woman would become “one flesh.”

The document has a long section on what popes and Christian theologians—from the early Church to modern times—have said and written about marriage.

Unlike other early theologians, it said, St. John Chrysostom did not emphasize procreation as a primary purpose for marriage but wrote that “the unity of marriage, through the choice of a single person to whom one is joined, serves to free people from an unrestrained sexual outlet devoid of love or fidelity, and properly directs sexuality.”

Until Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical on marriage in 1880, the popes did not write much about matrimony, the document said.



Pope Leo XIV greets newlywed couples who came for a blessing at his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Nov. 19. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 6–14, 2025

December 10 – 10:30 a.m.
High School Senior Mass at St. Malachy Church, Brownsburg

December 10 – 3 p.m.
Virtual Bishops’ Discussion on New Resource for Young Adults

December 11 – 8:15 a.m.
Virtual Judicaries meeting

December 11 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

December 11 – 11:30 a.m.
Employee Advent Gathering at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

December 13 – 1 p.m.
150th Community Anniversary Mass for Sisters of St. Francis at Franciscan Health, Lafayette, Ind.

December 14 – 11:15 a.m.
Mass and blessing to welcome Daughters of Mary of Nazareth at St. John Paul II Church, Sellersburg

In that encyclical, it said, the pope’s defense of monogamy was in part “a defense of the dignity of women, which cannot be denied or dishonored even for the sake of procreation. The unity of marriage therefore implies a free choice on the part of the woman, who has the right to demand exclusive reciprocity.”

Because marriage is a union between a man and a woman “who possess exactly the same dignity and the same rights,” the document said, “it demands that exclusivity which prevents the other from being relativized in their unique value or being used merely as a means among others to satisfy needs.”

In the Latin-rite sacrament of matrimony, it noted, “consent is expressed by saying: ‘I take you as my wife,’ and ‘I take you as my husband.’ In this regard, following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, it must be said that consent is a ‘human act by which the spouses

mutually give and receive one another.’

“This act, ‘which binds the spouses to each other,’ is a giving and a receiving: it is the dynamism that gives rise to mutual belonging, called to deepen, to mature and to become ever more solid,” the doctrinal note said.

How that belonging to one another in an exclusive way is lived out may change over time, “when physical attraction and the possibility of sexual relations weaken,” the document said, but it does not end.

“Naturally, various intimate expressions of affection will not be lacking, and these are also considered exclusive,” it said. “Precisely because the experience of reciprocal and exclusive belonging has deepened and strengthened over time, there are expressions that are reserved only for that person with whom one has chosen to share one’s heart in a unique way.”

“The mutual belonging proper to exclusive, reciprocal love implies a delicate care, a holy fear of profaning the freedom of the other, who has the same dignity and therefore the same rights,” the note said.

The unique friendship of spouses, it said, is “full of mutual knowledge, appreciation of the other, complicity, intimacy, understanding and patience, concern for the good of the other and sensitive gestures.”

That friendship “transcends sexuality,” but “at the same time embraces it and gives it its most beautiful, profound, unifying and fruitful meaning,” the document said. †

The Criterion

12/05/25

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Choose the way of peace, pope says as he leaves Lebanon

BEIRUT (CNS)—Pope Leo XIV ended his stay in Lebanon with what he termed “a heartfelt appeal: may the attacks and hostilities cease.”

“We must recognize that armed struggle brings no benefit,” he said at the Beirut airport before returning to Rome on Dec. 2. “While weapons are lethal, negotiation, mediation and dialogue are constructive. Let us all choose peace as a way, and not just as a goal!”

Throughout his stay in Lebanon on Nov. 30-Dec. 2, the pope repeatedly called for peace, justice and a concerted effort by all Lebanese to build a better future for themselves and their families.

In fact, after Mass and before praying the *Angelus* on Dec. 2, he implored “the international community once again to spare no effort in promoting processes of dialogue and reconciliation,” and he appealed “to those who hold political and social authority here and in all countries marked by war and violence: Listen to the cry of your peoples who are calling for peace.”

“The Middle East needs new approaches in order to reject the mindset of revenge and violence, to overcome political, social and religious divisions, and to open new chapters in the name of reconciliation and peace,” he said. “We need to change course. We need to educate our hearts for peace.”

However, he never mentioned by name Hezbollah, the militant Islamic fighters who target Israel from Lebanon, nor did he mention Israel, which has been striking Lebanese cities and towns for more than two years, claiming they were targeting Hezbollah.

At the airport farewell ceremony, he expressed hope for the involvement of “the entire Middle East in this spirit of

fraternity and commitment to peace, including those who currently consider themselves enemies.”

At 6:30 a.m. on the last day of Pope Leo’s first foreign papal trip, a double rainbow appeared in the sky over Beirut’s Zaitunay Bay.

The pope began the day visiting a Catholic-run psychiatric hospital and then praying at the Beirut port, site of the chemical explosion in 2020 that killed more than 200 people, injured some 7,000 and left an estimated 300,000 people displaced.

“I was deeply moved by my brief visit to the Port of Beirut, where an explosion devastated the area, not to mention many lives,” the pope said at the Mass he celebrated afterward on the waterfront nearby.

“I prayed for all the victims, and I carry with me the pain, and the thirst for truth and justice, of so many families, of an entire country,” the pope said. Family members of those killed when improperly stored ammonium nitrate exploded joined him for the prayer at the site where there are still mountains of rubble, piles of burnt-out cars and heaps of tattered clothing and cloth.

The Melkite and Maronite bishops of Beirut were also present as were Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Haneen Sayed, the government minister for social affairs; her mother was killed in the blast.

Pope Leo laid a wreath, lighted a candle and prayed before greeting the families and survivors who still bear the scars of their injuries. A young woman, crying, asked for a hug, which the pope gave her before putting his hand on her head and blessing her.

In his homily at Mass, Pope Leo said the beauty of Lebanon “is overshadowed

by poverty and suffering, the wounds that have marked your history. In this regard, I just visited the port in order to pray at the site of the explosion.”

“The beauty of your country is also overshadowed by the many problems that afflict you, the fragile and often unstable political context, the dramatic

economic crisis that weighs heavily upon you, and the violence and conflicts that have reawakened ancient fears,” the pope said without being more specific.

The day’s Gospel reading for Mass, Luke 10:21-24, begins by quoting Jesus, who “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and Earth’” (Lk 10:21).

Pope Leo told the estimated 100,000 people at the Mass that he knows it is not always easy to praise God.

“Sometimes, weighed down by the struggles of life, worried about the many problems around us, paralyzed by powerlessness in the face of evil and oppressed by so many difficult situations,” he said, “we are more inclined to resignation and lamentation than to wonder and gratitude.”

But, the pope told them, the Gospel “invites us to find the small shining lights in the heart of the night, both to open



Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass in Beirut, Lebanon, on the final day of his first apostolic journey on Dec. 2. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

ourselves to gratitude and to spur us on to a common commitment for the sake of this land.”

The faith and charity of Lebanese Christians, the willingness to dialogue and collaborate with members of other religions are all “small lights that shine in the night, small shoots that sprout forth and small seeds planted in the arid garden in this era of history,” he said.

“Cultivate these shoots,” the pope told them. That is the way to avoid discouragement and “to not give in to the logic of violence and the idolatry of money, and to not resign ourselves in the face of the spreading evil.”

“Lebanon, stand up,” he said. “Be a home of justice and fraternity! Be a prophetic sign of peace for the whole of the Levant,” a term referring to the area that borders the Eastern Mediterranean and traditionally includes Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Palestine and Jordan. †

Love without fear, Pope Leo XIV tells Lebanese Church workers

HARISSA, Lebanon (CNS)—At a shrine topped by a 28-foot-tall statue of Our Lady of Lebanon, Pope Leo XIV listened to stories of unshakable faith amid war, injustice and suffering.

The pope began on Dec. 1 at the tomb of St. Charbel Maklūf at the Monastery of St. Maron in Annaya, a place known for its atmosphere of silent prayer, especially in difficult moments.

Despite intermittent rain, thousands of people gathered along the road leading to the monastery, tossing rose petals or rice as a sign of welcome.

After entrusting the Catholics of Lebanon and the entire country to St. Charbel’s care, Pope Leo went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in Harissa and listened, like St. Charbel often did, to the cries of people’s hearts.

Father Youhanna-Fouad Fahed, a married Maronite Catholic priest and pastor of a parish near the Syrian border, spoke first. His village welcomed Syrian refugees from the civil war in their country that began in 2011 and was repeatedly struck by shelling from the Syrian side of the border. In December 2024, when the Syrian civil war officially ended, more refugees came.

“The collection bag during Sunday Mass revealed to me a first, silent cry: I noticed Syrian currency inside: It was an offering mingled with pain,” Father Fahed told the pope.

“Alone, feeling my people’s suffering smothered by fear, the misery concealed

by the shame of asking for help, I went in search of them,” the priest said. Some told him they had fled to protect their daughters from forced marriage, and many arrived in Lebanon hoping to eventually migrate to Europe, even if that meant “entrusting their dreams to migrant smugglers who stole their savings.”

All Father Fahed asked of Pope Leo was a word of comfort so the people would not feel forgotten and alone.

Sister Dima Chebib is a member of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and director of a school in Baalbeck, which is considered by many to be a stronghold of the Hezbollah militia and has been struck repeatedly by Israeli shelling in the past year.

While many people fled the town, she said, the priests and religious of the Melkite Catholic diocese “decided to stay and welcome the refugee families—Christian and Muslim—who came seeking safety and peace. We shared bread, fear and hope. We lived together, prayed together and supported one another in fraternity and trust.”

“In the heart of war,” she told the pope, “I discovered the peace of Christ. And I give thanks to God for this grace of remaining, loving and serving to the end.”

Loren Capobres, who came to Lebanon from the Philippines as a domestic worker and now works with Jesuit Refugee Service, described the people she helps as “people who had left everything behind—broken not just by war, but by betrayal and abandonment.”

Vincentian Father Charbel Fayad, a prison chaplain, told the pope of the repentance and conversion of prisoners who are amazed anyone cares enough to minister to them.

“Even in the darkness of the cells, the light of Christ never goes out,” Father Charbel said.

Pope Leo responded to the testimonies by saying that just as for St. Charbel in the 19th century, so today “it is in being with Mary at the foot of Jesus’ cross that our prayer—that invisible bridge which unites hearts—gives us the strength to continue to hope and work, even when surrounded by the sound of weapons and when the very necessities of daily life become a challenge.”

Father Toni Elias, the Maronite pastor of Rmaych, near the Israeli border, did not speak to the pope, but told reporters, “We have basically been living in war for the past two, two and a half years but never without hope.”

The visit of the pope, he said, is confirmation for believers that “what we have lived”—the fear and the hope combined—“has not been in vain.”

Pope Leo’s speech to government and civic leaders on Nov. 30 had focused on the Lebanese people and did not mention Israel at all. But Father Elias said that was “beautiful” because peace and harmony among Muslims, Christians and Druze “are our roots, our culture. That is Lebanon.”

Meeting the country’s bishops, priests, religious and pastoral workers—a crowd of about 2,000 people—Pope Leo told them, “If we wish to build peace, we must anchor ourselves to heaven and, firmly set in that direction.”

“Let us love without being afraid of losing those things which pass away and let us give without measure,” the pope said. “From these roots, strong and deep like those of cedars, love grows and with God’s help, concrete and lasting works of solidarity come to life.” †

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Editorial

Let us prepare our hearts this Advent for the birth of Jesus

Vigilance, which is defined as “keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties,” is a word we become familiar with during Advent.

But as Catholics, being *vigilant* in Advent can be defined as a time of deliberate preparation, to be watchful and attentive in a spiritual sense, anticipating the arrival of Jesus with loving anticipation instead of fear.

Pope Benedict XVI said as much in December 2012 while praying the *Angelus*.

The pontiff said that the community of believers is “a sign of the love of God, his justice that is present in the history but that is not yet fully realized, and that we therefore must always be waiting and seeking it with courage and patience.”

It is a time to make room for Jesus and not become distracted by trivial things.

As we recently ended a liturgical year and began another liturgical year with Advent, we could argue trivial matters were present on social media, the airwaves and everywhere we turned, helping us to become distracted as we approached this holy time of year.

But the seeds of distraction were planted long before then.

The message our secularist society continues to send us each year is crystal-clear: Let’s zip through Halloween and barely clean our plates from our Thanksgiving gathering, hit the stores and the “can’t miss” sales on Black Friday, and jump into online shopping on Cyber Monday.

