



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Twenty Something

This 'Old House,' Catholic edition, brings Minnesota mom 'the greatest joy,' page 8A.

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Woman's remarkable journey in life leads to living 'a dream that God has for me'

By John Shaughnessy

Cramming into a wooden boat, the family had tried 13 times to escape from their communist homeland in Vietnam—all in the desire to have the freedom to live their faith and give their children an opportunity for a better life in the United States.

And 13 times they had been turned back by government boats patrolling the sea.

Now under the cover of that night in 1987, the extended family members of 3-year-old Maria Nguyen quietly boarded the boat again. The little girl stayed close to her mother, who had prayed at a nearby shrine of St. Martin de Porres, asking him to intercede with God for their safety and freedom.

This time, the boat slipped past the patrols. Still, the danger was far from over.

Seasickness swept through the family members on the boat. And after days on the sea, they ran out of water, food and gas. As they drifted in waters where pirates preyed, a boat headed toward them.

See **SISTER MARIA**, page 8B

On the day she professed her solemn vows—July 29, 2023—as a Discalced Carmelite sister in Terre Haute, Sister Maria Nguyen holds a booklet featuring a statue of Our Lady of La Vang that was given to her as a gift. She chose to hold the image of Our Lady of La Vang because of her Vietnamese roots and the fact that she grew up with that image and statue in her family's home.

(Submitted photo)



Only love will save humanity, pope says in encyclical on Sacred Heart

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A world that has become “heartless” and indifferent to greed and war, and a Catholic Church in need of revitalizing its missionary



Pope Francis

joy need to open themselves up to Christ's infinite love, Pope Francis wrote.

By contemplating Jesus' Sacred Heart, the faithful can be filled with the “living water that can heal the hurt we have caused, strengthen our ability to love and serve others, and inspire us to journey together toward a just, solitary and fraternal world,” the pope wrote in his encyclical, “*Dilexit nos*” [“He loved us”]: On the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ” (#220).

The Vatican released the 28,000-word text on Oct. 24.

While it is the pope's fourth encyclical, he wrote that it is meant to be understood in tandem with two of his previous encyclicals, “*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home” and “*Fratelli Tutti*: On Fraternity and Social Friendship.”

“The present document can help us see that the teaching of the social encyclicals ... is not unrelated to our encounter with the love of Jesus Christ,” Pope Francis wrote. “For it is by drinking of that same love that we become capable of forging bonds of fraternity, of recognizing the dignity of each human being, and of working together to care for our common home” (#217).

The pope had said in June, the month the Church traditionally dedicates to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that he was going to release a document in the fall on the devotion to “illuminate the path of ecclesial renewal, but also to say something significant to a world that seems to have lost its heart.”

The encyclical includes numerous

See **ENCYCLICAL**, page 2A

Nov. 9-10 is the annual UCA intention weekend to support seminarian formation, Catholic Charities, retired priests and more

By Natalie Hoefler

The weekend of Nov. 9-10 is the archdiocesan annual United Catholic Appeal (UCA) intention weekend in parishes across central and southern Indiana.

The goal for this year's appeal is \$6.3 million. The money will be distributed to ministries and organizations throughout the archdiocese that meet needs no single parish or deanery can independently address, such as seminarian and diaconate formation, care for retired priests, Catholic Charities, the support of college campus ministry to keep young adults engaged in the faith, homeless shelters and more.

The theme of this year's appeal is “United in the Eucharist.” “Your financial backing for the pastoral, charitable and

diocesan ministries of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis serves as a courageous testament to our unity in the Eucharist,”

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson said in a letter to the archdiocese posted on the website for the United Catholic Appeal (unitedcatholicappeal.org). “By stewarding and sharing your resources, you amplify the reach of our impact in central

and southern Indiana, and beyond.

“In these challenging times, the imperative to draw the people of our

archdiocese closer to Jesus Christ through our many ministries and programs grows ever more urgent. To meet this call, we rely on your support. ...

“We are fortunate that every contribution to the United Catholic Appeal directly fuels ministry initiatives. Whether your

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UNITED CATHOLIC APPEAL

ENCYCLICAL

continued from page 1A

reflections from the Bible, previous magisterial texts and the writings of saints and his fellow Jesuits, to re-propose to the whole Church the centuries-old devotion. Since 1899, there have been four papal encyclicals and numerous papal texts dedicated to the Sacred Heart—a symbol of Jesus’ infinite love, which moves the faithful to love one another.

“In the deepest fiber of our being, we were made to love and to be loved,” the pope wrote (#21).

However, he wrote, “when we witness the outbreak of new wars, with the complicity, tolerance or indifference of other countries, or petty power struggles over partisan interests, we may be tempted to conclude that our world is losing its heart.

“It is heartbreaking,” he wrote, to see elderly women, who should be enjoying their golden years, experiencing the anguish, fear and outrage of war. “To see these elderly women weep, and not feel that this is something intolerable, is a sign of a world that has grown heartless.

“The most decisive question we can ask is, ‘Do I have a heart?’” the pope wrote (#22, #23).

The human being is more than an instrument, a material body and a carrier of intelligence and reason, the pope wrote.

The human person also embodies spiritual, emotional, creative and affective dimensions that are often undervalued, neglected or squelched in today’s world, he wrote. It is the heart that integrates all these dimensions that are so often fragmented or neglected.

The most precious treasures that animate and dwell in the human heart are often the simple and poignant moments in life: “How we first used a fork to seal the edges of the pies that we helped our mothers or grandmothers to make at home”; “a smile we elicited by telling a joke”; “the worms we collected in a shoebox”; and “a wish we made in plucking a daisy” (#20).

“All these little things, ordinary in themselves yet extraordinary for us, can never be captured by algorithms” and artificial intelligence, he wrote, and, in fact, “poetry and love are necessary to save our humanity,” not just reason and technology (#20).

At a Vatican news conference presenting the encyclical on Oct. 24, Archbishop Bruno Forte of Chieti-Vasto, Italy, said the document is a “compendium” and the “key” to understanding Pope Francis’ pontificate.

Some commentators criticize the pope for focusing too narrowly on “social” issues, the archbishop said. This encyclical explicitly presents the spiritual and theological foundation underlying the pope’s message to the Church and the world for the past 12 years—that everything “springs from Christ and his love for all humanity.”

Many saints and religious congregations have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart, including St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus, the religious order the saint co-founded and

to which Pope Francis belonged.

St. Ignatius’ spiritual exercises encourage people to “enter into the heart of Christ” to “enlarge our own hearts” and train them to “sense and savor” the Gospel message and “converse about it with the Lord,” the pope wrote (#144).

Christ’s heart is aflame with infinite love, and Christ desires to be loved and consoled in return, the pope said, especially by loving and serving one’s neighbors and those who are most marginalized.

Jesus associated with “the lowest ranks of society,” he wrote, introducing the “great novelty of recognizing the dignity of every person, especially those who were considered ‘unworthy.’

“In union with Christ, amid the ruins we have left in this world by our sins, we are called to build a new civilization of love,” the pope wrote. “That is what it means to make reparation as the heart of Christ would have us do.

“Amid the devastation wrought by evil, the heart of Christ desires that we cooperate with him in restoring goodness and beauty to our world,” Pope Francis wrote (#170, #182).

The encyclical was published as members of the Synod of Bishops were wrapping up a multiyear process focused on fostering “a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.”

In his encyclical, the pope emphasized how only a deep and abiding love in the Lord can inspire and fuel Catholics to share the Gospel and God’s love with the world.

Mission requires missionaries who are “enthralled by Christ” and are “impatient when time is wasted discussing secondary questions or concentrating on truths and rules because their greatest concern is to share what they have experienced,” he wrote (#209).

“They want others to perceive the goodness and beauty of the Beloved through their efforts, however inadequate they may be,” he wrote (#209).

The heart of Christ also frees Catholics from the problem of communities and pastors who are “excessively caught up in external activities, structural reforms that have little to do with the Gospel, obsessive reorganization plans, worldly projects, secular ways of thinking and mandatory programs,” he wrote (#88).

“The result is often a Christianity stripped of the tender consolations of faith, the joy of serving others, the fervor of personal commitment to mission, the beauty of knowing Christ and the profound gratitude born of the friendship he offers and the ultimate meaning he gives to our lives,” he added (#88).

Pope Francis invited Catholics to rediscover or strengthen their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the practices connected with it, particularly eucharistic adoration and receiving the Eucharist on the first Friday of each month.

Today the First Friday devotion, he wrote, can help counter “the frenetic pace of today’s world and our obsession with free time, consumption and diversion, cell phones and social media [and] we forget to nourish our lives with the strength of the Eucharist” (#84).

(The encyclical can be found in English at: bit.ly/DilexitNos2024. It is available in Spanish at: bit.ly/DilexitNos2024-Spanish.) †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

November 3–19, 2024

November 3 – 2 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Mary Parish, Rushville; St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, Liberty; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Richmond; and St. Gabriel Parish, Connersville, at St. Mary Church of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish

November 5 – 10:30 a.m.

Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

November 6 – 11 a.m.

Mass and lunch with retired priests at St. Jude Parish, Indianapolis

November 6 – 6:30 p.m.

Pastoral Planning Listening Session at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Indianapolis

November 7 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

November 7 – 12:30 p.m.

Women’s Care Center Board meeting and lunch at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

November 9-14

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Administrative Committee meeting and general meeting, Baltimore, Md.

November 16 – 10 a.m.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting at St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus

November 16 – 2:30 p.m.

Mass for Parish Men’s Ministry Workshop at St. Agnes Parish, Nashville

November 19 – 11 a.m.

College of Deans meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

What is your favorite story of the great gift of hope in your life?

The TV series “Ted Lasso” focuses on the story of an American who knows nothing about soccer moving to England to coach a city’s professional soccer team. As the team prepares for the last game of its season as a heavy underdog, Ted gathers the players together and says, “So I’ve been hearing this phrase y’all got over here that I ain’t too crazy about—‘It’s the hope that kills you.’ Y’all know that? I disagree, you know? I think it’s the lack of hope that comes and gets you. See, I believe in hope. I believe in belief.”

Hope has always been one of the foundations of the Catholic Church, along with faith and love. And starting on Christmas Eve of this year and extending until Jan. 6, 2026, the

Church will mark a Jubilee Year that has the theme, “Pilgrims of Hope.”

As we prepare to celebrate this Jubilee Year, *The Criterion* is inviting you, our readers, to share your stories of hope—how embracing hope has helped and guided you in the toughest moments of your life, how others have given you hope for your present and your future, how your faith in God has sustained you and uplifted you in hope during your life.

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

Who would you thank for making a powerful impact on your life?

If you had the opportunity to share a special thank-you with someone who has influenced your life in a positive and powerful way, who would you choose to thank?

With Thanksgiving approaching, *The Criterion* is offering you that opportunity. Whether that person or group is from your past or your present,

share with us why you are grateful for the special impact they have had on you.

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



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E-mail us:
criterion@archindy.org

Staff:
 Editor: Mike Krokos
 Assistant Editor: John Shaughnessy
 Reporter: Sean Gallagher
 Reporter: Natalie Hoefler
 Graphic Designer / Online Editor: Brandon A. Evans
 Executive Assistant: Ann Lewis



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Synod calls for quick steps to involve more people in Church life

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Parishes and dioceses must move quickly to give life to the consultative bodies and broad participation in mission and ministry already foreseen by Church law if the Catholic Church is to have any hope of becoming a more “synodal” Church, members of the Synod of Bishops said.

“Without concrete changes in the short term, the vision of a synodal Church will not be credible and this will alienate those members of the people of God who have drawn strength and hope from the synodal journey,”

the members said in the final document they approved on Oct. 26.

Pope Francis convoked the synod in 2021 and called on parishes, dioceses and bishops’ conferences to hold listening sessions before the first synod assembly in Rome in 2023. The current assembly, including most of the same members, began with a Mass at the Vatican on Oct. 2.

Members voted on each of the 155 paragraphs of the document, which made suggestions and requests to Pope Francis that included long-term projects, such as continuing discernment about the possibility of women deacons, the need to reform seminary training and the hope that more lay people would be involved in the selection of bishops.

But they also included actions that could and should be implemented immediately, including hiring more women and laymen to teach in seminaries or having bishops make pastoral councils mandatory for every parish and pastors ensuring those bodies are truly representative of the parish members and that he listens to their advice.

Synod officials said all the paragraphs were approved by the necessary two-thirds of synod members present and voting; 355 members were present and voting, so passage required 237 votes. A paragraph devoted to increasing women’s profile in the Church received, by far, the most negative votes of any paragraph with 97 members voting no and 258 voting yes. The paragraph, which required 66% of the votes, passed with 72%.

“In simple and concise terms,” members said, “synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it

can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.”

In a synodal Church, the document said, members have different roles, but they work together for the good of all members and for the mission of the Church.

Like the synthesis report from the first assembly of the synod in 2023, the final document did not use the term “LGBTQ” or even “homosexuality” and spoke only briefly about the need to reach out to people who “experience the pain of feeling excluded or judged because of their marital situation, identity or sexuality.”

The document repeatedly referred to the “equal dignity” of men and women by virtue of their baptism and insisted the Catholic Church needed to do more to recognize women’s contributions to the life and mission of the Church and their potential to offer more.

“Women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining a fuller recognition of their charisms, vocation and roles in all the various areas of the Church’s life,” it said. “This is to the detriment of serving the Church’s shared mission.”

Members of the synod called for the “full implementation of all the opportunities already provided for in canon law with regard to the role of women,” and said, “there is no reason or impediment that should prevent women from carrying out leadership roles in the Church. What comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped.

“Additionally, the question of women’s access to diaconal ministry remains open,” they said. “This discernment needs to continue.”

The question of women deacons was among several questions Pope Francis assigned to study groups last spring. Synod members asked the General Secretariat of the Synod “to continue to watch over the synodal quality of the working method of the study groups,” which are supposed to report to the pope in June.

The synod process, members said, was a “call to joy and renewal of the Church in following the Lord, in committing to service of his mission and in searching for ways to be faithful.”

But the document repeatedly acknowledged the crime and sin of clerical sexual abuse and abuse of power, and insisted that a commitment

to synodality, particularly to learning to listen and to necessary forms of transparency and accountability, were essential to preventing abuse.

Synodality, members said, “will also help to overcome clericalism, understood as use of power to one’s own advantage and the distortion of the authority of the Church which is at the service of the

people of God. This expresses itself above all in forms of abuse, be they sexual or economic, the abuse of conscience and of power, by ministers of the Church.”

Lay men and women have many talents that can and should assist bishops and parish priests in the smooth functioning of their dioceses or parishes, synod members said. Tapping into those talents can help bishops and priests, who often feel overworked.

Where Church law requires the bishops to consult their priests’ or pastoral council or pastors to consult the parish council, the document said, they “may not act as if the consultation had not taken place.

“As in any community that lives according to justice,” it said, “the exercise of authority does not consist in an arbitrary imposition of will.”

Synod members also said listening, consulting, praying and discerning before making a decision are not the end of the process. “It must be

accompanied and followed by practices of accountability and evaluation in a spirit of transparency inspired by evangelical criteria.”

Ensuring accountability and regularly evaluating all those who minister in the Church’s name “is not a bureaucratic task for its own sake. It is rather a communication effort that proves to be a powerful educational tool for bringing about a change in culture,” synod members said.

One issue that prompted debate during the synod involved the authority of national bishops’ conference, particularly when it came to doctrinal matters.

The synod members, in the final document, called for a study of the theological and juridical status of bishops’ conferences and for a clear definition of “precisely the domain of the doctrinal and disciplinary competence” of the conferences. †



Pope Francis speaks to members of the Synod of Bishops on synodality after they approved their final document on Oct. 26 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

See related article, page 12A.

