

The Criterion

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Encounters with the Lord

As year come to a close, parishioners reflect on journeys of faith, pages 3 and 9.

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Here are some of the movies that a group of young adult Catholics recommend as "should-see" for Catholics. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Lights in the darkness: movies that promote truth, beauty and goodness

By John Shaughnessy

Phil Thompson doesn't cry easily, but his tears flowed when he watched the movie *The Spitfire Grill*, the redemption story of a young woman who gets out of prison and seeks a home and healing.

Thompson's tears turned to cheers while watching *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, savoring the fellowship, drama and adrenaline of a classic battle between good and evil.

And he was filled with awe as he watched *A Man for All Seasons*, the Academy Award-winning depiction of St. Thomas More's inspiring commitment to stay true to his conscience,

his faith and God, even to the point of death.

In one way, Thompson's appreciation of these films reflects his lifelong love affair with movies.

"I've loved movies since I was a little kid," says Thompson, a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. "The first movie I ever saw was *Mary Poppins*, with Dick Van Dyke and Julie Andrews. I just loved it. I thought, 'This is magical.' There's animated penguins dancing with Dick Van Dyke. I was just mesmerized by the whole process."

He still is, but his love of movies has also expanded to a deeper focus, one that connects to the Catholic faith that

See FILMS, page 7

**Pope prays
Mary will fill
believers with
hope, inspire
them to serve**

ROME (CNS)—Celebrating the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Jubilee Year was ending, Pope Leo XIV prayed that "Jubilee hope" would "blossom in Rome and in every corner of the Earth," bringing with it reconciliation, nonviolence and peace.



Pope Leo XIV

Standing near the Spanish Steps in central Rome, at the foot of a towering column topped by a statue of Mary, the pope led thousands of Romans, pilgrims and tourists in prayer on Dec. 8.

At dawn that morning, a firefighter named Roberto Leo, the fire service's longest serving department head in Rome, climbed up 100 rungs of an aerial ladder to place a wreath of white flowers on the outstretched arms of the statue about 90 feet above the ground.

Following a tradition begun in 1958 by St. John XXIII, Pope Leo blessed a basket of white roses that assistants placed at the foot of the statue and read a prayer specifically written for this year's feast, with references to what is going on in the Church, the city and the world.

In the prayer to Mary, Pope Leo noted that the Jubilee year brought millions of pilgrims to Rome, representing "a humanity tried, at times crushed, humble like the Earth from which God shaped it and into which he never ceases to breathe his Spirit of life."

"Look, O Mary, upon the many sons and daughters in whom hope has not been extinguished: May what your Son has sown sprout within them—he, the living Word who in each person asks to grow still more, to take on flesh, face and voice," the pope prayed.

As the Holy Doors of the major basilicas of Rome are about to close at the end of the Jubilee on Jan. 6, he said, "may

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'Beautiful acts of humanity' and love mark Camino journeys

(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 northern Spain to share how that experience has influenced their life and their faith.)

Sixth in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

After another day of walking during their 600-mile pilgrimage on the *Camino*, Peter and Christina Rosario were bone-tired one evening when they faced a disheartening reality.

As they entered the town where they planned to sleep that night, they learned that the hostel for pilgrims there was already full. And the next hostel in the next town was another 2 1/2 miles away.

That's when they received what they view as "a beautiful act of humanity."

"We had met two women on the *Camino* from Germany," Peter recalls about that day.

See CAMINO, page 8

Peter and Christina Rosario of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis experienced God's grace and people's generosity as they traveled the *Camino*. (Submitted photo)





Roberto Leo, a senior firefighter, places a wreath of flowers on a Marian statue near the Spanish Steps in Rome on Dec. 8 the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

POPE

continued from page 1

other doors now open: doors of homes and oases of peace where dignity may flower again, where nonviolence is taught, where the art of reconciliation is learned."

The pope prayed that Mary would "inspire new insights in the Church that walks in Rome and in the particular Churches that in every context gather the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of our contemporaries—especially the poor and all who suffer."

Pope Leo also expressed the hope that baptism, which washes every person free of original sin, would "bring forth holy and immaculate men and women, called to become living members of the Body of Christ—a body that acts, consoles, reconciles and transforms the earthly city where the city of God is being prepared."

In a world filled with "changes that seem to find us unprepared and powerless," he asked Mary to intercede and help.

"Inspire dreams, visions and courage, you who know better than anyone that nothing is impossible for God, and at the

same time that God does nothing alone," he prayed.

The pope also asked Mary to help the Church always be "with and among the people, leaven in the dough of a humanity that cries out for justice and hope."

Before heading to the Spanish Steps, the pope had led the recitation of the *Angelus* prayer at noon with visitors in St. Peter's Square.

By preserving Mary from any stain of sin from the moment of her conception, he said, God granted her "the extraordinary grace of a completely pure heart, in view of an even greater miracle: the coming of Christ the Savior into the world as man."

That extraordinary grace bore extraordinary fruit, he said, "because in her freedom she welcomed it, embracing the plan of God."

"The Lord always acts in this way: he gives us great gifts, but he leaves us free to accept them or not," the pope said. "So, this feast, which makes us rejoice for the unsullied beauty of the Mother of God, also invites us to believe as she believed, giving our generous assent to the mission to which the Lord calls us." †

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad announce Christmas liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 101 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Parking will be available from 9 p.m.-midnight behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., across from the cathedral. It will be livestreamed at: www.ssppc.org/streaming.

Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Seating in the Archabbey Church is limited; however, the Christmas services will be livestreamed at www.saintmeinrad.org/live.

Dec. 24—Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) 5 p.m. CT, Mass 10 p.m. CT

Dec. 25—Mass 10:30 a.m. CT, Vespers 5 p.m. CT

For the Christmas liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices. †

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Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 13–24, 2025

December 17 – 3:30 p.m.

Catholic Community Foundation Advisory Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

December 18 – Noon

Lunch gathering with archdiocesan priests, Indianapolis

December 20 – 4 p.m.

Mass and pastor installation at St. Ann Church, Indianapolis

December 21 – 6:30 p.m.

Mass celebrating Simbang Gabi and Filipino Community at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

December 22 – 5:15 p.m.

Serra Club dinner for seminarians and guests at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

December 24 – 10 p.m.

Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Pope: Advent call is to cooperate in building a kingdom of peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Preparing the way of the Lord means taking concrete steps to help usher in God's kingdom of peace, Pope Leo XIV said on his first Advent Sunday back at the Vatican after his trip to Turkey and Lebanon.

Leading the recitation of the *Angelus* prayer on Dec. 7, the pope spoke about his trip as well as about the Advent Mass readings that emphasize the call to conversion and the hope that dawned with the birth of Jesus.

"In the 'Our Father' we pray each day: 'Thy kingdom come,' as Jesus himself taught us," the pope told the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square for the midday prayer.

"With this invocation we turn toward the new thing that God has in store for us, recognizing that the course of history is not already written by the powerful people of this world," he said. "Let us, then, put our thoughts and energy at the service of God who came not to reign over us, but rather to free us. This is the 'gospel,' the truly good news that motivates and draws us in."

In the first reading at Mass, Isaiah prophesies that when the Messiah comes, "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" (Is 11:6).

"Sisters and brothers, how much the world needs this hope," the pope said. "Nothing is impossible to God."

"Let us prepare ourselves for his kingdom, let us welcome it," he continued. "The little child, Jesus of Nazareth, will lead us! He who placed himself in our

hands, from the night of his birth to the dark hour of his death on the cross, shines upon our history as the rising sun."

The new day has already begun, the pope said, and it calls people to walk in the light of the Lord.

Pope Leo told the crowd about his trip to Turkey on Nov. 27-30, mainly to celebrate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and the leaders of other Christian Churches, and his trip to Lebanon on Nov. 30-Dec. 2.

The pope noted that he was speaking about the trip on the 60th anniversary of the declaration made between St. Paul VI and Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras, "which put an end to the mutual excommunications" their predecessors had issued more than 900 years earlier.

"We give thanks to God and renew our dedication to journeying toward the full visible unity of all Christians," the pope said.

And he also spoke about meeting the small Catholic communities of Turkey. "Through patient dialogue and service to those who suffer, they witness to the Gospel of love and the logic of God who manifests himself in littleness," he said.

For the second part of the trip, the pope said, "the Lebanese people were waiting for a word and a presence of consolation, but it was they who comforted me with their faith and their enthusiasm" despite recent political and economic crises and ongoing military strikes by Israel trying to destroy the Hezbollah militia. †

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Dec. 28 liturgy at cathedral to close Jubilee year; local Church members travelled to Rome as 'Pilgrims of Hope'

Criterion staff report

It began in the archdiocese on Dec. 29, 2024, with a prayer service at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, followed by a procession across the street for Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, both in Indianapolis.

Father James Brockmeier, rector of the cathedral, opened the 2025 "Pilgrims of Hope" Jubilee year.

While the holy doors of the four major basilicas of Rome close at the end of the Jubilee on Jan. 6, 2026, the local celebration of the Jubilee year will come to a close during a 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Dec. 28, at the cathedral. All are invited to attend.

'Our cross of hope'

During the prayer service last December, Father Brockmeier explained the significance of the cross chosen for the event—the cross that soon thereafter led the procession to the cathedral, where Father Brockmeier celebrated a Mass marking the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

"It is the cross that led the eucharistic procession through the streets of Indianapolis [during the National Eucharistic Congress]," he explained of the cross that resided in the cathedral during the jubilee year announced by Pope Francis in May of 2024. "That is why it is our cross of hope, reminding us to be pilgrims of hope, reminding us to be people who bring our Lord in the Eucharist out into the world."

See related story, page 9.

'Jesus, the door of salvation open for all'

On Christmas Eve, 2024, Pope Francis opened the holy door of Jubilee 2025 in St. Peter's Basilica. This door represents "Jesus, the door of salvation open for all," the pope said in his message "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world):

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

"For everyone," the Holy Father said in his papal bull announcing this special year, "may the jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' [Jn 10:7-9] of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as our hope" (1 Tm 1:1).



People process across Meridian Street from the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center to SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on Dec. 29, 2024, after a prayer service to mark the start of the 2025 Jubilee Year, whose theme is "Pilgrims of Hope." (File photo by Mike Krokos)

The history of jubilees in the Church

A jubilee or holy year is a special year in the life of the Church ordinarily celebrated every 25 years.

Jubilee years have been held on regular intervals in the Catholic Church since 1300, but they trace their roots to the Jewish tradition of marking a jubilee year every 50 years.

See JUBILEE, page 8

Indianapolis Catholic schools receive \$22.5 million Lilly Endowment grant

Criterion staff report

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis announced on Dec. 8 that it has received a grant of more than \$22.5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support Catholic schools in Marion County.

The grant will support Project Magi: Know Your Gifts, Grow Your Gifts, Share Your Gifts—an effort launched earlier this year to strengthen academic achievement, enhance student wellness, improve postsecondary success, and deepen faith formation for nearly 11,000 students in 29 Catholic schools across Marion County.

The project reflects the archdiocese's mission to form saints and scholars by integrating rigorous academics with Catholic values, according to Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese.

"We are deeply grateful to Lilly Endowment for its extraordinary investment in Catholic education," Disney said. "This grant allows us to build on the foundation established earlier this year and expand Project Magi's reach and impact. Together, we are preparing students for life beyond high school through rigorous academics, vibrant extracurriculars and a deep commitment to Catholic values."

Although Project Magi is focused on the archdiocese's presence in Marion

County, Disney noted the initiative promises even greater impact by expanding insights and best practices gained in Indianapolis schools to all its 69 Catholic schools serving nearly 23,000 students in all 39 central and southern Indiana counties of the archdiocese.

Earlier this year, funding from Lilly Endowment through Phase 1 of its Private Schools Initiative helped the archdiocese focus the direction for Project Magi through extensive engagement with stakeholders, including school leaders, educators, parents, students and community partners.

A steering committee analyzed data from thousands of surveys and focus groups to identify priorities that would most impact student success.

With this new Phase 3 funding, Project Magi will strive to make a difference in several areas:

—Provide individualized professional development for all school staff members to meet their needs and achieve their goals.

—Enhance student wellness by providing more school nurses and expanding partnerships with health care providers.

—Assist students with post-secondary exploration and discernment by partnering with parents, expanding career exploration opportunities in elementary

schools and enhancing high school career discernment.

—Expand high school career preparation by increasing college-level course offerings, expanding career courses and growing work-based learning opportunities.

—Expand elementary academic programs by growing STEM education, increasing high school credit course offerings and exploring specialized programming.

The Marion County K-12 Private Schools Initiative is part of Lilly Endowment's broader effort to strengthen educational outcomes for students in Indianapolis through complementary initiatives for both public and private schools.

Large-scale implementation grants

to public schools in Indianapolis were awarded through a separate, complementary selection.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr., and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr., through gifts of stock in its pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion.

The Endowment funds programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion, and maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.