As Catholics, something tells us things should be different—much different—than the way this time of year is portrayed. We know there are much more important things than shopping, whether it be in stores or online. The noise and impatience caused by the holiday chaos, we believe, fails to assist us in our spiritual lives as we prepare for Christ’s birth.

Now that December and a new Church year are upon us, we need to remember Advent invites us to prepare our hearts for Jesus by staying awake and paying attention to the things that matter most.

This season calls us to a renewed sense of wonder, beauty and peace. It is what we long for—the truth of our existence revealed in the most unremarkable way, the birth of a little child, the most vulnerable and innocent of all God’s creatures.

As we continue our Advent journey and prepare for Christmas, let us, as St. John Paul II said, “start afresh from Christ” by building on our lives of faith.

Find the grace to detach from bad habits. Let go of small sins you know are wrong.

Silence, we believe, must be an integral part of Advent, too. Why not cut out some of the things that make noise? It could be social media, podcasts, TV, radio or even unnecessary conversations.

In that spirit of silence, why not visit a parish that has perpetual eucharistic adoration or regular times for adoration and spend time in the presence of our Lord?



A woman prays during Mass on the first Sunday of Advent at Sacred Heart Church in Prescott, Ariz., on Nov. 30. The season of Advent is the Church’s preparation for the commemoration of Christ’s birth. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

In an Advent reflection offered a few years ago, Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn., said eucharistic adoration “is a particularly rich form of spiritual waiting.”

He continued, “As you keep vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, bring to Christ some problem or dilemma that you have been fretting over, and then say: ‘Lord, I’m waiting for you to solve this, to show me the way out, the way forward. I’ve been running, planning, worrying, but now I’m going to let you work.’ Then, throughout Advent, watch attentively for signs.”

Spiritual reading could be a wonderful practice to add to your daily Advent plans. Reflecting on the day’s Mass readings is a great option—Scripture is God’s love letter to his people—and while you’re at it, why not try to include attending Mass beyond Sunday during this liturgical season?

Our Advent practices could also include making time to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. As you’ll read on page 15 of this week’s issue of *The Criterion*, the opportunities to go to confession are plentiful throughout parishes in central and southern Indiana. Clip it out or visit our Advent website at www.archindy.org/advent if you’d like the most up-to-date schedule.

As Catholics, we are a people of hope. Let us improve our disposition to make this season more fruitful. We pray: *Come, Holy Spirit. Guide our minds and hearts this Advent as we wait patiently for the birth of the Christ Child, Jesus, our Savior, the cause of our rejoicing.*

Maranatha! *Come, Lord Jesus!*!”

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Greg Erlandson

A little soap for the nation’s potty mouth

I tasted soap once, and it was enough.

At a rather tender age, I must have sassed my mom. I don’t remember the crime, but I remember the punishment: Getting my mouth washed out with soap. It left an impression.

As we enter the Christmas season this year, I can’t help but think Santa Claus could do worse than leave a bar of soap in our nation’s collective stocking.

On the airwaves, from our comedians, from our politicians, even from our president, there are f-bombs galore. The same with many TV series and movies we stream. The minority leader of the U.S. Senate released a video message during the government shutdown that used the word as a point of emphasis, as if somehow the rest of his message was not enough.

Take the example of John Oliver. On his weekly HBO show, he can do impressive reporting on such topics as public media and Medicare. But to listen to him, you must wade through a deluge of what now are quaintly called “obscenities.” The deluge doesn’t add anything to the reporting, but it seems to impart some sort of seal of authenticity on the content and is usually rewarded with laughter and applause from the audience.

There is a coarsening of our public speech that is impacting all of us. One hears it on public transportation or phone conversations had in public. One hears it from parents talking to their children and children talking to their parents. It has become acceptable as mainstream discourse, a kind of linguistic punctuation point to communicate anger or enthusiasm or simply astonishment.

This coarsening of our public discourse has seeped into our politics. When the president of the United States called a reporter he didn’t like “piggy,” the White House defended his insult as “frankness.”

Letter to the Editor

Reader: Bishop Perry’s column offers a timely reminder regarding voting rights and Catholic social teaching

Thank you for the guest column in the Nov. 21 issue of *The Criterion* from Chicago Bishop Joseph N. Perry regarding voting rights and Catholic social teaching.

The U.S. Supreme Court is deciding a challenge to the seminal Voting Rights Act, a hallmark of our country’s civil rights history. If it vacates the important effects of the law, then legal protections for African Americans and other voters may not be enforced, or left to each state.

Insults, whether on our children’s playgrounds or in social media postings or in the White House press room, are not examples of frankness. They are simply insults inappropriate for anyone.

The challenge, of course, is that one cannot simply mandate that everyone else stop using these words, these slurs and insults. And when one is swimming in a sea of verbal sewage, it is hard not to pick up the stink. I speak from uncomfortable experience, for I’ve found that the more I’m exposed to such language, the more I am likely to use it in moments of anger, enthusiasm or astonishment.

Last Lent, it was even one of my resolutions to dial back on what is even more quaintly called “cuss words.” It was a resolve I struggled with. But since it is increasingly difficult to avoid its usage by others, the solution most of us are left with is how to change our own speech.

That may mean recovering expressions of anger, enthusiasm or astonishment from an older, more genteel period. We could start a national movement to bring back “Holy cow,” or “Judas priest” (my dad’s favorite) or “golly” (my uncle’s). Even the use of the word “frickin” could be a transitional step back, as could be “shoot.”

We need a verbal equivalent of the “#@%&*!” that one finds on the comics page. In the movie *The Christmas Story*, Ralphie’s dad muttered a string of unintelligible syllables signifying his deep displeasure and was the funnier for it.

This Advent, as we barrel toward Christmas, let’s make an early resolution to dial back the potty mouth. If you don’t suffer from this disease, you are blessed. For the rest of us, well, good golly, what better time to start?

(*Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on X @GregErlandson.*) †

Letters Policy

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

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

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

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). In order to encourage opinions from a variety of readers, frequent writers will ordinarily be limited to one letter every three months. Concise letters (usually less than 300 words) are more likely to be printed.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Blessed Mother and John the Baptist prepare us for Christ's coming

Pope Benedict XVI once wrote that the two great figures of Advent are the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist. Both prepare us for the coming of Christ—Mary, by her wholehearted acceptance of God's will for her, and John, by his prophetic witness and his baptism of repentance.

According to the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Advent (Mt 3:1-12):

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. (Mt 3:1-6)

St. Matthew tells us that John is the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. Although he was a member

of the priestly caste, he renounced his privileges and chose a life of prayer and asceticism in the desert. He announced the coming of One far greater than himself, and he urged all who faithfully awaited the coming Messiah to acknowledge their sins and seek God's forgiveness.

Sunday's first reading (Is 11:1-10) gives us a taste of Isaiah's prophetic vision:

He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.

The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea. (Is 11:4-9)

We long for the peace that only Christ can bring, and so we are keenly aware that we must pray, and work, for the advent of the Lord of both justice and mercy. We believe that he came among us 2,000 years ago, that he is present with us now (especially in the Holy Eucharist), and that he will come again to fulfill his promise of redemption for all who wait for him in joyful hope. John is his herald; he urges us to prepare for his coming.

On Monday, Dec. 8, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the new Eve, the mother of all the living, and the only one who, by the grace of God, was born without sin. Her response to the angel is the model for all of us who aspire to be faithful missionary disciples of Jesus Christ: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

John challenges us to acknowledge our sins and repent. Mary shows us the way. By surrendering self-will to the holy will of God, and by offering ourselves completely to the Lord as instruments of his peace, we can ready

ourselves for his coming—past, present and future.

In the second reading for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Eph 1:3-6, 11-12), St. Paul offers a blessing that affirms our special election as sons and daughters of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ":

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love, he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. (Eph 1:3-6)

This is our unshakable Advent hope: That Christ will come again and allow us to assume our rightful places as sisters and brothers in the one Family of God.

May the vision shared by our Mother Mary and St. John the Baptist come true for each of us this Advent season. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

La Virgen y san Juan Bautista nos preparan para la venida de Cristo

El papa Benedicto XVI escribió en una ocasión que las dos grandes figuras del Adviento son la Santísima Virgen María y san Juan Bautista. Ambos nos preparan para la venida de Cristo: María, por su aceptación de todo corazón de la voluntad de Dios para ella, y Juan, por su testimonio profético y su bautismo de arrepentimiento.

Según el Evangelio del segundo domingo de Adviento (Mt 3:1-12):

Por aquel tiempo comenzó Juan el Bautista a predicar en el desierto de Judea. Decía: "Conviértanse, porque ya está cerca el reino de los cielos." A este Juan se había referido el profeta Isaías cuando dijo: "Se oye una voz; alguien clama en el desierto: "¡Preparen el camino del Señor; abran sendas rectas para él!"

Juan iba vestido de pelo de camello, llevaba un cinturón de cuero y se alimentaba de saltamontes y miel silvestre. Acudían a él gentes de Jerusalén, de toda Judea y de toda la ribera del Jordán. Confesaban sus pecados, y Juan los bautizaba en las aguas del Jordán. (Mt 3:1-6)

San Mateo nos dice que en Juan se cumple una profecía del Antiguo Testamento. Aunque pertenecía a

la casta sacerdotal, renunció a sus privilegios y eligió una vida de oración y ascetismo en el desierto. Anunció la venida de Uno mucho más grande que él e instó a todos los que esperaban fielmente al Mesías venidero a reconocer sus pecados y buscar el perdón de Dios.

La primera lectura del domingo (Is 11:1-10) nos ofrece una muestra de la visión profética de Isaías:

Herirá al violento con la vara de su boca, con el soplo de sus labios matará al malvado; la justicia será su ceniidor, la lealtad rodeará su cintura. El lobo vivirá con el cordero, la pantera se echará con el cabrito, novillo y león pacen juntos, y un muchacho será su pastor. La vaca pastará con el oso, sus crías se echarán juntas; el león comerá paja como el buey. Jugará el lactante junto a la cueva del áspid, el niño hurgará en el agujero de la víbora. Nadie hará daños ni estragos en todo mi monte santo, pues rebosa el país conocimiento del Señor como las aguas colman el mar. (Is 11:4-9)

Puesto que anhelamos la paz que solo Cristo puede traernos, somos plenamente conscientes de que debemos rezar y esforzarnos por el

advenimiento del Señor de justicia y misericordia. Creemos que estuvo entre nosotros hace 2,000 años, que está aquí ahora (especialmente en la Sagrada Eucaristía) y que vendrá de nuevo para cumplir su promesa de redención para todos los que lo esperan con alegre esperanza. Juan es su heraldo y nos insta a prepararnos para su venida.

El domingo 8 de diciembre celebraremos la Solemnidad de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen, la nueva Eva, la madre de todos los vivos, y la única que, por la gracia de Dios, nació sin pecado. Su respuesta al ángel es el modelo para todos los que aspiramos a ser fieles discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo: "He aquí la esclava del Señor. Hágase en mí según tu palabra" (Lc 1:38).

Juan nos reta a reconocer nuestros pecados y a arrepentirnos y María nos muestra el camino. Al doblegar la voluntad propia a la de Dios y ofrecernos por completo al Señor como instrumentos de su paz, podemos prepararnos para su venida, pasada, presente y futura.

En la segunda lectura de la solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción (Ef 1:3-6, 11-12), san

Pablo nos plantea una bendición que afirma nuestra especial elección como hijos e hijas del "Dios y Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo":

Alabemos a Dios, Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, que por medio de Cristo nos ha bendecido con toda suerte de bienes espirituales y celestiales. Él nos ha elegido en la persona de Cristo antes de crear el mundo, para que nos mantengamos sin mancha ante sus ojos, como corresponde a consagrados a él. Amorosamente nos ha destinado de antemano, y por pura iniciativa de su benevolencia, a ser adoptados como hijos suyos mediante Jesucristo. De este modo, la bondad tan generosamente derramada sobre nosotros por medio de su Hijo querido, se convierte en himno de alabanza a su gloria. (Ef 1:3-6)

Esta es nuestra fe inquebrantable en el Adviento: Que Cristo vuelva y nos permita asumir los lugares que nos corresponden como hermanas y hermanos en la única Familia de Dios.

Que la visión compartida por nuestra Madre María y san Juan Bautista se haga realidad para cada uno de nosotros en el tiempo de Adviento. †

Events Calendar

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

December 9

Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Taizé Prayer at the Woods**, 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence, virtual option available. Information: Taize.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952.