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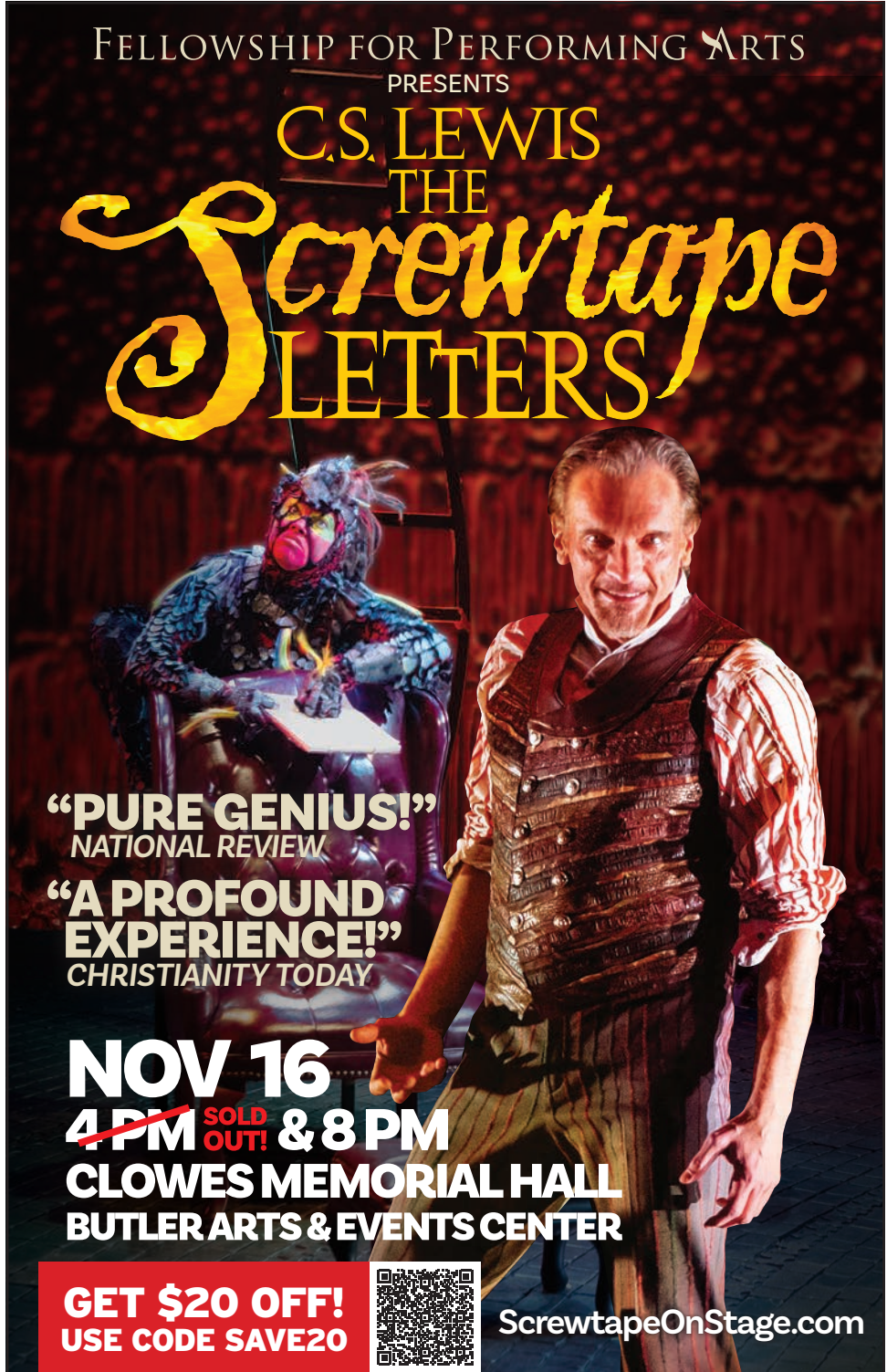
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Editorial



Banners of new saints hang from the facade of St. Peter's Basilica during the Mass for the canonization of 14 new saints on World Mission Sunday in St. Peter's Square with Pope Francis at the Vatican on Oct. 20. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Let's be next door saints, reflecting the light of Christ

A mother and her young son, Billy, stopped to pray in a church with many beautiful stained-glass windows. The boy kept interrupting his mother's prayers, asking her who was pictured in this and that window. The mother would explain, "That's St. Joseph." "That's St. Andrew." "That's St. Margaret Mary."

The boy was silent for a few minutes, then he said, "I know what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a saint."

"Why, Billy?" the mother asked. "You don't even know what a saint is." "I do so," the boy said. "A saint is a person the sun shines through."

Today we are celebrating the Solemnity of All Saints. We recognize that saints are the people that the light of Christ shines through. These are the holy men, women and children, living and deceased, whose lives give witness to the goodness of God.

Some have been officially designated as saints (canonized), but many more have not. Saints are all the people throughout human history who have sought the face of God and lived in accordance with God's will.

"Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future," wrote the 19th-century Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde. None of the saints, except Mary, was sinless. All were sinners who repented, sought God's forgiveness and were transformed by grace. It is this transformation, this conversion of life, that shines through the lives of the saints and shows us the face of God.

Pope Francis calls our attention to the "next door saints." These are the people whose humility, courage and faith shine brightly in spite of their suffering, poverty or ordinary troubles. These next door saints are not famous or distinguished in any way except for their goodness, their willingness to accept life on life's terms (which are often unfair), their readiness to forgive others, and their simple desire to help those who are in need.

Everyone can point to at least one next door saint. It may be a grandmother or favorite aunt. It could also be a childhood friend who got mixed up with the wrong crowd, lost his way, and then returned home again like the Prodigal Son.

The parables of Jesus show us the many different faces of next door saints. Surely the Good Samaritan qualifies.

So does the Roman centurion who said he was unworthy to have Jesus enter his home, yet believed in the Lord's healing power. And, of course, the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with costly perfume and the "good thief" who was crucified next to Jesus, but who acknowledged his sinfulness and humbly asked to be admitted to paradise were next door saints.

All these—and many, many more next door saints—are celebrated today with great rejoicing. They remind us that we are all called to be saints and that, in spite of our unworthiness, there is nothing to prevent us from repenting, asking for God's forgiveness, and then accepting the grace we need to change our lives and grow in holiness.

In his encyclical "*Spes Salvi*" ("Saved by Hope") Pope Benedict XVI writes: "Life is a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives" (#49). The saints are the light of hope, Pope Benedict says, because they point us to Jesus Christ, "the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history" (#49).

The Church has given us the examples of many canonized saints, and she urges us to learn more about them and to imitate them. They were living witnesses to the good news they proclaimed in Jesus' name.

Some were very smart. Others had average, or below average, intelligence. Some were active missionary disciples who traveled extensively, founded diverse religious orders, schools, hospitals and charitable organizations. Others remained behind cloistered walls in convents or monasteries and devoted themselves to prayer and contemplation. Some saints lived to be quite elderly. Others died young. In them, the canonized saints of the Church, we can find models for our own lives—regardless of who we are or what our state of life is.

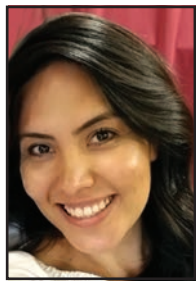
No matter what our past may be, all of us have a future. We are all sinners called to be saints. Let's ask God for the grace to be next door saints, people who reflect the light of Christ in our daily lives.

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Brenda Noriega-flores

Finding meaning in wonder: A journey of the heart

Have you ever found yourself pondering the meaning of life? If so, you're definitely not alone! Most people, especially between 13 to 30 years of age, frequently wrestle with these big questions. Wonder is part of what it means to be human and, as St. Thomas Aquinas wisely noted, it's a deep desire for knowledge.



During our younger years, it's natural to seek answers about who we are, where we come from and where we want to go. These questions can be both exhilarating and daunting. But here's the truth: Life without wonder feels empty. Genuine wonder doesn't just come from grappling with the unknown; it originates from a deeper source within us. It's God who plants that sense of wonder in our hearts, inviting us to seek him out and all goodness, truth and beauty in the world.

When we move through life on autopilot—just going through the motions without dreaming or being surprised by new experiences—we risk losing touch with our true essence. Our hearts can become weary and unresponsive. In other words, our hearts get old.

Jesus tells us that he came so we could have life abundantly (Jn 10:10). This isn't just about our hearts beating faster or our lungs taking in more air. It speaks to two deeper realities: eternal life and how we perceive and engage with the world around us.

In "*Christus Vivit*," Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation about young people (and directed to all of the Church) reminds us that Christ is alive and that he desires for us to be fully alive. But what does this mean, especially when we're tossed by life's challenges?

When someone asks for directions, we typically start by understanding where they are. Similarly, to navigate our lives effectively, we must first recognize our own starting point. This involves understanding who we are, how we feel and our relationship with God.

By reflecting on our place in the world and articulating our understanding of ourselves in relation to God, we can chart a path toward the ultimate goal for every Christian: holiness. In other words, we can learn to live in abundance.

Now, I am not talking about a financial abundance, but the type of abundance that—with or without material possessions—makes life matter. Abundance in Christian discipleship means to leave it all so that we can receive. I know that sounds contradictory but please bear with me.

We are invited to renounce any type of security. Usually, this is more about mental securities or comfort zones. When we have grown wounds or resentments toward a friend, relative, classmate,

co-worker or even a stranger, it is easier to walk away from that relationship than to do the hard work of reflection, healing and reconciliation. Similarly, when we have biases against a person for whatever "otherness" we may perceive, it is more comfortable to ignore differences and a Christian call to communion and recognize God in the other and all of creation.

The same goes for those times when we opt against getting involved in the face of suffering or injustice and we turn a blind eye for fear of being negatively affected if we are to speak up; or when we get so wrapped up in our list of tasks and accomplishments that we leave no time for listening attentively to the pain and needs of others.

When we withdraw from a suffering world or challenging conversations or relationships due to fear, resentment, apathy or anger, our hearts start getting old, and instead of living, we turn into walking bodies that breathe and even reason but do not dream and love. Trust me, I've been there.

But Pope Francis reminds us that seeking security and comfort can limit our horizons and dampen that youthful excitement we should carry throughout life. As we grow and mature, we should strive to maintain our enthusiasm and openness to new realities. Every moment offers a chance to renew our sense of youthfulness ("*Christus Vivit*," #160).

Stepping out of our comfort zones may feel challenging, but it's essential for growth as disciples. Living in abundance means fostering relationships with God and all of creation, allowing our hearts to be renewed by love, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Col 3:12-14). To do otherwise is to live in scarcity.

So, dear friends, I invite you to ponder God's infinite love for you. Allow yourself to wrestle with and rest in the idea that you are cherished beyond measure. Let God heal any biases, divisive thoughts, narratives or worldly expectations about success.

Embrace the capacity of wonder and dreaming that define youthfulness, and don't let comfort or apathy rob you of that joy. Ask questions, explore your feelings and don't be afraid to seek out Christ, who is the greatest mystery of life. Each step you take on this journey brings you closer to discovering the meaning and fullness of your unique life.

When things get tough, ask the Holy Spirit for help. In Christ, every heart can be renewed. Today, let's strive to live in abundance and be fully alive!

(Brenda Noriega-flores is a doctoral candidate in theology and education at Boston College Clough School of Theology and Education. She additionally works as a research assistant and project coordinator for Nuevo Momento, a leadership and capacity-building initiative for ministerial organizations serving Hispanic Catholics.) †

Letters Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

We are called to be saints, to grow close to Christ

Today, the Solemnity of All Saints, is the day that our Church recognizes and celebrates *all* the people—known and unknown—whose closeness to Jesus distinguishes them as outstanding in holiness.

The first reading for today refers to “a great multitude” who are gathered in heaven singing God’s praise:

“After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.’” (Rev 7:9-10).

The Church calls this immense gathering “the communion of saints.” It includes both the living and deceased—all those who throughout salvation history have lived righteous lives and have shown themselves to be holy.

All the baptized are called to be saints. This is the universal call to holiness that invites, and challenges, baptized Christians to conform their lives to the person of Jesus Christ, the

source of all holiness. The Hebrew word for “holy” is “*qadosh*.” It means to be separate or set apart from the ordinary. God is the one who is “Most Holy,” totally other, and absolutely separate from the world that he has created.

To become holy requires that we reflect the holiness of God in the way that the moon reflects the sun’s brightness. Saints do not produce their own light, their own holiness. The light of Christ shines through them and makes visible to us the holiness of God.

The image of a great multitude of men, women and children praising God recalls the experiences that more than 50,000 of us had last summer when we gathered for the National Eucharistic Congress held here in Indianapolis on July 17-21. This truly was a gathering of saints—not perfect people, but faithful missionary disciples who came to be close to Jesus in the holy Eucharist and to grow in holiness together.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus outlines the path to holiness. He tells us that we are blessed when we live our lives for others. When we live the Beatitudes, we

are holy—on the road to sainthood—and we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, living as he did.

We become holy when we learn to make the Beatitudes the program for living that is our own:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven” (Mt 5:3-12).

We are *all* called to be holy. This does not mean we are supposed to consider ourselves as better than everyone else (“holier than thou”).

On the contrary, holiness demands humility. It requires us to walk with all our sisters and brothers and to share in their struggles as well as their joys.

To be holy means to grow closer to Jesus and, in so doing, to reflect his light. Saints are not perfect. They are repentant sinners who are getting better because they have allowed the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to enter their empty hearts and make them whole.

All sinners are called to be saints. If we are open to God’s grace, and if we can learn to say “yes” to the way of life entrusted to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are truly blessed.

Today’s second reading makes this clear: “Everyone who has this hope based on [Christ] makes himself pure, as he is pure” (1 Jn 3:3). It is in drawing close to Christ that we learn to live like him. We learn to set aside our own interests and begin to live for others.

This is the way to be holy, to become the saints we are all called to be.

May God’s grace be with us—and all the saints—in a special way today. May we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints with gratitude and great joy! †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Estamos llamados a la santidad y a estar cerca de Cristo

Hoy, Solemnidad de Todos los Santos, es el día en que nuestra Iglesia reconoce y celebra a *todas las personas*—conocidas y desconocidas—cuya estrecha relación con Jesús las hace sobresalir por su santidad.

La primera lectura de hoy se refiere a “una gran multitud” que está reunida en el cielo cantando alabanzas a Dios:

“Después de esto miré, y he aquí una gran multitud, la cual nadie podía contar, de todas naciones y tribus y pueblos y lenguas, que estaban delante del trono y en la presencia del Cordero, vestidos de ropas blancas, y con palmas en las manos; y clamaban a gran voz, diciendo: ‘La salvación pertenece a nuestro Dios que está sentado en el trono, y al Cordero’ ” (Ap 7:9-10).

La Iglesia llama a esta inmensa reunión “la comunión de los santos” que incluye tanto a los vivos como a los difuntos: todos aquellos que a lo largo de la historia de la salvación han vivido con rectitud y se han comportado de manera santa.

Todos los cristianos bautizados tienen la obligación de responder al llamado universal a la santidad que los invita—y los desafía—a conformar sus vidas a la persona de Jesucristo, fuente de toda santidad. La palabra hebrea para “santo” es

qadosh que significa estar separado o apartado de lo ordinario. Dios es el “Santísimo,” totalmente aparte y absolutamente separado del mundo que ha creado.

Para ser santos, debemos reflejar la santidad de Dios como la luna refleja la luz del sol. Los santos no producen su propia luz, su propia santidad; es la luz de Cristo la que brilla a través de ellos y nos manifiesta la santidad de Dios.

La imagen de una gran multitud de hombres, mujeres y niños alabando a Dios recuerda las experiencias que más de 50,000 de nosotros tuvimos el verano pasado cuando nos reunimos en el Congreso Eucarístico Nacional celebrado aquí en Indianápolis del 17 al 21 de julio. Fue realmente una reunión de santos, no de personas perfectas, sino de fieles discípulos misioneros que vinieron a estar cerca de Jesús en la Sagrada Eucaristía y a crecer juntos en santidad.

En el Evangelio de hoy, Jesús esboza el camino hacia la santidad. Nos dice que somos bienaventurados cuando vivimos nuestra vida para los demás. Cuando vivimos las Bienaventuranzas, somos santos—en el camino de la santidad—y seguimos las huellas de Jesús, viviendo como él vivió.

Nos hacemos santos cuando

adoptamos las Bienaventuranzas como nuestro propio programa de vida:

“Bienaventurados los pobres en espíritu, porque de ellos es el reino de los cielos. Bienaventurados los que lloran, porque ellos recibirán consolación. Bienaventurados los mansos, porque ellos recibirán la tierra por heredad. Bienaventurados los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia, porque ellos serán saciados. Bienaventurados los misericordiosos, porque ellos alcanzarán misericordia. Bienaventurados los de limpio corazón, porque ellos verán a Dios. Bienaventurados los pacificadores, porque ellos serán llamados hijos de Dios. Bienaventurados los que padecen persecución por causa de la justicia, porque de ellos es el reino de los cielos. Bienaventurados sois cuando por mi causa os vituperen y os persigan, y digan toda clase de mal contra vosotros, mintiendo. Gozaos y alegraos, porque vuestro galardón es grande en los cielos; porque así persiguieron a los profetas que fueron antes de vosotros” (Mt 5:3-12).

Todos estamos llamados a ser santos. Esto no significa que debemos considerarnos mejores que los demás (“más santos que tú”).

Al contrario, la santidad exige humildad y “caminar con” todos

nuestros hermanos y hermanas y compartir tanto sus luchas como sus alegrías.

Ser santo significa acercarse cada vez más a Jesús y, al hacerlo, reflejar su luz. Los santos no son perfectos, sino pecadores arrepentidos que mejoran porque han permitido que la gracia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo entre en sus corazones vacíos y los haga íntegros.

Todos los pecadores estamos llamados a ser santos. Si estamos abiertos a la gracia de Dios, y si podemos aprender a decir “sí” a la forma de vida que nos ha confiado nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo, seremos verdaderamente bendecidos.

La segunda lectura de hoy lo deja claro: “Y todo aquel que tiene esta esperanza en él [Jesús], se purifica a sí mismo, así como él es puro” (1 Jn 3:3). Acercámonos a Cristo aprendemos a vivir como él. Aprendemos a dejar de lado nuestros propios intereses y empezamos a vivir para los demás.

Este es el camino para ser santos, para convertirnos en los santos que todos estamos llamados a ser.