For more information about Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit: www.archindy.org/schools. †

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Editorial



Pope Francis greets retired Pope Benedict XVI during an encounter for the elderly in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sept. 28, 2014. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Stewards of hope

As baptized Christians, we are a people constantly on the move. We are a pilgrim people with a common destination—our heavenly home. And we have a detailed roadmap to follow on our pilgrim journey—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By following in his footsteps, we find meaning and direction in our lives. By encountering Jesus in prayer and the sacraments, especially the holy Eucharist, and by living as Jesus instructed us to live—serving others without hesitation—we experience freedom and happiness as his sisters and brothers and we never have to be frightened, lonely or confused about who we are or where we are going.

Our journey does not “dead end” at death. Instead, we believe that, God willing, we will continue to walk with Jesus, Mary and all the saints through the joy of our heavenly home. The mission that those who have been baptized into the death of Christ have received is to be stewards of hope who proclaim joyfully the Good News of our salvation in him.

For those of us who are committed to the spirituality of stewardship, our light should shine brightly and our hope should always be confident. This may at times seem like a burden, but that's why we look to the image of the crucified Christ on the cross. When we can participate in his suffering, our own burdens seem light. And when we see in his eyes the love and compassion that he has for us, we can carry our own crosses without self-pity or regret.

In his apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis urged all of us to be witnesses to the joy that comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer. In fact, he specifically warned us not to be “sourpusses,” people whose hearts are hard and who are cold and indifferent to the needs of others. Pope Leo XIV has confirmed his predecessor’s commitment to sharing the joy of the Gospel in every dimension of his petrine ministry.

In his autobiography *Hope*, Pope Francis speaks often about the need for tenderness and compassion in our relationships with the people we meet—those who are closest to us and those who are strangers. This compassionate

approach to daily living is especially evident in Pope Francis’ description of his relationship to his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis writes:

Benedict was a father and a brother to me. Our relationship was always genuine and deep, and regardless of a few tales that were made up by those who were determined to tell the opposite story until the very end, he helped, advised, supported, and defended me. ...

Even in his last days, when his body was increasingly frail and his voice increasingly feeble, I could feel the force of his tenderness. We met for the last time on Dec. 28, 2022, three days before he died. He was still conscious but unable to speak. We remained there looking at each other and holding hands. I spoke words of affection. I blessed him, his bright eyes gleamed with the same sweetness and intelligence as always. The intelligence of one who has witnessed how God is always new, surprises us, brings news. I thank the Lord for having presented him to me and to the Church.

Here we see two different popes humbly and tenderly giving witness to the joy that unites them in Christ, the Divine Redeemer. Especially as this scene is described by Pope Francis, we can also see that there is nothing calculated or superficial about the witness that we are called to give as we wait for death, which is not the end, but a wonderful new beginning in a journey that is “always new” and full of surprises.

By inviting us to see ourselves as hope-filled pilgrims on a wonderful spiritual journey, the Church reminds us that none of us is alone in facing the challenges of daily living. We are all members of God’s family who travel together on a journey of light and hope. Only the light of Christ can make our life clear and bright. Only Christ can give us lasting hope.

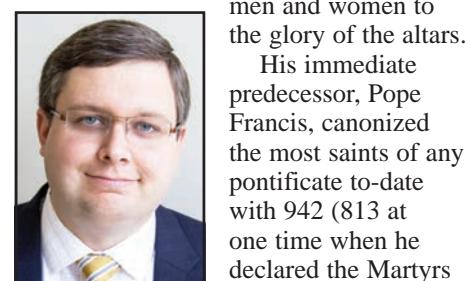
During Advent, we are called to be stewards of hope who wait for the Lord’s promises to be fulfilled in our personal lives and in our world. And we are privileged to be prophetic witnesses to the joy promised us—now and in our heavenly home.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Michael R. Heinlein

Six years after Archbishop Sheen’s cause was shelved, could Illinois-born Pope Leo XIV bring it back?

As holy Roman pontiff, Pope Leo XIV has the singular prerogative of advancing canonization causes and solemnly raising men and women to the glory of the altars.



His immediate predecessor, Pope Francis, canonized the most saints of any pontificate to-date with 942 (813 at one time when he declared the Martyrs of Otranto, Italy, to be saints early in his pontificate).

As with many aspects of his pontificate, Pope Francis sometimes took an avant-garde approach to declaring saints, designating more saints by equivalent canonization—that is by papal fiat, without a requisite miracle—than any pope in modern history.

Some cases moved ahead with great speed, too, like that of St. Carlo Acutis, whose canonization took place on Sept. 7, after having been postponed due to Pope Francis’ April 21 death. And yet others have experienced unusual setbacks—such as the cause of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen.

Archbishop Sheen’s beatification had been scheduled for Dec. 21, 2019, in Peoria, Ill., before its mysterious postponement, a move that was both unusual but also scandalous, given the stage of the cause.

Could the Church’s change in leadership at the top bring his cause out of dormancy?

There is hope that Pope Leo might have a variety of reasons to be aware of and interested in rectifying the situation. Archbishop Sheen and the former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, now the first native-born American to occupy the see of Peter, are both sons of Illinois.

With Pope Leo having grown up in baby-booming American suburbia when Sheen was a television phenomenon and household name, it’s possible he even has a devotion to the TV evangelist.

Additionally, with the pope’s emphasis on unity and an apparent bent toward overcoming polarization in the Church, Archbishop Sheen’s beatification could be seen as a much-needed opportunity to heal and divide a fractured Church, especially in the land of his birth. The signs are hopeful.

Nearly six years after the planned beatification, there has been very little clarity on what happened to cause its extraordinary and surprise delay. Moving it ahead, and explaining what happened, could give Pope Leo a “win” in this first year of a pontificate clearly directed at building up the body of Christ in charity and truth.

To date, the only explanation offered by an ecclesiastical authority was from the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y., where Sheen served briefly as diocesan bishop. The diocese acknowledged its request for further examination of his record on handling claims of abuse against some Rochester priests during his brief tenure as diocesan bishop there.

This request seemed to arise from concerns related to a statewide report then expected from New York’s attorney general relating to clergy sexual abuse. Nothing has surfaced whatsoever as that process is believed to be nearing a conclusion. After nearly six years, the Diocese of Rochester alone reached a settlement agreement on Sept. 5 that established a \$256.35 million fund for abuse survivors.

Ongoing infighting between dioceses—namely Peoria and New York—over Archbishop Sheen’s mortal remains might also be a contributing factor, one which

Rome could solve rather easily, avoiding any potential additional legal disputes in American courts between a Sheen descendant and the New York archdiocese, which wanted to retain his body in the crypt of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Manhattan. It was the wish of Archbishop Sheen’s family to see their uncle brought home to the Peoria cathedral where he discovered his priestly vocation and was ordained in 1920.

The linchpin in the debate about postponing the beatification? That Sheen’s life of heroic virtue has been proven and a miracle attributed to his intercession has been authenticated. Pope Benedict XVI declared in 2012 that Archbishop Sheen was worthy of veneration by the faithful, and the miracle paving the way to his beatification was approved by Pope Francis in 2019. That miracle warrants and necessitates his beatification regardless of any behavior that may or may not be uncovered from Rochester or elsewhere.

When a miracle is approved, but a cause is effectively put on ice—particularly in the way Sheen’s has been, with little transparency—what does that say about the Church’s process of beatification? In a situation such as this, transparency and clarity from Church leadership can help avoid unpleasant questions.

Six years later, the delay of Archbishop Sheen’s beatification remains a cause of concern for the whole Church. Because despite the disappointment surrounding the 2019 beatification that wasn’t, devotion to Sheen continues to grow, and he is continually celebrated and invoked as a man for our times.

There is hope that Pope Leo might be particularly concerned about how the faithful—who have been told Archbishop Sheen was a man worthy of our veneration for his life of holiness and virtue—have been left in the dark as far as the current status of his cause is concerned.

There is also hope that other recent changes pertinent to Sheen’s legacy could help advance setting right the wrong. In Peoria, Bishop Louis Tylka recently renewed the Sheen Foundation Advisory Board, which had been inactive since 2019. And for decades, Sheen was national director of The Pontifical Mission Society in the United States. And his renown for occupying that position was and is legendary.

As such, it is hopeful that Msgr. Roger Landry—a well-respected, non-ideological Churchman of rising prominence, and growing media presence—has taken the reins of that organization, becoming successor to Sheen’s most prominent role in public ministry. (Msgr. Landry, it should be noted, was scheduled to celebrate Mass on Dec. 9 in New York on the 46th anniversary of Sheen’s death.) Perhaps he could be positioned to take up the cause of continuing to advance Archbishop Sheen’s rich legacy and see his beatification finally scheduled.

Time will tell where all this will go. But as Pope Leo continues to identify priorities and actions that can help bring unity to the Church, it seems to me that finally beatifying Sheen could be a significant win.

(Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.*) †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Let's turn to the Blessed Mother, to her love for us

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior." (Lk 1:46-47)

Four days ago, on Dec. 8, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The doctrine of Mary's sinless conception, and her freedom from the burden of original sin that is carried by every other descendant of Adam and Eve, is a powerful testament to God's mercy and his desire to preserve us from the consequences of sin and death.

The Immaculate Conception celebrates the fact that Mary is unique and different from all the rest of us—not in a way that distances her from us, but in a way that brings her closer.

Mary's closeness to us is emphasized in today's Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The story of Mary's miraculous appearance in 1531 to St. Juan Diego, a poor Indian from Tepeyac, a hill northwest of Mexico City, is familiar to many Catholics in central and southern Indiana.

Mary identified herself as the Mother

of God, but also as the mother of all of us. What's more, she appeared to this poor man as a young mestiza woman dressed like a native princess. She spoke to him—not in Spanish but in the indigenous language of his own people. And she assured him that she was not a stranger, but in fact was as close to him as his own mother.

Mary instructed Juan Diego to have the local bishop build a church on the site. As proof of who she was, the beautiful lady left an image of herself imprinted miraculously on his *tilma*, a poor-quality cactus cloth. Under ordinary circumstances, this cloth should have deteriorated within 20 years but to this day, nearly 500 years later, it shows no sign of decay.

When Juan Diego opened his *tilma* in the bishop's presence, out-of-season Castilian roses fell to the ground, and the bishop sank to his knees. On the *tilma* where the roses had been, there was an indelible image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac.

In 1999, St. Pope John Paul II, in his homily given during a Solemn Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe during

his third visit to the sanctuary, declared the date of Dec. 12th as a liturgical Holy Day for the whole American continent. During the same visit, the Holy Father entrusted the cause of life to Mary's loving protection and placed under her motherly care the innocent lives of children, especially those who are in danger of not being born.

We celebrate this great feast day in communion with dioceses throughout the United States, Mexico and all the Americas. We are reminded on this day that Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our mother, is here with us, and one with us, in all the moments of our lives. In good times, she rejoices with us. In hard times, she showers us with her compassion, and she shares with us the courage that she displayed standing at the foot of her Son's cross.

Mary's freely chosen acceptance of God's will for her was a powerful instrument of our salvation in Christ. The fact that she comes to us wearing native clothing and speaking our own language is a sign that her love for us is boundless and unfettered. She is not subject to the narrow divisiveness of sin. She remains close to

us always, pointing the way to her Divine Son and showing us how to be united with him and with each other.

Mary's words to St. Juan Diego, nearly 500 years ago, speak powerfully to each of us today:

Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you.

As we continue to celebrate this holy season of Advent, let's turn to our Blessed Mother and allow her to guide us, care for us, and intercede for us. And let's ask the one who was born without sin to show us what life can be like for us if we surrender completely our egos, our self-centeredness, and our refusal to accept God's will for us in our daily lives.

Advent is the season for patient waiting. Let's ask our loving Mother to help us with our impatience. May we join with Mary in saying to God's messengers: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Refugiémonos en la Virgen, en su amor por nosotros

"Mi alma glorifica al Señor, y mi espíritu se regocija en Dios mi Salvador." (Lc 1:46-47)

Hace cuatro días, 8 de diciembre, celebramos la Solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Santísima Virgen.

La doctrina del concepción sin pecado de María y que estuviera libre de la carga del pecado original que llevan todos los demás descendientes de Adán y Eva, es un poderoso testimonio de la misericordia de Dios y de su deseo de preservarnos de las consecuencias del pecado y la muerte.

La Inmaculada Concepción celebra el hecho de que María es única y diferente de todos nosotros, lo cual no la hace inalcanzable sino, al contrario, nos acerca a ella.

La cercanía de María a nosotros se pone de relieve en la solemnidad de hoy de la Virgen de Guadalupe. La historia de la milagrosa aparición de María en 1531 a san Juan Diego, un pobre indio del Tepeyac, una colina situada al noroeste de Ciudad de México, es conocida por muchos católicos del centro y el sur de Indiana.

María se identificó como Madre de Dios, pero también como madre de todos nosotros. Es más, a este

pobre hombre se le apareció como una joven mestiza vestida como una princesa indígena. Le habló, no en español, sino en la lengua indígena de su propio pueblo y le aseguró que no era una extraña, sino que en realidad estaba tan cerca de él como su propia madre.

María dio instrucciones a Juan Diego para que el obispo local construyera una iglesia en el lugar de su aparición. Como prueba de quién era, la bella dama dejó una imagen de sí misma impresa milagrosamente en su *tilma*, una tela burda fabricada con cactus. En circunstancias normales, esa tela debería haberse deteriorado al cabo de 20 años, pero al día de hoy, casi 500 años después, no muestra signos de deterioro.