December 13

Ars Café at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, 23345 Gavin Lane, Bright. **Feast of St. Lucy**, 6-8 p.m., hot chocolate and cookies available, freewill donations accepted. Information: brightlightsindiana.com, 812-537-3992.

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Christmas Fun at the Woods, 1:30-4:30 p.m., crafts, alpaca visits, wagon rides, storytelling, face painting, a bake sale, cake walk, free, suggested donation of \$5 per vehicle. Information: spsmw.org/event, 812-535-2946, lrobinette@spsmw.org.

December 14

Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Church,

7225 Southeastern Ave., Indianapolis. **Carols and Classics with the Vickery Family**, 4 p.m., Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra violinist Peter Vickery, his wife pianist Joyce Vickery and their family present classic and original carols for the Christmas season, freewill offerings accepted. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 15
Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove.

Annual Christmas Concert, 5 p.m., donations accepted. Information: 317-784-5454, sr.sheila@holynname.cc.

December 15

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Women's Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online every third Monday of the month, free. Information, registration: 317-261-3381, tinyurl.com/SrTheaBowmanGroup, blackcatholicministry@archindy.org.

December 17

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1752 Scheller Lane, New Albany. **Mass of the Longest Night**, 7 p.m., for those experiencing grief and loss in the holiday season, free. Information:

812-945-1647, jfey@olphna.org.

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439, catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 18

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

December 19

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Church, 23345 Gavin Lane, Bright. **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra concert**, 6:30 p.m., freewill donations accepted. Information: brightlightsindiana.com, 812-537-3992.

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis.

Catholic Business Exchange, Carmel Civility Foundation, Inc. founder, president and CEO Jeff Worrell presenting "Project Civility: Making the World a Better Place—One Community at a Time," rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register

by 4 p.m. on Dec. 16. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

December 27

All Saints Parish, St. Martin Campus, 8044 Yorkridge Road, Guilford. **Holy Innocents Mass**, 4 p.m., healing Mass for families or individuals who have lost a young child due to miscarriage, stillbirth, illness or any type of loss, RSVP online by Dec. 19. Information, rsvp: tinyurl.com/holyinnocents2025, 812-576-4302.

December 28

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Filipino Mass**, Divine Mercy 3 p.m., rosary 3:10 p.m., Mass 3:30 p.m. with homily in English, every fourth Sunday. Information: mariasolito@yahoo.com.

2026

January 7-April 22

St. Jude Parish, Guerin Room, 5353 McFarland Road, Indianapolis. **Surviving Divorce Program**, 6:30-9 p.m., three Wednesdays a month for a total of 12 sessions (Jan. 7, 14, 28, Feb. 4, 11, 25, March 4, 11, 25, April 8, 15, 22), \$30, scholarships available.

Registration, information: tinyurl.com/survivingdivorce2026, 317-786-4371, pcollins@stjudeindy.org.

January 9-11

Beavercreek, Ohio. **Retrouvaille Retreat**, for those in a struggling marriage, location disclosed upon registering, \$400 per couple, register by Jan. 2. Information, registration: 513-486-6222, 3030r@helpourmarriage.org, helpourmarriage.org.

January 22

Indiana Convention Center, Sagamore Ballroom, 100 S. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis. **Indiana Youth Rally for Life**, 9-11 a.m., for youths in grades eight-12, Daughters of Mary of Nazareth founder Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, music by Nico Cabrera, confession available, free, youth group leaders must register by Jan. 15 at archindym.com/youthrally-for-life, sponsored by archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry. Information: 317-456-7076, rgilman@archindy.org.

Indiana Convention Center, Hall J, 100 S. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass for Life with Indiana bishops**, 11:30 a.m., all welcome, sponsored by archdiocesan

Office of Human Life and Dignity. Information: 317-236-1543, bvarick@archindy.org.

Indiana March for Life, Indianapolis: 1 p.m. pre-rally, Georgia and Capitol streets, Indianapolis; 1:45-2:30 p.m. march from Georgia and Illinois streets to Indiana Statehouse, 200 W. Washington St.; post-rally at south Statehouse steps, 2:30-3 p.m.; all welcome, sponsored by Right to Life of Indianapolis. Information: 317-582-1526, info@rtli.org.

January 24, Feb. 7

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, visit with elder sisters and help them with activities such as Bingo, exercise, baking and more. Information, registration: teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org, jluna@spsmw.org, 361-500-9505.

January 28

St. Nicholas School, 6459 E. St. Nicholas Dr., Sunman. **Open House**, 5:30-7 p.m., free. Information: 812-623-2348, schooloffice@stnicholas-sunman.org. †

Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/retreats.

December 12-14

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Being A Eucharistic People: The Embodied Presence of Christ**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

December 13

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mount St. Francis.

Advent Retreat: A Journey of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Mount Saint Francis associate director Regina Proctor presenting, includes coffee, pastries and

lunch, \$60. Information, registration: 812-923-8817, mountsaintfrancis.org/advent-retreat.

2026

January 9, Feb. 20

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

January 9-11

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Young Adult Retreat**, for ages 18-35,

Benedictine Father Simon Herrmann presenting, \$50 single, \$100 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

January 10

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Mend Your Heart with Gratitude, Renewal**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Jesuit Father Ed Kinerk presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

January 15, Feb. 19

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, includes

room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

January 16-18

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Biblical Mercy: Matthew's Gospel as an Encounter with Jesus' Love**, Father Zachary Samples, Diocese of Springfield, Ill., presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

January 15, Feb. 19

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Beauty of the Sacraments Retreat**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Catholic Answers apologist Karlo Broussard presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple,

commuter \$90, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$400 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

February 13-15

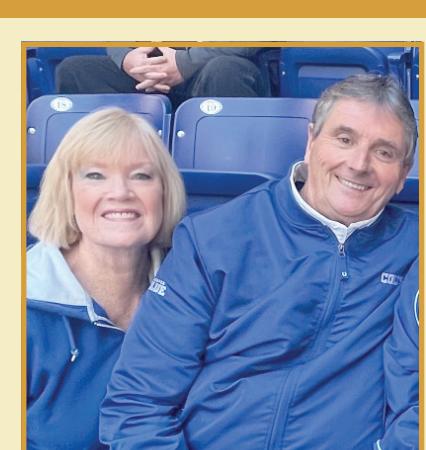
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Seasons of Us: Renewing Marriage Through Every Stage of Life**, married couples retreat, Josh and Angie Greulich presenting, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Wedding Anniversaries

MIKE AND CATHY (COMMONS) LOVELL, members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 6.

The couple was married in St. Therese of the Child Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 6, 1975.

They have two children: Kevin and Nick Lovell. The couple also has four grandchildren. †



Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to cutt.ly/anniversaries or call 317-236-1585.

Filipino Simbang Gabi Mass novena to take place in two churches on Dec. 15-23

Two archdiocesan churches, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis and St. Margaret Mary in Terre Haute, will host a series of nine Masses leading up to Christmas as part of *Simbang Gabi*, a traditional Filipino Advent devotion, from Dec. 15-23.

"*Simbang Gabi*" is Filipino for "night Mass." Traditionally, the Masses take place in the nine evenings prior to Christmas, although early morning Masses are acceptable before the sun rises.

The Filipino Eucharistic Family of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral will host its *Simbang Gabi* celebrations at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis according to the following schedule:

—Dec. 15: 6:30 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Chapel
—Dec. 16-20: 6:30 p.m. cathedral
—Dec. 21: 6:30 p.m., cathedral

followed by dinner reception at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 22: 6 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Chapel

—Dec. 23: 6:30 p.m., cathedral, followed by dinner in rectory.

For more information e-mail Sherry Legaspi at sherrylegaspi@gmail.com or 317-332-9564.

On the same dates, the *Simbang Gabi* Mass novena will be celebrated at St. Margaret Mary Church, 2405 S. Seventh St. in Terre Haute, starting at 6 p.m. Masses will be in English with elements of Tagalog, including songs. A collection of food items for St. Patrick's Soup Kitchen will be collected at each Mass. Contact the parish office for the list of food to bring for specific days.

For more information, contact the parish at 812-232-8518. †

Parishes to host annual Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations

Criterion staff report

The following Masses and special events for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe throughout central and southern Indiana were reported to *The Criterion*.

American Martyrs Parish, 270 S. Bond St., Scottsburg

—Dec. 6: 4 p.m. dancing, 4:30 p.m. rosary, 5 p.m. Mass, 6 p.m. dinner with Mariachi performance

Holy Spirit Parish, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 11: 7-8 p.m. rosary, 8-8:30 p.m. Holy Spirit Youth *Rondalla*, 8:30-9 p.m. apparition presentation, 9-9:30 p.m. dancing, 9:30-10 p.m. serenade 10-11 p.m. Mass, 11-11:30 p.m. Ohio Dance, 11:30 p.m. *mañanitas* with the *Cristo Vive* Choir

—Dec. 12: 7-8 p.m. Mass, 8-9 p.m. rosary, 9-9:30 p.m. dance, 9:30 p.m. gathering in Early Hall with raffles

Immaculate Heart of Mary, 5692 Central Ave., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 13: 5:30 p.m. Mass followed by *Las Posadas*, including traditional food, beverages and music

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, 1840 E. 8th St., Jeffersonville.

—Dec. 11: 5:15 a.m. 40 hours of adoration begins, 9 a.m., 1 p.m. rosary, 3 p.m. Divine Mercy Chaplet, 7 p.m. praise and worship

—Dec. 12: 9:15 a.m.-9:15 p.m. (12 hours of) confessions, 9:15 p.m. Benediction

St. Ambrose Parish, 325 S. Chestnut St., Seymour.

—Dec. 12: 5 a.m. serenade, 8:45 a.m. Mass, 6 p.m. Mass

St. Ann Parish, 6350 S. Mooresville Road, Indianapolis.

—Dec. 12: 7 p.m. Mass followed by celebration with singing, dancing, music and food.



National Catholic Youth Conference participants hold up a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe while celebrating after the end of the event's closing Mass on Nov. 22 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, St. Mary Campus, 720 N. "A" St., Richmond.

—Dec. 12: 6:30 p.m. Mass, followed by social in school gym

SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi School Gymnasium, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood.

—Dec. 12: 8 a.m. Our Lady of Guadalupe presentation by children from St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis

St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 11: 7 p.m. rosary, 8 p.m. apparitions play, 9-10 p.m. *Danzas Guadalupanas*, 10-11:50 p.m. Music with Mariachi, groups and choirs, midnight *mañanitas* and Mass

—Dec. 12: 6 p.m. Bilingual Mass/

Quinceañeras offering flowers, 8 p.m. Mass in Spanish with blessing of children wearing St. Juan Diego and other costumes after liturgy

St. Joseph Parish, 125 E. Broadway St., Shelbyville.

—Dec. 12: 6 p.m. rosary, 6:30 p.m. Aztec dance, 7 p.m. Mass, 8 p.m. apparitions re-enactment, 8:30 p.m. *serenata* followed by fellowship

St. Louis Parish, 13 St. Louis Place, Batesville.

—Dec. 14: 3 p.m. rosary, 5 p.m. Mass followed by music and food

St. Mary Parish, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 11: 8 p.m. outdoor procession starting at Monument Circle, 9 p.m.

rosary, 9:45 p.m. *danza*, 10:30 p.m. apparitions re-enactment, 11 p.m. Mass

—Dec. 12: midnight *mariachi*

St. Monica Parish, 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis.

—Dec. 11: 7 p.m. rosary, image presentation, Aztec dancers, songs, play, apparition re-enactments, 11 p.m. Mass followed by *mañanitas* and Aztec dancers

—Dec. 12: 5:45 p.m. Mass, Aztec dancers, followed by procession and celebration dinner

St. Philip Neri Parish, 550 N. Rural St., Indianapolis.

—Dec. 11: 6 p.m. rosary, 7 p.m. Mass followed by procession and dinner celebration with *mañanitas* and apparitions re-enactment. †

Record numbers of women are visiting pregnancy centers, study shows

(OSV News)—In 2024, pregnancy centers saw more new clients, provided more medical care and distributed more material goods than ever before, according to a new report from the Charlotte Lozier Institute (CLI).

Between free medical care, education services such as childbirth classes, and items such as diapers, baby clothes and car seats, pregnancy centers provided an estimated \$452 million to families in need.

Centers also are increasingly upping the number of services they offer, including abortion pill reversals, testing

and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, childbirth classes and after-abortion support.

"As permissive abortion policies continue to de-prioritize women's health, CLI's results demonstrate that pregnancy centers found in communities across the country stand ready to provide focused, quality, wide-ranging, life-affirming care," said Moira Gaul, a Charlotte Lozier Institute associate scholar and the project manager of the report.