Que la gracia de Dios esté hoy con nosotros—y con todos los santos—de un modo especial. Que celebremos la solemnidad de Todos los Santos con agradecimiento y gran alegría. †

Events Calendar

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

November 6

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

Lumen Christi Catholic School, 580 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **School Open Houses**, elementary school 12:30-2:30 p.m., high school 6-7 p.m. Information: 317-632-3174, erosko@lumenchristischool.org.

November 7

Marian University, 3200 Cold Spring Rd. Indianapolis, **Gold Mass Event for Scientists**, 4 p.m. reception in Evans Center Atrium, 4:30 p.m. presentation in Evans Center Room 152, 5:30 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Chapel, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) research associate Dr. Fernanda Psihas presenting, free admission, campus parking passes provided with reservation, RSVP requested by Nov. 5, sponsored by Society of Catholic Scientists. Information,

registration: cnicholson@marian.edu, tinyurl.com/mariangoldmass24.

Virtual Prayer with the Sisters of Providence, 7-7:45 p.m., for single women ages 18-42, prayer and sharing on topic of trust. Information, registration: events.sistersofprovidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

November 9

St. Joseph Parish, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. **Altar Society Craft Fair**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., local vendors, bean soup, hot dogs, bake sale, vendor tables \$10, tables with electricity \$15, free admission. Information, vendor table reservations: 317-241-3841.

November 10

St. Monica Parish, 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis. **Mass in French / Messe en français**, 5 p.m. / 18h, coordinated by ACFADI (*Apostolat des Catholiques Francophones de l'Archidiocèse d'Indianapolis*), second Sunday of each month / *le deuxième dimanche de chaque mois*. Information: acfadi2014@gmail.com, rvermett@iu.edu.

Marian University, Norman Center Room 222, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis.

People of Peace OFS Monthly Meeting, 12:30-3 p.m., explore Franciscan spirituality with lay Franciscans, free. Information: 317-762-6259, popofsindy@gmail.com.

November 11

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, McGivney Hall, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Confraternity of Christian Mothers**, 6 p.m. Mass followed by meeting, for all Catholic women, free. Information: 217-638-7433, paulabeechler@gmail.com.

November 12

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

November 15

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Notre Dame Federal Credit Union chief partnership officer Robert Kloska presenting "Faith Through the Fight: My Journey with Cancer," rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following,

\$18 members, \$24 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Nov. 12. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, Priori Hall, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **"Babies Survive Abortions" Lecture**, 6 p.m. doors open, 6:30 p.m. lecture, CEO and founder of Abortion Survivors Network Melissa Ohden presenting, pizza and salad provided, freewill donations accepted. Information: pro-life@holyroaryindy.org, holyroaryindy.org/pro-life-ministry.

November 16

St. Agnes Parish, 1008 McLary Road, Nashville. **Brotherhood in Christ: Building a Community of Disciples**, 8 a.m. doors open, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., men's ministry workshop sponsored by the archdiocesan Department of Pastoral Ministries, keynote speaker Benedictine Father Denis Robinson, president-rector of St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, lunch included, \$12, scholarships available. Information registration: tinyurl.com/brotherhoodindy24, 317-235-5804, thosty@archindy.org.

November 17

Our Lady of Grace Monastery, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Celebration of Light**, 7-8 p.m., prayer service in honor of deceased sisters, family members and friends, \$25 requested donation for luminaries (or up to \$100 for 10 people), luminaries must be ordered by Nov. 1. Information, luminary donations: 317-787-3287, olgdevelopment@benedictine.com, tinyurl.com/olgraceluminaries24.

November 19

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Remembrance Mass in Memory of All Children Lost Too Soon**, 5:30 p.m., organized by St. Joan of Arc Respect life. Information: emfrey96@gmail.com, 317-283-5508.

November 20

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

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Providence Hall Dining Room, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Memory Café**, 2-3:30 p.m., third Wednesday of each month, for people with

early-to-moderate memory loss and their caregivers, beverages and snacks provided, free. Information, registration: events.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2873, memorycafe@spsmw.org.

November 21

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

November 23

Knights of Columbus Fatima Council, 1040 N. Post Road, Indianapolis. **Christmas Bazaar**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., benefitting God's Embrace Coffee Shop which employs people with disabilities, local craft vendors, visit from Santa and the elves, kids' Christmas craft station, bring an unwrapped toy for Toys4Tots and receive a free hot chocolate or apple cider, raffle tickets \$1 or six for \$5, free admission. Information: 317-402-1930.

November 24

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Filipino Mass**, 2-3 p.m., every fourth Sunday of the month, free. Information: mariasolito@gmail.com. †

Retreats and Programs

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

November 15

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.

November 15-17

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **The Passion Narrative of Mark's Gospel**, Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Christ-Centered Counsel for Everyday Difficulties**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate Father Terrance M. Chartier facilitating, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$369.08 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

November 16

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Stories from the Rez**, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Franciscan Sisters Marya Grathwohl and Mary Ann Stoffregen presenting, \$30, \$45 with CEUs. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

November 17

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Coffee Talks—Franciscan Spirituality: Alive Today**, 10:45 a.m.-noon, Franciscan Father Frank Jasper presenting, online option available, freewill donation. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

November 18

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$45, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$32, dinner additional \$11. Registration: archindy.org/fatima-events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

November 22-24

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **"Being & Belonging" Retreat for Separated and Divorced Catholics**, 6 p.m. Fri.-1:30 p.m. Sun., Father James Farrell with team, \$210 includes program, meals, snacks, two overnight stays in private room with shared bathroom, Mass on Sunday. Registration: archindy.org/fatima-events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

November 23

Mystics and Fellowship virtual program, 9-10:30 a.m., sponsored by Sisters of Providence, first of four independent sessions, register by Nov. 20, \$25 per session. Information, registration: events.SistersofProvidence.org, 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org.

December 2

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis. **Advent Reflections: An Evening in the Chapel, O Antiphons, and the Wisdom of Pope Francis**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., facilitated by Judy Ribar, free. Information, RSVP: mountsaintfrancis.org/advent-evening-of-reflection, 812-923-8817. †

Wedding Anniversaries

RALPH AND VICKI (RIGA) SEILER, members of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 7.

The couple was married in St. Antoninus Church in Cincinnati on Nov. 7, 1964.

They have eight children: Bonnie Risse, Jill Yauch, Lynn, Keith, Mark, Neil, Todd and Wayne Seiler.

The couple also has 22 grandchildren.

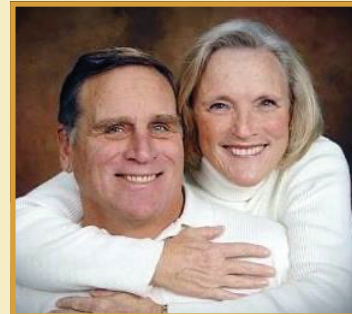


DAVID AND ANN (MCATEE) GANDOLPH, members of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on Oct. 25.

The couple was married in Holy Spirit Church in Indianapolis on Oct. 25, 1969.

They have four children: Jennifer Hawk, Daniel, David, Jr., and Thomas Gandolph.

The couple also has 10 grandchildren.



STEPHEN AND JUNE (TANNER) KOCHERT, members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on Oct. 18.

The couple was married in the former Holy Trinity Church in New Albany on Oct. 18, 1969.

They have two children: Elizabeth and Brian Kochert.

The couple also has one grandchild.



TOM AND MARLA (LONG) HRENO, members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 19.

The couple was married in St. Gabriel Church in Connersville on Oct. 19, 1974.

They have two children: Colette and Christopher Hreno.

The couple also has seven grandchildren.



St. Louis de Montfort to host free Thanksgiving Day dinner on Nov. 28

A free dine-in or take-out Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetables, rolls and dessert will be offered in Craig Willy Hall at St. Louis de Montfort Parish, 11441

Hague Road, in Fishers, Ind. (Lafayette Diocese), from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on Nov. 28. All are welcome.

For more information, call 317-517-4256. †

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



(Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Every vocation offers the faithful new hope

By Fr. Michael Keucher

Each year, the archdiocesan vocations office creates posters of our seminarians and of our men and women religious in formation. These posters hang in our parishes, schools and agencies across the central and southern Indiana.



Fr. Michael Keucher

One woman was next to me in the narthex of St. Joseph Church in Shelbyville as I was hanging the posters up this year. Looking at the seminarian poster, she almost began to cry as she said, “I’m just filled with so much hope when I look at these faces.” And then she folded her hands.

She hit the nail on the head!

I’ve heard some version of that statement by so many people during my years as vocations director, and I feel its sentiment strongly in my own heart. The response is always the same: folded hands in hopeful prayer of gratitude and prayer of petition.

Hope! Every vocation should fill the faithful with a great big dose of hope.

Every vocation reminds us that our Lord is still calling men and women to follow him, spend their lives for him and pour themselves out for the salvation of souls.

Every vocation requires a total gift of self. And, praise God, there are so many young folks in our archdiocese willing to lay down their lives and give that heroic “yes.”

Every vocation, as Pope Francis reminds us, “flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people”—and our archdiocese is filled with these good and faithful people.

Every vocation brings more grace and love in this world and leads to the eternal salvation of real souls.

Every vocation is connected in a mystical yet vital way to other vocations. Holy priests, for example, need holy families, and holy families need holy priests.

Hope! Each and every vocation is a source of great, great hope—for our world, our Church and our very souls.

Pope Francis has announced the upcoming 2025 Jubilee Year’s theme to be “Pilgrims of Hope.” No matter what troubles afflict our world, hope means knowing that Jesus provides for us something so much bigger: his grace, his mercy, his presence, his love—and even his salvation.

And Jesus offers all that wrapped up in a deeply mysterious and personal way inside each and every vocation issued, answered and lived.

The priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life—these are the three types of vocations we hold in special prayer and honor during National Vocations Awareness

Week. Because of them, our tabernacles and souls are not left empty. Our sins are not left unabsolved. The poor are not left destitute. The imprisoned are visited. The hungry are fed. Children are taught and formed. The eucharistic Lord is not left abandoned. The Lord’s purposes are attended to by folks who give up their whole lives for him.

For all that, we ought to join with Pope Francis in his beautiful prayer: “May hope fill our days!” Those words, I suggest, ought to be our prayer when we look at the faces on our vocations’ posters, when we read the stories in this supplement and consider the vocations of those we know and love—and even our own.

This week, we thank God for the gift of the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life. I invite you to consider how those in these vocations have touched your lives, and, if able, offer a word of support and gratitude. At the same time, we pray for a generous increase in these holy vocations.

May hope fill our days! May hope fill our hearts! May hope fill our archdiocese!

(Father Michael Keucher is director of vocations for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, dean of the Batesville Deanery and pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County. Contact him at mkeucher@archindy.org.) †



Benedictine sisters bring charism of hospitality to local, international communities, page 3B.



Deacons share the good news at work, ‘using words if necessary,’ page 6B.



Catholic leadership skills instilled in seminarian from a young age, page 7B.



'The joy is immense'



Father Thomas Kovatch poses with Noah Jager, left, and Anthony Leal, both members of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, at Columbus North High School in Columbus in March 2020 after Jager's and Leal's Bloomington South High School boys basketball team won its sectional in the Indiana High School Athletic Association boys basketball tournament. (Submitted photo).

Father Thomas Kovatch finds happiness in leading others to Christ and the Church in Bloomington and around the world

By Sean Gallagher

BLOOMINGTON—Father Thomas Kovatch loves the Eucharist so much that he celebrates it for his parishioners every day—even on those days when he's at his parish but taking a day off.

"I can't imagine going a day without Mass in my life. I just can't," he said. "It's not something that I have to do. It's something that I love to do."

Father Kovatch has lived out this commitment to the Mass since 2008 when he was first assigned to be a pastor in the archdiocese, leading St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. Since 2011, he has served as pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington.

The effects of his commitment to the Eucharist reach out to the rest of his ministry as an archdiocesan priest, helping to draw his parishioners closer to Christ and the Church in their daily lives and even sharing the faith with them in

mission trips to Uganda in east Africa.

Wherever he goes, Father Kovatch shows his commitment to his priestly life and ministry by wearing a Roman collar. That's his way of showing his availability to others.

"How can I, as a priest, not wear the collar?" he asked. "The availability goes into that. That's my mindset. I'm a priest. I'm not just here for the people of St. Charles. I'm here for anybody that sees me anywhere."

Bringing the presence of God to others

"I just feel the presence of God so intimately during Mass that it just has a feel that I wish others could feel," he said. "And I think that some laity feel it when they're at Mass or in adoration. There's something that just grabs you."

An important way that Father Kovatch helps his parishioners be open to the presence of God at Mass and the rest of their lives is through another commitment he's made as a pastor: to hear confessions

before every Mass he celebrates.

The sacrament of penance, he said, is like the Mass because it is "another time when the presence of God is right there in the priest."

"When we absolve them, we don't say, 'Jesus absolves you,' " Father Kovatch said. "The words are, 'I absolve you.' Now, I'm not the one absolving them. Christ is using me in that sacrament."

A main reason for making himself available for the sacrament of penance is to help Catholics be reconciled to God when they have missed going to Sunday Mass, something that many recent studies have shown a majority of Catholics in the U.S. do.

Father Kovatch knows the effects of missing Mass personally. As a young adult, he fell away from the practice of his faith.

"We have to be ready to receive the Eucharist," said Father Kovatch, 66. "And if we miss Mass—which I did for

a number of years myself—then we need to have the opportunity to go and confess that before I go and receive the Eucharist, along with the other sins."

Before becoming an archdiocesan seminarian in his 40s and being ordained in 2007 at 49, Father Kovatch served in the U.S. Marines and later became a successful businessman.

He started going to Mass daily when discerning if God might be calling him to the priesthood.

"I did that before I entered the seminary and I haven't stopped that since," Father Kovatch said. "It's just very powerful."

'He truly jumped all in'

Kim Sprague saw Father Kovatch's dedication to the Eucharist and confession when he was pastor of St. Teresa and she was the parish's director of religious education.

"He always had a deep sense of

PRIEST, page 9B

Vocations Awareness Supplement highlights the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life

This issue of *The Criterion* features our annual supplement that highlights vocations in the Church to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.

It is ordinarily published during the U.S. bishops' annual Vocations Awareness Week, which this year is on Nov. 3-9.

From the beginning, the Church has recognized that marriage is also a vocation, a pathway to holiness, to which God calls people. *The Criterion* publishes two marriage

supplements annually, usually in February and July.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis has three offices which promote vocations. For information on the Office of Marriage and Family Life, visit www.archindy.org/marriageandfamily. For information on the diaconate, go to www.archindy.org/deacon. For information on the priesthood and consecrated life, visit www.archindy.org/vocations. †



Benedictine sisters bring hospitality to local, international communities

By Ann Margaret Lewis

The Benedictines are one of the oldest religious orders in the Church. Communities of Benedictine monks, nuns and sisters have been guided for some 1,500 years by St. Benedict's *Rule*, which lays out how his spiritual sons and daughters seek holiness together.

One of the key precepts of the *Rule* is hospitality, or welcoming the other as one would welcome Christ.

The Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove have a special focus on hospitality, both locally in their special liturgies, which are open to the community, and internationally through acts of loving service.

Benedictine Sister Marie Therese Racine has been a professed religious for 21 years. As Our Lady of Grace Monastery's director of liturgy, she



Sr. Marie Therese Racine, O.S.B.

manages preparations for the regular liturgies of the community. They include Masses in their chapel as well as the Liturgy of the Hours, which the community prays together three times a day.

These liturgies offer many opportunities for hospitality,

Sister Marie Therese said. And yet, as she became part of the community, she found that charism particularly difficult to practice.

"I'm more of a shy person," she said. "But it's a development of a disposition of heart or an attitude of the heart to always be ready to welcome someone as Christ."

She adds that St. Benedict wrote that no monasteries should be without guests.

"All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ," she said. "So ... we show proper honor to them and meet with them with all the courtesy of love."

Sister Marie Therese keeps visitors in mind while prepping for the community's liturgies. This includes ensuring there are lectors and servers for the liturgies as well as enough supplies, and that the chapel is accessible for those with disabilities and using mobility devices.

She also directs the *schola* and handbell choirs and prepares worship aids so that visitors can sing along. Worship aids are especially important for the Liturgy of the Hours, the regular prayer of the Church with which many visitors might be unfamiliar.

"Historically, [the Liturgy of the Hours] was the people's prayer before it got really involved in monasteries," said Sister Marie Therese. "So, because it's always been the prayer of the people, we really want to have people here with us praying."

Members of the outside community, even people of other faith traditions, are always welcome at any of the liturgies, the times of which are listed on the sisters' website.

Sister Marie Therese said it is her hope, and the hope of all her sisters, that "[guests] feel welcome and comfortable and prepared to pray with us. [That they are] able to have their hearts open to encounter Christ during that liturgy. [And that] when they come, they can find peace, some healing, if that's what they need, as well as some joy."