Cuando Juan Diego abrió su *tilma* en presencia del obispo, cayeron al suelo rosas castellanas que estaban fuera de temporada, y el obispo se arrodilló. En la *tilma* donde habían estado las rosas, había una imagen indeleble de María exactamente como se había aparecido en el cerro del Tepeyac.

En 1999, san Juan Pablo II, en su homilía pronunciada durante una misa solemne en la Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe durante su tercera visita al santuario, declaró la fecha del 12 de diciembre

como Día Santo litúrgico para todo el continente americano. Durante la misma visita, el Santo Padre confió la causa de la vida a la amorosa protección de María y puso bajo su maternal cuidado las vidas inocentes de los niños, especialmente de aquellos que corren peligro de no nacer.

Celebramos esta gran fiesta en comunión con las diócesis de Estados Unidos, México y todas las Américas. En este día se nos recuerda que María, la Madre de Jesús y madre nuestra, está aquí y es una con nosotros en todos los momentos de nuestra vida. En los buenos tiempos, se alegra con nosotros; en los momentos difíciles, nos colma de compasión y comparte con nosotros el valor que demostró al pie de la cruz de su Hijo.

El hecho de que María aceptara libremente la voluntad de Dios para ella fue un poderoso instrumento de nuestra salvación en Cristo. La libre aceptación por parte de María de la voluntad de Dios para ella fue un poderoso instrumento de nuestra salvación en Cristo. El hecho de que se nos presente vestida con ropa indígena y hablando nuestra propia lengua es una señal de que su amor por nosotros es ilimitado y sin restricciones, ya que no es

preso de la mezquindad divisoria del pecado. Permanece siempre cerca de nosotros, señalándonos el camino hacia su Divino Hijo y mostrándonos cómo estar unidos a él y entre nosotros.

Las palabras de María a san Juan Diego, hace casi 500 años, nos hablan hoy con fuerza:

¿No estoy aquí, yo, que soy tu madre? ¿No estás bajo mi sombra? ¿No soy yo tu salud? ¿No estás por ventura en mi regazo? ¿Qué más has menester? No te apene ni te inquiete otra cosa.

A medida que continuamos con las celebraciones de esta temporada santa del Adviento, dirigímonos a nuestra Santísima Madre y dejemos que nos guíe, nos cuide e interceda por nosotros. Y pidámosle a ella, que nació sin pecado, que nos muestre cómo podría ser la vida si renunciamos por completo a nuestro ego y egocentrismo, y a la negativa a aceptar la voluntad de Dios en nuestra vida cotidiana.

El Adviento es la época de la espera paciente; aprovechemos para pedirle a nuestra Madre amorosa que nos ayude con nuestra impaciencia. Unámonos a María para decírsela a los mensajeros de Dios: "He aquí la esclava del Señor. Hágase en mí según tu palabra" (Lc 1:38). †

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 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, bake sale, cake walk, free, suggested donation \$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: 317-357-1200.

tmarlin@nativityindy.org.

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 15-23

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Simbang Gabi Novena of Masses**, 6:30 p.m. (6 p.m. on Dec. 22), Filipino traditional novena of Masses before Christmas Eve, all Masses in English; Dec. 15 and 22 Masses in the cathedral's Blessed Sacrament Chapel; Dec. 21 Mass celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St. across from cathedral; light dinner in rectory after Dec. 23 Mass.

Information: Sheri Legaspi, 317-332-9564.

St. Margaret Mary Church, 2405 S. Seventh St., Terre Haute. **Simbang Gabi Novena of Masses**, 6 p.m., all Masses in English with Tagalog elements, including songs. Donations accepted for St. Patrick Soup Kitchen. Information: 812-232-8518.

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.

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, pccollins@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/youth-rally-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. †

Retreats and Programs

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

January 9, Feb. 20, March 27

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.

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

January 15, Feb. 19, March 18

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.

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, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

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.

February 18

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Ash Wednesday and The Contemplative Life**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, includes lunch, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

February 20-22

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Strong Marriage, Strong Parenting**,

6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., EWTN personality and clinical psychologist Dr. Ray Guarendi 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.

February 21

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Modern Day Saints**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., artist Gracie Morbitzer presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

February 24-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Women of the Bible**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Reduced-rate young adult retreats offered in 2026 at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Retreat dates for 2026 are as follows:

—Jan. 9-11
—April 17-19
—May 29-31, special St. Carlo Acutis Video Gamers Young Adult Retreat

—Aug. 7-9
—Oct. 23-25

The May 29-31 weekend will feature the St. Carlo Acutis Video Gamers Young Adult Retreat, celebrating the canonization of Carlo Acutis on Sept. 7. The retreat will bring together Catholic and other Christian gamers for a weekend of prayer and conferences reflecting on the *Rule of St. Benedict* and video games, fellowship over meals, eucharistic devotion and video gaming.

Additionally, there are four spots available for young adults in the basket weaving retreat led by Benedictine Brother Jean Fish scheduled for Oct. 16-18, 2026. The fee is \$40, and any interested young adult should register directly with Brother Jean at baskets@saintmeinrad.edu.

To register for the retreats, visit www.saintmeinrad.org/retreats or call the Guest House and Retreat Center at 812-357-6611. †

Conference on Alzheimer's disease is planned for Jan. 10 in Carmel

Brain Health: A Focus on Alzheimer's Disease Conference will take place at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road in Carmel, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette) from 9:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. on Jan. 10.

The conference, sponsored by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish's Health Ministry and the Alzheimer's Association, will feature presentations by Alzheimer's Association Certified Awareness Champion and Community Educator

Rafik H. Bishara, Alzheimer's Association Community Engagement Manager Robin Rockel, CICOA Aging and In-Home Solutions Dementia Programs Coordinator Holly Hess and Dr. Janice Kunkel of Witham Health Services.

The program is free, but registration is required by Jan. 7. Registration can be done online at bit.ly/2026brainhealth. For more information, contact Liz Escoffrey at 317-846-3190 or liz.escoffrey@setoncarmel.org. †

FILMS

continued from page 1

is at the heart of life for this associate professor of theology and the Semler Chair of Ethics at Marian University in Indianapolis.

He shared that deeper focus during a talk he gave to a group of Catholic fathers in Indianapolis earlier this year, placing his emphasis on movies that dads could watch with their families, films that have a core of faith-related qualities.

"Jesus didn't tell us what we wanted to know in the form of high theological treatises. He used stories—parables that people could relate to," Thompson told the group called Fraternitas, a program developed by Marian University in Indianapolis to help dads grow in their faith. "We are people of stories. He knew that."

"There are a lot of movies which exemplify very good themes for us. Movies that are inspiring will have truth, beauty and goodness in them. If they're doing that, that tells you that you are on the right track."

A parent's discretion

At the same time, Thompson advises parents to avoid movies "with unnecessary violence, excessive bad language, sexual promiscuity or toilet humor."

Yet, as with all rules, there are exceptions, all at the discretion of what a parent believes is right for a child at an appropriate age, he says.

"Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan are movies with violence in them. But what's the purpose of the violence?" Thompson says. "Naturally, Saving Private Ryan deals with war, so violence is a part of it. But the violence doesn't override the underlying moral themes of the movie."

Use of crude language can particularly be a challenge.

"It's hard to find a movie without any bad language. It doesn't have to be totally

pure," Thompson says, citing *The Spitfire Grill* as an example of a movie that has words that may offend viewers. "It's just that if every other word is a bad word, then it's problematic."

He also encourages parents to use "bad moments" in a movie as a basis for discussion with their child or children—"This is what we don't want to happen," "Why is this problematic?"

That's one the whole family could watch'

In his search for movies that promote "truth, beauty and goodness," Thompson looks for ones that have Catholic themes of human dignity, grace, redemption, wisdom, conscience, justice, solidarity, common good, conversion, care for the poor and fortitude.

All conversations about a good movie for him start with how it portrays and promotes human dignity.

"Or maybe there's a violation of human dignity that's going on, and it offends our sense of what human dignity is. This is the fundamental value in all of Catholic ethics," he says. "Does it promote human dignity or not? If you get nothing out of this list—human dignity—start there."

A relatively current movie he recommends is *Boys in the Boat*.

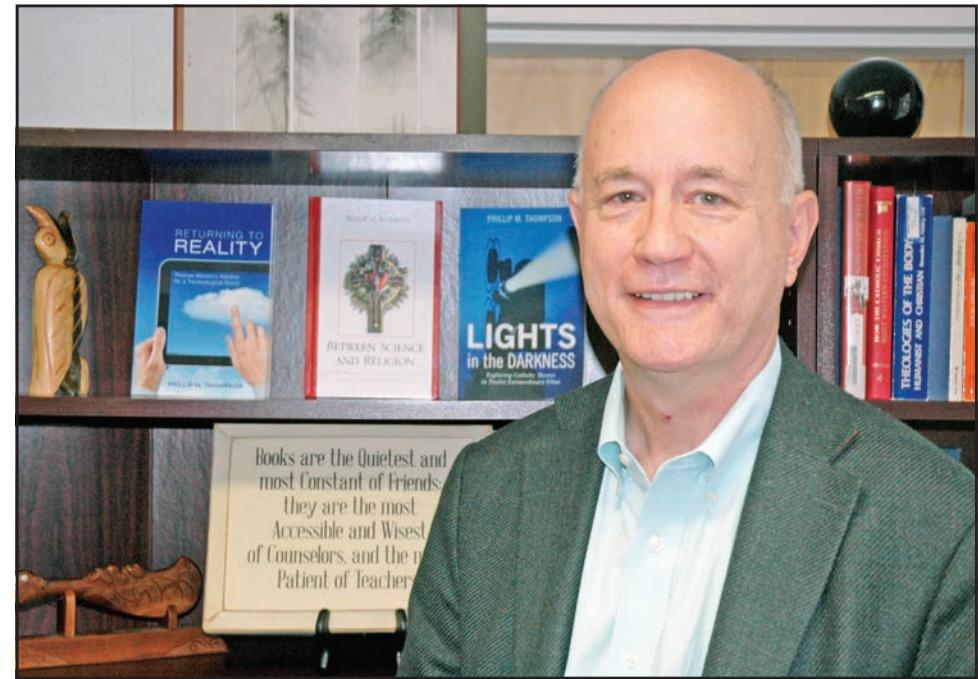
"It's about the rowers of the United States in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin," Thompson says. "It's all about how in the middle of the Depression these guys come together at the University of Washington and become this incredible team against all odds. No one thinks they're going to win the United States championship let alone the Olympics in Berlin."

Another favorite movie of his—one he considers appropriate for children of all ages—is *The Sandlot*.

"I defy anybody to reject *The Sandlot*," he says about the movie that celebrates childhood friendships. "That's one the whole family could watch."

Growing together in the light

Thompson's interest in movies led him to write *Lights in the Darkness: Exploring Catholic Themes in Twelve Extraordinary*



Phil Thompson shared some of his favorite movies earlier this year with a Catholic men's group developed to strengthen fathers in their faith. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Films. (See below for the list of these 12 movies.)

"Scripture says, 'The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light' [Mt 4:16]. I have this at the beginning of my book. And 'lights in the darkness' is what a movie does. What I wanted to find in the films was the light which is Jesus Christ."

For Thompson, the goal is to help parents and children grow together in that light through movies.

"Children have immense curiosity and imagination," says Thompson, the father of a grown son. "Movies are an amazing source of inspiration in developing the imagination in the right way, if you get the right films. If we can direct children toward films or TV shows or books that are faith-filled or have faith themes in

them, it can be a tremendous way to work together on our faith."

He also offers parents a piece of valuable advice he learned from his father.

"My dad was a very wise man. He said, 'You don't mold children, you unpack them.' We have to nurture them in the right direction.

"One thing I would say for parents, find what your child or your children like. Find out what they're excited about. If they like animals, look at nature films and documentaries. If they're into history like I was, find some exciting films about historical events or figures."

"Take them where they are, what they like and match that up with movies, books or art that are consistent with our Catholic faith." †

Lights in the Darkness

Here are the movies that Phil Thompson featured in his book, *Lights in the Darkness: Exploring Catholic Themes in Twelve Extraordinary Films*:

- Field of Dreams*
- Going My Way*
- Gran Torino*
- It's a Wonderful Life*
- Les Misérables*
- Lilies of the Field*
- Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- Rocky*
- Spider-Man 2*
- Star Wars*
- The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- The Dark Knight*
- The Passion of the Christ*
- The Princess Bride*
- The Shawshank Redemption*

- Dekalog*
- Diary of a Country Priest*
- Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story*
- Gattaca*
- Of Gods and Men*
- The Decalogue*
- The Flowers of St. Francis*
- The Mission* †

Pope Leo's favorite films

In November, the Vatican shared the favorite films of Pope Leo XIV as he prepared for a meeting with a group of Hollywood actors and directors.