"The fact that there has been a net increase in the number of U.S. abortions leading up to and post-*Dobbs*, indicates a greater need for pregnancy support in America," she said.

Dobbs is the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. It overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the court's 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. *Dobbs* returned abortion policy to the states.

"Our study shows an encouraging trend: More women and men are embracing

the hope and help they find at pregnancy centers, allowing them to courageously choose life for their children," Gaul added.

The 2025 National Pregnancy Center Report, released on Nov. 17, is the fourth national study Charlotte Lozier has released since 2017. To conduct the analysis, the institute partnered with pregnancy center organizations including Care Net, Heartbeat International, National Institute of Family and Life Advocates and Focus on the Family Option Ultrasound Program.

The report found that the nation's 2,775 pregnancy centers saw more than a million new clients last year. Those clients are increasingly tapping into material support—a 48% increase since 2022.

The results highlight the findings of a separate Charlotte Lozier Institute peer-reviewed study that found that 60% of women with a history of abortion would have preferred to give birth had they received either more emotional support or had more financial security.

Gaul believes even more clinics and services are needed.

"The professional and practical care that the pregnancy centers are offering are helping to fill a health care gap with their medical services, the vast majority of which are free or very low-cost, and they're obviously addressing emotional support with their whole-person care," she told OSV News. "We know that communities benefit from pregnancy centers. The maternal and child health benefits of centers are tremendous."

The report also noted that the number of maternity homes has increased from 458 in 2023 to a total of 498 the following year. More clinics are utilizing an educational video streaming service called BrightCourse

and a texting platform called HopeSync that helps pregnancy centers connect more effectively with clients.

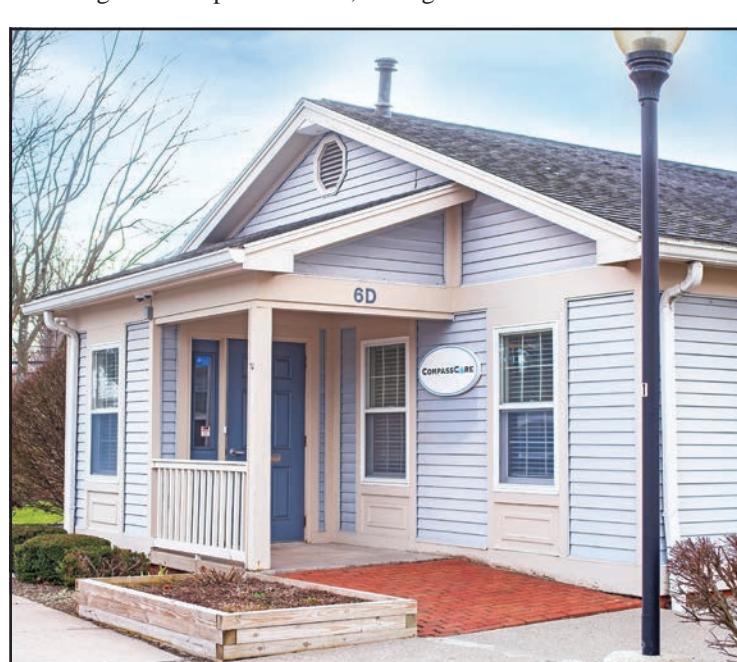
Organizations such as Focus on the Family and the Knights of Columbus help provide millions in needed funds and new ultrasound machines to pregnancy centers nationwide. While a few states are increasing or maintaining some level of funding for pregnancy centers, others are hostile to pro-life efforts.

Since the original national study was published eight years ago, there has been growth in many areas. New clients have steadily increased from 883,700 in 2017 to now more than 1 million. The number of pregnancy center locations included in each study has increased from 2,600 in 2017 to 2,775 in 2024. The number of ultrasound exams performed went from 400,100 in 2017 to 636,000 in 2024, a 60% increase.

More clients are utilizing STI testing services, too, with nearly a quarter million tests performed in 2024 representing a \$12 million value, the study noted.

"As the landscape of abortion in America following the *Dobbs* decision has rapidly changed, pregnancy centers continue to offer steadfast, professional care to women and families," Karen Czarnecki, Charlotte Lozier Institute's executive director, said in a press release on the new report.

"Rising client visits and overall satisfaction are undeniable proof these centers are improving lives," Czarnecki said. "It's imperative that pregnancy centers continue to increase the availability of services—walking alongside women, men and families to provide love, education and support so they can courageously choose life."



A CompassCare pregnancy center in Rochester, N.Y., is pictured on Jan. 3. CompassCare is a network of faith-based pregnancy centers offering limited medical services across New York state. In 2024, pregnancy centers saw more new clients, provided more medical care and distributed more material goods than ever before, according to a new report released on Nov. 17 by the Charlotte Lozier Institute. (OSV News photo/Annemarie Nordquist)

MIRACLE

continued from page 1

'I started to plan for the end of my life'

The heart of her story begins with the daunting, two-part reality check about beating the odds that Yetter received from Dr. Mohamed Hegazi, her physician at the University of Louisville Health–Brown Cancer Center in Kentucky.

First, he told her she would need a stem-cell transplant. Then, if a match was found, she would need someone to care for her for 70 days in isolation after the transplant.

"He said he would do everything to help me live with a transplant, but there is another half of the equation—the caregiving when you go home," Yetter says. "He told me, 'You cannot be alone at home after hospitalization for a transplant.'

Yetter doesn't have children, and she knew her siblings were either too old or too far away to help her for so long. So, she asked Hegazi about other options.

"When I asked about nursing agencies, he said it was out of the question to have an agency of nurses' aides come into my house around the clock because I was prone for possible infection. And hiring an individual from an agency to stay with me 24 hours a day for the few months of isolation would be very expensive.

"It all didn't seem to be in my reach to have this transplant. And I started to plan for the end of my life. I had my attorney draw up a will. I bought a plot in the cemetery of our church and a headstone. I was going to try to make the most of my life, but I was preparing for the worst."

Yet, that's when her miracle of friendship, faith, love and hope started to unfold.

'They continued to extend my life'

An Episcopalian for most of her life, Yetter was invited by her best friend, Kathy Wesson, to join a Bible study group at St. John Paul II Parish in 2021. Soon, Yetter was part of one group on Mondays and another on Tuesdays.

During the months of sharing that followed, she felt embraced by these women, which inspired her to enter into full communion of the Catholic Church in 2022. And when the news of her cancer diagnosis spread to the groups, their faith and their caring quickly enveloped her.

Their response began when Yetter had radiation therapy and chemotherapy infusions to fight the cancer as she waited for the possibility of a transplant.

"These wonderful ladies didn't want me to die without a chance to be saved," Yetter says. "They started to think of a plan to take me to my appointments. After I received my appointment times and dates, the dates would go out to the groups, and the girls would volunteer their time and rotate the responsibility of driving me to my scheduled appointments."

"That continued to extend my life as I waited for a possible transplant and somehow a caregiver."

The need for a caregiver was resolved on an October evening in 2024, a moment that still overwhelms Yetter with emotion and gratitude.

'I couldn't believe anyone would do such a thing'

She received a phone call from Dr. Lynell Chamberlain, a retired physician, Yetter's confirmation sponsor and a member of both Bible study groups.

"When she called, these were her exact words, 'I think I have a plan for you,'" Yetter recalls. "She asked me to think about staying in her house instead of her coming to my house. She said, 'You would have your own room, your own bathroom, and there would be an exit door where you could walk on the deck and do your thing outside.'"

Yetter pauses as emotion fills her again about that memory.

"I couldn't believe anyone would do such a thing and be so dedicated. And this is the respect for life she has. She's just a wonderful person."

Chamberlain downplays the praise.

"If you take seriously Jesus' message to his disciples, it's basically, 'You are here to serve others,'" she says. "If there's a need, simply go ahead and address it. Don't sit around and wait for somebody else to do it."

Actually, Chamberlain was sitting around when she made the life-changing decision to invite Yetter into her home.

"I was sitting and praying about it one morning," Chamberlain recalls. "I was looking around my bedroom. It's not huge, but it's a generous-sized bedroom that has its own private bathroom, and its own entrance, so you don't have to go through the rest of the house. I was thinking, 'It's a shame she doesn't have something like this.' It was one of those moments where you strike your forehead and say, 'Well, she could.' So, I set about seeing if she had any interest."

Yetter did. Still, the plan to provide help during isolation was just one part of the equation for Yetter. Months passed as she waited and hoped for a match so she could have the stem-cell transplant.

'The doctor was so excited for me'

"These girls were doing so much for me, and my body is failing. And this can't go on," Yetter says about those months of waiting, choking up again. "I was getting very nervous there wouldn't be a match, and all their efforts would be in vain."

"Then the word came out that there was a donor. The girls' prayers were answered, and so were mine."

She received news of the match in April—a match that was everything Yetter and Dr. Hegazi had hoped for.

"A perfect match for a stem-cell transplant for someone who has AML, according to the doctor, would be a young male in his twenties with the same make-up as mine," Yetter notes. "My direct family members were too old or too distant down the line of relatives to qualify. I had to go through an international donor list to find exactly what the doctor had wanted, if there was such a donor. And it happened. Exactly what the doctor had wished for. A full match."

"A full match is rare and hard to come by. But this young man and I have the same chromosome make-up. It was amazing. The doctor was so excited for me. This also was something that my sisters in faith were praying for."

Yetter had to endure and pass medical, physical and mental exams to determine if her body could accept the transplant. Once she did, the procedure was scheduled for April 25 of this year, five days after Easter.

On the day before she went to the

'These girls selected their favorite psalms out of the Bible, wrote them on a little piece of paper and put them into one of those large plastic Easter egg shells. ... The gesture was very symbolic to me. Jesus was resurrected, and I was going to my own transformation.'

—Elizabeth Yetter



Elizabeth Yetter, center, poses with Dr. Mohamed Hegazi and Dr. Lynell Chamberlain, two physicians who have been instrumental in her care concerning her cancer diagnosis. (Submitted photo)

hospital—Easter Sunday—the women in her Bible study groups gave her a gift to help sustain her in the days ahead.

'The promise of a new life'

"These girls selected their favorite psalms out of the Bible, wrote them on a little piece of paper and put them into one of those large plastic Easter egg shells, the ones that come apart," Yetter says. "The gesture was very symbolic to me. Jesus was resurrected, and I was going to my own transformation. A new life. It was just a message from God, I believe."

Yetter also drew strength from her favorite Bible verse, Jeremiah 29:11. "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord. Plans for your welfare and not your woe. So as to give you a future of hope."

On the day after Easter, Yetter entered the hospital for three days of chemotherapy, one day of radiation and the transplant on the fifth day. A month of isolation in the hospital followed. During those days, the outreach of her Bible study friends continued.

"They sent me links to songs and sent me cards in the hospital," she says. "And every day while I was in the hospital, I'd take out one of the psalms they gave me, take a picture of it, and then send it back to them and thank them so much for their blessings and their prayers."

"These girls are so wonderful."

Then came her release from the hospital to begin 70 days of isolation in the home of Chamberlain—another time of generosity and unexpected grace.

'It was exactly what I needed'

"In those days, you go through this transformation of your body trying to adjust to your new DNA and your new blood type," Yetter says. "Lynell knew all of this as a critical care doctor."

"But she had never been on the other side of the spectrum as a nurse. She had to be instructed how to use an infusion pump. She was giving me doses of medication through the pump. It was a crash course for her. She knew I didn't have much of an appetite, that I was always tired, and to watch out for infection. I couldn't believe anyone would be so dedicated."

As good as Chamberlain's care was, so was the setting of her home for Yetter's recovery.

"She lives on a farm. She has 60 beautiful acres, trees and a creek. She has goats and chickens, dogs and cats. It was so pleasant. It was exactly what I needed, what my body needed."

Then came a time that was hard for Yetter—when Chamberlain started to limit her presence to her friend near the end of the isolation period.

"Toward the end, I was wondering why she wasn't spending so much time with me," Yetter recalls. "I confronted her one day. I said, 'Lynell, I feel abandoned.' She said, 'You shouldn't. I'm trying to let you live your life. I'm trying to bring you back to your independence. One day, you'll be alone soon.'"

'If you take seriously Jesus' message to his disciples, it's basically, "You are here to serve others." If there's a need, simply go ahead and address it. Don't sit around and wait for somebody else to do it.'

—Dr. Lynell Chamberlain

'Miracles do happen'

Back home for a few months by herself, Yetter is still in a period of transition, of caution.