The Benedictine charism of hospitality, however, doesn't stop with their local community. Benedictine Sister Mary Luke Jones, a professed member of Our Lady



During a recent visit in September, Benedictine Sister Mary Luke Jones (second from left) and Community of International Benedictines moderator Benedictine Sister Lynn McKenzie (far left) share joy and playfulness with orphan children in Tanzania. (Submitted photo)

of Grace Monastery for 56 years, is executive secretary to the moderator of *Communio Interantionalis Benedictinarum* or the Community of International Benedictines (CIB), which is committed to sharing the *Rule* of St. Benedict with all cultures and countries.

In that role, Sister Mary Luke has traveled extensively.

"Benedictines are the same all over the world," she said. "I have had the privilege of visiting



Guests join the Benedictine sisters in the chapel of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove for the Easter Vigil on April 8, 2023. (Submitted photo)

sisters in a number of countries and meeting with sisters from every continent, and they are all the same in regard to their commitment to hospitality. Similarly, people all over the world ... want to be respected and treated as children of God."

She noted that Benedictine communities in Tanzania, Ukraine and Australia, as well as those in the United States, work together to promote the charism of hospitality and treating others with dignity and respect.

"The role of CIB," Sister Mary Luke explained, "is to strengthen the bonds of Benedictine women worldwide, to acknowledge their work, to support their efforts on behalf of the people they serve and to unite our prayers for the world.

In so doing, sisters are fortified in their mission of prayer, work and hospitality."

At the same time, she said, "the recipients of their hospitality gain a sense of worth and dignity. Benedictine women extend themselves in service to men and women,

children of all ages through education, health care, spiritual direction, prayer."

She added, "Never counting the cost, the sisters go out of their way to meet and greet, serve and pray for the people of God—the ones before them and others from all over the world."

An example of this, Sister Mary Luke said, comes from the sisters in Ukraine, who are dealing with the daily struggles of war in their country. The Abbess Klara Swiderska of Zhytomyr, Ukraine, wrote to the CIB community, relating how their sisters had to adapt to regular shellings, gunfire and deaths that are close to their home. The abbess wrote: "We have learned that the only thing we can do and change in the world is our little heart."

By changing themselves and focusing on Christ in the other, Sister Mary Luke and Sister Marie Therese reach out and assist to the wider community in any way they can.

(To join the Benedictine sisters at their Beech Grove monastery for their regular liturgies, see their prayer schedule on their website, benedictine.com/prayer-schedule. For more information on CIB and their hospitality outreach worldwide, go to benedictines-cib.org.) †



Sr. Mary Luke Jones, O.S.B.

Formation, ministry helps Providence sister see all of who she is 'as a gift'

By Jason Moon

Special to *The Criterion*

ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS—More than eight years ago, Providence Sister Emily TeKolste joined the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods in western Indiana.

"I became a Sister of Providence because I found a community whose spirit matched mine," recalled Sister Emily, previously a member of St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis. "They are rooted in love, mercy and justice, both contemplative and action oriented. I wanted to be a part of justice-making in the world and to do it in community."

Since September 2016, Sister Emily admitted she has grown exponentially in her spirituality.

"I have learned to embrace people who express their Catholicism, Christianity and spirituality in many different ways," she said. "I have been able to find my authentic self in new ways and



Sr. Emily TeKolste, S.P.

embrace more of who I am without the shame that was taught to me when I was younger.

"I have grown to see all of who I am as a gift, even the harder parts."

Sister Emily admits the growth has been mildly difficult. But she continues to move forward.

"Sometimes, it's still hard to work through some parts of what I feel and express. I'm learning to listen for what others are telling me, trusting that God gave them to me for a reason," she said. "I've learned to be in more authentic relationship, meeting people where they are and being more honest about my own needs and boundaries in many situations."

Upon entering the Sisters of Providence, Sister Emily volunteered in the Congregation's Mission Advancement Department as well as at Providence Health Care and White Violet Center for Eco-Justice.

In her third year with the congregation, she began ministry as a high school teacher of theology and sociology at Bishop McNamara Catholic School in Kankakee, Ill. There, she was able to utilize her bachelor's degree in sociology from Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Following her profession of first vows in 2019,

Sister Emily started ministering as a grassroots mobilization coordinator for NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, where she remains to this day.

"My ministry is to work with citizen advocates, everyday people across six states who want to fulfill the call of Catholic social teaching to participate in creating the world we want to live in," Sister Emily said, "a world that values human dignity and puts policies in place to honor that human dignity."

She and other advocates meet with senators and representatives, write letters to newspaper editors, elicit phone calls and host community education programs.

She explained how NETWORK is currently advocating for a return to the 2021 Child Tax Credit, which cut the child poverty rate in half.

"We continue to advocate for returning to that expanded Child Tax Credit since we know it works to significantly reduce child poverty," she said.

(Jason Moon is communications director for the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Sister of Providence, contact Providence Sister Joni Luna at 361-500-9505 or e-mail jluna@spsmw.org.) †



Franciscan priest seeks to share life in abundance with Oldenburg Catholics

By Jennifer Lindberg

Special to *The Criterion*

OLDBENBURG—It may seem odd to sing a funeral hymn at an ordination, but when Father John Barker's fellow Franciscans chanted the "*Ultima*" hymn over him, after he had just received the laying on of hands to become a priest, something eternal unfolded.

"When death's hour is then upon us, to your Son pray that he grant us death both holy and serene, Virgin Mary, Mother, Queen."

This ancient hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary is valued so much by Father John's Franciscan province that they sing it at all special occasions.

It is a hymn about death leading to new life. On Aug. 24, Father John did die to his old self and put on the new man of the priesthood.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, who ordained Father John, stated at the ordination Mass that the priesthood is a dying to self for the good of the people of God.

"It's never about us," the archbishop said at Holy Family Church in Oldenburg where the liturgy took place.

Father John says this dying to self is about showing the people of God how living the Catholic faith is about living a life of abundance.

"If I had a motto, it would be from John 10:10: 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly,'" said Father John, who has served as pastor of Holy Family Parish since his ordination. "God wants us to be free and healed, and if we can frame everything in this verse, even in the most difficult circumstances, we can see everything as a gift for God."

This new life in Christ that Father John embraced in abundance has brought a lot of firsts into his life. For instance, he is the first priest to be ordained at Holy Family in Oldenburg since 1958.

He's also thought about his life anew after spending 24 years as a Franciscan brother before thinking about the path to priesthood again.

The first prompting to the priesthood began while attending Mass at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Charleston, S.C. He had thought about pursuing a pre-med college degree—his father was a doctor—but was working in the restaurant industry at the time.

He also had a strong revival in his Catholic faith. So, when the cathedral's rector asked him if he had ever considered being a priest, he was open to the idea.

After a period of discernment, he felt called to the religious life and not the diocesan priesthood. After sending inquiries to several religious communities, the Franciscans of St. John the Baptist Province in Cincinnati responded. It



Franciscan Father John Barker poses in the friary at Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg, where he has served as pastor since being ordained a priest there on Aug. 24. (Submitted photo by Jennifer Lindberg)

later merged with other provinces and is now part of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province based in Atlanta.

He professed temporary vows as a Franciscan brother in 2000 and solemn vows in 2004.

At first, Father John thought he would take the typical path to the priesthood, but he also had a deep desire to study Scripture and wanted to focus on it.

"I'm not a good multi-tasker," Father John said.

Those early decisions led him to earn a master's degree in theology and biblical studies. He continued his education at Boston College in Boston, earning a doctorate in Scripture in 2016 and teaching at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He also co-authored *Living the Word: Scripture Reflections and Commentaries for Sundays and Holy Days* (World Library Publications, 2019).

It was while teaching that Father John decided academia was not for him for the long term. Also, his favorite saint started showing up in prayer. On Aug. 4, 2020, the feast of St. John

Vianney, Father John felt called to the priesthood once more.

And like St. John Vianney, he wants to bring the sacrament of reconciliation to the forefront of his parishioners' lives. Father John believes so greatly in the graces and healing of the sacrament of reconciliation to help people live

well into what Father John is trying to communicate about God's abundance. The devotion comes from messages from Christ to a 17th-century nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Those who keep the devotion—by going to the sacrament of reconciliation and receiving holy Communion—will receive peace in their

'You can see the power of Christ come into someone's life in this sacrament. There are times when you see people leave [the confessional] and they are so relieved.'

—Franciscan Father John Barker, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg on the sacrament of reconciliation

the abundant life in Christ that his first decision as pastor of Holy Family was to offer confession before every Mass. The joy he has as a priest to offer the sacrament of reconciliation for his people is poignant.

"It's a celebration on both sides of the grate," Father John said. "I know people stay away from the sacrament, so I want to make it as easy as possible for people to get back to it."

While the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic faith, people need to be in a state of grace to receive it—and for that, they need the sacrament of reconciliation.

Confession helps those struggling with certain sins to know that there is forgiveness and healing awaiting them, said Father John.

"You can see the power of Christ come into someone's life in this sacrament," he added. "There are times when you see people leave [the confessional] and they are so relieved."

Another way Father John is helping live out his priesthood with the people entrusted to him is starting First Friday devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is the second decision of his brief priesthood tenure, but one that he feels will bring people closer to Christ.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart fits

homes, comfort in their afflictions, all the graces necessary for their state in life and much more.

His idea to start the devotion at Holy Family began when he found a large and beautiful monstrance in the safe of the friary in Oldenburg. While Holy Family Parish has adoration from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, Father John wanted to do something special in the church on First Fridays. That means adoration is moved for First Fridays into the main church with Benediction at 7 p.m.

In his brief time as a priest, Father John said offering a word of encouragement to his parishioners gives him a lot of joy in his ministry. Usually, at the end of a homily, he reminds people about the peace of God, ending with the encouragement of "be at peace."

It seems Father John has found that peace in the order best known for preaching it: the Franciscans. He's also learned that peace comes with God's timeline and not his own.

"I think I trust more in that now," he said.

(Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon. For more information about the Franciscans of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, visit friars.us.) †



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson anoints with chrism oil the hands of Franciscan Father John Barker during an Aug. 24 ordination Mass at Holy Family Church in Oldenburg. (Submitted photo)



Prayer groups commit to interceding for priests, seminarians and religious

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—The number of seminarians preparing for priestly ministry in the archdiocese has grown during the past several years, and the priest who oversees the archdiocesan vocations office looks quickly to one cause for the rise.

“I always think that the reason we have a surge in vocations right now is because people are praying in our churches and



Fr. Michael Keucher

adoration chapels so hard,” said Father Michael Keucher.

Groups of people and individuals in parishes across central and southern Indiana praying for vocations in part led the archdiocesan vocations office to develop a new prayer

resource for them.

It had 15,000 copies of “Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations” recently printed and distributed to parishes and schools across the archdiocese. The booklet includes prayers for adoration, discernment, religious, seminarians, priests, prayers written by saints, rosary meditations for priestly and religious vocations and a litany for vocations.

“This booklet is the perfect thing we can give to folks who are looking for a focused way to pray for priestly and religious vocations,” Father Keucher said. “We wanted to be able to give them the tools they need.”

This prayer by a growing number of people interceding for priests, religious, seminarians and those discerning ordained and consecrated vocations has also had a positive influence on their faith.

Fran Chigi, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville, spoke of how her prayers for seminarians and priests have increased her awareness of the blessings and challenges of the daily life of priests.

“Because I pray for them, I think I have a better understanding of their lives, the commitment that they have and the sacrifices that they’re making,” she said.

“It’s not just a priest up there celebrating a Mass. It’s who he is and why he has committed himself, and what a great commitment it is.”

Marilyn Ross has been part of a group at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood that for about 10 years has prayed a holy hour for vocations on Tuesday nights in the faith community’s adoration chapel.

“I feel like God has really called me to this,” she said. “It’s not just something that came along. Knowing that I have this commitment to pray for priests and vocations helps keep me on track with my prayer life.”

Ross’ regular prayer for vocations has also led her to action to support vocations ministry.

She and others at Our Lady of the Greenwood hosted teenage boys taking part in Bishop Bruté Days, the vocations office’s annual summer vocations camp, late one evening after a full day of activities.

“It was about 10:30 when they got to the parish,” Ross recalled. “We had make-your-own ice cream sundaes for the boys. I called it ‘Jesus and Ice Cream.’”

Father Todd Goodson, Our Lady of the Greenwood’s pastor, then took the teens to the parish church where they prayed Night Prayer, part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

“We just don’t know how we’re impacting,” Ross reflected. “And we’re not called to know. To me, we’re called to be faithful to what God is asking us to do, and he’ll bring the fruit.”

Father Goodson has started his own holy hour for vocations in Our Lady of the Greenwood’s adoration chapel at 4 p.m. on Fridays.

“I try to commit to a holy hour daily,” Father Goodson said. “I don’t always do a perfect job, but this one helps me get my holy hour in. There’s a real need for vocations. I think it’s an opportunity if someone thinks he might have a vocation to come and pray with us.”

While Father Goodson and other archdiocesan priests try to pray a holy hour each day, there is a growing number of Catholic women across central and southern Indiana who are doing the same, offering their holy hours specifically for the priests serving in their parishes.

They’re part of the Seven Sisters Apostolate started in 2011 by Janette Howe in St. Paul, Minn. The name of the ministry is taken from the way it is organized.

Seven women commit themselves to praying a holy hour on a specific day of the week for their parish priest.

From starting in the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul in 2011, the apostolate has grown in just 13 years to be present in all 50 states and 39 countries around the world.

“It just goes forward by the excitement of people understanding the need of prayer for priests,” said Howe.

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, there are three groups of seven women praying for Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and 14 other groups praying for priests serving in their parishes.



Father Todd Goodson, right, leads a holy hour for vocations on Oct. 4 in the adoration chapel of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Pam Malinoski has helped lead the group at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis for about 10 years, with one in the group praying a holy hour each day during that time for Father C. Ryan McCarthy, Holy Rosary’s pastor since 2013.

“We don’t know who they are,” she explained. “We don’t want to know who they are.”

Howe recalled that a vicar for clergy told a priest who came to him for help “that there’s someone praying for him today.”

“It’s one of the most incredible holy

‘I feel like God has really called me to this. It’s not just something that came along. Knowing that I have this commitment to pray for priests and vocations helps keep me on track with my prayer life.’

—Marilyn Ross

“There are a lot of activities in our parishes,” Malinoski said. “Having this as an option for a more contemplative way to build up the Church is a beautiful thing.”

She added that the prayer of Seven Sisters groups is a way of showing gratitude for all that priests do for them and the parish as a whole.

“Sometimes priests can be taken for granted,” Malinoski said. “As often as we ask them to pray for us and serve us in our spiritual lives, we can support that and give that back to them through our prayers in the dedicated and intentional way that the Seven Sisters do.”

Howe spoke about how the Seven Sisters Apostolate helps its members focus on the needs of priests in the present moment.

“It really slows one down,” she said. “When we’re before the Lord, we realize that we don’t need to pray for the priest’s whole life right now. We’re committing to praying for what happens in the next seven days, in a sense.”

Seven Sisters also has opportunities for men to give of themselves spiritually for priests. Its Fasting Brothers groups

have six men fast on a particular day of the week and offer that sacrifice for a particular priest. There are only six in such a group because, in the Church’s tradition, no fasting should be done on Sundays.

Seven Sisters has also developed groups of seven women called Elijah’s Helpers, who pray daily holy hours for priests experiencing a crisis in their life and ministry. Howe explained that the vicar for clergy in dioceses where such groups are established let the group leader know when a priest needs their prayers.



Janette Howe

hours I do every week,” Howe said. “It’s my favorite one.”

In leading a large suburban parish with a school, Father Goodson has many duties from week to week. So, he’s grateful for the Seven Sisters group that prays for him daily.

“It’s very edifying and helpful,” he said. “We need a lot of prayer. We have a lot of responsibilities in this challenging world that we live in. It’s very helpful knowing that there are people out there praying for us.”

Father Keucher, who has a Seven Sisters group praying for him, sees their ministry as rooted in Scripture.

“Jesus had a lot of women supporting his ministry,” he said. “I think of Mary and Martha, and then Luke mentions Joanna and Susanna and points to other women as well. We priests are *alter Christus* [other Christs], and what a joy that is. And so, we also need the support of holy women. The Seven Sisters apostolate means so much to me.”

Malinoski hopes that the prayer of the Seven Sister group in her parish and in others across the archdiocese will help all Catholics—not just priests—grow in holiness.

“There’s the idea that if your priest is a saint, then the people will be holy,” Malinoski said. “Hopefully, this will have a ripple effect through our parish. The more we can support Father McCarthy in his growth and spiritual life will come right back to us. Hopefully, that will make our entire parish more holy.”

(For more information about priestly and religious vocations in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com. For more information on the Seven Sisters Apostolate, visit sevensistersapostolate.org.) †



This is the cover of a new prayer resource, “Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations,” developed by the archdiocesan vocations office.



Deacons share the good news at work, ‘using words if necessary’

By Natalie Hoefler

Since 2008, the archdiocese has been blessed with the ministry of men ordained as permanent deacons. Currently, 63 active deacons are assigned to parishes throughout central and southern Indiana.