With unifying themes of hope and

human dignity, the four movies that Pope Leo views as his favorites are:

- It's a Wonderful Life*
- The Sound of Music*
- Ordinary People*
- Life is Beautiful* †

A caution to our readers

Every parent has their own list of criteria for judging whether a movie is appropriate for viewing with their child at a given age.

If you are unfamiliar with or have

doubts about a movie, you are encouraged to do some research about the movie before watching it with your child.

A helpful website for this is commonsensemedia.org. †

Young adults share their 'should-see' movies for Catholics

Earlier this year, a group of young Catholics shared their "Official List of 100 Movies Every Catholic Should See."

According to the group's website, the list was made by young Catholics "who love and appreciate film, with the goal of promoting edifying works of cinema in the hope of inspiring more young Catholics to take up the challenge of Pope John Paul II to move forward in the New Evangelization."

Some of the movies on the subjective and wide-ranging list are:

- A Hidden Life*
- Casablanca*
- Chariots of Fire*
- Cinderella Man*
- Fantasia*

- Field of Dreams*
- Going My Way*
- Gran Torino*
- It's a Wonderful Life*
- Les Misérables*
- Lilies of the Field*
- Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- Rocky*
- Spider-Man 2*
- Star Wars*
- The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- The Dark Knight*
- The Passion of the Christ*
- The Princess Bride*
- The Shawshank Redemption*

For the full list of the 100 movies—and the reasons they are recommended—visit the website, tinyurl.com/MovieList2025. †

Pope asks big names in film to continue to challenge, inspire, give hope

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Meeting an international cast of film directors and actors, Pope Leo XIV spoke about the power of cinema to help people

"contemplate and understand life, to recount its greatness and fragility and to portray the longing for infinity."

Sitting in the front row of the Vatican's frescoed Clementine Hall on Nov. 15 were, among others: directors

Gus Van Sant and Spike Lee and actors Monica Bellucci, Cate Blanchett, Viggo Mortensen and Sergio Castellitto, who

played the traditionalist Cardinal Tedesco in the 2024 film *Conclave*.

In a video released a few days before the meeting, Pope Leo said his four favorite films were: *It's a Wonderful Life*, the 1946 film directed by Frank Capra; *The Sound of Music*, the 1965 film by Robert Wise; *Ordinary People*, the 1980 film directed by Robert Redford; and *Life Is Beautiful*, Roberto Benigni's 1997 film.

Pope Leo asked the directors and actors to "defend slowness when it serves a purpose, silence when it speaks and difference when evocative."

"Beauty is not just a means of escape," he told them, "it is above all an invocation."

"When cinema is authentic, it does not merely console, but challenges," he said.

"It articulates the questions that dwell within us, and sometimes, even provokes tears that we did not know we needed to express."

Being authentic, the pope said, means not being afraid "to confront the world's wounds. Violence, poverty, exile, loneliness, addiction and forgotten wars are issues that need to be acknowledged and narrated."

"Good cinema does not exploit pain," Pope Leo said. "It recognizes and explores it."

"Giving voice to the complex, contradictory and sometimes dark feelings that dwell in the human heart is an act of love," he told them. "Art must not shy away from the mystery of frailty; it must engage with it and know how to remain before it."

Coming to the Vatican during the Jubilee of hope, he said, the directors and actors join millions of pilgrims who have made the journey during the past year.

"Your journey is not measured in kilometers but in images, words, emotions, shared memories and collective desires," the pope told them. "You navigate this pilgrimage into the mystery of human experience with a penetrating gaze that is capable of recognizing beauty even in the depths of pain, and of discerning hope in the tragedy of violence and war."

The pope prayed that their work would "never lose its capacity to amaze and even continue to offer us a glimpse, however small, of the mystery of God." †



Pope Leo XIV

JUBILEE

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According to the Vatican website for the jubilee, these years in Jewish history were “intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land and a fallow period for the fields.”

A variety of talks, retreats and similar events touched on the theme “Pilgrims of Hope” throughout the archdiocese, but local pilgrims also journeyed to Rome.

A digital missionary and Catholic influencer

Twenty-four-year old Sophia Chamblee in late July took part in the Vatican’s Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers—a gathering that drew more than 1,000 people from more than 70 countries to Rome.

A member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, Chamblee graduated from college in 2023 and shortly thereafter created the website, www.playgroundsaints.shop, where she sells stickers, prints and keychains featuring the saints. She also shares her focus on saints on the social media platform Instagram @playgroundsaints. She posts stories and self-described “goofy” videos about the saints, hoping to show their humanity.

She was also in Rome on Sept. 7 for the canonization Mass honoring the saint who changed her life—St. Carlo Acutis.

“I first heard about Carlo Acutis during COVID,” Chamblee said. “That was when he was beatified. He really stood out to me because he was a nerd. And I am also a huge nerd. I was a huge Star Wars fan growing up, and that’s drifted off into other things. I really saw myself in Carlo.”



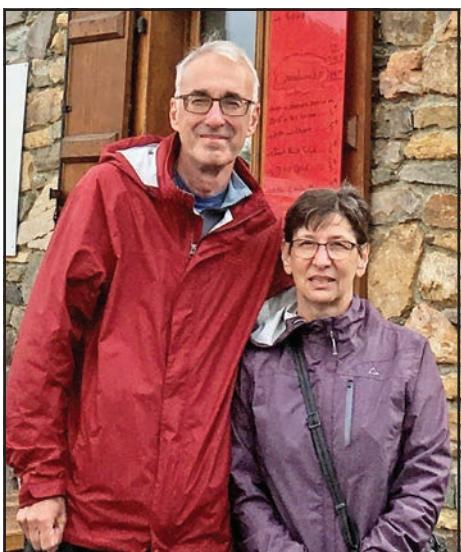
Sophia Chamblee came to St. Peter's Square on Sept. 7 for the canonization Mass honoring the saint who changed her life—St. Carlo Acutis. (Submitted photo)

CAMINO

continued from page 1

“Fortunately, the German women knew we were walking slowly and paid for two beds. Their act of kindness saved us from having to walk further to the next town.

“We bought dinner for them—an even



Tom and Kathleen Williams of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis celebrated their wedding anniversary as they walked the Camino. (Submitted photo)

swap. It was amazing how helpful and kind people were, freely willing to offer food, medical help and advice.”

Ten years have passed since the Rosarios completed their journey from Lourdes, France, to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, but the memories and the life lessons from that pilgrimage continue to influence the couple who have been married for 52 years.

One of the life lessons revolves around the gifts they see other people share and that they try to share.

“We continue to live our *Camino* memories with the beautiful acts of humanity we daily see lived out around us,” Christina says. “These include any variety of an act of love, trust in God, facing uncertainties with resolve, receiving suffering with acceptance, and continuing forward unrelentingly.”

The other main lesson focuses on the presence of God in our lives—and placing our trust in him.

Members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, the Rosarios trusted in God being there for them every day on the *Camino*—through the threatening weather, while being surrounded by the beauty of nature, and even in the evenings when they wondered if they would have a bed for the night.

“The overall experience which has

The more she learned about him, the more she was impressed—and felt a bond with him.

“He wanted to use the Internet to evangelize. And that’s what I wanted to do as well,” she said. “Maybe not in the same way as him. He built a website documenting eucharistic miracles. That way people had all the information they needed in one place.”

“I saw myself in Carlo as having that dream of using the Internet as a tool to evangelize. I’ve used the Internet to learn how to draw, how to film, how to use different apps. I wanted to use it to talk about Catholic saints. So, he kind of became the patron saint of my mission.”

‘What it means to be a pilgrim of hope’

In the fall, as the chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Archbishop Charles C. Thompson led a group of 30 pilgrims to Rome for the Jubilee of Catechists. The trip was sponsored by the USCCB.

Archbishop Thompson gave a presentation to English-speaking catechists from around the world in Rome on how catechists are doors of hope. He prayed at the tomb of Pope Francis at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome. And he and the pilgrimage group met Antonia Salzano, the mother of St. Carlo Acutis in Assisi.

During the trip, the group had a private audience with Pope Leo XIV, which was a highlight for pilgrims.

Archbishop Thompson also met one-on-one with the Holy Father, where the pope asked about the Church in Indiana.

“We do so many wonderful things here,” the archbishop said. “I shared that we have a very vibrant Church here in central and southern Indiana. We talked about how our people are so very good at doing national events, mentioning the Eucharistic Congress.”

Archbishop Thompson noted that coming to Rome specifically for the Jubilee for Catechists “kind of heightened the notion of what it means to be a pilgrim of hope.”

“Every baptized person is called to be sent out,” he said. “We each have our own unique way—lay or ordained—to carry that out. But we all have that same common baptismal call to holiness and mission and to proclaim through witness and action the good news. How do we draw people to Jesus Christ?”

Synodality: A gift to the Church, world

Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, visited Rome during the Oct. 24-26 Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies at the Vatican.

The meetings occurred in the context of a Jubilee Year event in Rome, and as coordinator of the archdiocesan synod implementation team, he participated in a gathering of his counterparts from throughout the world.

The Jubilee included workshops and other gatherings to further strengthen the implementation phase of the final document of the 2021-2024 Synod of Bishops on synodality.

During an Oct. 26 Mass to close the Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies, Pope Leo told the approximately 2,000 people gathered that the supreme rule in the Catholic Church is love, which compels all of the faithful to serve, not to judge, exclude or dominate others.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is pictured with Marilyn Santos, left, associate director of the Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Antonia Salzano, St. Carlo Acutis’ mother, during a pilgrimage stop in Assisi, Italy. (Submitted photo courtesy of Marilyn Santos)

“No one should impose his or her own ideas; we must all listen to one another. No one is excluded; we are all called to participate,” he said in his homily. “No one possesses the whole truth; we must all humbly seek it and seek it together.”

Ogorek said the pope’s message spoke to the common vocation of all the faithful to be missionary disciples.

“Among the thoughts that Pope Leo shared is that synodality is about having a strong sense of mission, acknowledging that Christ has commissioned each baptized person to be his missionary, witnessing to him to the ends of the Earth,” Ogorek wrote in a column for *The Criterion*.

“Synodality’s focus on mission affirms our archdiocesan pastoral planning process, whose theme is ‘Go Forth in Joy and Hope as Missionary Disciples,’” Ogorek noted. †



Father James Brockmeier, rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis, on Dec. 29, 2024, holds a crucifix aloft for veneration at the entrance of the cathedral to open the archdiocesan 2025 Jubilee Year. Pictured with him is Deacon Steven Hodges, left, and altar server Joaquin Legasti. (File photo by Mike Krokos)

of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis.

“Many towns had a daily Mass that often included a special welcome and blessing for pilgrims,” Tom notes. “I was privileged to read at Vespers in Rabanal del Camino and at the weekday morning Mass in English in the Cathedral in Santiago.

“It was a joy to share Mass with fellow pilgrims. At the Sunday Mass in the Santiago cathedral, we were joined in our pew by a Canadian couple we had seen on and off along the way. They came to join the service, though neither was Catholic. At another Mass in the magnificent cathedral in Leon, we were joined first by two women from California, and then by a young woman from Poland, again pilgrims we did not know well but had interacted with as we trekked across Spain.”

Two other aspects of those Masses stand out to him. They reinforced how universal the Church is. He also appreciated how joyfully the parishioners of the churches, especially in the smaller towns, welcomed the pilgrims.

That gift of welcoming was shared in different venues along the pilgrimage route—in the hostels, the small hotels, the restaurants.

“While it was eight years ago, the memories of that remarkable journey are still fresh,” Tom says. “I never tire of thinking about it.” †

Holy Spirit parishioners 'experience' three pilgrimages during jubilee year

By Sean Gallagher

The Church's current Jubilee Year of Hope is scheduled to come to an end on Jan. 6 when the feast of the Epiphany will be celebrated in Rome.

Although it's ending and another ordinary jubilee year won't take place until 2050, many members of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis hope to continue to experience the effects of this jubilee year and share it with others for years to come.

The Indianapolis East Deanery faith community sponsored three pilgrimages during the course of the jubilee year. More than 30 people traveled to Spain, France and Italy on Feb. 3-17. A group of 17 people, made up largely of young adult Catholics, visited Italy and Poland from June 22-July 5.

And a group of more than 60 people visited on Sept. 6 the Shrine of St. Theodora Guérin, Indiana's first saint, on the campus of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Father Michael O'Mara, Holy Spirit's pastor, accompanied all three groups. For him, taking part in the pilgrimages put him in close touch with "the real mission of our Church, which is to proclaim Christ, to complete his mission here on Earth."

"As a priest, I experienced great joy in sharing this with whatever age group we were walking with," Father O'Mara said. "It was just such a joy."

I've never felt that much calm and peace'

Barb Williams took part in all three of the pilgrimages sponsored by Holy Spirit. As she prepared for the first one in February, she just "looked on it as a vacation" and was excited "to get to visit all of these places" like St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican and all of its grandeur.

But she soon learned that she had signed up for a pilgrimage, not a vacation. Grand historic sites didn't move her heart. It was places marked more by peace.