"Because of the chemo, your immune system is just about zero, so you're open to a lot of infections. I still have to be careful in what I do," she says. "I'm still under the care of the team, and I won't be clear of everything until five years from my transplant. I'm still in remission."

At the same time, she has an immense feeling of hope, all in the belief that God has been through everything with her—and will continue to do so.

"I've had a good relationship all my life with God. I always knew he was with me," she says. "I would tell people, 'Never lose your faith. God is there for you. God is listening, and miracles do happen.'"

Often, they're the kind of everyday miracles that come through the people whom God places in a person's life—the people who share their gifts of friendship, faith, love and hope.

Yetter may live by herself, but she knows that Chamberlain and her other Bible study friends are always there for her.

"This year, my word for the year was *hope*," Yetter says. "I'm truly blessed. The doctor said, 'You can't do this alone.' I haven't had to. The dedication of my church family, and these women especially, deserve the credit."

"All things are possible with the love and faith and support you have from God, and the gift you receive from others."

(In this Jubilee Year for the Church with the theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope,' The Criterion has invited you, our readers, to share your stories of hope—how embracing hope has helped you in the toughest moments of your life, how others have given you hope for your future, how your faith in God has sustained you and uplifted you. We will continue to offer this opportunity into the new year and beyond. If you have a story of hope to share, please send it to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.) †

Pope gives Catholics in Turkey Advent 'resolutions'—building bridges

ISTANBUL (CNS)—With their different rites, cultures, languages and races, Catholics find a unity around the altar that "is a gift from God. As such, it is strong and invincible, because it is the work of his grace," Pope Leo XIV said.

Celebrating Mass on Nov. 29 in Istanbul's Volkswagen Arena, Pope Leo was joined by laypeople, priests and bishops from the Latin, Chaldean, Armenian and Syriac Catholic churches.

The readings and prayers at the Mass were recited in Latin, Turkish, English, Armenian, Arabic and Italian.

Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and representatives of other Christian communities attended as well.

Celebrating the Vigil Mass for the first Sunday of Advent, Pope Leo gave the Catholics what he described as "resolutions" to work on this Advent: building bridges with other Catholics, other Christians and other believers in God.

The unity in diversity on display in the arena, like three Istanbul bridges over the Bosphorus Strait linking Europe and Asia, need constant maintenance to stay strong, Pope Leo said.

Speaking to the diverse Catholic communities, the pope urged them to make every effort "to foster and strengthen the bonds that unite us, so that we may enrich one another and be a credible sign before the world of the Lord's universal and infinite love."

The second bond Catholics must cultivate, he said, is that with other Christians, because "the same faith in Jesus our Savior unites not only those of us within the Catholic Church, but all our brothers and sisters belonging to other Christian Churches."

And, in a nation where about 99% of the population is Muslim, Pope Leo said,



Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass with members of Turkey's Catholic communities at the Volkswagen Arena in Istanbul on Nov. 29. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Catholics must practice dialogue and tolerance, promoting respect and peace in "a world where religion is too often used to justify wars and atrocities."

"We want to walk together by appreciating what unites us, breaking down the walls of prejudice and mistrust, promoting mutual knowledge and esteem in order to give to all a strong message of hope and an invitation to become peacemakers," he said.

Father Ryan Boyle, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force and chaplain at

Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, was one of the concelebrants at the Mass, but unfortunately the U.S. military personnel who traveled to Istanbul with him were outside the arena with hundreds of other people, who did not get one of the 4,000 free tickets for Mass.

The bridge-building metaphor was appropriate, Father Boyle told Catholic News Service. "'Pontifex Maximus'—one of the titles for the pope—means great bridge builder.

"And then, as a military chaplain, I work in a pluralistic environment with

Protestant chaplains, Jewish chaplains, Muslim chaplains," the priest said, "and even though we have very diverse backgrounds and faith traditions, we are often able to find the things in common and work together."

As for the various Christian traditions, he said, "we are all united in our love for Jesus Christ. We all look forward to being in heaven with the angels and saints forever and ever. And of course, in heaven there won't be signs, you know, saying 'Catholics this way' and 'Orthodox that way.' †

TURKEY

continued from page 1

"a path of reconciliation, peace and growing communion."

The increasingly cordial relations have been "fostered through frequent contact, fraternal meetings and promising theological dialogue," he said. "And today we are called even more to commit ourselves to the restoration of full communion."

Especially important work has

been done by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the pope said, but he noted that tensions among the Orthodox Churches have led some of them to suspend their participation.

The commission's last plenary session was held in Egypt in 2023; the most noticeable absence was that of the Russian Orthodox Church, which broke relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2018 when the patriarch recognized

the autonomy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Pope Leo used his greeting at the Divine Liturgy to confirm that, "in continuity with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and my predecessors," the pursuit of full communion among Christians "is one of the priorities of the Catholic Church. In particular, it is one of the priorities of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, whose specific role in the universal Church is to be at the service of all, building and safeguarding communion and unity."

In his homily at the liturgy, Patriarch Bartholomew restated the Orthodox commitment to unity and called for common Christian efforts to protect the environment and to end wars.

"We cannot be complicit in the bloodshed taking place in Ukraine and other parts of the world and remain silent in the face of the exodus of Christians from the cradle of Christianity" in the Holy Land, the patriarch said.

Pope Leo's day had begun with a visit to Archbishop Sahak II Mashalian, the Armenian Apostolic patriarch of Constantinople, at his cathedral in Istanbul.

The celebrations of the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and its statement of faith that formed the basis of the Nicene Creed, are an affirmation

that "we must draw from this shared apostolic faith in order to recover the unity that existed in the early centuries between the Church of Rome and the ancient Oriental Churches," the pope said.

"We must also take inspiration from the experience of the early Church in order to restore full communion," he said; the goal is "a communion which does not imply absorption or domination, but rather an exchange of the gifts received by our Churches from the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father and the edification of the body of Christ."

While Pope Leo paid tribute to "the courageous Christian witness of the Armenian people throughout history, often amid tragic circumstances," he was not more explicit about the politically sensitive subject of what many call the "Armenian genocide," when an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were killed by Ottoman Turks in 1915-18.

Mardik Evadian, a local business owner who was present for the pope's visit, told reporters that for Armenians in Turkey "it is not important" that the pope use the word "genocide."

Armenians know what happened and remember their loved ones who were killed, he said, "but we are living in this country; maybe in old times there were pogroms, but now it is peacetime." †



Pope Leo XIV and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople greet people from a balcony following a Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George in Istanbul on Nov. 30. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

CAMINO

continued from page 1

educators at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis—also came to their journey with the hopes of their colleagues.

"Before we left, we gave every faculty and staff member a card for a prayer intention that we could take with us on our journey," recalls Reel, Roncalli's assistant principal for academics. "We began in Sarria, Spain, and every day we stopped to read out prayer intentions aloud."

They read the prayer intentions at churches, by a waterfall, as they walked through a eucalyptus forest, and at the foot of the tomb of St. James in Santiago.

"There were so many sacred moments along The Way," says Reel, a member of St. Rose of Lima

Parish in Franklin. "And we were blessed to carry our school community's prayers as if they traveled with us."

They were also blessed by each other as they walked 70 miles on the *Camino* during five days in June of 2019.

"We encountered each other every single day," Reel says. "The four of us lifted each other up, sometimes literally—walking uphill for hours on end—and definitely spiritually as we prayed in community with our intentions."

Roberts found strength and comfort from another woman during an especially miserable day of the pilgrimage.

"We hiked 18 miles on the longest day of the pilgrimage," says Roberts, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis and Roncalli's director of special services. "A weather event, which created cold temperatures, torrential rains and shearing winds,

made the hike extremely challenging.

"We couldn't hear each other and had to keep our heads down, simply moving forward. We were cold, wet and uncomfortable. I found myself saying the rosary, over and over, to distract myself from the misery. When the day was done, I felt a profound peace, deep within. That serenity, a gift from Mary [the Blessed Mother], stayed with me during the remaining days."

Like her three companions, Reel says the pilgrimage tested her physical strength, and it also strengthened her prayer life and her faith.

She still carries the prayer that she prayed on the *Camino* with her.

God, help me, with each step I take, to walk closer toward you. Help me to know your will and how to become what you will for me. Fill me up so I am whole. Help me love others and myself the way you love me. †

Sisters of Providence celebrate jubilees of 75 and 70 years of religious life

Criterion staff report

Part one of two

In 2025, 21 members of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods celebrated significant milestones in the congregation.

This article will honor the life and ministry of jubilarians who marked 75 and 70 years of religious life.

75-year jubilarians

Sister Eileen Rose Bonner was born in Whiting, Ind., in the Gary Diocese. She entered the congregation on Jan. 8, 1950, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1957.

Sister Eileen Rose earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in education at Indiana State University in Terre Haute.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at Immaculate Heart of Mary School from 1964-69, St. Luke the Evangelist School from 1973-75 and Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ School from 1975-77.

She has also ministered in the Diocese of Evansville and in Kentucky. She currently ministers in prayer at the motherhouse.

Sister Ruth Johnson, formerly Sister Joseph Maurice, was born in Cambridge, Mass. She entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1950, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1957.

Sister Ruth earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in education at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

In the archdiocese, she ministered at the motherhouse as a driver from 1986-2007 and in church environment from 1987-2004. Sister Ruth currently serves as a volunteer and a fiber artist at the community's White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, a ministry she began in 2007.

Sister Dorothy Ellen Wolsiffer was born in Indianapolis where she grew up as a member of St. Patrick Parish. She entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1950, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1957.

Sister Dorothy Ellen earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in elementary education at Indiana State University in Terre Haute and a master's degree in liturgy at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill.

In the archdiocese, she served at the former Annunciation School in Brazil from 1956-59 and in Indianapolis at St. Thomas Aquinas School in 1959, at St. Luke the Evangelist School from 1968-72, at the former St. James School from 1972-76, at the former South Central Catholic School from 1976-77, at St. Philip Neri School from 1977-79 and as director of the former Simeon House from 1989-91.

At the motherhouse, Sister Dorothy Ellen ministered in various capacities from 2012-21.

She also served in Illinois, Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Beginning in 2021, she dedicated herself entirely to prayer.

70-year jubilarians

Sister Josephine Bryan, formerly Sister Joseph Anthony, was born in Hollywood, Md. She entered the



congregation on July 22, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1963.

Sister Josephine earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, a bachelor's degree in nursing at St. Xavier College in Chicago and a master's degree in nursing at the University of Indianapolis in Indianapolis.

She served in the archdiocese in Indianapolis at the former St. Andrew the Apostle School from 1960-61 and at St. Joan of Arc School from 1961-64. At the motherhouse, she ministered in the community's infirmary from 1964-65, 1967-69 and 1971-73 and from 1976-84 in health care.

Sister Josephine also ministered in the Lafayette Diocese and in California, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Wisconsin and in Vietnam.

She currently serves as a volunteer visitor at Scripps Mercy Hospital in Chula Vista, Calif.

Sister Suzanne Dailey, formerly Sister Suzanne Marie, was born in Lincoln, Neb. She entered the congregation on July 22, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1963.

Sister Suzanne earned a bachelor's degree in social studies at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in U.S. history at Indiana University in Bloomington, a master's degree in education at the University of Southern Illinois in Carbondale, Ill., and a doctorate in U.S. history from St. Louis University in St. Louis.

In the archdiocese, Sister Suzanne ministered at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1964-67 and in faculty and administrative positions at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1971-93. She ministered as her community's general secretary from 2013-18.

Sister Suzanne has also served in California and Illinois.

Since 2018, she has ministered as the coordinator of the Sisters of Providence Resource Center.

Sister Jean Fuqua, formerly Sister Jean Marian, was born in Owensboro, Ky. She entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1955, and professed final vows on

Aug. 15, 1962.

Sister Jean earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana and a master's degree in business

administration at Indiana University in Bloomington.

In the archdiocese, she served at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1962-67 and in faculty and administrative positions at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1967-85 and 1987-98 and as a volunteer at the Providence Food Pantry in West Terre Haute from 2013-16.

At the motherhouse, Sister Jean has ministered at the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice and as a driver. She currently serves at the motherhouse as a clerical assistant in the clinical care office.

Sister Ann Matilda Holloran was born in Indianapolis, where she grew up as a member of St. Anthony Parish. She entered the congregation on Jan. 5, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1962.

She earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in elementary education at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

In the archdiocese, Sister Ann Matilda ministered in Indianapolis at St. Jude School from 1966-71, at St. Simon the Apostle School from 1971-77 and as a chaplain at Community East Hospital from 1989-2006. She also did chaplaincy ministry in health care at the motherhouse from 2006-23.