Their mission is three-fold: to assist at liturgies, to serve in a ministry of charity outside of their assigned parish and to proclaim the Gospel at Mass.

Like all Catholics, deacons are also called to proclaim the Gosepl in their daily lives, “using words if necessary,” as goes the quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Such daily proclamation of the good news includes their workplace.

“Deacons don’t get paid, so unless you’re retired, you still have to earn a living,” says Deacon Jerome Bessler, a battalion chief for the Washington Township Avon Fire Department.

The Criterion spoke with Deacon Bessler of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, Deacon Mark Schmidl of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County and Deacon Steven Tsuleff of St. Michael Parish in Brookville and St. Peter Parish in Franklin County to learn how their diaconate mission of proclaiming the Gospel plays out in the workplace.

‘Helping them find some closure or peace’

As a fireman, helping people was already part of Deacon Bessler’s job. But being a deacon added a new element to that service.

For starters, he became a chaplain for the Hendricks County Fire Department and joined a peer support group that “just listens” when firefighters and medics need to talk after a difficult run.

He also offers a listening ear while at an emergency.

“If I’m not in charge as medic on a run, I assign myself to talk with the family,” says Deacon Bessler, 56, who was ordained in 2022. “Maybe we weren’t able to revive a loved one after a cardiac arrest. Or maybe there was a suicide. It’s just being an ear for them and helping them find some closure or peace.”

“I ask if there’s a pastor or priest I can call. If I find out they’re Catholic, I can walk with them in the faith.”

Sometimes in traumatic situations, Deacon Bessler proclaims the Gospel in a more tangible way.

“I carry pocket crosses,” he explains. “If I think it will help, I’ll give one to someone and say, ‘No matter what you do, hang onto the cross. Take all your problems and give it to the cross.’”

Deacon Bessler witnesses to the Gospel at work in simpler ways, too.

“We see people that don’t really make a lot of smart choices, and those choices cause others or themselves to get hurt,” he says. The tendency is to “want to judge [them] without knowing who they are or what they’ve been through.”

“I tell them we’ve got to put ourselves in their shoes. I’ve used the phrase [from John 8:7] quite a bit, when it comes to judging people: ‘Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone.’”

Deacon Bessler witnesses without words as well. Before carrying a pocket cross, he used to carry a small rosary of 10 beads in his pocket.

“If a conversation was not heading in

the right direction, I would pull it out and put it on the table, and when I did that, the conversation would change,” he says.

Since beginning his diaconate journey several years ago, “People I never would’ve expected come up and share their faith with me,” says Deacon Bessler.

“Some guys of faith will ask me to pray for them. I used to say, ‘Yeah, I will.’”

“But now I’ll say, ‘How about we pray right now?’ And we stop and pray. That’s something the diaconate put in me is that the time to pray is right now.”

‘I just try to meet them where they’re at’

Deacon Tsuleff’s co-workers have known of his calling from the start: The week he began his job 11 years ago as a commercial production editor and videographer for Local 12 WKRC-TV in Cincinnati, he also started his diaconate formation classes.

“I don’t hide the fact that I’m a deacon,” says Deacon Tsuleff,

62, who was ordained in 2017. “When you come into my office, you’ll see a crucifix on my desk and a picture of me and my wife the day I was ordained. On the wall there’s a picture of the archbishop and Pope John Paul II, and a statue of Mary and a Bible on my bookshelf. I don’t blatantly have spotlights on anything, but they’re there.”

These silent objects are one way Deacon Tsuleff proclaims the good news at work. The second form is also silent: listening.

“The biggest thing is people know they can sit down and talk with me, and that I’ll listen and hold everything in confidence,” he says.

The nature of their faith—or lack thereof—is not an issue.

“They know what it means for me to be a Christian, and whether they are or not, I don’t force anything on them,” says Deacon Tsuleff. “I just try to meet them where they’re at. I don’t force anything.”

Deacon Schmidl’s co-workers seek him out, too—even though he works from home in his job as a regional manager overseeing building maintenance of commercial properties.

“‘Oh, by the way, before we hang



In this Oct. 16 photo outside a fire station in Avon, Deacon Jerome Bessler, a battalion chief for Washington Township Avon Fire Department, displays one of the pocket crosses he carries with him on emergency runs to share with those impacted who might find it helpful. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

up’—that’s how it tends to be,” he says of co-workers seeking his pastoral care.

But there’s another way he says his role as a deacon helps him spread the good news at work.

“A lot of it is through organic conversation,” says Deacon Schmidl, 52, who was ordained in 2022. “I’m very open about being a deacon. So, when people ask, ‘What did you do this weekend,’ I can say I did a wedding on Friday night and a baptism on Sunday.”

Being a deacon draws lots of questions from co-workers, he says—Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

“It gives you that opportunity to

talk about the Church in general,” says Deacon Schmidl. “Some will tell me they’re Catholic but don’t go to Mass, so we’ll talk about that.”

“I get a lot of great questions just out of curiosity, and I love sharing the answers.”

One of his favorite questions concerns how much he gets paid as a deacon.

His answer: “Well, nothing here—but the eternal pay is great!”

(For more information on the diaconate, go to www.archindy.org/deacon or contact Deacon David Bartolowits at 317-236-1493 or dbartolowits@archindy.org.) †



Deacon Mark Schmidl



Items of faith adorn the desk, shelves and wall of Deacon Steven Tsuleff’s office at Local 12 WKRC-TV in Cincinnati on Oct. 22. (Submitted photo)

‘I carry pocket crosses. If I think it will help, I’ll give one to someone and say, “No matter what you do, hang onto the cross. Take all your problems and give it to the cross.”’

—Deacon Jerome Bessler, who works as a battalion chief for the Washington Township Avon Fire Department



Catholic leadership skills instilled in seminarian from a young age

By Sean Gallagher

ST. MEINRAD—Parish priests are called to be leaders. Sometimes within a few years of their ordination, they will be pastor of a parish.

That call to leadership is one of the reasons why priestly formation happens through the course of several years and involves many kinds of supervised ministry.

Samuel Hansen started to see what Catholic leadership looked like long before he became a seminarian.

He saw it as a student at St. Roch School and Roncalli High School, both in Indianapolis, in their teachers and in their administrators—including his father, Joseph Hansen, St. Roch’s principal when he was a student there.

“It was made clear to us explicitly at St. Roch, not just by my dad, but by every teacher there, that their job there was ministry as well as just educating,” Hansen said. “They were there to love you and attend to your faith.”

He saw Catholic leadership at home where he grew up with two younger brothers.

“It was always faith first,” Hansen recalled. “We dedicate ourselves to God in everything we do, whatever that might be. We give glory to God in the good times and in the bad. We’d have deep conversations together about the faith.”

And he’s seen it in archdiocesan priests, especially retired Father James Wilmoth, Hansen’s pastor at St. Roch for many years.

“You could sense it in every interaction he had with people he met,” Hansen said. “He just really belonged to the people of the archdiocese. He tried to give of himself to as many people as he could, to cast a wide net.”

Now in his fourth year of priestly formation and enrolled at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, Hansen, 25, is embracing in his own life the models of Catholic leadership that he’s been given.

Being drawn to a ‘sacred fraternity’

Hansen’s thoughts turned to the priesthood while he was still at St. Roch School. His discernment became more focused while at Roncalli, and he realized that, no matter what vocation to which God called him, “we are called to lay down our lives for others.”

“My search for my future in general was asking how I was supposed to do that,” Hansen said.

He found encouragement for his discernment from his fellow students at Roncalli.

“If I mentioned that I was interested in the priesthood, they were so supportive,” Hansen said. “They thought it was so cool. They’d ask me questions about it. It was an environment that encouraged it. You don’t expect reactions like that from high school kids.”

Hansen ultimately decided to become a student at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind., after graduating from Roncalli.

Soon after arriving at the all-male college, Hansen started exercising the faith-filled leadership skills he had seen growing up, getting involved in the college’s Newman center and trying “to take a lead in building a deliberate Catholic community where I could.”

In his sophomore year in college, Hansen served as the student president of the Newman center and was drawn to “getting the Gospel out to as many people as we can.”

His continued love for his faith and taking opportunities to lead others in it led Hansen by the end of his sophomore year at Wabash to discern becoming an archdiocesan seminarian with the help of two priests: Father Douglas Marcotte, an associate vocations director for the archdiocese, and Father Sean Danda, pastor of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, who then served as Hansen’s spiritual director.

“They were honest about me having thoughts about the priesthood, but not really doing anything about them,” Hansen recalled. “It didn’t seem so obvious to me until I talked to Father Danda about them.”

During that time, Hansen visited Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis.

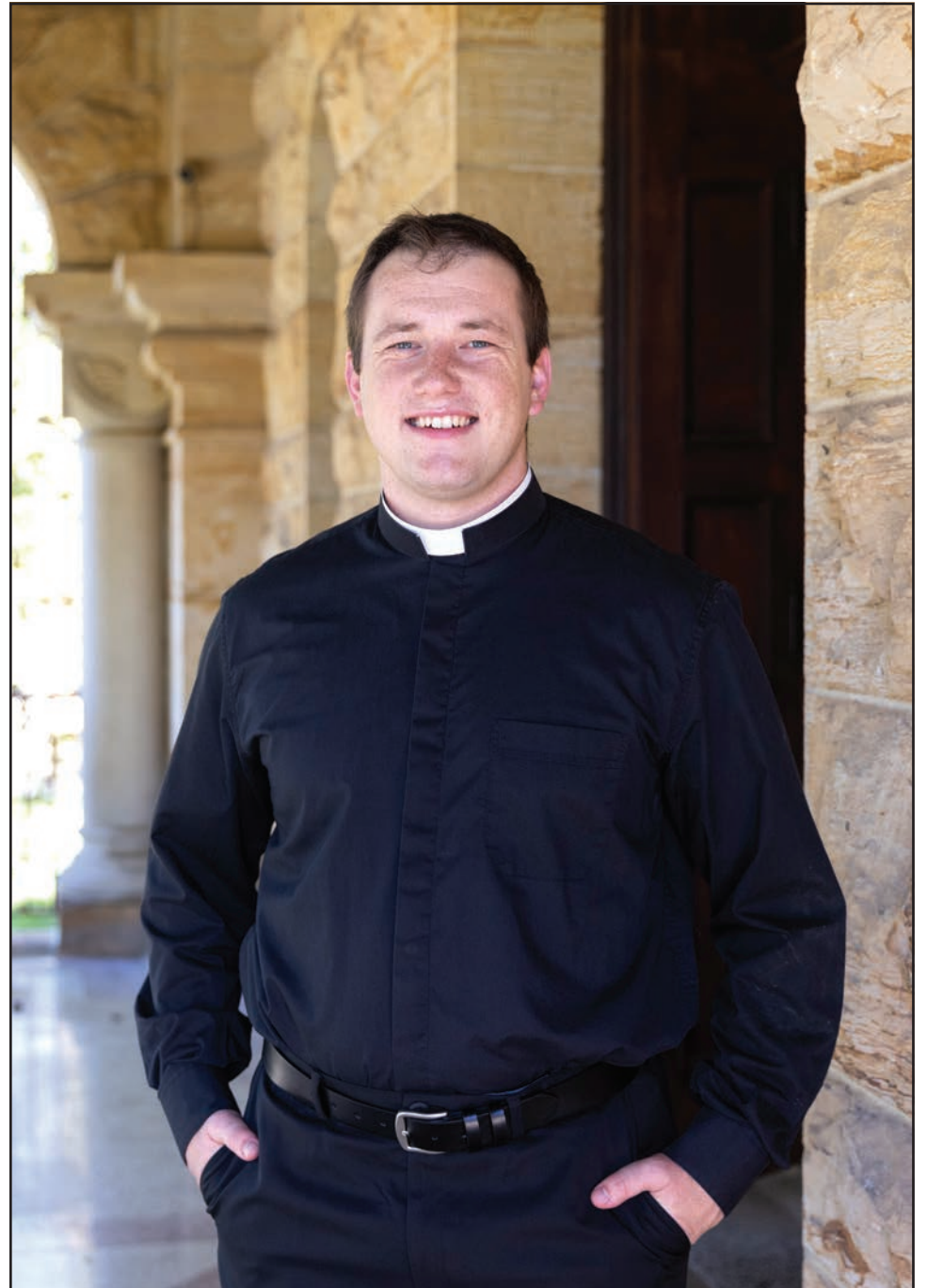
He found the fraternity among the seminarians there similar to what he had experienced at Wabash, “but under the guidance and banner of the Church.”

“A lot of what I learned in that visit was the importance of, not just fraternity, but sacred fraternity in terms of men bonding together specifically because of their faith,” Hansen said.

‘Lay it all on the line like Christ did’

In the fall of 2020, Hansen was an archdiocesan seminarian at Bishop Bruté and taking classes at nearby Marian University.

Two years later after graduating from Bishop Bruté and Marian, he began



Seminarian Samuel Hansen poses on Oct. 3 by the main entrance of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. A member of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, Hansen is in his fourth year of priestly formation as an archdiocesan seminarian. (Photos courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

priestly formation at Saint Meinrad.

During his four years as a seminarian, Hansen has come to understand with more clarity the thread of faith and leadership woven into his life from grade school to the present.

“I don’t think I knew how to articulate it back then,” he said. “But what I was trying to do was to give my life for others, not just to do a good thing for others, but to lay it all on the line like Christ did.”

“For me, priesthood has always been the answer, and I’ve kind of come to realize that.”

That realization has happened through the formation he’s received in the classes and community life at Bishop Bruté and Saint Meinrad, but also in a trip he and other seminarians made in January to the town in Guatemala where Blessed Stanley Rother ministered as an American missionary priest and died as a martyr in 1981.

It also happened in ministry in the summer of 2021 at St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County.

Father Michael Keucher, at the time pastor of St. Joseph and sacramental minister at St. Vincent, was his ministry supervisor.

“I don’t think he has ever met a stranger,” Father Keucher said of Hansen. “Sam takes a genuine interest in the people in front of him and is present to them. He is just the kind of guy people

like to be around. He’s fun, thoughtful, prayerful and just kind to everyone.

“Sam is a hard worker, but at the same time he knows how to have fun while doing it all. I don’t think he thinks ministry is work at all.”

The leadership qualities that Father Keucher saw in Hansen in 2021 were apparent to Mary Ann Chamberlin much earlier. She was his middle school social studies and religion teacher at St. Roch.

“He was just one of the kindest students that I ever had,” said Chamberlin, still a teacher at St. Roch. “He had a great sense of humor and still does. He was an outstanding student and worked very hard. He was in all the sports and did extracurricular activities.”

Chamberlin is happy to see such growth in Hansen, whom she has known since his time at St. Roch.

“He talked even back then about wanting to become a priest,” she said. “It gladdens my heart that he stayed with that. He has so many qualities that will make him a very good priest and pastor. He listens to people.

“He certainly has a servant’s heart. He also has the leadership style of leading by example.”

(For more information about archdiocesan seminarians and about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.) †



Seminarian Samuel Hansen plays soccer on Jan. 22 with young boys at Colegio Católico Padre Ablas in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. He and other seminarians visited earlier this year the town where Blessed Stanley Rother, an American missionary priest, ministered and was martyred in 1981.

‘... what I was trying to do was to give my life for others, not just to do a good thing for others, but to lay it all on the line like Christ did.’

—Seminarian Samuel Hansen



SISTER MARIA

continued from page 1A

“Everyone was very scared,” Nguyen says, her recollections aided by the memories of the adults who were in that boat. “But then what can they do? Instead, they turn to God for help in prayer.”

“The spirit of prayer and faith was so strong that, even in the midst of weakness and seasickness, all was offered up to God in faith and trust—and in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There was a spirit of, ‘It’s going to be OK. God will help us.’ And that gave us all so much courage.”

The boat that approached theirs was owned by a fisherman, who befriended the group and towed them to the nearest landing of safety—in the Philippines. Two years later, Nguyen and her family finally made it to America.

At 5 years old, she never imagined that the true journey of her life had just begun, a journey that would eventually lead her to Indiana and the life that she believes God has always wanted for her—a life of faith as a Carmelite sister.

A moment that changed a life

On the verge of her 40th birthday—November 5—Sister Maria says, “The journey out of Vietnam gave me a grand impression of God’s existence in my life and in the life of my family.”

So has the faith of her family, who settled in California upon their arrival in America.

“Throughout my journey, my parents and grandparents played a crucial role in nurturing my faith. Each night, we would gather to pray the rosary together,” she says. “And whenever our family has a need, we all ask St. Martin de Porres for his intercession. And he has never let us down.”

The prayers and petitions were all part of her family’s approach to faith, an approach that centered on a fundamental belief:

“We were all taught that this life is very temporary and that whether we live or die, everything is in God’s hands, so let us not worry,” Sister Maria says. “I know that whatever I aspire to be in life, that if I go for it and if it’s God’s will, then it will happen. But if it is not God’s will, then I might have to sit back and do some more reflection or try something else, but not to give up.”

As that belief has shaped her life, a moment from her childhood has shaped her vocation.

It happened late in her time as an elementary school student when her father drove her home one day. Getting stuck in a traffic jam, she looked out the window and saw a small child walking with her grandfather.