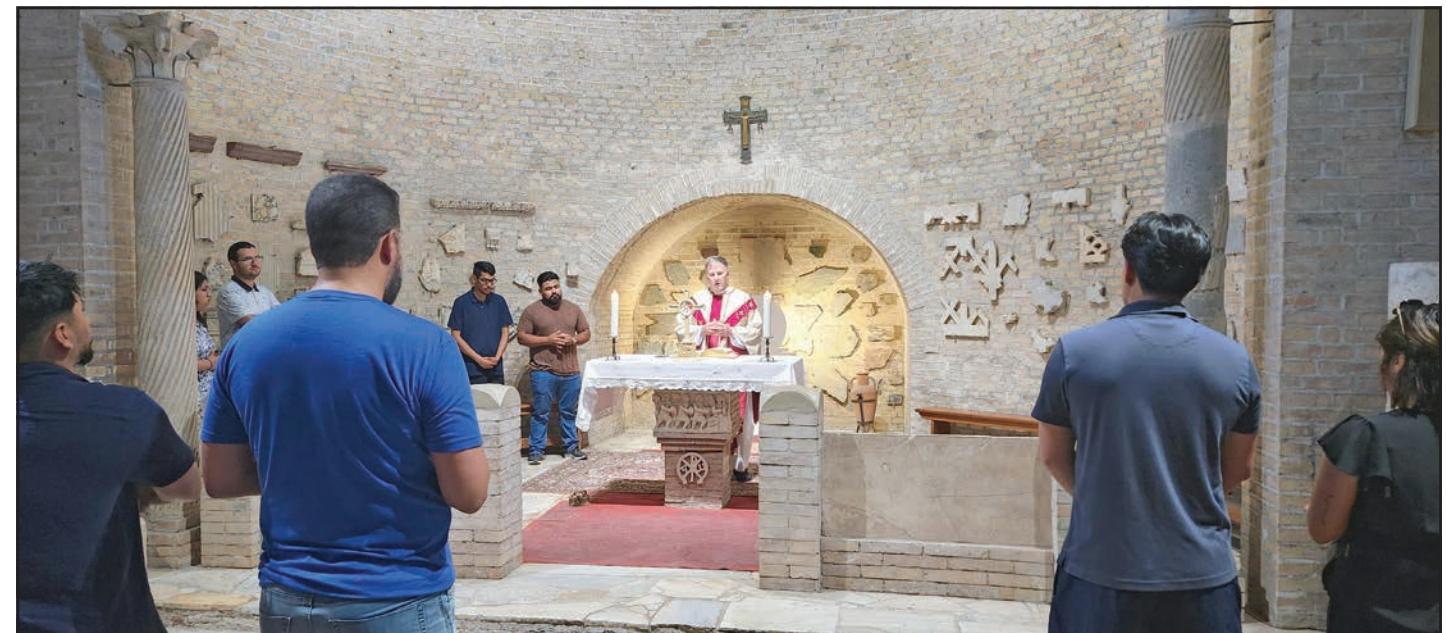
"When we got to Lourdes, it was just calm, just peaceful," Williams said. "I've never felt that much calm and peace."

"If you go over and treat it as a vacation, you come back and you just show pictures. But if you come back as a pilgrim, [you're changed]."

In Assisi, Williams was given a simple wooden cross that she continues to wear in her day-to-day life back in Indianapolis.

"I would never have worn this before," she remarked. "Since I've been back and worn it and people have commented on it, I tell them about it. Before, I would not have done that. So, I did bring back more faith than I went with, definitely."

When the February pilgrimage group made its way to Rome, they prepared to visit the city's four major basilicas and walk through each's jubilee doors, a spiritual practice during jubilee years that gives a plenary indulgence to those



Father Michael O'Mara, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, celebrates Mass on June 24 in a chapel in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome for participants in a pilgrimage to Italy and Poland sponsored by the Indianapolis East Deanery faith community. Holy Spirit sponsored three pilgrimages during the Church's Jubilee Year of Hope. (Submitted photo)

who do it.

One of the conditions to receive the indulgence is to take part in the sacrament of reconciliation.

"We had reconciliation in the back of the bus," Williams recalled. "All the people in the back of the bus had to go to the front. And Father Michael sat in the very back and we took turns going to reconciliation. It was great."

While in Rome, the group visited the "Scala Santa," a set of stairs across the street from the Basilica of St. John Lateran which are believed to have been the stairs Christ climbed on his way to meet Pontius Pilate on the day of his crucifixion.

Those who visit the site have traditionally for centuries prayerfully climbed the stairs on their knees, something that Father O'Mara and other pilgrims from Holy Spirit did.

"It's hard," he said. "It's painful by the time you get to the top. But, as Pope Benedict XVI said, 'We are not made for comfort. We are made for greatness.'"

Listen with your heart'

All of the parish's pilgrimages were also multicultural experiences with some pilgrims being Hispanic and having Spanish as their first language and others having English as their first language.

Holy Spirit parishioner Kathy Lamb Kozenski took part in the February pilgrimage. She said it required "intentionality" for all the pilgrims to be open to the experiences they were all sharing together.

"You had to actually listen more intentionally, because there were several people who weren't comfortably fluent in English," Lamb Kozenski said. "That was a big factor. Other people weren't fluent or comfortably fluent in Spanish. But we all were kind and looked out for each other. We were respectful."

"You had to pause to listen. You listen with your heart more by watching the person, looking at their facial reactions and body language."

Jared Aguado-Bermudez, 19, was

a part of the pilgrimage in June and July. Raised in a Hispanic family that primarily spoke Spanish, he said he's more comfortable praying in that language.

But like Lamb Kozenski, he felt comfortable traveling on his pilgrimage with people from other cultures who prayed in other languages.

"You don't know exactly what they're saying, but because you know your prayers, you know what they're feeling," said Aguado-Bermudez, a Holy Spirit parishioner. "When you hear the Our Father or the Hail Mary in Italian, you don't know what exactly each word means, but you can follow along."

Visiting Wadowice, the Polish hometown of St. John Paul II, was special for the young adult who was born the year after the Polish pontiff died.

"My parents talked about him when I was growing up," Aguado-Bermudez said. "A few days after he died, my mom found out that she was pregnant with me. So, when I was in the second grade in Sunday school, I had to dress up as a saint. I was dressed up as Pope John Paul II. At the time, I wasn't sure who he was."

Visiting where the pope grew up helped the young adult value him more.

"When I got to his house, I read about what he had done and how he had spread the faith around the world," Aguado-Bermudez said. "He helped bring people together."

Intentionally walking toward God'

Many people from Holy Spirit and some beyond the parish were brought together in the three pilgrimages the parish sponsored during the jubilee year.

Holy Spirit parishioner Monica Kohlman was born in Bali in Indonesia, a place with a very different culture from the United States and the countries of Latin America where other of her fellow parishioners come from.

That ultimately doesn't matter for Kohlman.

"We come from different backgrounds and different languages, yet we are one," she said.

Kohlman experiences that unity not simply with the diverse people in her parish community. It also extends to people who lived before her.

That was at the forefront of her heart and mind when she took part in Holy Spirit's Sept. 6 pilgrimage to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, where the Sisters of Providence were founded in 1842 when Mother Theodore Guérin and five other religious sisters arrived there from France.

"When I was on those grounds, my body walking there represented my soul," Kohlman said. "I was intentionally walking toward God. When you are there, you can feel the many generations



Participants in a pilgrimage sponsored by Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis pose on Feb. 9 in the Shrine of St. Pio da Pietrelcina in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. (Submitted photo)

of women there who did that. They had perseverance and strength. It just puts humility into your life. What am I doing complaining?"

While Father O'Mara was glad to accompany two pilgrimage groups to Europe, he said there was an important meaning in the parish sponsoring a journey within the archdiocese.

"Even in Indiana, we've had extraordinary people walk the Earth here, and there are more coming," he said.

Kohlman said she hopes her participation in the pilgrimage to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods will help her grow in holiness in a new way.

"Holiness is actually a day-to-day life," she said. "We don't have to do extraordinary things in daily life. It's also a communal thing. It's just not me personally, but how I react toward and treat others."

Those who took part in Holy Spirit's pilgrimages hope to share the fruits they received with other members of the faith community. After each pilgrimage, there were events where pilgrims were able to share their experiences with the broader parish community.

"We got together and we all told our stories," Father O'Mara said. "Everybody took one of the sites that we visited and shared their experience of that site."

Father O'Mara compared the pilgrimages to "a retreat experience."

"Twenty or 30 people go on a retreat," he said. "But what they do with it and the stories they tell afterward is how retreats continue to have an impact, not just on individuals, but on other people."

"I think all of us who were on the pilgrimages have told countless stories. I hear people say over and over again, 'I want to do that. I want to have an experience like that.' " †



Participants in a pilgrimage sponsored by Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis pray on Sept. 6 at the tomb of St. Theodora Guérin at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. (Submitted photo)

Sisters of Providence celebrate jubilees of 60, 50 and 25 years of religious life

Criterion staff report

Part two 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 60, 50 and 25 years of religious life.

60-year jubilarians

Sister Claire Hanson, formerly Sister Brigid Eileen, was born in Chelsea, Mass. She entered the congregation on Sept. 12, 1965, and professed final vows on Sept. 30, 1973.

Sister Claire earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at Indiana State University in Terre Haute and a master's degree in elementary education/early childhood at Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass.

In the archdiocese, she currently serves as a volunteer at the Providence Food Pantry in West Terre Haute, a ministry she began in 2023. Sister Claire has also ministered at the motherhouse since 2017 in health care, as a driver and as a receptionist.

She also served in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Washington, D.C.

Sister Kathleen Leonard, formerly Sister Dennis Therese, was born in Chelsea, Mass. She entered the congregation on Sept. 12, 1965, and professed final vows on Nov. 23, 1973.

Sister Kathleen earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a licentiate in clinical psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at the former St. Andrew the Apostle School in 1969 and at St. Joan of Arc School from 1983-86.

Sister Kathleen has also ministered in Maryland, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.

She currently serves at the motherhouse in residential services, mail distribution and as a sacristan.

Sister Betty Paul, formerly Sister Paulette, was born in Evansville, Ind. She entered the congregation on Sept. 12, 1965, and professed final vows on April 10, 1976.

Sister Betty earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and a master's degree in pastoral ministry at Seattle University in Seattle.

In the archdiocese, she served at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis from 1970-73 and at the former Schulte High School in Terre Haute from 1973-76.

Sister Betty also ministered in Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Oklahoma.

She currently serves in Greensboro, N.C., as the northern regional coordinator for the Office of Faith Formation of the Diocese of Charlotte, N.C.

Sister Martha Rojo, formerly Sister Maria Cruz, was born in Van Nuys, Calif. She entered the congregation on Sept. 12,

1965, and professed final vows on Dec. 12, 1976.

Sister Martha earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master's degree in religious studies in Hispanic ministries at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio.

She has ministered in California and Texas and currently serves in parish and assisted living ministry in California.

Sister Mary Ann Stewart,

formerly Sister Marie Faith, was born in Terre Haute, where she grew up as a member of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish. She entered the congregation on Sept. 12, 1965, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1978.

Sister Mary Ann earned a bachelor's degree in elementary 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 previously served in Indianapolis at St. Philip Neri School from 1970-74 and at the former Middle Central Catholic School from 1974-80.

Since 1980, Sister Mary Ann has ministered at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis.

50-year jubilarians

Sister Mary Ann DeFazio was born in Pittsburgh. She entered the congregation on Aug. 23, 1975, and professed final vows on Oct. 14, 1984.

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

She ministered in Illinois and New Hampshire before beginning service as a pastoral associate at St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis in 2009, where she continues in ministry.

Sister Jeanette Hagelskamp was born in Indianapolis, where she grew up as a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish. She entered the congregation on Aug. 23, 1975, and professed final vows on Aug. 19, 1984.

Sister Jeanette earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in mathematics and physics at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., a certificate of advanced study in educational leadership and administrative supervision



Sr. Claire Hanson, S.P.



Sr. Kathleen Leonard, S.P.



Sr. Betty Paul, S.P.



Sr. Martha Rojo, S.P.



Sr. Mary Ann Stewart, S.P.



Sr. Mary Ann DeFazio, S.P.



Sr. Jeanette Hagelskamp, S.P.



Sr. Lisa Stallings, S.P.



Sr. Dawn Tomaszewski, S.P.



Sr. Janice Smith, S.P.

from the National College of Education and a doctorate in education at the University of San Francisco in San Francisco.

In the archdiocese, she served at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1979-82 and at Marian University in Indianapolis from 2013-21. Sister Jeanette was also instrumental in founding Providence Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis, serving there in various capacities from 2005-13.

At the motherhouse, Sister Jeanette ministered in administration as a general councilor from 2016-21.

She also served in California and Illinois.

Sister Jeanette currently ministers in administration at the motherhouse as vicar and general treasurer.

Sister Lisa Stallings was born in Evansville, Ind. She entered the congregation on Aug. 23, 1975, and professed final vows on Aug. 25, 1984.

She earned a bachelor's degree in English at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in English at Indiana University in Bloomington, a master's degree in Church music from the former St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Ind., and a master's degree in theology at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

In the archdiocese, Sister Lisa served at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville from 1977-80.