Sister Ann Matilda also served in Illinois. She currently serves as a driver at the motherhouse.

Sister Ann Margaret O'Hara was born in Louisville, Ky., and later was a member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville. She entered the congregation on July 22, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1963.

Sister Ann Margaret earned a bachelor's degree in English at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in business education at Indiana University in Bloomington and a master's degree in pastoral theology at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

In the archdiocese, she served at the former Chartrand High School in Indianapolis from 1963-67 and at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1976-77. In her religious community, she has held a variety of administrative positions, including serving as its general superior from 2001-06.

Sister Ann Margaret also ministered in Illinois, Ohio and Washington, D.C.

Since 2022, she has ministered in prayer at the motherhouse.

Sister Mary Ann Phelan, formerly Sister Marie Marcella, was born in Baltimore. She entered the congregation on July 23, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1963.

Sister Mary Ann earned a bachelor's degree in social studies at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

In the archdiocese, she served at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and at the motherhouse in a variety of ministries, including helping to promote the canonization cause of St. Theodora Guérin and as a sign language instructor.

Sister Mary Ann also ministered in Illinois, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.

She currently serves as a volunteer receptionist at Providence Hall at the motherhouse.

Sister Margaret Quinlan, formerly Sister Ann Jude, was born in Troy, N.Y. She entered the congregation on Jan. 23, 1956, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1963.

Sister Margaret earned a bachelor's degree in social studies at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in English at Indiana University in Bloomington.

In the archdiocese, she served at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ School in Indianapolis from 1960-62, at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1972-78 and 1979-81, at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1996-2018, in Providence Self-Sufficiency Ministries in West Terre Haute from 1996-2006 and at the motherhouse in residential services from 2018-21.

Sister Margaret also ministered in the Evansville Diocese, in Illinois and in Texas.

Since 2021, she has dedicated herself to prayer at the motherhouse.

Sister Alice Ann Rhinesmith was born in Bellefonte, Pa. She entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1955, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1962.

Sister Alice Ann earned a bachelor's degree in business education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in business education and office administration at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., and a master's degree in health services administration at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Ill.

In the archdiocese, she served at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1963-67, at the former Schulte High School in Terre Haute from 1967-68, at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis from 1969-71, at the Providence Retirement Home in New Albany from 1978-79, in administration of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1979-86 and in ministry at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute from 2016-21.

Sister Alice Ann also served in the administration of her religious community from 1969-73 and at the motherhouse in health care from 2016-21.

She also ministered in Illinois.

Since 2021, Sister Alice Ann has dedicated herself entirely to prayer at the motherhouse. †



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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Teaching on Immaculate Conception developed over centuries

By D.D. Emmons

(OSV News)—It's not unusual in the Church for the faithful to be confused about the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It's often referred to simply as the feast of the Immaculate Conception. And as it occurs during the season of Advent, it's understandable that many people believe that it celebrates the conception of Christ in the womb of Mary.

But this liturgical feast honors Mary's immaculate conception, free from all stain of original sin. The feast as we mark it today reflects the development of the Church's teachings about Mary that took place over the course of many centuries starting more than 1,500 years ago.

It first came to the forefront in the early fourth century when Arius, a priest of Alexandria, Egypt, claimed that Jesus was a great prophet and teacher but was not God. The Church's first ecumenical council, held in 325 at Nicaea in present-day Turkey, sorted out this issue. The Church's bishops defined that Jesus shared the same divine nature with God the Father, that they were "consubstantial." This council, however, did not settle the issue.

During the next century, Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, took another approach to reject the divinity of Jesus. He preached that Mary was the mother of Jesus but not the mother of God, meaning that Jesus and God were not the same.

Bishops of the Church met at the Council of Ephesus in 431. St. Cyril of Alexandria opposed Nestorius' false teaching. Though not addressing Mary's conception, the bishops affirmed the decisions of Nicaea, that Jesus was consubstantial with the Father, and defined Mary as the Mother of God.

But as early as 388, St. Ambrose wrote, "Mary, a virgin not only undefiled but a virgin whom grace has made inviolate, free from every stain of sin."

By the eighth century, the Church in the East celebrated a feast of the Conception of Mary by St. Anne. During the next century, this feast spread to the West to southern Italy, then Ireland. By the 11th century, it had come to France and other western European countries. As the feast broadened in Europe, the emphasis of the devotion changed from St. Anne to an emphasis on Mary and that she was conceived without sin.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) objected to the belief about a sinless conception. He said: "I say that the virgin Mary could not be sanctified before her conception, inasmuch as she did not exist.

"If, all the more, she could not be sanctified in the moment of her conception by reason of the sin which is inseparable from conception, then it remains to believe that she was sanctified after she was conceived in the womb of her mother.

"This sanctification, if it annihilates sin, makes holy her birth, but not her conception. No one is given the right to be conceived in sanctity: only the Lord Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and he alone is holy from his very conception."

Theologians of that era who opposed Mary being conceived immaculately without original sin argued along these same lines, including St. Albert the Great (1206-80) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). They pointed to the fact that original sin is inherent, universal to every man, save Jesus, and they referred to Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as through one person [Adam] sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned."

Accordingly, they said, all men needed the redemption given by Jesus Christ—all needed a savior. How, then, could Mary have been free from original sin, if Jesus had not yet been born, had not yet died on the cross and resurrected? They could accept that she was cleansed from original sin sometime between conception and birth, but they couldn't accept her being conceived with no sin.

The complex issue was explained by Blessed John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan who lived from 1266 until 1308. He reasoned that because Mary was going to be the vessel that carried Jesus for nine months and was the source of the miraculous birth, she could never be soiled with original sin or any sin. She was preserved from all sin at the moment of conception in her mother's womb, redeemed in advance—a preserved redemption.

At her conception, Mary was infused with supernatural grace in the manner of Eve; she was conceived without sin, born without sin and, unlike Eve, lived without sin. While original sin is removed from us at baptism, she, because she was destined to become the Mother of God, was, in a unique and singular way, never allowed to acquire sin.

Duns Scotus used this example: "It is a more excellent gift to preserve someone from evil than to permit them to fall into evil and afterward to deliver him from evil. Thus, it is for Mary a more excellent gift to be preserved from original sin than to permit in her the contraction of original sin, and to purify her from it." While this rationale was accepted by many, the Church did not define the Immaculate Conception as dogma or as an article of faith for another 500 years.

In the 14th century, the feast was called the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Conception and added to the universal Church calendar, but Catholics were not required to accept it as a defined Church teaching. Then, as now, the thinking was not that Mary was conceived or born miraculously like Jesus; indeed, she was conceived by relations between her parents, born like every other human being. But unlike others, the sin of Adam was never transferred to her. At the moment, in her mother's womb, when her soul was united with flesh, she was infused with supernatural grace and protected from original sin.

In 1661, Pope Alexander VII declared that Mary was conceived without original sin and that the feast of her conception celebrates that belief. This declaration influenced the eventual definition of the Immaculate Conception as a dogma. Pope Clement XI extended the feast of the Conception to the universal Church in the early 18th century.

Devotion to the Immaculate Conception continued to increase among the laity and clergy as the 19th century began. In 1830, the Blessed Mother appeared in several visions to a nun named St. Catherine Labouré, a member of the Daughters of Charity. On Nov. 27, Catherine saw Mary appearing as a picture inside an oval frame standing on a globe with light streaming from her hands. The vision included an inscription: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Our Lady asked Catherine to pursue the making of a medal based on the vision that Catherine was witnessing. This medal was initially called the "Immaculate Conception Medal," but so many miracles came to those who wore it that it became known as the "Miraculous Medal."

Between 1834 and 1847, the Holy See reportedly received 300 petitions seeking permission to insert the word "immaculate" into the preface of the Mass on the feast day of Our Lady of the Conception. The people of the United States were devoted to the Immaculate Conception, and in 1846 the bishops of this country chose the Blessed Virgin Conceived without Original Sin as the patroness of their country.

They requested and received permission from the Vatican to add "immaculate" before the word conception in the Liturgy of the Hours for the Conception of the Blessed Mother and in the preface of the feast day Mass. All this widespread devotion emerged before the Church defined the Immaculate Conception as dogma to be believed by every Catholic.

Pope Pius IX, witnessing the continuous Church-wide love and affection for the Blessed Mother and her Immaculate Conception, issued a letter to the worldwide



Mary appears in a cloud surrounded by cherubs in this interpretation of the Immaculate Conception by Bartolomeo Esteban Murillo, a 17th-century Spanish artist. The feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrating the belief that the Blessed Virgin was free from original sin from the first moment of her existence, is on Dec. 8. The painting is a holding of the Museo del Prado in Madrid. (CNS photo from Art Resource)

bishops requesting their feedback, that of their clergy and the laity, as to whether or not this long held belief should be adopted as a dogma.

Pius also convened a group of theologians to study the history and Church documents to determine if the belief could be dogmatically defined. The responses were overwhelmingly positive. People throughout the world prayed that the pope would approve and adopt this belief as universal throughout the Church.

On Dec. 8, 1854, in the presence of 40,000 people including hundreds of bishops and cardinals, Pope Pius, with great emotion, read his decree "Ineffabilis Deus" ("Ineffable God"), in which he eloquently pronounced the Blessed Mother "preserved from all stain of original sin" was immaculately conceived.

Catholics rejoiced at this infallible act by the Holy Father, an act that affirmed what had been believed by Christians from antiquity, promoted and avowed by popes, Church councils and especially the faithful whose love for the Blessed Mother has continued and grown through the centuries.

Just four years after Pope Pius IX defined this dogma, God affirmed it at Lourdes, France, where a young woman, St. Bernadette Soubirous, experienced a series of visions of Our Lady. On March 25, 1858, Bernadette asked the Lady her name, and the Blessed Virgin responded, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

The 14-year-old Bernadette, as well as her parents, had never heard that name before. The Church has authenticated this Marian apparition; Bernadette was declared a saint in 1933, and Catholics annually celebrate the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes on Feb. 11.

Every Advent, as we await the birth of our Savior, the holy season is punctuated by the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On Dec. 8, we are called to this beautiful holy day of obligation to celebrate once again Mary's Immaculate Conception and how God almighty prepared her for her role in salvation history, her role as the Mother of the Messiah.

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

Twenty Something/Christina Capecci

Whispering pines and an opportunity to listen for the Holy Spirit

The sun was setting by the time we'd reached consensus on our Christmas tree. We'd decided on a cedar that hadn't been anyone's first choice—safely neutral, conflict averted.



Now we were dragging it home in the dark—tired, cold and hungry. Suddenly we heard a shimmering sound in the top of the swaying pines. It was different from the start-and-stop rustle of wind in oak leaves. The pines were singing, steady and smooth, their densely packed needles turned to reeds.

We paused our homeward trek, standing still and letting the sound wash over us.

Later, eager to confirm what we'd heard, I took to Google. Was it true? Were pines distinctly suited to make music?

Yes, I learned—and the Transcendentalists were enchanted by it. Ralph Waldo Emerson captured it well in his 1836 essay "Nature": "The pine blows its own sweet music when the wind sweeps through it."

Later his protégé, Henry David Thoreau described it in his journal, writing: "There is no finer music than the

wind in the pine tops. It is the Earth's own breath, sweet and powerful, sighing through the forest."

I read on.

Anne of Green Gables—one of my favorite literary heroines—finds comfort in singing pines. In book three of L.M. Montgomery's beloved series, *Anne of the Island*, Anne returns to Green Gables, homesick and weary, and soaks up the "passionate wind-songs in the pines."

My next discovery delighted my inner etymology nerd. There's actually a word for the sound of wind rustling through trees: psithurism. It's an archaic word with a Greek root, *psithuros*, meaning whispering.

Isn't that a lovely concept? Whispering wind.

At only a whisper, we may easily miss its lyrical song.

We embrace the spirit of Advent when we pause from our march to enjoy the view. When our instinct is to hurry up and look down, it is good to slow down and look up. We release our screens and our agendas and gaze into the heavens—available, attuned.

In an era of mindless scrolling and swiping, paying attention is a spiritual exercise. It allows us to see the sacred in our midst—the dignity of every person, the glory of God's creation, pine needle by pine needle. When we pay attention, we process the world as we are intended to,

with all our senses and grateful hearts. We remember we aren't machines and life isn't a hamster wheel.

Only then are we able to sense the movement of the Holy Spirit, which Scripture likens to wind. (The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, meaning wind or breath.)