“As they were walking past our car, I could see the big backpack was getting too heavy for the little girl, so her grandfather took the pink backpack off her and swung it on his back. And with the other hand, he pulled out a dinner roll from his pocket for the little girl to eat. Her face was full of joy.

“As they passed by our car, I suddenly felt the love of God the Father on all his children. Tears rolled down my eyes, because I was so touched by what I saw, but more so by what I felt inside of me. It was God loving me at every moment of life, and it was his reminder that he is with me.

“It was a moment of conversion I guess, but ever since then, I felt God’s love calling me to follow him. God’s love called me to pursue religious life so that I can remain in that love which gives me strength and courage in life.”

Yet, just like the journey of her family leaving Vietnam, her path to religious life took time.

Searching for a home for the soul, for a place to belong

After graduating from college in California, she worked at a shelter for homeless families before applying

to become a Salesian Sister. But after a year of living and working with that order, she realized it wasn’t her calling.

Two years later, a friend told her about a monastic experience at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute. That weekend in 2014 touched Sister Maria’s soul and led her to request living in the community, even as she struggled with the thought of leaving her family in California.

There were other struggles, too. She says moving into the monastery “was like entering into a new world.”

“I had to put a stop to some of my bad habits like talking too much. I took corrections terribly hard, and I was sensitive, so it made me feel unworthy and discouraged at times. Worst of all, we were given permission to call home only once a month. And we were given only half an hour to talk on the phone. I missed my family so much, especially my mom and dad.”

At the same time, she increasingly felt the sense that she was meant to be part of the Carmelite community.

She began caring for the community’s orchard filled with blueberry bushes, fruit trees and a flower garden. She learned about woodworking, plumbing and fixing the heating and cooling systems. Most of all, she increasingly embraced the spirit and purpose of the community.

“Our ministry is prayer for the Church, for the missionary, for those defending the Church, and for the evangelizers of the faith.

“We pray for the suffering people who go through life with one trial after the next and for all the sick who have recommended themselves to our prayers. I believe that, somehow, our intercession is going to bring some relief to the needs of others. God is so good to us, and he never abandons us, especially during difficulties.”

On the feast of the Assumption in 2018, she made her first profession of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, consecrating her life to God.

“This was a moment of immense joy for me, as my entire family and community friends gathered in the chapel to pray for me,” she says. “I felt great joy to have found a home with the Carmelite sisters. It was a blessing to be able to find a home for your soul, a place to belong and to do what you love to do—to give praise and thanks to Almighty God for his love and mercy.”

Yet as she embraced a new home with the Carmelites, she was also tugged by what was happening in her family’s home in California.

‘My mother gave me the biggest smile’

“After my mother attended my first profession of vows, she started her first treatment of dialysis. From that day onward, her health declined little by little,” Sister Maria recalls. “It was very difficult for me to see her being so sick and not be able to be at home to comfort her and to care for her.”



As Discalced Carmelite Sister Maria Nguyen professes her solemn vows on July 29, 2023, Carmelite Sister Anne Brackmann, left, and Carmelite Mother Mary Joseph Nguyen pin a flower crown onto her new black veil. In the Discalced Carmelite order, Sister Maria notes, the wreath of flowers symbolizes “the glory to come to those who accept espousals with the crucified and risen Lord.” (Submitted photo)



Carmelite Sister Maria Nguyen shares a moment of joy with her parents, father Oanh Nguyen and mother Sang Bui. (Submitted photo)

During the next few years, she was allowed to make one trip home when her mother had surgery to help with her hearing—and another visit as her mother was nearing death.

“My mother gave me the biggest smile when she saw me at home. We hugged each other and didn’t want to let go. My mother had wanted to see me before going home to God. She made sure to tell me that she was so proud of me. Hearing her say that gave me so much courage.

“On October 29, 2022, I was holding my mother’s hand at home with my father, sister, nephew and niece when my mother suddenly opened her eyes and breathed her last very peacefully. My first profession of vows gave my mother such joy that she was ready to go home to God. Her journey was complete seeing me in my Carmelite habit.

“Nine months after my mother’s death, my family flew from California to Terre Haute to witness my solemn profession.”

On that day—July 29, 2023—Sister Maria’s commitment to God became as complete as the trust she put in her mother when they stepped on that boat 37 years ago.

As she looks back on the journey of her life and her vocation to this point, Sister Maria thinks about how far she has come since she was a 3-year-old girl whose family wanted a better life for her.

“I was a little girl on a boat heading toward America, and here I am giving witness to God’s goodness in my life and in the life of the Church,” she says. “The idea of leaving Vietnam was to give the children and grandchildren the opportunity to discover freely what God is calling them to do—and to go for it with full confidence.

“Here I am living my dream, a dream that God has for me.”

(For more information about the Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph in Terre Haute, visit heartsawake.org.) †



On the day of her solemn vows—July 29, 2023—Discalced Carmelite Sister Maria Nguyen celebrates with three of her childhood friends, Tiffany Tran, left, Lina Thai and Mary Pham. (Submitted photo)



PRIEST

continued from page 2B

prayer,” said Sprague, who continues to serve at St. Teresa, as well as at St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora. “You could sense his commitment to his prayer life and the sacramental life of the Church. He brought all ages into that. He was very convicted on the importance of the sacrament of reconciliation.”

She also saw his dedication to leading the Batesville Deanery faith community’s youths closer to Christ and the Church by taking them to the annual national March for Life in Washington, D.C., and the National Catholic Youth Conferences held in Indianapolis.

His commitment to the parish’s youths also took him and them together halfway around the world after one teen suggested a mission trip to Africa in a brainstorming conversation during a youth group meeting.

Without hesitation, Father Kovatch gave the green light to the idea. Sprague tried to warn the pastor about that later.

“After the meeting, I was like, ‘You know, you just can’t say OK. They’ll remember this,’” she recalled.

The teens may have remembered his words, but so did Father Kovatch. He also remembered that a friend from his time in seminary was from Uganda.

They hadn’t been in contact much since both were ordained priests, but the suggestion of service in Africa soon got them reconnected and ultimately led to Father Kovatch leading 17 mission trips to Uganda.

“He truly jumped all in,” said Sprague, who took part in the first mission trip.

“There was not a reservation. You have to trust that there’s the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He allowed himself to be moved in those directions.”

The ministry she saw Father Kovatch do in Uganda was consistent with what she had witnessed in Bright.

“There was instantly a deep love that



Father Thomas Kovatch, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, sprinkles holy water on the site of a new dormitory for St. Jerome Primary School in Kapeeka, Uganda, on July 4, 2018. The parishioners of St. Charles Borromeo raised \$125,000 for the project. Father Kovatch has led 17 mission trips to the east African country. (Submitted photo by Ashley Barnett)

you could see from him for the people,” Sprague said. “His love just poured out. Just because he said yes.”

For his part, Father Kovatch put the focus on the love he’s experienced from the people of Uganda.

“The love they have is immense,” he said. “We don’t do [ministry] to get the feeling back. But, when we get that back from the people, then I think it’s God saying, ‘Hey, keep doing that.’”

‘I want to be like Father Tom’

Noah Jager was a fifth-grader at St. Charles Borromeo School when Father Kovatch became his pastor in 2011. Now a recent graduate of the United States Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., and a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army doing graduate studies in London, Jager’s connection to his pastor stays strong far from his Bloomington home.

“No matter if I am having the best of times or the worst of times,” Jager said, “Father Tom has been someone that I always wanted to call.”

Jager’s bond with his pastor came through Father Kovatch’s words and witness.

“He teaches about Jesus in a way that is joyful,” Jager said. “He shows what Christ can do for you. That’s a way that God works through Father Tom, bringing joy through teaching the faith. The values he gave are something that I want to live up to. I want to be like Father Tom in a lot of ways.”

Jager said that his desire to give of himself in service in the Army was inspired by his pastor’s self-giving, first as a Marine and then as a priest.

While such high ideals were appealing to a young man like Jager, he soon learned at West Point that it involves a lot of sacrifice and hardship in balancing difficult classes and the demands of Army training.

“In those times of struggle, I would call Father Tom,” Jager recalled. “He would say to ask God for strength and that sometimes God would put me in difficult situations so I can come out stronger on the other side. With that strength, I can help people in the future.”

Creating ‘a culture ... that values the priesthood and religious life’

Father Kovatch has helped lead another young man from St. Charles to give of himself.

Seminarian Casey Deal, a member of St. Charles, sees power in the priestly life and ministry of his pastor.

“Father Tom loves being a priest, which can be contagious to other young men,” said Deal, who is currently serving in a pastoral internship at St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. “Father Tom has created a culture at St. Charles that values the priesthood and religious life, which makes the possibility of a priestly vocation a

viable option for young men.”

That culture has helped Deal in his own discernment and priestly formation during the past three years.

“I am grateful for Father Tom’s support as I discern a vocation to the priesthood,” Deal said. “He is always willing to get together to talk about the priesthood and seminary. His spiritual support is a tremendous blessing as well. Every Mass he celebrates, he prays by name for the seminarians and those in religious formation who he has a connection with.”

‘The joy is immense’

While there are people from Bright to Bloomington to Uganda who have been blessed by Father Kovatch’s Christ-like ministry, he is quick to acknowledge how much God has given to him in his vocation—and how much he might be offering to other possible future priests.

“As a priest, we’re invited into places where people can’t normally go,” he said about bringing God’s mercy to people in confession. “Even though there’s trauma and the hard stuff about it, all of these people have invited me even deeper into their lives. Through their hurt, I think they take on what the priest kind of exudes, that this isn’t our home. We’re on a journey toward our true home.”

Being St. Charles’ pastor for 13 years has also opened Father Kovatch to the love of its parishioners in ways that continue to grow.

“They’ve invited me into their families,” he said. “Whenever I hear someone say that priesthood is lonely, it’s only because you allow it to be that way. I could be with somebody every night of the week if I wanted to. The people are thirsting for time with a priest.”

For men considering that God might be calling them to the priesthood, Father Kovatch encourages them to be open to the invitation.

“Don’t be afraid of it,” he said. “God will give us joy and happiness when we do what he’s calling us to do. The joy that comes from being a priest is so deep and profound that, unless you are a priest, you don’t know what it feels like. The joy is immense.”

(For more information about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HearGodsCall.com.) †



Father Thomas Kovatch, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington, prays the Divine Mercy Chaplet during eucharistic adoration on Oct. 9 in his parish’s church. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

2024-2025 Seminarists

VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE



Deacon Thomas Day '25
Saint Meinrad Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis



Deacon Liam Hosty '25
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
St. Barnabas, Indianapolis



Deacon Isaac Siefker '25
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. John the Apostle,
Bloomington



Casey Deal '28
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Charles Borromeo,
Bloomington



Kristofer Garlitch '26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mary, North Vernon



Samuel Hansen '26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Roch, Indianapolis

CONFIGURATION STAGE



Timothy Khuishing '26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist,
Indianapolis



Aaron Noll '26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Bartholomew,
Columbus



Randy Schneider '28
Saint Meinrad Seminary
All Saints, Dearborn
County



Nathan Thompson '28
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Ann, Jennings County



Khaing Thu '26
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist,
Indianapolis



Lance Tony '27
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Simon the Apostle,
Indianapolis *Co-sponsored with
the Diocese of Palayamkottai

DISCIPLESHIP STAGE



**Emiliano Enriquez
De Alva '29**
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Ambrose, Seymour



Antonio Harbert '31
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Joseph, Shelbyville



Aidan Huersperger '29
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Joseph, Jennings County



Seth Hickey '29
Saint Meinrad Seminary
Mary Queen of Peace,
Danville



Abraham Hudepohl '31
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Nicholas, Sunman



Nathan Huynh '31
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
New Albany



Lucas LaRosa '30
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist,
Indianapolis



Robert McKay '29
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Ann, Indianapolis



William Rees '31
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Nicholas, Sunman



Joshua Russell '31
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
Holy Family, New Albany



Todd Seiler '30
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Mary, Aurora



Noah Sherman '29
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Mary, North Vernon

PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE



Levi Wojtalik '29
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis



Jack Fraley '32
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
St. Gabriel, Connersville



John Fritch '31
Saint Meinrad Seminary
St. Martin of Tours,
Martinsville



Adam Hermesch '32
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
All Saints, Dearborn County



Dominic Pavey '32
Bishop Simon Bruté Seminary
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis



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RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION

2024-2025



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vocations@archindy.org



Sr. Emily Tekolste, SP
Sisters of Providence,
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
St. Anthony, Indianapolis
Temporary professed



Sr. Jessica Vitente, SP
Sisters of Providence,
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Temporary professed



Sr. Leslie Dao, SP
Sisters of Providence,
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Temporary professed



Sr. Stephanie Marie Rivas, SP
Sisters of Providence,
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods
Novice



Sr. Mary Amata Naville, OSF
Sisters of St. Francis of
Perpetual Adoration
St. Mary, Navilleton
Temporary professed



Sr. Mary Peter Ruschke, OSF
Sisters of St. Francis of
Perpetual Adoration
Batesville
Temporary professed



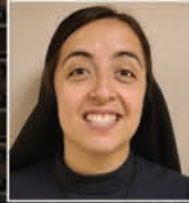
Miss Christina Sheehan
Sisters of St. Francis of
Perpetual Adoration
Holy Rosary, Indianapolis
Postulant



Sr. Israel Mercy Magnificat
Sisters of Life
St. John the Evangelist,
Indianapolis
Temporary professed



Maureen Pisani
The Sisters of St. Francis,
Oldenburg
St. Vincent de Paul/
St. Joseph, Shelbyville
Postulant



Sr. Maria Guadalupe Figueroa, RSM
Religious Sisters of Mercy
St. Anthony, Indianapolis
Temporary professed



Sr. Magdalene Marie Schafer
Daughters of the Holy Mary
of Sacred Heart of Jesus
St. Lawrence, Indianapolis
Temporary professed



Sr. Mary Lily Among Thorns McCann, SSVN
Servants of the Lord and
the Virgin of Matará
All Saints, Dearborn
County
Temporary professed



Sr. Mary Paul Callahan, FSGM
Sisters of St. Francis of the
Martyr St. George
St. Joseph University Parish,
Terre Haute
Junior professed sister



Sr. Amada Agnes
Missionaries of Charity
St. Michael, Brookville
Postulant



Sr. Maria Gemma Barnett, SOLT
Society of Our Lady of
the Most Holy Trinity
St. Charles Borromeo,
Bloomington
Temporary professed



Sr. Katelyn Noll
Nashville Dominican
Sisters of St. Cecilia
Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
New Albany
Postulant



Kristin Foresman
Mercedarian Sisters of
the Blessed Sacrament
St. Mark, Indianapolis
Novice



Br. Gregory Morris, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed



Br. Isaac Levering, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed



Br. Jude Romero-Olivas, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Temporary professed



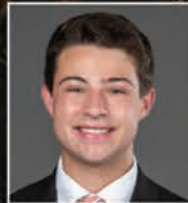
Joshua Brahm
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Novice



Owen Meredith
Saint Meinrad Archabbey
St. Meinrad, IN
Novice



Br. Benjamin Sasin, CSC
Congregation of Holy Cross,
United States Province of
Priests and Brothers
St. John the Evangelist,
Indianapolis
Temporary professed



Josh Amodeo
Congregation of Holy Cross,
United States Province of
Priests and Brothers
SS. Francis and Clare,
Greenwood
Novice



Br. Alberic Henry, OCSO
Abbey of Gethsemani
Our Lady of the
Greenwood, Greenwood
Temporary professed



Ben Jansen, SJ
Society of Jesus -
Midwest Jesuits
SS. Francis and Clare,
Greenwood
Philosophy studies



Taylor Fulkerson, SJ
Society of Jesus -
Midwest Jesuits
St. Mary, Lanesville
Theology



Diaconate ordination



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson ritually lays hands on seminarian Thomas Day during an Oct. 26 Mass at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad. Day and seminarian Isaac Siefker were ordained transitional deacons during the liturgy. They, along with transitional deacon Liam Hosty, are expected to be ordained priests for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis next June. (Photos courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson ritually gives a Book of the Gospels to newly ordained transitional Deacon Isaac Siefker during the ordination Mass. Seminarian Khaing Thu, center, assists during the liturgy.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson poses with transitional deacons Thomas Day, left, and Isaac Siefker after the ordination Mass.

2024-2025 Seminarians & Religious in Formation Prayer Card

Please pray for the following individuals and intentions on the corresponding day of the month.