At the motherhouse, she has ministered in various positions of administrative and liturgical leadership.

Sister Lisa also served in Illinois and Kentucky.

She currently ministers as the coordinator of liturgy at the motherhouse.

Sister Dawn Tomaszewski was born in Chicago. She entered the congregation on Aug. 23, 1975, and professed final vows on Aug. 19, 1984.

Sister Dawn earned a bachelor's degree in communications at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a master's degree in journalism at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., and a master's degree in theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

In the archdiocese, Sister Dawn served at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 1984-87 and in various administrative positions at the motherhouse from 1984-96 and from 2011-present.

She also ministered in Illinois and North Carolina.

Sister Dawn has served as general superior of the Sisters of Providence since 2016.

25-year jubilarian

Sister Janice Smith was born in Baltimore. She entered the congregation on Sept. 14, 2000, and professed final vows on June 28, 2008.

She earned a bachelor's degree in Greek and Latin at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md., a master's degree in Greek and Latin at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and a master's degree in theological studies at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.

In the archdiocese, Sister Janice served at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College from 2013-15 and at the motherhouse as director of novices from 2012-21.

She also ministered in California, Illinois and Taiwan.

Sister Janice currently serves as a spiritual guide at the Federal Penitentiary in Terre Haute.

(For more information about the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, visit www.spsmw.org.) †

New coalition aims to end capital punishment as public support wanes

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Despite an uptick in executions in the U.S. in 2025, opponents of the death penalty lauded decreases in new death sentences and waning public support for the practice during comments at a Dec. 3 press event announcing a new coalition called the U.S. Campaign to End the Death Penalty.

Laura Porter, the campaign's director, said in a statement that the new coalition comes at "a critical juncture in our country's history with the death penalty, with executions on the rise and new experimental execution methods being promoted in a handful of states despite growing opposition to the death penalty."

"It is more important than ever that we shine a light on capital punishment's failures and come together to show growing bipartisan support for ending executions," Porter said.

According to data from the Death Penalty Information Center, as of Dec. 3, 44 prisoners have been executed in 11 states in the U.S. in 2025, with three more scheduled before the end of the year.

Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph, who

is the author of *Dead Man Walking* and a member of the coalition's advisory council, told reporters, "Simply by being a human person, we have an inalienable right to life, and you cannot entrust over to government ever to have the wisdom or the know-how, or the purity of heart, to be able to carry [the death penalty] out."

The number of executions in the U.S. nearly doubled in 2025 from the previous year, when 25 executions were carried out.

Among the first actions of his second term earlier this year, President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order directing the U.S. attorney general to "pursue the death penalty for all crimes of a severity demanding its use," and to "seek the death penalty regardless of other factors for every federal capital crime" that involves the "murder of a law-enforcement officer" or a "capital crime committed by an alien illegally present in this country."

Some states, such as Florida, have sought to follow suit, dramatically increasing their scheduled executions.

However, an October Gallup poll found that although

a slim majority of Americans favor the death penalty for people convicted of murder, that number continued a steady decline, dropping from a peak of 80% in 1994 to 52% in 2025. While statistically similar to its findings in the previous two years, the 2025 result marks the lowest in Gallup's death penalty trend since 1972, when 50% were in favor.

The coalition of more than 50 organizations aims to further increase the number of Americans opposed to the death penalty, advocate for more states to end the practice, and decrease the number of new sentences.

The Catholic Church's magisterium opposes the use of capital punishment as inconsistent with the inherent sanctity of human life and advocates for the practice's abolition worldwide.

The late Pope Francis revised the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 2018 to clarify the Church's teaching that capital punishment is morally "inadmissible" in the modern world and that the Church works with determination for its abolition worldwide. †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Archbishop Sheen effectively used modern media to proclaim the Gospel

By Michael R. Heinlein

(OSV News)—Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is remembered as one of the most influential and innovative evangelists in American history. Once dubbed “God’s microphone,” Sheen announced God’s truth in a manner at once both nonconfrontational and life-giving to untold millions through print, radio and television.

The year 2025 marks the 130th anniversary of the birth of this impressive man who is on the path to canonization.

Born in El Paso, Ill., on May 8, 1895, Sheen resolved from an early age to serve the Church as a priest. Known to always have “his nose in a book,” Sheen fittingly was assigned to academic ministry following his ordination to the priesthood on Sept. 20, 1919, for the Diocese of Peoria, Ill.

A philosopher at heart, Sheen said his goals for his priesthood were “to know two things: what the world is thinking about, and how to answer errors in the light of the philosophy of St. Thomas [Aquinas].”

After he pursued studies in Europe, a promising future awaited him as a professor. He was called back home to Peoria, however, for service as an assistant priest at a poor, inner-city parish—a test of his obedience. Sheen threw himself into the work, exhibiting an extraordinary zeal for souls. As part of his parish ministry, he launched a door-to-door evangelization campaign.

In less than a year, Sheen became a professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, where he taught for 25 years. He quickly became one of the most popular professors on campus, known for his engaging and stimulating lectures. During that time, he authored more than half of his nearly 70 books.

Sheen’s oratory prowess was successful, in part, because of his commitment to using no notes. His command of material came after hours of preparation and memorization.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Sheen became a household name as host of “The Catholic Hour,” broadcast nationally from NBC Radio in New York. He emerged as a national voice—a prophetic truth-teller who spoke out on a host of issues, particularly the threats posed by communism. For that, he even came under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

After his appointment as director of the U.S. branch of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1950, Sheen had to give up his work as a professor and move to New York City.

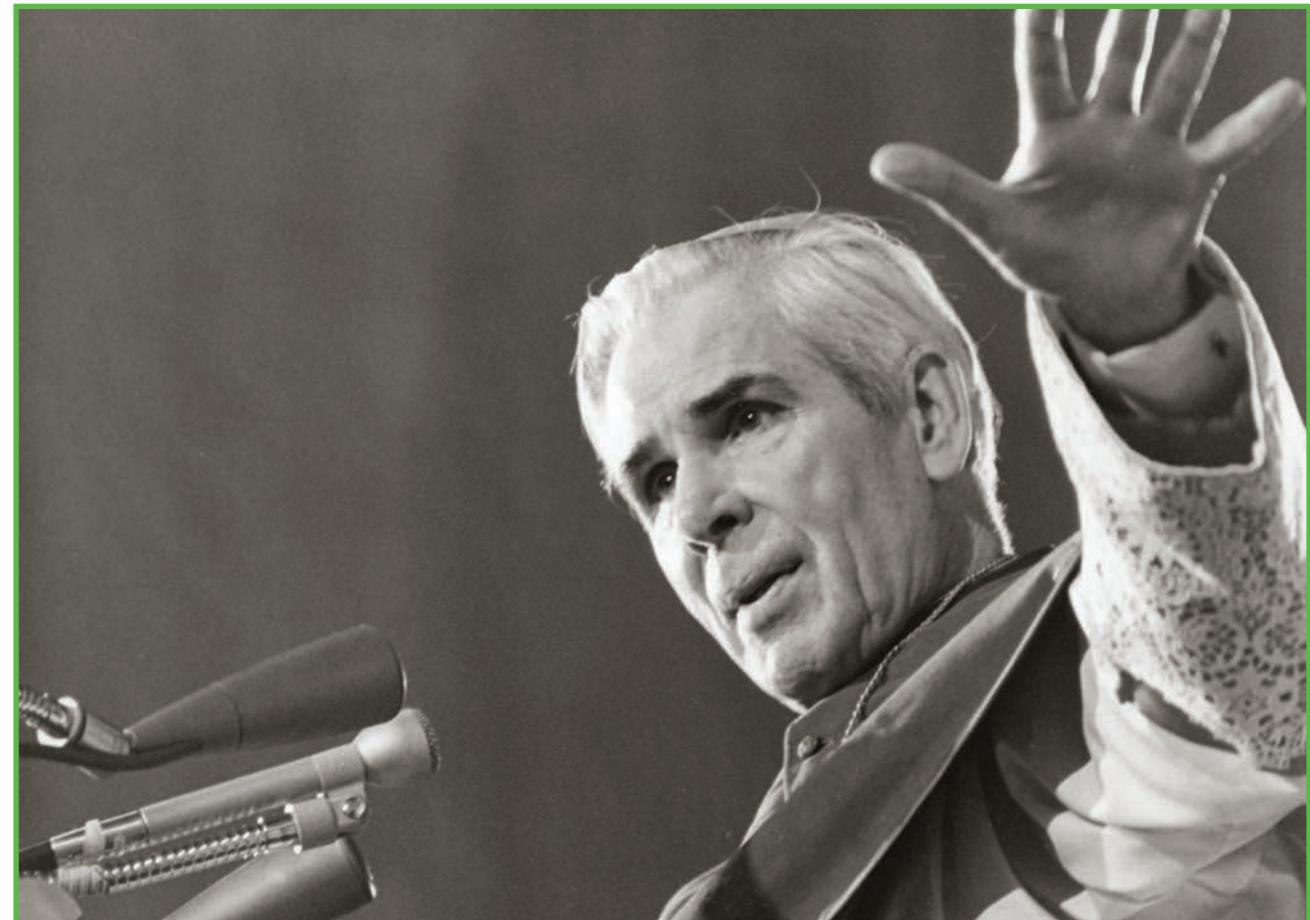
The following year, Sheen was appointed an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, ordained in Rome on June 11, 1951. Sheen began his work on behalf of the global missions with great energy, and his innovative efforts enabled him to evangelize at the same time.

On Tuesday evenings from 1952 to 1957, Sheen propagated eternal truths to an estimated audience of 30 million via his “Life Is Worth Living” television program. With apparent ease and captivating eloquence, he helped viewers find the meaning of life and drew them toward the divine—always equipped with his famous cape and chalkboard.

In addition, Sheen made millions of dollars in advertising—all of which (along with the profits from his books) directly supported the missions. He spent an hour in preparation for each of his 30 minutes on the air. As in the classroom, he refused to use notes; instead, he delivered scripts in Italian and French in preparation for his televised lessons.

After his first year on the air, Sheen won an Emmy for best television personality. Upon acceptance, he famously thanked his writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Sheen’s writings, preaching and broadcasting were inspired by a lively and heroic faith. When he traveled the globe visiting the missions, he drew massive crowds. He was a much sought-after preacher—particularly legendary were his Good Friday sermons at a packed St. Patrick’s



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, pictured in an undated photo, is remembered as one of the most influential and innovative evangelists in American history. Once dubbed “God’s microphone,” Archbishop Sheen announced God’s truth in a manner at once both nonconfrontational and life-giving to untold millions through print, radio and television. (OSV News file photo)

Cathedral in New York City.

As a pastor of souls, Sheen’s selfless ministry was marked by great faith, hope and charity. He was an attentive pastor to greatest and least alike. A rare combination of intelligence, wit and humor made him an effective evangelist. And with clear teaching and common sense, Sheen helped people make sense of life’s problems. His media efforts helped lessen widespread anti-Catholicism in America.

In all that he said and did, Sheen remembered his work was the Lord’s. Once asked by Pope Pius XII how many converts he assisted, Sheen replied, “I am always afraid if I did count them, I might think I made them, instead of the Lord.”

Like St. Paul, Sheen could not pass on what he did not already first receive in Christ. Throughout his life in ordained ministry, Sheen sought to conform himself more closely to Christ by observing a daily eucharistic holy hour, what he called “the hour that makes my day.” The practice brought him into a variety of circumstances, some even comical, such as when he was forced into jumping out of a window after the pastor of a Chicago church accidentally locked him in. He also was intensely devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Sheen battled various temptations and difficulties throughout his life, many of which came as the result of his fame. This included the hidden suffering from a decade of hostility from Cardinal Francis J. Spellman of New York. But in the face of his troubles, Sheen persevered in virtue. He understood his sufferings in light of God’s providence: “Christianity begins not with sunshine, but with defeat. During those days when my life was backed up against the Cross, I began to know and to love it more.”

In what would be his last Good Friday sermon, Sheen said: “There has been physical suffering. And other kinds ... but as I look back over the years, I have never received the punishment I deserved. God has been easy with me. He has never laid on me burdens equal to my faith.”

Given his talents and reach, many expected Sheen to become a cardinal. After his retirement, when asked

why he did not rise higher in the Church hierarchy, he said: “I refused to pay the price. ... I felt it would be disloyalty to my own principles, and I think to Christian practice.”

From 1966 to 1969, Sheen served as bishop of Rochester, N.Y. It was a brief tenure, regarded by many as an exile. Sheen had been an active participant

at the Second Vatican Council and as a diocesan bishop worked to implement some of its main reforms, including changes in priestly formation and increase in lay participation in the life and ministry of the Church.

Attentive to the times, his priorities often were rooted in social consciousness. He ministered to the poor, worked to improve race relations and was a vocal opponent of the Vietnam War. But despite Sheen’s best efforts, his brief tenure in Rochester was met with great resistance and resulted in a good deal of self-described failure.

After his request for early retirement was accepted in 1969, Sheen was granted the title “archbishop” by St. Paul VI. He continued preaching far and wide in his last decade, delivered retreats aimed at renewal of the priesthood throughout the country and maintained a voice in the public square through regular media appearances.