We can't see the Holy Spirit, but we can feel it and hear it. And like pines swaying in wind, we can see it moving those around us. The Gospel writer John tried to capture this mystery, writing: "The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8).

Twice last month, I interviewed Catholic leaders who spoke to the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a striking part of their ministry, opening doors at just the right time, providing the clue, the key, the cash.

"It's been amazingly consistent," one woman told me. "You know it when you experience it, and I believe it."

Amid our many December to-dos, may we listen for the Holy Spirit, whispering like wind. May we know it and believe.

(Christina Capecci is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.) †

It is Good/Elizabeth Scalia

To become a cherished 'little one,' always reject the seat of honor

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor" (Lk 14:8).

OK, can we stipulate that a working and fully engaged pope probably does not have the bandwidth to concern himself with seating arrangements for big banquets and will entrust his staff with such details?

I ask because on the increasingly and thoroughly poisoned wells that comprise social media, I've read posts either denouncing Pope Leo XIV or praising him after this year's annual luncheon, partaken of by the pontiff and some 1,300 of Rome's destitute and unemployed on the World Day of the Poor.

The banquet was begun by Pope Francis in 2016 when he ordered the day, and the gathering, during the release of his apostolic letter, "Misericordia et misera."

Paused for two years during the COVID pandemic, Pope Francis re-established it again in 2022, and Pope Leo continued his predecessor's grace-filled initiative, an event which should be unobjectionable to all people of good will.

"Should" is the operative word here, but given a forum (no matter how small or toxic), broken humanity can find a way to befoul even the purest endeavor.

During Pope Francis' pontificate, some Catholics grumbled that too much distinction was given to representatives of the same-sex and transsexual communities, who sat at what some call "the top table," with the pontiff.

At this year's gathering, the pope's tablemates were randomly selected from among those who had attended the Mass preceding the meal. Thus, the indigent poor, the migrant poor, the helpless poor, the aged poor, the young poor, the gay poor and the trans poor were seated without distinction throughout the hall.

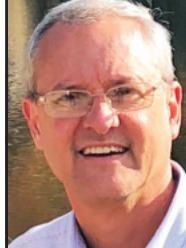
In this way, all of the attendees were seen and regarded as distinguished guests of the Church, which—if I'm reading Jesus correctly in Scripture—is how it is supposed to be. At least twice in the Gospels, Jesus warns us not to seek out a seat of honor, either so as to avoid embarrassment if moved, or to avoid being like the Pharisees who "love the place of honor at banquets" (Mt 23:6).

Nevertheless, some progressive Catholics considered an invitation that didn't

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Practice of tithing reminds us God cannot be outdone in generosity

I am not a development director. But, I have been influenced by the Dave Ramsey model in my understanding of personal finance and was always known to having been quite frugal with my spending habits.



But many years ago, I decided to tithe. I do not share this to brag, but so that I can tell of my personal experience from this practice.

My mother always said, "God will not be outdone in generosity." And now, I feel personally that it is true.

Additionally, I was also very blessed with income during my professional career. And when it first began to flow, I could not imagine giving 10% away.

Our family was not blessed with many financial riches at the time that I was born. So with my parents having lived through the Depression—at very young ages—I was

taught early in life about "the value of a dollar."

It was not easy for me to imagine "giving up" such a large percentage. (I know, I know—it all belongs to God—that I am just a temporary steward of these assets with which I am blessed. But I digress.)

So, I have been surprised throughout my life as I have tithed—to my parish, diocese and various charities—that I not only didn't experience a feeling of poverty when I gave funds away, but rather, the polar opposite.

I have been blessed to a point that I could never have dreamed at one time in my life: God's gifts just continue to pour back upon me and my family!

This now allows me to continue to give generously after my professional career has ended.

In St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, we read, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7).

In the Gospel according to Luke, we see, "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured

into your lap" (Lk 6:38).

Lastly, in Psalm 65, we read, "May we be filled with the good things of your house, the blessings of your holy temple" (Ps 65:5).

And this is what I have experienced, again, an overflowing of gifts back to me and my family.

An image that stays with me continually is that of the cornucopia—often seen at Thanksgiving—with gords, corn, fruits and other things tumbling out of it.

So it has become my experience that our God won't be outdone in generosity.

How are you doing with your spirit of giving? Any time is a wonderful time to review your current practice and decide if there is further room to pass along more of what the Lord has given you.

(Richard Etienne has a degree in theology from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and resides in Newburgh, Ind.) †

Second Sunday of Advent Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 7, 2025

- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Romans 15:4-9
- Matthew 3:1-12

The first section of the Book of Isaiah provides the first biblical reading for Mass this weekend.



This weekend's reading is in the same mood as that of last week. Isaiah was unhappy with the turn of events of his time. As was so often the case with the ancient Hebrew prophets, Isaiah saw the misfortunes facing his people as the result of their own disloyalty to God.

While direct and uncompromising, his words were not menacing or hostile. Rather, they were reassuring. They declared the prophet's firm belief that, despite the sins of the people, God would not forsake them. Furthermore, in due time, God's holy will would be vindicated. Wrongs would be corrected. Errors would be corrected. Justice and peace would prevail.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans supplies the second reading this weekend.

In this reading, the Apostle Paul repeats the basic message given earlier by Isaiah. It is a testimony to God's love. Throughout history, St. Paul maintains, God guided the chosen people to righteousness, and ultimately to union with the divine. Paul describes God as the source of all patience, sound judgment and encouragement. Despite human failings, God is constant in love and care.

The Apostle also counsels the Christian Romans to accept each other in love and good will. After all, he insists, Christ accepted them. Indeed, Christ was a visible and effective instrument on Earth of God's mercy and goodness.

For its third reading, the Church this weekend offers us a reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew. The central figure is John the Baptist, mentioned in Luke as the child of Elizabeth and Zachariah. Elizabeth of course was a kinswoman of Mary, probably a cousin. Therefore, John himself was related to Jesus.

From the earliest days of Christianity, John the Baptist has been a favorite figure. His absolute personal dedication

to God has made him a model for the devout since the first century.

By journeying to the place where he encountered Pharisees and Sadducees, religious experts of his day, likely few of them his admirers, John showed that he was on a critical mission—to prepare the way for Jesus. Travel in ancient Palestine was understandably rare. It was undertaken with a serious purpose in mind.

John never sugar-coated the failings of people or the stubbornness of some in his demands that the people reform. In this reading, he chastises his listeners, in effect, for their pride and self-interest. Their lack of true devotion to God only strengthens and protracts the reign of sin in the land. Thus, their personal shortcomings add to the burdens weighing heavily upon the entire society.

He challenges the people to purge themselves of this self-interest and humbly to turn to God.

Reflection

As we progress through Advent, the Church calls us to allow God in his grace and to make us worthy of himself.

Advent's purpose is not just to plan for a memorial of Christ's birth. It is primarily to make our hearts fitting dwelling places for the Lord. To be fitting dwelling places we must be rid of our sins.

Advent calls us to this very resolve, to confront our own sins and to turn away from sin with the help of God's grace. As an example, John himself was stark and direct, absolutely and completely committed to God.

To realize our personal sinfulness and the sinfulness of the world, we, too, must be resolute, making no excuses for ourselves. We must be frank with ourselves. Frankness comes only in humility.

By placing John the Baptist before us, the Church urges us personally to put first things first. Our goal must be union with God. Following self-interests and self-deception lead away from God.

God will empower us in our quest for holiness. He will be our strength and guide. He loves us and forgives us. †

Helping those in need

Kaleb Hardebeck, left, and Frank Meer, both sixth-grade students at St. Louis School in Batesville, pose on Nov. 21 at their school as they and their junior high classmates and school staff prepared to deliver donated food to the Batesville Food Pantry, an ecumenical ministry in the southeastern town which helps people in need. (Submitted photo)



Daily Readings

Monday, December 8

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Genesis 3:9-15, 20
Psalm 98:1-4
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12
Luke 1:26-38

Psalm 145:1, 9-13ab
Matthew 11:11-15

Friday, December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe
Zechariah 2:14-17
or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab
(Response) Judith 13:18bc, 19
Luke 1:26-38
Or Luke 1:39-47

Saturday, December 13

St. Lucy, virgin and martyr
Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11
Psalm 80:2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19
Matthew 17:9a, 10-13

Sunday, December 14

Third Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
Psalm 146:6-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Recent Vatican document clarified Church teaching regarding titles of Mary

Q Is it a sin if someone calls Mary "co-redemptrix"? Should I stop following them on social media? (Louisiana)



A I'm assuming your question is in response to the recent document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Vatican "department" that deals with major

theological questions pertaining to what we believe as Catholics) titled "Mater Populi Fidelis"—or in English, "Mother of the Faithful People"—which the dicastery noted is a "doctrinal note on some Marian titles regarding Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation."

The entire document is well worth a read, as it contains some helpful explanations and beautiful reflections on Mary's role in salvation history.

But the main practical takeaway from "Mater Populi Fidelis" is that, to avoid misunderstandings that could potentially veer into heresy, we should be extremely careful about referring to our Lady as "mediatrix" or mediator of God's grace;

and that "given the necessity of explaining Mary's subordinate role to Christ in the work of redemption, it is always inappropriate to use the title 'Co-redemptrix' to define Mary's cooperation" since "this title risks obscuring Christ's unique salvific mediation and can therefore create confusion and an imbalance in the harmony of the truths of the Christian faith" (#22).

In other words, while the title "co-redemptrix" has been used in the past by saints and even some popes, they did not elaborate "much on its meaning" (#18). Calling Mary "co-redemptrix" could in theory have a perfectly orthodox interpretation such as, e.g., a reference to her as the mother who bore Christ the Redeemer into the world. However, after years of careful discernment, the Church's doctrinal authorities came to

the conclusion that this title is apt for misunderstanding and thus should not be used.

Whether or not it is actually a sin to call Mary "co-redemptrix" is a nuanced question that would need to take several factors into account. For an act to be a sin, it needs to be something that is objectively wrong, which the one committing it knows is wrong and which is chosen with at least some degree of freedom.

Clearly, past Catholics who used the title before the publication of "Mater Populi Fidelis" on Nov. 4 were not sinning, since the question of calling Mary "co-redemptrix" was still an open one. And even now, this document does not seem to prohibit referencing this title in a purely academic context, such as if a degree theologian wished to explore this theme in a paper intended for their professional peers.

At the same time, canon 752 of the *Code of Canon Law* reminds us that "a religious submission of intellect and will is to be given to any doctrine which either the Supreme Pontiff or the College of Bishops, exercising their authentic magisterium [i.e., their teaching authority], declare upon a matter of faith or morals [...] Christ's faithful are therefore to ensure that they avoid whatever does not accord with that doctrine."

So, a Catholic who stubbornly refused to accept the Church's teaching found in "Mater Populi Fidelis" and continued to refer to Mary as "co-redemptrix" out of a willful disregard for the pope's authority likely would be sinning. Still, we generally cannot know what goes on in another person's heart as an outside observer.

Defiantly promoting the "co-redemptrix" Marian title might be objectively a problem—and it's not something we should do ourselves—but we can reserve judgment as to whether or to what degree another person might be sinning if he or she does this.

With respect to the question of whether or not to follow people who still use the "co-redemptrix" title on social media, here again I think a lot depends on the context. The Church does not ask us to un-follow friends or family members who post things contrary to Church teaching. But as a prudential judgment, it can be reasonable to avoid consuming media that directly contradicts Church teaching.

(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.) †



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

AMADOR, Maia J., 9, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 2. Daughter of Cesar and Sarah Amador. Sister of Maddox and Isaiah Amador. Granddaughter of Jim and Sally Williams and Armando and Yolanda Amador.

ANGER, Frances A., 87, Prince of Peace, Madison, Nov. 16.

BRAUER, Francis M., 96, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Nov. 15. Father of Laurie Maxfield, Christine and Karen Mueller and Frank and John Brauer. Brother of Margaret Burris. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of 24.

BROWN, Mary V., 89, St. Mary, New Albany, Oct. 2. Aunt of several.

BURKHART, Ronald E., 85, St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington, Nov. 7. Husband of Kathy Burkhardt. Father of three. Stepfather of Thanh Nguyen, Guy and John Zimmer.

CANTIN, Richard A., 89, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Nov. 6. Husband of Mary Cantin. Father of Barbara Carroll and Michael Cantin. Brother of Eileen Cantin.

CHURCH, Katharine L., 81, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Oct. 20. Wife of James Church. Mother of Julie Pruitt, Karen Winternheimer, Katie and Brian Church. Sister of Susan Yaggi. Grandmother of 14.