1. Pope Francis
2. Archbishop Charles C. Thompson
3. Deacon Thomas Day
4. Deacon Liam Hosty
5. Deacon Isaac Siefker
6. Kristofer Garlitch
7. Samuel Hansen
8. Timothy Khuishing
9. Aaron Noll
10. Khaing Thu
11. Lance Tony / Sr. Emily Tekolste, SP
12. Randy Schneider / Sr. Mary Amata Naville, OSF
13. Nathan Thompson / Sr. Mary Peter Ruschke, OSF
14. Casey Deal / Christina Sheehan
15. Emiliano Enriquez De Alva / Sr. Israel Mercy Magnificat, S.V.
16. Aidan Hauerperger / Maureen Pisani
17. Seth Hickey / Sr. Maria Guadalupe Figueroa, RSM
18. Robert McKay / Sr. Magdalene Marie Schafer
19. Noah Sherman / Sr. Mary Lily among Thorns McCann, SSVM
20. Levi Wojtalik / Sr. Mary Paul Callahan, FSGM
21. Lucas LaRosa / Sr. Amanda Agnes
22. Todd Seiler / Sr. Maria Gemma Barnett, SOLT
23. Antonio Harbert / Sr. Mary Francis Noll
24. Abraham Hudepohl / Kristin Foresman
25. Nathan Huynh / Br. Benjamin Sasin, CSC
26. William Rees / Josh Amodeo
27. Joshua Russell / Br. Alberic Henry, OCSO
28. Jack Fraley / Br. Ben Jensen, SJ
29. John Fritch / Br. Taylor Fulkerson, SJ
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THE EUCHARIST

HEART OF VOCATIONS



2024-2025

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Purgatory purifies souls and readies them for God in heaven

By Paul Thigpen

(OSV News)—“You ... must be perfect,” Jesus insisted, “as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Without such perfect holiness, Scripture says, “no one will see the Lord [in heaven]” (Heb 12:14), because “nothing unclean shall enter it” (Rv 21:27). But how many of us will have become perfect by the time we die, making us ready for heaven?

If we haven’t yet arrived at perfect holiness, does God just give up on us when we die? Or will he simply bypass our free wills to make us instantly perfect when we die, without our cooperation? He certainly doesn’t operate that way in this life.

Instead, the Catholic Church teaches, after someone has died in friendship with God, the Lord will bring to completion the process of making that person holy, of purifying that soul, which he had already begun in this life. And that process is what we call purgatory.

Why is it God’s ultimate intention for us to become perfect? God wants us to live forever in friendship with him, and he himself is completely holy—without sin or weakness of any kind. So, to see God face-to-face in heaven, and to know, love, and enjoy him there fully forever, we must be like him.

Heaven simply wouldn’t be heaven unless those who live there are perfected. If we were to bring along with us the sins and weaknesses we have in this life, heaven would be just as full of troubles as our life on Earth—troubles that would last for eternity. Such a fate would be more like hell than heaven.

Some will ask: Didn’t Christ die to forgive us our sins and save us? Yes! But even those who have escaped the penalty of hell, an eternity without God, find that sin has countless other consequences.

The forgiveness of sins has to do with the remission of guilt—and by guilt we mean the damage to the relationship between God and the sinner that results from sin.

When we receive God’s forgiveness, he cancels our guilt in the sense that he lays aside our offense against him, against his goodness and holiness. He chooses not to let the sin come between us, to keep us apart. He restores our friendship with him so that we won’t spend our eternity alienated from him—that is, an eternity in hell.

But guilt is by no means the only consequence of sin. Sin also disorders our souls. It injures others. It leaves us overly attached to things we have chosen to love more than we love God.

If we are to live with God forever, then repairs and reparation are necessary—that is, we must be healed (repairs), and we must make amends (reparation). If we’re selfish, we must learn to love. If we’re deceitful, we must learn to tell the truth. If we’re addicted, we must break the addictions. If we’re bitter, we must forgive.

This process of repair and reparation doesn’t take



Father C. Ryan McCarthy, pastor of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, leads Catholics on Nov. 5, 2022, in his parish’s eighth annual Indulgence Walk through Holy Cross and St. Joseph cemeteries in Indianapolis. Praying for the souls of the faithful departed is a Catholic practice rooted in Scripture and tradition dating back to the earliest days of the Church. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

place instantaneously by some divine action—not in this life, and not in the next. By its very nature, it requires not only our consent, but also our cooperation.

Consider this analogy: Suppose a driver injures himself and totals another person’s car in a collision because of his willful recklessness. As the ambulance arrives at the hospital, he expresses remorse for his misbehavior. In response, the other driver forgives him—that is, the other driver chooses to let go of the personal offense and not hold it against him, not seek to take him to court and sue him, or not exact revenge in other ways.

Nevertheless, other consequences of the reckless driver’s sin must still be dealt with. His broken bones must be set. The wrecked cars must be paid for. His driver’s license might even be suspended until he successfully completes a course that trains drivers to be responsible.

The process will not be pleasant. Having broken bones set is painful. Paying for a wrecked car is costly. Learning to change lifelong habits is wearying.

Even so, the process is restorative—it is a matter of both mercy (the repairs) and justice (the reparation). In the end, the reckless driver, by submitting to the process and cooperating with it, will be a new person.

The truth is that we’ve all wrecked our lives, and the lives of others, to one degree or another. Whether in this life or the next, however, God doesn’t bypass our free will to fix the situation, as if we were robots to be rewired.

Instead, we undergo a process to undo what we have done: paying our debts, letting go of whatever binds us, straightening out whatever is crooked within us, learning to “drive” right.

Is purgatory painful? The biblical texts that have traditionally been interpreted as allusions to purgatory certainly make it sound as if it’s painful. Consider St. Paul’s words about purging “fire” (see 1 Cor 3:10-15) and Jesus’ warning about “prison” (Mt 5:25-26).

The great teachers of the Church through the ages who have written about purgatory seem to be largely in agreement that it is extremely painful. This conclusion should not surprise us. After all, even in this life, the process we must endure to be purged of the consequences of sin is a painful one.

Like metal with impurities, we must be put through a refiner’s fire. Like a patient with a cancerous growth, we must have the growth cut away or cauterized. It hurts, but our healing requires it. God uses painful adversity in this life to purify us. Purgatory is simply a continuation of that painful trial, presumably more intense and concentrated.

Nevertheless, we should take consolation in the teaching of St. Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510) in her *Treatise on Purgatory*. She insisted that the souls in purgatory, though they suffer terribly, are more focused on God than they are on their own sufferings. Despite the pain, they also have marvelous joy. They know that

they are nearing the end of their journey to heaven and entering there is assured.

Think of the excruciating pain a mother must endure in the process of childbirth. Yet her pain is accompanied by great joy over the child who is coming into the world. The purgatorial process, we might say, is like the “birth canal” through which we enter heaven.

The truth about purgatory is affirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see #1030–1032) and is a defined dogma of the Church, part of the solemn teaching of three ecumenical councils: Lyons II (1274), Florence (1439) and Trent (1545–63). This teaching has its roots in Scripture and ancient tradition, though the word purgatory doesn’t appear in Scripture.

Any biblical or historical reference to God’s people praying, making sacrifices or performing other actions on behalf of the dead assumes that a purging process exists after death, and that our actions on behalf of the dead can help them through it. Actions on behalf of those who are in hell would be futile, and actions on behalf of those already in heaven would be unnecessary.

Consider these actions on behalf of the dead as noted in the following Scripture: 2 Maccabees 12:44–46; Sirach 7:33; 1 Corinthians 15:29–30; 2 Timothy 1:16–18 (apparently, the man being prayed for here is dead).

The ancient Jews prayed and made sacrifices for the dead to help them be purged and forgiven. Early Christians did the same, long before the New Testament books were written or placed in the canon by the Catholic Church.

Some of the oldest liturgies include prayers for the dead, and many of the earliest Christian tombstones bear inscriptions asking for prayers for the person buried there.

Catholics have never lost that belief and the accompanying practices. The month of November we are now entering has been for centuries and continues to be a time for the Church to focus in a special way on prayers for our faithful departed who are experiencing the purification of purgatory.

Scripture simply reflects that ancient, consistent belief and practice through the “hints” of purgatory it provides, though the term itself came into use only later to describe the process Christians had always known to be a reality.

Of course, this process has already begun in the lives of the faithful on Earth. Through acts of penance, and through accepting in faith the inescapable sufferings of the present life, we can be purged of sin’s effects and grow in holiness. But most of us will still need to complete the process of purging away the consequences of sin.

Once we understand the nature and purpose of purgatory, we will welcome the reality. It’s an expression of God’s mercy. In his desire to save us, he loved us enough to send his Son to die for us, and he loves us too much to leave us the way we are.

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



A floral rendition of Michelangelo’s “Last Judgment” decorates an area outside St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on June 29. The artwork was made by an Italian floral association. The Church teaches that people who die in friendship with God, but who still have the effect of sin on their souls, are purified after death in a process called purgatory. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

This 'Old House,' Catholic edition, bring Minnesota mom 'the greatest joy'

There was a time when Katherine Louise DeGroot didn't consider quiet suburbs or small towns. She was a city girl, thank you very much, and it suited her work as a nanny and a photographer.



Katherine was always on the go, hustling to book the next gig, racing to beat the clock. It was exciting.

It took a beautiful house to lure Katherine from Minneapolis to Stillwater, Minn., an old town on the St. Croix River. Perched on a hill beside a maple tree, the house beckoned to her: an 1872 Gothic Revival Victorian with a towering roof, pointed arches, decorative gables and a hydrangea-lined front porch.

Katherine swooned over the windows. "Some of them have that antique glass in them so that, when the light filters in, it feels exceptional," she said.

The price was a stretch for Katherine and her husband, Seth, who at the time were parents to a 10-month-old. They were aware of other interested parties. But they put in an offer, which was accepted, and financially they made it work.

It was time to leave the city behind.

Slowly the little family made the big house their own. They repainted it, replacing the dark green walls with soft blues, greens and pinks. They lined the nursery with

creamy floral wallpaper that feels like the endpapers of an old children's book. They filled the house with thrifted finds and hand-me-downs: a pine chest, an antique pie safe-turned-wardrobe, a vintage cradle. And they grew their family there. Katherine gave birth to three children in the house, bringing their count to six.

As Katherine cared for the house, the house cared for her. Homemaking reshaped her heart—slowing her pace, softening her edges, guiding her parenting and, ultimately, leading her back to the Catholic Church.

A reversion was underway. The faith of her childhood looked different now. More beautiful, more true.

"It was clear that the house was special, yes, and it was going to be part of our faith journey," said Katherine, who is now 37. "That's what it's all about."

The parish on their street, St. Michael's Catholic Church—nearly visible from their home—has become central to their family. Living liturgically and seasonally has become the heartbeat of daily life.

"Time moves slower here," she said. "It's been really special to embrace our life here. I've felt so creative. The absence of the hustle didn't remove my creativity. The slowness and the quiet have invigorated it."

Her senses have been reawakened. "When it rains," she said, "the house feels like a jewel box. It has this special feeling—and it has to do with the windows."

A history minor in college, Katherine has delighted in researching their house, which is referred to as "the Castle House" for its builder, John Castle, a state senator. He is something of a patron saint to Katherine, who framed his picture in their dining room.

"I feel like there's a blessing from him over our family," she said. They even used his nickname, James, for their second-born's middle name.

"Taking care of an old house feels like a calling and a responsibility," Katherine said. "We've had to do expensive repairs. Our hot water went out in the winter once. But we want to be wise stewards and add to the house and honor its dignity, just like we would to anything given to us from God, like our children or our Earth or a beautiful gift from someone."

Generosity is part of stewardship—which for Katherine, means practicing hospitality. Every Sunday, she and Seth cook a big dinner for family members and friends from church. And she shares the house with strangers on Instagram (@katherinelouisedegroot), which she considers a ministry.

Creating this life with her family is deeply fulfilling, Katherine said. "It's the greatest joy of my life."

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.) †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Catholic-Lutheran dialogue is building bridges across faith traditions

(The following column is written by Anders Kilmark. A member of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis, he serves on the Advisory Board of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. A child of a mixed religion marriage—one of his parents was Catholic, the other was Lutheran—Anders is married to his wife Cheryl, a Methodist. He writes this piece from his lived ecumenical perspective.)



Halloween is always a fun day of costumes, candy and scary movies. Catholics and many mainline Protestants have another reason to celebrate: saints, both canonized and in our own families.

But for Protestants, the day has another special significance.

This year, Oct. 31 marked the 507th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. That day, Martin Luther is said to have nailed his 95 theses to the door of All Saints' Church (also referred to as Castle Church) in Wittenberg, Germany.

What started as a sincere effort to bring reform from within the Church tragically led to a splintering of the Church.

The Reformers disagreed with the Catholic Church on many topics—indulgences, the role of Mary, the canon of Scripture.

But most fundamental was a disagreement on how sinful man is made right with God: justification.

How are we saved? Is it by faith alone?

Or must we also live a life marked by Christian charity, filled with good works? Can we lose our salvation during the course of our lives through sin? Or are the baptized eternally secure in their salvation?

Bitter division on these questions led to mutual condemnations between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Christians who once worshiped together began to see each other as enemies.

But our story would not end there. At the Last Supper, Christ prayed for his Church that they would remain one as he and the Father are one. And Christ's prayer will not be denied.

The 20th century saw significant change in the hearts of Christians worldwide. The Holy Spirit inflamed the hearts of the faithful to re-engage one another. For

Roman Catholics, the Second Vatican Council urged ecumenical dialogue.

But if Western Christianity was to overcome the centuries-old division, the question of justification would need to be addressed.

Fittingly, healing began where the wound began—between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. Through decades of studying and reading Scripture together, it became increasingly clear that the differences between them were more about emphasis than substance. They were not so divided after all.

In 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church published a document called the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" (JDDJ).

In it, they boldly and joyfully declared that Catholics and Lutherans of the federation could now articulate a common understanding of this "first and chief article of the Christian religion" (as Luther called it). Fittingly, each tradition retained its particular emphasis. And the mutual condemnations of the 16th century no longer applied.

This was just the beginning. In 2006, the World Methodist Council officially joined the JDDJ. The Anglican Consultative Council would join 10 years later, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches would sign on the next summer.

As a result, 75% of Christians worldwide by way of denomination affiliation are now united by the JDDJ. And there is a push within some Baptist circles to join in the future.

In just a couple dozen pages, the JDDJ accomplished a significant ecumenical achievement. It moved Christians in a concrete way toward healing. Furthermore, the work it took to produce the JDDJ provided a now-proven method of fruitful dialogue.

This Halloween marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the JDDJ.

As Christians, let us use this occasion to take time to read the declaration. As we read, let us remember and mourn the things that still divide us. And let us take courage in the Spirit

whose power to gather and unite us is greater than our divisions.

May we learn from the example of the JDDJ. May we commit ourselves to the hard work of cooperation with God's grace so that Christ's prayer for our unity may be fulfilled in us!

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

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Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Take time to be grateful for God's shower of blessings and gifts in your life

A friend of mine was sharing the number of bumper stickers and yard signs that he had observed with one simple word ... "Blessed."



Wouldn't it be wonderful if a person could spend as much time and energy focused on the blessings in life rather than that next purchase, or possibly obsessing over all of the issues in life that aren't to their liking?

In this season of Thanksgiving, I offer the following challenge for you: every time that you say the blessing prayer before meals, can you truly reflect on the words that you are

saying? "Bless us O Lord ..."

Bless each of us that seeks God's will in our lives. Bless all of our family, neighbors, co-workers, friends ... everyone.

But especially bless me or this group that has gathered here to share this brief moment of nourishment ... "and these thy gifts ..."

Everything that we are and will ever have is a gift from God. It is not only about the food on the table before us, but also an attitude of thankfulness for all that we have.

The image that recently came to me is that I live in a shower (like rain) of God's gifts. Not all of these "drops" will hit me, but there are plenty for myself as well as for all of my loved ones ... "which we are about to receive ..."

This process of living in God's shower is endless. In only a moment or an hour or just a day, there will be more of them! It is an ongoing process. God's shower is tsunami-like.

Take just a small moment to look around you. Did you ever imagine that you would have the wonderful

life that you have been given? ... "from thy bounty through Christ our Lord." God's storehouse of gifts is endless!

In St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, we read, "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard ... what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9).

If each of us is blessed enough to have food for this Thanksgiving, when we sit down to pray the blessing over the meal, let us each be more reflective of the words that we are saying and continue to cultivate an attitude of eternal thankfulness for all that we have been given. Now, do you feel blessed?

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

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, November 3, 2024

- Deuteronomy 6:2-6
- Hebrews 7:23-28
- Mark 12:28b-34

The Book of Deuteronomy is the source of the first reading for Mass this weekend. Among the first five books of the Bible, Deuteronomy contains for Jews the basic rule of life, as it is the basic revelation of God about how to live well.



Moses is central in these books. He led the Hebrews from Egypt, where

they had been enslaved and oppressed, and guided them across the stark Sinai Peninsula to the promised land.

He led them not because they had chosen him or because he somehow had assumed the role of leadership, but rather because God commissioned him.

Moses not only led the people to their own land—the land God had promised them—he also taught them how to live according to God’s law. Again, the teachings of Moses were not merely the thoughts of Moses himself, but the very wisdom of God conveyed to humanity by Moses.

In this reading, Moses, speaking for God, reveals the central reality of existence. God, the Creator, is everything. Moses, still speaking for God, further reveals that God is one. God is a person.

For its second reading, the Church this weekend offers us a selection from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The loveliest and most powerful symbols and understandings of God and virtue in the ancient Hebrew tradition gleam in the verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The exact circumstances of its composition are unknown, but it was clearly first intended for an audience very aware of the traditions and beliefs of Judaism at the time of Jesus.