The temptations and sufferings Sheen faced purified him and intensified his union with Christ, he maintained. Toward the end of his life, writing in his autobiography, *Treasures in Clay*, Sheen apologized for his failures, wondering, “Was I inspiring anyone to imitate Christ in the daily carrying of his cross?”

Two months before Sheen died, St. John Paul II embraced him during a visit to St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City and said: “You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus. You are a loyal son of the Church.”

After nearly two years in and out of the hospital following open-heart surgery, Sheen died on Dec. 9, 1979, in New York City, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. His devotees have multiplied in number after his death, and many have turned to him for inspiration and intercession. In 2002, a cause for his canonization was opened. Sheen was declared venerable a decade later.

Archbishop Sheen’s cause has experienced setbacks on account of two controversies, including a public battle to relocate his remains from St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York to the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, as well as concerns related to management of the clergy sexual abuse crisis from his time as bishop of Rochester. The Holy See requested the “postponement” of Sheen’s beatification, without explanation, just weeks before the event which was scheduled for December 2019. A new date remains to be set.

However, Msgr. Jason Gray, executive director of the Peoria-based Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Foundation, has said that the archbishop’s eventual beatification is “inevitable.”

“The desire to see Sheen beatified is increasing, and there is a growing devotion to him,” Msgr. Gray told OSV News in 2024.

(Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, OMI.*) †

Archbishop O’Meara had a connection to Archbishop Sheen

Readers of *The Criterion* might be interested to learn about a connection between Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen and the Church in central and southern Indiana.

Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara, who led the Archdiocese of

Indianapolis from 1979-92, was a close collaborator with Archbishop Sheen at the U.S. branch of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith and succeeded him in leading the organization. †

Faith in History/Sean Gallagher

Although he lived 1,800 years ago, St. Irenaeus remains relevant today

Although he is the doctor of the Church who goes back farthest in Church history, St. Irenaeus of Lyons is one of the most recent saints to be given this title.

He is thought to have been born between the years 120 and 130 in present-day Turkey and died as a martyr in present-day Lyons, France, around 202. But he was only named a doctor of the Church in 2022 by Pope Francis. The Church celebrates his feast on June 28.

Irenaeus' formation in the faith reaches back to the earliest days of the Church. He was born in Smyrna, today the city of Izmir in Turkey. It is thought that he may have been a spiritual student of St. Polycarp, the bishop of the city at the time. Polycarp, in turn, according to an ancient tradition, was said to have been taught by St. John the Apostle.

Understandably, St. Irenaeus emphasized in his writings that the way to determine authentic Christian beliefs is to trace them to apostolic origins.

It was important for Irenaeus to do this because many groups had emerged across the Roman Empire claiming to represent true Christian teachings that differed from those taught by the nascent Church.

Most of these groups, which would ultimately be determined to hold and proclaim heresies, were what

historians and theologians came to call "gnostics."

This term is rooted in the Greek word "gnosis," which means "knowledge" in English. There were a wide variety of gnostic groups rivaling the Church in the first few centuries of its history. Each in their own way claimed to have a secret "knowledge," which, when known, would free knowers from the trials of this fallen world and open them to eternal life.

Irenaeus addressed the beliefs of a particular gnostic group led by a man named Valentinian in his work known as *Against Heresies*. Through the course of five volumes in this work, Irenaeus sought to lay out this group's beliefs, how they are false and to argue for the veracity of authentic Christian teachings rooted in Gospels with true apostolic origins.

Many gnostic groups in Irenaeus' time put forth their own Scriptures which they claimed were written by Apostles. In his writings, Irenaeus makes an early argument for the apostolic authenticity of only the four Gospels that are in the New Testament that we have today. He also emphasizes the continuity of the Old Testament and the New Testament, which the gnostics commonly denied.

Gnostics in many instances also showed dualistic tendencies, calling good only that which was spiritual while naming what was physical as evil.

Irenaeus staunchly opposed such dualism, proclaiming strongly both the full humanity and divinity of Christ, a

central Christian belief which would later become known as the incarnation.

One of Irenaeus' most famous quotes is found in the fourth book of *Against Heresies* in which he made arguments for the incarnation and against gnostic dualism. Translated in various ways, it is most commonly known as, "The glory of God is man fully alive."

In defending the incarnation, Irenaeus was also placing a high value on creation as put in order by God the Creator. That includes valuing the human body created as it is and taken on by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

This ancient teaching of Irenaeus is especially relevant today as it has become more common to believe that the human body as created by God is irrelevant to a person's identity. Such opinions echo in part the views of the ancient gnostics, who held that the human body is an obstacle to overcome for people to achieve their ultimate destiny.

Irenaeus invites us to see the human body from a different perspective—from the perspective of God in Christ. He took on a created human body. The glory of God showed forth through it in the babe whose birth in Bethlehem we will celebrate on Christmas.

Each of us was created in the image of God, and in baptism we became his adopted sons and daughters. With the help of God's grace, may his glory shine forth through us in our daily lives of faith. †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

May this Christmas be a time for the lost ones to find their way home

Christmas arrives each year, inviting weary souls in from the cold.

Like fragile sparrows trembling on bare winter branches, many live surrounded by heartbreak, disappointment and loneliness—haunted by shame, guilt or failure.

One blustery day follows another, and their only companions are fellow strugglers perched on the same desolate limbs, confused and unprotected.

We try so hard to draw them into warmth. Week after week, church bells ring, choirs lift their voices, and glowing sanctuaries shine like beacons. Yet those who need comfort most often remain outside.

During the Christmas season, poverty places a heavy burden on low-income families, who often struggle to afford not only gifts and festive meals but even basic necessities as costs continue to rise. This financial strain forces difficult choices

that can take a toll on mental health and well-being during what should be a joyful time of year. Thankfully, Catholic Charities and our Catholic parishes extend a helping hand through food pantries and other vital services, offering families in need essential nourishment and gifts to bring comfort and hope to the holiday season.

Then, as the year closes, Christmas speaks its timeless message: Emmanuel. God with us. The One who dwelt in heaven—co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit—chose to descend into our world. He breathed our air, carried our pain, shared our sorrows and bore our sins. He came not to terrify, but to lead us into safety and warmth.

Still, many keep their distance. It was so when he first came, and it remains so today.

Yet Christmas returns—again and again. The story of Bethlehem's child is told

once more. We sing familiar carols, kneel at the manger, watch Mary and Joseph cradle their newborn and marvel as if for the first time. It never grows old.

Why? Because each of us knows what it is to shiver on the frozen branches of this world—rejected, wounded, afraid. Each of us remembers the moment we finally flew into the shelter of his love. And each year, we hope that perhaps, just perhaps, this Christmas will be the one when someone we love finds their way in from the cold.

For many, though, Christmas is the loneliest season. Families separated by prison walls. Single parents. The elderly. The hospitalized and the dying, along with those who care for them. Soldiers far from home. Adults are scarred by painful childhood memories. The newly widowed. Students who are unable to return home.

For others, the season becomes a hollow pursuit of greed and frenzy. Gift-buying spirals out of control, turning joy into financial strain and frustration. Instead of slowing down to savor the lights, the music, and quiet moments with loved ones, we rush headlong into the chaos, letting it eclipse the meaning.

And yet, for some, Christmas is the only time they hear the name of Jesus. Carols carry profound theology. Pageants, readings and services proclaim the Incarnation. Even Christmas cards, opened by those who might never otherwise consider the Gospel, whisper the story of his coming.

So, this year, I pray the warmth of the Savior's love will rest upon you in new and deeper ways. And may you remember that there are still sparrows trembling in the cold—too frightened to fly toward the light and the warmth.

Perhaps, because of something you say or do, this Christmas will be the one when they finally find their way home.

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

Called to Holiness/Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Heaven is the wedding that God has been planning for us forever

If you're not careful, planning a wedding can easily become a full-time job. But when you already have a full-time job and are moving to a new apartment, you've got to do everything in your power to keep that from happening. That has been our youngest daughter's situation since her engagement one year ago. (Of course, it's been our situation, too.)

Keeping it all under control doesn't look hard, at least theoretically. You just have to take a rational approach: Decide to keep things as simple as they can be kept, prioritize what's genuinely important and let go of all the rest. I say all that as a testimony to what I have learned as a mother-of-the-wrangler in previous rodeos through the years.

But there's a reason "wedding planner" is a profession, albeit one our family has neither the desire nor the resources to pay for. Weddings seem to have a life of their own, one that resembles a giant snowball rolling down a mountainside; a havoc-wreaking globe that gains volume, velocity, escalating intensity as the date draws nearer. The most confident and well-matched couples can't seem to escape it. And even the most organized and undemanding bride still becomes overwhelmed by the sheer number of choices set before her. "Decision fatigue" is real.

Putting on a wedding is a big deal. But when you believe in the couple getting married, every sacrifice and

expense seems worth the trouble. With every additional detail on that endless to-do list comes anticipation and joy.

I imagine that God's plan for salvation was a lot like planning a wedding. Since the moment he created humanity, the Father longed for us to share his life and love. Like a faithless fiancée, we failed to grasp the depth of what we had in him, grasped for something else instead and fell away. But God did not give up on us. He simply waited through the centuries and planned his next move.

In the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose Immaculate Conception we observed on Dec. 8, God's wedding plans began to take shape. Saved from the stain of original sin at her conception, Mary was entirely pure and free from disordered desires. A bride herself, she alone would be worthy of ushering the Divine Bridegroom into the world, the fallen and human world of his bride, the Church.

When you're planning a wedding, there's only one date that matters. Similarly, all of human history was centered on and directed to the incarnational moment. As the words of the "Exsultet" tell us, heaven was wed to Earth in a match made not just in heaven, but by heaven. In Nazareth, God became human, like us in all things except sin, so that we could become like him. That is, so that we could take his name as our own and become one with him.

Salvation history is a love story, a romance between God and every human being. Think I'm pushing it? The

Bible clearly tells us that the happily ever after we all long for is a marriage.

"As a young man marries a virgin, so your builder will marry you. As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Is 62:5).

"I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:28-30).

"Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?' (Mt 9:15)?

"For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2).

It's easy to forget that we are called to the eternal wedding supper of the lamb not as guests, but as the bride. Heaven is the wedding God has been planning forever.

There, we won't have to worry about vendors or venues. When the day of the Lord arrives, all to-do lists will disappear. The Bridegroom will come for his bride. Our only task is to be radiant and ready to welcome him.

(Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.) †



Third Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 14, 2025

- Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
- James 5:7-10
- Matthew 11:2-11

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

Isaiah was between a rock and a hard

place, so to speak. He realized that unwise alliances and behavior that ignored God put the Hebrews' kingdom of Judah at great risk. The prophet was convinced that, if the nation did not return to God in genuine

obedience and piety, then the whirlwind eventually would sweep away life as he and his contemporaries knew it.

He met dispute and outrage. It must have been frustrating. Nonetheless, Isaiah unflinchingly called the people back to God despite the angry reaction of many of his contemporaries to what he said.

It was not as if God would bring a terrible punishment upon the kingdom. Rather, the people, by their impiety, would create a nightmare for themselves.

The Epistle of St. James supplies the second reading. This epistle rarely appears in the liturgy. The identity of the author is unclear, and it leads to another question.

The New Testament mentions four men with this name. Which, if any, wrote this epistle? Some insist that James, the foster brother of the Lord, was the author.

(Here is the other question. Did Mary have other children? Ancient Christian writers surmised that James in this reference was a son from a previous marriage of Joseph, the eventual spouse of Mary. They reasoned that this must have been the case, as they believed, with the Church today, that Mary had only one child, namely Jesus.)

Regardless, this reading solidly establishes the author's faith that Jesus will be victorious. No power can exceed the power of the Lord. After all, the Lord is the Son of God.

While final victory undoubtedly will come, it will not necessarily come at a time that humans predict. And it certainly



will not come at their bidding. But it will come. So, the epistle urges strong faith, but also forbearance.

The third reading, from St. Matthew's Gospel, centers on John the Baptist, whose denunciations of sin in high places led to his arrest. (In time, they would lead to his death.)

Despising the Roman occupation of the land, pious Jews at this time yearned for a Messiah who would rid the Holy Land of the pagan intruders.

John gave another description of the Redeemer. He saw the Savior not as a warrior, commanding armies to slaughter the enemies of the One God of Israel, but as a compassionate leader, truly holy and a guide of the pious.

Jesus met this description, healing the sick, giving hope and restoring life, lovingly coming to Earth as God.

In the last verses, John affirms that Jesus is a prophet. In fact, John insists Jesus is the greatest prophet.

Reflection

Ancient cultures often found the dawn awe-inspiring and reassuring. As the sun creeps over the horizon, the sky presents a marvelous sight. It is not a sudden transition from utter darkness to bright light. Instead, everything first changes to a gentle rose.

In the spectrum of color, rose is the blending of red and yellow. Pink combines red and white.

Traditionally, priests wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend to remind us that dawn is here, the bright, golden light of Christ is about to burst upon the horizon of our world. It is overwhelming to consider. God so loved the world that he sent his Son to us, to give us life.