Honoring veterans



St. Peter Parish in Franklin County honored veterans on Nov. 7 with a Mass and a breakfast. Here the veterans attending the event pose in the Batesville Deanery faith community's church. Joining them is St. Peter's administrator, Father Santosh Yohannan. (Submitted photo)

CORNELIUS, Timothy G., 66, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Nov. 9. Brother of Mary Eckstein, Allen and Erik Cornelius. Uncle and great-uncle of several.

DIEKHOFF, Edward J., 87, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Oct. 29. Husband of Naomi Diekhoff. Father of Dana, Daniel, Edward and Mark. Brother of Barbara Laudick. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of eight.

FISTER, Ronald H., 85, St. Michael, Brookville, Nov. 11. Father of Barbara Dillon, Kathleen Harper, Deborah Lakin, and Stephen Fister. Brother of Nancy Biggs, Mary Ann Shiplett and Dennis Fister. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of eight.

GANDER, Joseph C., 84, St. Louis, Batesville, Nov. 11. Husband of Rosemary Gander. Father of Bill Gander. Brother of Helen Gardner and Mary Jane Kuntz.

HARRIS, Diana L., 79, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Oct. 30. Husband of Deleana Eastin. Father of Samantha Bruton, Stacie Ferguson, Stephanie Roell, Heather Spears, Aaron, Robert and Vince Eastin. Brother of Sue Eastin. Grandfather of 28. Great-grandfather of several.

ECKERT, John W., 87, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 12. Father of Albert, Michael, Paul and Phillip Eckert. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of nine.

HUNGATE, Larry D., 79, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Nov. 4. Husband of Thankful Hungate. Stepfather of Bill Westfall. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of one.

JENNINGS, Linda K., 77, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 8. Wife of Paul Jennings. Mother of Dawn Desince, James and Joseph Jennings. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 12. Great-great-grandmother of one.

KAMER, Carl E., 96, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 8. Husband of Joyce Kamer. Father of Carla Kron.

KELLY, Michael E., 84, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Nov. 8. Husband of Barbara Kelly. Father of Colleen Recchia, Shannon Wallerius, Kevin and Kyle Kelly. Brother of Janet Ramsey and Molly Woolsey. Grandfather of nine.

LEMIEUX, Mary C., 96, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 5. Mother of Charlotte and William Lemieux. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of four.

LYONS, Kathleen L., 80, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 7. Wife of Joe Lyons. Mother of Bryan and Kevin Elmore. Stepmother of Brian, Mike and Shawn Lyons. Sister of Debbie Peters. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 11.

MAYFIELD, Maurice, 90, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 17. Husband of Jane Mayfield. Father of Julie Bowers, Sherri Sams, Lori and Tony Mayfield. Brother of James Mayfield. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of five.

MCNULTY, Nancy, 80, St. Joseph, Shelbyville, Nov. 10. Wife of Bill McNulty. Mother of Brian, Kevin and Tracy McNulty. Sister of Eileen Kestner, Marie Lobascio, Kathy McDonald and Peggy O'Neill. Grandmother of four.

MILLER, Lois, 92, St. Patrick, Salem, Nov. 13. Mother of Brenda Hester.

Brian, Michael, Robert and Steven Miller. Sister of Marita Allendorf and Patricia Gee. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 10.

O'BRIEN, Suzanne, 85, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 5. Mother of Katie Kumler, Ellen Paul, Erin Pietranek, Dennis and Peter O'Brien. Grandmother of 10.

PRIMAVERA, Dorothy L., 93, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Mother of Gina Navabi, Tom and Tony Primavera. Sister of Bryan and Tom Toll. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 14.

SCHERSCHEL, Philip C., 83, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Nov. 15. Husband of Sarah Scherschel. Father of Vonda Stevens, Andrea and Eric Scherschel. Brother of Mary Carol Jackson and Donnie Scherschel.

Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of 22.

SCHWEIGER, Nathan, 40, St. Michael, Bradford, Sept. 9. Husband of Sarah Schweiger. Father of Luca Schweiger. Son of Mark and Mary Schweiger. Brother of Brittany White.

SCHWERING, Dale, 91, St. Mary, Rushville, Nov. 10. Husband of Shirley Schowering. Father of Theresa Downey, Angela Settles, Jeff and Stephen Schowering. Brother of Paul Schowering. Grandfather of 12. Great-grandfather of 19.

STAPP, Mary D., 86, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 9. Mother of Lisa Lowery, Nancy Smith and Jeffrey Stapp. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of 10. Great-great-grandmother of two.

STONEFIELD, Donald E., 89, St. Peter, Franklin County, Nov. 5. Husband of Diane Stonefield. Father of Christie Andres, Dennis and Don Stonefield. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of four.

TAYLOR, Kenneth, 61, St. Mark, Perry County, Nov. 7. Brother of Dennis and John Taylor. Uncle of several.

VONDERHEIDE, Betty Sue, 95, St. Michael, Brookville, Nov. 11. Mother of Mary Buckler, Deborah King, Allen, David, Elmer, Irwin, Kerry and Randy Vonderheide. Grandmother of 16. Great-grandmother of 35. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
- CDU offers classes on Catechism of the Catholic Church
- 20% discount for all employees, volunteers, and parishioners

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



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

1 Ethics Point
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410

317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Providence Sister Margaret Norris served in Catholic education for 49 years

Providence Sister Margaret Norris (formerly Sister Marie Angeline), a member of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, died on Nov. 3 at the Union Hospital in Terre Haute. She was 94.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 21 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Margaret was born on Jan. 5, 1931, in Jasper, Ind. She entered the Sisters of Providence on July 22, 1949, and professed final vows on Jan. 23, 1957.

Sister Margaret earned a bachelor's degree in education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in education at Indiana University in Bloomington.

During her 76 years as a member of the Sisters of Providence, Sister Margaret served as an educator in Catholic schools for 49 years in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and North Carolina.

In addition to being an educator, Sister Margaret was known for running, competing several times in the famed Boston Marathon. After retiring from teaching, she worked for two years in an exercise facility and studied massage therapy. After retiring to the motherhouse in 2008, Sister Margaret offered massage to the members of her community.

In the archdiocese, Sister Margaret served at St. Michael School in Greenfield from 1965-69.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. †

Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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

Batesville Deanery

Dec. 5, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at All Saints Parish, St. Martin Campus, Dearborn County
 Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
 Dec. 11, 6:30-8 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhouseen
 Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
 Dec. 12, 6-7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood
 Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, St. John the Evangelist Campus, Decatur County
 Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
 Dec. 19, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
 Dec. 19, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville

Recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:

Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. and Saturdays 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
 Saturdays after 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Nicholas, Ripley County

Bloomington Deanery

Dec. 10, 6-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center
 Dec. 16, 7-9 p.m. for St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, and St. Mary, Mitchell, at St. Vincent de Paul
 Dec. 17, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
 Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville

Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville

Connersville Deanery

Dec. 9, 9 a.m.-noon, St. Anne, New Castle
 Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connorsville
 Dec. 19, 5:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Holy Family Campus, Richmond

Indianapolis East Deanery

Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit Parish

Indianapolis North Deanery

Dec. 14, 2 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary
 Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at Christ the King
 Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X

Indianapolis South Deanery

Dec. 10, 7 p.m. for St. Jude, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Mark the Evangelist, at St. Jude
 Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ann
 Dec. 17, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
 Dec. 18, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., 12 Hours of Grace at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood
 Dec. 20, 8:30 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg

New Albany Deanery

Dec. 6, 11 a.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
 Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
 Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
 Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
 Dec. 15, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Navilleton; St. Joseph, Corydon; and St. John the Baptist, Starlight, at St. Mary, Navilleton

Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County

Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery

Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh
 Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at St. Rose of Lima, Franklin
 Dec. 17, 7 p.m. for St. Ambrose, Seymour; American Martyrs, Scottsburg; and St. Patrick, Salem, at St. Ambrose
 Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. for Prince of Peace, Madison, and Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, at Prince of Peace

Tell City Deanery

Dec. 14, 2 p.m. CT at St. Augustine, Leopold
 Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m. CT at St. Boniface, Fulda



Father Isaac Siefker hears a confession on Nov. 21 in an exhibit hall at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis used for the sacrament of penance during the National Catholic Youth Conference. The priest is parochial vicar of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove and Good Shepherd in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 11, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., 12 Hours of Grace at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
 Dec. 16, 4:30 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
 Dec. 18, 5:30 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle †

For advertising rates call (317) 236-1585.

Classified Directory

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.

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Dan Shea, RHU
 Long time
 Parishioner of St.
 John the Evangelist
 Indianapolis.

ASL interpreters help deaf participants feel more connected at NCYC

By Natalie Hoefer

As youths from throughout the country gather in Indianapolis every other year for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), they bring many needs.

There are spiritual needs, of course. Perhaps some have social, emotional or intellectual needs, too—or all of the above.

And sometimes there are a handful with a specific need: interpreters who know American Sign Language (ASL).

No participants requested that need during this year's conference on Nov. 20-22.

But that fact did not discourage three ASL interpreters from signing during the NCYC events held in Lucas Oil Stadium "just in case" the need arose, says Megan Kenworthy, a nationally certified, professional ASL interpreter.

She first assisted signing at NCYC when she was in college.

"I can't remember if this is my third or fourth time" signing at NCYC, says the member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis. But she has enjoyed each experience.

"It's fun being on the stage as an interpreter" in front of the small section in the stands of the stadium reserved for the deaf during NCYC, says Kenworthy.

"You see the emotions. There's kids crying and holding each other, and they have so much fun singing praise music."

The 27-year-old started learning ASL in college when she was 18. She went on to earn undergraduate degrees in American Sign Language and linguistics at the former Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis, and a master's degree in linguistics at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

ASL interpreters at NCYC are paid by the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry.

Kenworthy also interprets for the local Church through the archdiocesan Disabilities Ministry, receiving payment from the archdiocese.

She occasionally signs at archdiocesan Masses, like the St. Martin de Porres feast day Mass held this year at Holy Angels Church in Indianapolis on Nov. 3, or at a recent confirmation Mass held at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

"Catholicism is already another language of itself" with unique words and terminology, she says. "Putting it into another language [ASL] is challenging."

"American Sign Language is not just taking English words and signing them word for word. You have to completely change gears."

For instance, ASL has specific grammar and linguistics, Kenworthy explains.

"So for me, when it comes to signing, it's like, 'What is this message? What does this idea mean? What is this sentence trying to say in a deeper meaning?'

"I really have to try to take [the spoken message] apart, digest it and put it out in a way so it's an understandable message and more than just the blanket statements."

At events like NCYC, there are two interpreters together at all times, says Kenworthy. They alternate signing every 15 minutes "to avoid burnout and fatigue," with "the 'off' interpreter supporting the 'on' interpreter if we miss something or just need extra support."

"So, you're not ever really off for 15 minutes, but you're not the center of attention."

When there are no deaf participants registered for NCYC, the interpreters only sign in the stadium for the four general sessions and the closing Mass, each lasting two-and-a-half to three hours.

But when an NCYC registrant indicates the need for an ASL interpreter, "We do the breakout sessions with them and everything else, too," she says.

"It's a lot," Kenworthy admits.

It was even tiring this year with no deaf participants but only three ASL interpreters for the five gatherings in the stadium.

"But then seeing the kids all hyped up by the music, you can feel the energy in the room, and it rejuvenates you to keep going."

There are the emotional rewards, too.

"At the NCYC two years ago, there was a student who didn't even know that she could have an interpreter until she got here," Kenworthy recalls. "I remember her and her brother were crying together, and she was like, 'I just feel so connected'—she even signed that during the [closing] Mass."

"So, that was really cool, to feel like she was being connected and not struggling through the language."

Kenworthy feels making that connection possible is



Megan Kenworthy signs during a general session in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 21 during the National Catholic Youth Conference. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

especially important for the youths at NCYC, even though the largest number she's signed for in the stadium was six.

"This is a time where sharing and growing in the faith is fun, it's exciting," she says. "Your friends can be here and support you at the same time. That [experience] can make a difference later, when some start to drift away from the Church."

Whether it's at an archdiocesan Mass or NCYC, "It's just fun to see people worshiping in another way, in another language, to just build that connection stronger" with each other and the faith, says Kenworthy.

"It's definitely an amazing way to lead and worship and help the Church."

(For Catholics who know ASL and are interested in using your talent to serve the Church in central and southern Indiana, contact archdiocesan Disabilities Ministry coordinator Jenny Bryans at 317-236-1448 or jbryans@archindy.org.) †

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