As in days of old when the re-appearance of the sun showed that all would be good, so Christians are reassured that they are secure. Jesus lives. He is with us.

Each of us sins. Each is imperfect. Advent is the opportunity to allow God to create a dawn within our hearts. We invite Christ to come to brighten our lives. †



Hoosier celebration

Dominican Father Patrick Hyde, left, and Dominican Father Ben Keller celebrate on the field of Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Dec. 6 after the football team of Indiana University in Bloomington won the Big 10 Football Championship Game over Ohio State University. Father Patrick and Father Ben respectively serve as pastor and parochial vicar and director of campus ministry at the St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, which serves the university community. (Submitted photo)

Daily Readings

Monday, December 15

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a
Psalm 25:4-5b, 6, 7bc, 8-9
Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday, December 16

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23
Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Psalm 72:1-4b, 7-8, 17
Matthew 1:1-17

Thursday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-25

Friday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Psalm 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

Saturday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Luke 1:26-38

Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-24

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Advent penitential practices can assist in preparing for the coming of Christ

My dad gives up chocolate every year for both Lent and Advent. I always tell him that this is weird and that we're not supposed to give things up for Advent, only Lent. Which one of us is right? (Florida)



even while the practice of taking on an additional, personal Lenten penance is a well-established and praiseworthy custom, Catholics also are not required to do anything extra for Lent beyond the usual fasting and abstinence from meat (see canon 1251 of the *Code of Canon Law*).

However, your dad also isn't being "weird" for deciding to take on an additional penance for Advent. Although it's not as common as a personal Lenten penance, it is still very much in keeping with the nature of the Advent season.

Of course, Advent and Lent are different liturgical seasons with their own distinct meanings. Yet, they actually do parallel each other in many ways.

Both seasons are seasons of preparation: in Lent, we prepare for our annual remembrance of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. During Advent, we prepare ourselves for the celebration of his first coming to Earth as man at Christmas.

Advent also calls to mind the big-picture need for preparation for Christ's second coming in glory at the end of time—as well as the constant need for readiness to receive him daily into our hearts, minds and souls.

In a similar vein, both seasons are also seasons of

repentance. During Lent, we recall our sins so as to be truly sorry for them in memory and gratitude for what Christ suffered to redeem us. And in Advent, we renew our resolve to turn away from sin as a way to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

This Advent theme of repentance is especially present in the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Advent in which we hear how "John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 3:1-2).

The penitential nature of Advent is reflected in other aspects of our liturgy.

For example, as in Lent, the liturgical color for Advent is purple, which signifies sorrow for sin and repentance. Although the Third Sunday of Advent has the specific theme of joy at the closeness of Christ's coming—it is often called "Gaudete Sunday," from the Latin word for "rejoice"—the liturgical color is rose, which communicates a more restrained and subdued joy than the white used for the full rejoicing proper to the Christmas and Easter seasons.

Likewise, during Advent, Church decorations are to be pared down, as per the "General Instruction of the *Roman Missal*": "During Advent, the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord" (#305). And at Advent Sunday Masses, the joyful "Gloria" prayer is omitted (#53).

There is a venerable Latin saying that I think applies here: "*lex orandi, lex credendi*," which roughly translates to "we pray as we believe." This means that our liturgy represents the truths of our faith, which we are to strive to interiorize ever more deeply.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us specifically with respect to Advent: "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming" (#524).

So, on a practical spiritual level, taking on some additional penance for Advent—whether this be making a sacrifice, taking more time for prayer or spiritual reading or committing to additional works of charity—can be an excellent way to enter more deeply into the spirit of the season.

(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.)

Daughters of Isabella



The Indiana State Circle of the Daughters of Isabella met on Oct. 26 at St. Mary Parish in Greensburg. Representatives from all 15 circles, including several in the archdiocese, were present. Those circles included All Saints, Batesville; Nativity, Tell City; St. Florentine, Lawrenceburg; St. Catherine, Brookville; St. Rose of Lima, Shelbyville; St. Mary, Greensburg; and St. Rita, Connersville. The day's events included Mass, lunch, a workshop and an update from St. Elizabeth Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services, an archdiocesan Catholic Charities agency begun by the Indiana State Circle in 1915, on its assistance to unwed mothers, performing wellness visits and assisting with domestic adoptions. Those interested in starting a local circle in Indiana are asked to call or e-mail Julie Bowling, state regent, at 513-255-1637 or jbowling12769@gmail.com. (Submitted photo)

Rest in peace

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

ARMBRUSTER, Andrew M., 34, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Nov. 24. Son of Michael Armbruster. Brother of Michael, Jr., and Paul Armbruster. Uncle of one.

BLINE, Sr., William C., 84, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 14. Father of Cynthia Jacobi, David and William Bline, Jr. Brother of Dennis and Walter Bline. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of 10.

BOSTON, Odia, 97, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Nov. 14. Father of Susie Eshcoff, Donna Hall, Mary

Jo Newman and Carol Rost. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of nine.

DUCHARME, Patricia A., 74, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 14. Wife of Serge Ducharme. Mother of Melanie Gravois, Marie-Claud Ducharme-Keane, Jeffrey Ducharme, Gary and Robert Thalls. Sister of Michael Clarke. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of one.

EICHEN, Gerald, 82, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Oct. 31. Husband of Bette Eichen. Father of Eric, Jeffrey and Matthew Eichen. Brother of Karl and Roger Eichen. Grandfather of five.

FLASPOHLER, Kenneth H., 94, St. Michael, Brookville, Nov. 29. Father of Stephanie La Mont, Darrel, David, Doug, Dwight and Terry Flasphohler. Brother of Wilma Ripperger. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of 10.

FRY, Kerwin, 95, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 5. Father of Sheryl Crase, Jeffrey and Michael Fry. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of seven.

HARPRING, Norbert, 92, St. Mary, Rushville, Nov. 24. Father of Joann Fenimore, Kristine Herbert, Carol Johnson, Linda, Brian, Edward and Lawrence Harpring.

Grandfather of 19. Great-grandfather of 20.

HIBBITT, Shirley J., 81, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Nov. 2. Mother of Karen Brandon. Sister of Annette, Darlene, Lonnie, Mark and Neil. Grandmother of five.

KELLY, Candace L., 78, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Nov. 20. Mother of Lisa McMann and Lori Shoemaker. Sister of Terri Snyder and Maureen Treece. Grandmother of three.

KRUSE, Robert, 81, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 14. Husband of Carol Kruse. Father of Melissa Van Pelt, Jennifer Wenberg and Robert Kruse. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of one.

LAND, Scott L., 51, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 19. Son of Kathleen Land. Brother of Jennifer Devlin and Brian Land. Uncle of several.

LINN, Carolyn G., 89, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 22. Mother of Therese Hetland, Mary Langhill, Diane Luken, David and Stephen Linn. Sister of Mary Lynne and Edward Thien, Jr. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of three.

MILLER, Shirley, 88, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis, Nov. 16. Mother of Brenda Brown, Teri DeWitt, Chris Schwettman and Bob Miller. Sister of Gary and Ron Eckstein. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 25. Great-great-grandmother of three.

NEWHART, Don, 89, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Nov. 12. Husband of Amelia Newhart. Father of Yvonne Rose, Don, Jr., Jeff and John Newhart. Brother of Dee Abplanalp, Penny Brinson and Chris Newhart. Grandfather of 17. Great-grandfather of 20. Great-great-grandfather of three.

NUSS, Timothy D., 81, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Oct. 24. Uncle of several.

RENN, Randall L., 69, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 18. Husband of Monica Renn. Father of Andrew, Marcus and Matthew Renn. Brother of Laura Bowlds, Pauline Franklin, Linda Hunter, Charlotte Nagle, Joy Oglesby, Barbara Peay, Carol and Leslie Renn. Grandfather of 10.

SCHNEIDER, Richard L., 72, St. Peter, Franklin County, Nov. 19. Father of April and Christina Schneider, and Calypso Stephens-Schneider. Brother of Mary Holston, Carl, Jim, Tim and Tony Schneider.

SCHOETTMER, William, 85, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 23. Husband of Jean Schoettmer. Father of Cathy Duerstock, Debbie Geis, Stacey Wagner, Jay and Tim Schoettmer. Brother of Susan Buning, Mary Jane

Roberts, Dorothy Snyder, Helen Wagener and Norbert Schoettmer. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of six.

SKLODOSKI, Terrence E., 87, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Nov. 21. Husband of Jinny Sklodoski. Father of Dana Kaps, Lori and David Sklodoski, and Chuck Williams. Brother of Carol Warren. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of 19. Great-great-grandfather of three.

STROBEL, Ruth A. (Kleaving), 82, St. Paul, Tell City, Nov. 22. Mother of Janet McFarland and Sue Strobel-Sanders. Sister of Esther Goffinet, Glenda Gogel and Gilbert Kleaving. Grandmother of one.

SUSEMICHEL, Robert, 86, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 11. Husband of Toni Susemichel. Father of Peggy Martin, Bob and Paul Susemichel. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of one. †

Crèche collection



This crèche is part of an exhibit of crèches from around the world on display until Jan. 6 at the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Library in St. Meinrad. The display features crèches from the monastery collection and from the Catherine A. Smith Nativity Collection, which was donated to Saint Meinrad Archabbey in 2002 in memory of Father Charles "Pat" Smith, an archdiocesan priest who died in 1977. Catherine Smith began collecting Nativity sets in 1971, purchasing many during her extensive travels throughout the world. The crèches selected for display represent a variety of styles and media, such as porcelain, wood, glazed tile, glass, cloth, stone, metals and ceramic. The exhibit is free and open to the public. For library hours, call 812-357-6401 or 800-987-7311. The library will be closed on Dec. 24-25 and Jan. 1. Those wishing to view the exhibit may want to arrive at least 30 minutes before closing time. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

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

Benedictine sisters celebrate anniversaries of religious life

Criterion staff report

In 2025, the Benedictine Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove had three members celebrate significant milestones in religious life.

60-year jubilarian

Benedictine Sister Carol Falkner marked the 60th anniversary of her profession of vows as a religious.

She entered Our Lady of Grace from her home parish of St. Joan of Arc in Indianapolis and made her first profession of vows at Our Lady of Grace in 1965.

Sister Carol earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at the former St. Benedict College in Ferdinand, Ind., and a master's degree in education with a concentration in administration at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Ambrose School in Seymour from 1967-71 and at St. Bartholomew School in Columbus from 1971-76.

At Our Lady of Grace, Sister Carol served as the administrator of the former Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center from 1995-2001 and from 2010-22.



Sr. Carol Falkner, O.S.B.

She also led Our Lady of Grace as its prioress from 2001-09 and served as second leadership of the monastic community as subprioress from 1985-93.

Sister Carol is currently serving as subprioress again, beginning in that ministry in 2022.

Benedictine Sister Heidi Marie Krack marked the 60th anniversary of her profession of vows as a religious.

She entered Our Lady of Grace from her home parish of St. Charles Borromeo in Bloomington and made her first profession of vows in 1965.

Sister Heidi Marie earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at the former St. Benedict College in Ferdinand, a master's degree at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad and a master's degree in education with a concentration in music education at the University

of Indianapolis in Indianapolis.

In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at Christ the King School from 1967-71 and St. Matthew the Apostle School from 1990-2023. Sister Heidi Marie also ministered at St. Anthony of Padua School in Clarksville from 1971-75, and at the former Our Lady of Grace



Sr. Heidi Marie Krack, O.S.B.

Academy from 1975-78, and at Holy Name of Jesus School, both in Beech Grove, from 1978-90.

Sister Heidi Marie retired from ministry in 2023.

Benedictine Sister Sharon Kuhn marked the 60th anniversary of her profession of vows as a religious.

She made her first profession of vows in 1965 as a member of the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho, and later became a member of Our Lady of Grace in 2006.

Sister Sharon earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho.

In the archdiocese, she served as director of facilities for the Benedict Inn from 2000-02, as an administrative assistant in the archdiocesan Office of Clergy

and Parish Life Coordinators from 2003-09 and in the business office of the former St. Paul Hermitage in Beech Grove from 2015-17. She also served as an administrative assistant at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis from 2017-20.

At Our Lady of Grace, Sister Sharon served as second in leadership as subprioress from 2009-15 and 2020-22.

She retired from ministry in 2023. †



Sr. Sharon Kuhn, O.S.B.

Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan deanery parishes leading to Christmas

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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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

Terre Haute Deanery

Dec. 16, 4:30 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
Dec. 18, 5:30 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle †



A priest 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.
(Photo by Sean Gallagher)

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Employment

Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper

Cathedral Parish of SS Peter and Paul, Indianapolis

Position: Full-Time; Non-Exempt | **Reports To:** Director of Operations

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As the seat of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the Cathedral Parish of SS Peter & Paul is seeking a mission-driven and detail-oriented Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper to support our parish operations and ensure smooth administrative and financial functioning.

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A Joyful Community Helped Thomas Find His Faith— Your Support Makes It Possible.

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Through Indy Catholic's Bowling Ministry, Thomas met new friends who lived their faith with joy and authenticity. Their witness inspired him to explore the Catholic Church more deeply, leading him to join the Church this past Easter.

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