For the ancient Jews, from the time that Aaron, the brother of Moses, served as high priest, the central figure in Jewish society was the high priest. This person’s role extended far beyond officiating at religious ceremonies. He represented God. He also spoke for the people in

acknowledging God as supreme.

This epistle sees Jesus as the great, eternal high priest. While the image of Caiaphas and previous high priests was less than lustrous among Jews of the time of Jesus, because the high priests allowed themselves to be tools of the Roman oppressors, the great high priest envisioned by Hebrews, Jesus, is holy and perfect.

As a human, the Lord represented all humanity. As God, the sacrifice of Jesus was perfect.

St. Mark’s Gospel furnishes the last reading. A scribe, an expert in Jewish religion, asked Jesus to capsule the commandments. It was an understandable question. Jewish law, all seen as emanating from God, had 613 such commandments.

Responding, Jesus drew upon two divine statutes well-known to the audience, one from Deuteronomy, the other from Leviticus. This mere technique situated the Lord in the tradition of revelation and confirmed that he was no imposter. He was God’s spokesman.

Reflection

The Church is moving forward to the Solemnity of Christ the King, celebrated only a few weeks from now. In this feast, the Church will conclude its liturgical year and close its yearlong lesson, given us in part each of the 52 Sundays when we hear God’s word and pray.

As it approaches the year’s end, the Church, a good teacher, summarizes its teachings, declaring that God is everything. Ignoring God, disobeying God, bring chaos and doom. God guides us to peace and fulfillment in life, as he guided the Hebrews to freedom. He sends Jesus as our teacher and leader, as once Moses led the Hebrews.

In a few days, Americans will choose the 538 electors who, in late December, will select the next president. Voters will elect new members of Congress, who, in January, will begin to make the laws for our country.

It is time to place God at the center of decisions. God is love. He is perfect. †

Daily Readings

Monday, November 4

St. Charles Borromeo, bishop
Philippians 2:1-4
Psalm 131:1-3
Luke 14:12-14

Tuesday, November 5

Philippians 2:5-11
Psalm 22:26-32
Luke 14:15-24

Wednesday, November 6

Philippians 2:12-18
Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
Luke 14:25-33

Thursday, November 7

Philippians 3:3-8a
Psalm 105:2-7
Luke 15:1-10

Friday, November 8

Philippians 3:17-4:1
Psalm 122:1-5
Luke 16:1-8

Saturday, November 9

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12
Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9
1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17
John 2:13-22

Sunday, November 10

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Kings 17:10-16
Psalm 146:7-10
Hebrews 9:24-28
Mark 12:38-44
or Mark 12:41-44

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Church teaching related to gender theory based on Scripture, tradition, science

These days we hear so much about “trans people.” I expect our Church is against the practice, but I really have never heard anything official about the Church’s position. What does our Church say about it? Thank you.



That, with transgender issues being a relatively new phenomenon in modern society, the

Church does not yet have an extensive teaching on this specific topic.

But all of the Church’s teachings on morality and on the nature of the human person are interconnected and build on each other. So, we can still discern the mind of the Church with respect to transgender issues. And it is worth noting that “gender theory” and “sex change” were briefly addressed in the March 2024 declaration “*Dignitas Infinita*” from the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on the subject of human dignity in general.

It would not be accurate to say that the Church is against “trans people” as people, because the Church believes that they have the same fundamental dignity as any and every human person. Consequently, the Church strongly condemns any kind of hatred or violence toward people who identify as transgender.

Pope Francis in his 2016 apostolic exhortation “*Amoris Laetitia*” states that: “The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception. ... We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation”—and thus, by extension, gender identity—“ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while ‘every sign of unjust

discrimination’ is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence” (#250).

And we as Christians are called to be sensitive to all those who are suffering in any way, which would include those who are experiencing emotional pain due to discomfort with their body.

That being said, the Church is against any “gender ideology” that would separate the concept of psychological gender from biological sex; or which would propose that one’s sex could be changed through medical or surgical means; or which would hold that one’s bodily sex could be somehow wrong or mistaken in light of one’s self-perception of one’s gender.

And in practical terms, the Church is also against any medical intervention that would damage healthy organs in the absence of any true medical need.

As we read in “*Dignitas Infinita*”: “Teaching about the need to respect the natural order of the human person, Pope Francis affirmed that ‘creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.’ It follows that any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception.”

The Church’s teaching on these issues is based in part on our theology. For instance, in Scripture we read that: “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27). That is, we as Catholics believe an important part of God’s plan for humanity involved creating two equal, but distinct and complementary, sexes.

But another component of the Church’s teaching is based in the natural, biological sciences. The physical differences between men and women were obvious even to ancient observers, and are even clearer to us now thanks to modern medical science. For example, we know now that our maleness or femaleness is part of our DNA, meaning that every cell in our body is identifiable as male or female.

Although the proper scope of the Church’s teaching authority is specifically faith and morals, the Church’s goal is always to embrace the truth, regardless of whether that truth is known by faith, by logical reasoning or by modern scientific evidence.

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

My Journey to God

Two Little Souls

By Sue T. Hoefler

Little soul that in me lived,
Little life that God did give,
Little child I never got to hold.

Some might say you mattered not
Or that your life was all for naught.
But there’s a greater story to be told.

For every child God creates,
With His own breath He animates
And fills with purpose holy and divine.

The full extent I’ll never know,
But God one plan did deign to show
For the life of this lost child, mine.

See, for a time I clung to pain,
Regarded God with great disdain,
Declared Him to be cruel and unjust.

Yet in His heart He held me near
Where I could see my child dear,
And in my soul with love He whispered, “Trust.”

(Sue T. Hoefler is a former member of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: A sculpture depicting Hope, one of two pieces in the A.J.B. Unborn Memorial “Garden of Sorrow and Hope” at Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center in Bloomington, is shown in this photo from Oct. 19.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Archbishop says supporting UCA ‘realizes hope, power of God at work’

By Natalie Hoefer and Leslie Lynch

INDIANAPOLIS and FLOYD COUNTY—Visualize images of Catholic churches, the Mass, Catholic school children, priests, seminarians, young adults, those in need. A child’s voice narrates, wondering if these images will be part of his life.

The child is finally shown. It is an infant in a carrier gazing up at the crucifix in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

“As I sit here now, thinking about my future, these are my questions, my hopes, my dreams,” the child’s voice says in the background. “The power is in your hands today for a better tomorrow.”

It was a powerful message from a video shown at two recent advance United Catholic Appeal (UCA) Mass and dinner events. The first was held in Indianapolis on Sept. 26 at the cathedral and the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center. The second was held on Oct. 10 at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church and parish hall in Floyd County.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson was in attendance at both events. His homily and dinner talks focused on, as he said in the video, the need to “commit ourselves to the ongoing mission of our Church, ensuring that future generations inherit a Church that is vibrant, compassionate and faithful to the Gospel.”

‘That’s when we’re most effective’

The archbishop spoke in both homilies of the many voices in today’s world, noting that the United Catholic Appeal is how the Church keeps its voice in the mix.

“Through the United Catholic Appeal, our Catholic voice is heard in our ministries, services, parishes, schools and charities. Without that voice, who would bring that goodness to the conversation?” he said at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs.

Supported by the UCA, archdiocesan ministries “continue to bring about the healing, the peace, the transformation, the gift of hope that so many are desperately lacking in our world today,” he said at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

Noting the theme of this year’s appeal is United in the Eucharist, the archbishop spoke of the first night of the National Eucharistic Congress (NEC), held in Indianapolis in July.

“That night, with about 50,000 people at Lucas Oil Stadium, it all began with eucharistic adoration,” he said at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs. “Before the first personality ever took the stage, all of our attention was brought to the Eucharist, to Jesus.”

It’s when members of the Church are Christ-centered that the body of Christ is at its best, Archbishop Thompson noted.

“That’s when we’re most credible. That’s when we’re most effective,” he said at the cathedral. “That’s when the world truly realizes hope, realizes the power of God at work.”



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson elevates the Eucharist during a Mass in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis as part of a United Catholic Appeal advance gathering event on Sept. 26. Concelebrating with the archbishop are archdiocesan vicar general Msgr. William Stumpf, left, and archdiocesan director of worship Father James Brockmeier, right. Deacon Thomas Hosty is second from left. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

‘The generosity of the people of God’

The advance UCA gatherings encourage attendees to contribute or continue contributing to the appeal, particularly at the Miter Society level—donating \$1,500 or more—or at the recently created Blessed Carlo Acutis level—pledging to make ongoing contributions to the appeal throughout the year.

“This past year, 543 individuals contributed a combined \$533,462” at the Blessed Carlo Acutis level, Jolinda Moore noted at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs. She is the archdiocese’s executive director of the Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation. “Even small amounts have a big impact.”

She noted in Indianapolis that the UCA “is not just about raising funds. It’s about living our faith. It’s about empowering the ministries of the Church to go out and serve others. ...

“The future of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis ... all depends on each of us stepping forward and leading by example, making a lasting impact on the investment of the Church.”

To both groups, Archbishop Thompson recalled the words of Cardinal Luis A. Tagle, pro-prefect for the Section for the First Evangelization and New Particular Churches of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Evangelization, during the closing Mass of the NEC.

The cardinal “reminded us that a eucharistic people is a missionary and evangelizing people,” he said. “When you support the United Catholic Appeal, you are making it possible for the archdiocese to share the good news and all of the blessings we receive from the Eucharist.”

Those ministries address the “needs and concerns of life and dignity” of all within central and southern Indiana—regardless of faith, race or ethnicity—in ways no single parish or deanery can, the archbishop said.

Those ministries include Catholic Charities, homeless shelters, seminarian and deacon formation, Mother Theodore Catholic Academies, refugee and immigration services and more, including caring for retired priests, who “retire from administration but not from ministry,” Archbishop Thompson noted.

“Thousands of lives have been touched through our ministries,” he said. “And we know that many more will continue to be served thanks to the generosity of the people of God.”

‘A reason for great joy’

At St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, several in attendance spoke with *The Criterion* about why they contribute to the UCA.

“We need to be good stewards,” said Gary Libs of

St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish. When all of the parishes of the archdiocese “work together, we’re stronger. We are one community. What we do for God is the right thing.”

Michael Carter of Holy Family Parish in New Albany said he is particularly fond of the appeal’s support for seminarians and retired priests.

“I can name all the priests I’ve had since childhood,” he said. “They’ve had such an impact on my life and on my family. They’ve dedicated their entire lives. It’s time to pay them back.”

One shepherd present at the event spoke of his gratitude for contributions to the UCA.

“People who give of themselves are a reason for hope for the archdiocese and the Church,” said Father Kyle



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson processes in St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church in Floyd County on Oct. 10 to celebrate Mass during a United Catholic Appeal advance gathering event. Behind him are altar server Danica Faye, left, and archdiocesan director of worship Father James Brockmeier. (Photo by Leslie Lynch)

Rodden, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon and St. Mary Parish in Lanesville. “Seeing evidence of this gives me a new wind for ministry. The substantial generosity of so many is a real light for the future. Christ is alive—a reason for great joy!”

(For more information on the United Catholic Appeal, visit unitedcatholicappeal.org or call the archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development at 317-236-1415.) †



About 175 people listen as Archbishop Charles C. Thompson discusses the United Catholic Appeal in the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Sept. 26.

(Photo by Natalie Hoefer)



Happy birthday Nov. 5, J Dub.
Love you.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson speaks with Mellissa and Dan Coffey, left, of Holy Family Parish in New Albany, and James and Maxine Evrard of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville in the parish hall of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County during a United Catholic Appeal advance gathering on Oct. 10. (Photo by Leslie Lynch)

Back home again — at IU



Lee Corso, who was head coach of Indiana University's football team from 1973-82, poses on Oct. 25 by the entrance to Higgins Hall at St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington with Fellowship of Catholic University Students missionaries Austin Michael, left, Sophie Zell and Cori Martin. Higgins Hall is named after Father James Higgins, St. Paul's founding pastor and a close friend of Corso when both were in Bloomington. Corso, who is Catholic, was back recently when ESPN's College Gameday show visited IU. (Submitted photo)

How the UCA goal is determined

Criterion staff report

During a question-and-answer period of the United Catholic Appeal (UCA) advance gathering event at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara



Jolinda Moore

Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Sept. 26, a question was asked about how the UCA goal is set each year. Jolinda Moore, executive director of the archdiocese's Office of Stewardship and Development and the Catholic Community Foundation, explained that the annual UCA goal amount is based on the finances needed by each archdiocesan ministry to effectively serve the people of central and southern Indiana but which the archdiocese lacks the funds to cover. That deficit amount becomes the goal of that year's UCA.

Here is a breakdown of how that amount is determined:

—Archdiocesan office directors set an annual budget for the funding they feel is needed to effectively carry out their ministry's mission to serve the people of central and southern Indiana.

—The directors present their budget to a committee to explain line items. The committee decides which items to approve, setting that office's final annual budget.

—The deficit amount for each office—budget items deemed necessary for that ministry to serve as the hands and feet of Christ in central and southern Indiana but which the archdiocese lacks funds to cover—is presented to the Office of Stewardship and Development.

—The UCA goal is determined based on those deficits.

“That need for the last several years has not extended beyond \$6.3 million, which is the goal, again, of this year's United Catholic Appeal,” said Moore. †

UCA

continued from page 1A

donation is \$5 or \$500 per month, it will leave a lasting imprint on someone's life.” (See related article, “Archbishop says supporting UCA ‘realizes hope, power of God at work’” on page 10A.)

In the last year, that impact included the following:

—Sheltering more than 900 families at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis.

—Staffing 32 Catholic schools throughout central and southern Indiana with social workers through Catholic Charities' Social Work Program.

—Serving more than 700 children through the three Mother Theodore Catholic Academies.

—Graduating 15 certified pastoral leaders from throughout the archdiocese through the Intercultural Pastoral Leadership Institute.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

—Providing financial support to archdiocesan seminarians at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

—Supporting 37 retired priests who have devoted their lives to serving others.

—Welcoming more than 1,000 young adults at Theology on Tap events.

In advance of intention weekend, Catholics in central and southern Indiana are asked to consider—through prayer and with gratitude—how they are called to help those in need, educate and catechize children and adults, and support seminarians and retired priests through the United Catholic Appeal.

(For more information on the United Catholic Appeal, visit unitedcatholicappeal.org or call the Office of Stewardship and Development at 317-236-1415.) †

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- An ability to work with the Archdiocesan staff.
- Basic computer skills.
- Good organizational and communication skills.

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

Executive Director Indiana Non-Public Education Association

The Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA) has opened a search for its next Executive Director. INPEA, a membership association, is recognized as the essential voice in advancing excellence and equitable access for all Indiana non-public schools. The successful candidate must be a dynamic leader who exhibits exceptional relationship-building, interpersonal, and communication skills.

Qualifications:

Candidates should demonstrate a passion for non-public school education and a proven track record in building strategic partnerships in the public policy arena. Successful leadership experience in non-public schools as well as a master's degree is strongly preferred. A complete position description can be found at <https://inpea.org/job/inpea-executive-director>.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to seachcommittee@inpea.org by November 15, 2024.

Employment

ASL Interpreters Needed!

The Disabilities Ministry of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis is in urgent need of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for 7:30 a.m. Mass at St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, and sacramental prep assistance for two children at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

It is preferred that interpreters be Catholic, but those who have a strong familiarity with the Catholic Mass and other liturgical rites are encouraged to apply. It is also preferred that interpreters have an Indiana Interpreting Certificate, though allowances can be made depending on experience.

For more information, contact Jenny Bryans, Disabilities Ministry Coordinator, at jbryans@archindy.org or 317-236-1448.

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Pope to open Holy Door at Rome prison at beginning of Jubilee 2025

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Two days after opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis will travel to a Rome prison to open a holy door as a "tangible sign of the message of hope" for people in prisons around the world, the Vatican announced.

The pope will go on Dec. 26 to Rebibbia prison on the outskirts of Rome, "a symbol of all the prisons dispersed throughout the world," to deliver a message of hope to prisoners, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization's section for new evangelization and the chief organizer of the Holy Year 2025, announced at a news conference on Oct. 28.

Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Dec. 24. He will then open the Holy Doors at the major basilicas of St. John Lateran on Dec. 29, St. Mary Major on Jan. 1 and St. Paul Outside the Walls on Jan. 5.

In his "bull of indiction," the document

formally proclaiming the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis wrote that during the Holy Year he will have close to his heart "prisoners who, deprived of their freedom, feel daily the harshness of detention and its restrictions, lack of affection and, in more than a few cases, lack of respect for their persons."

In the document, the pope also called on governments to "undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope" for incarcerated persons during the Holy Year, such as expanding forms of amnesty and social reintegration programs.

Archbishop Fisichella announced that the Vatican had signed an agreement with Italy's minister of justice and the government commissioner for Rome to implement reintegration programs for incarcerated individuals by involving their participation in activities during the Jubilee Year.

The archbishop also outlined the schedule of cultural offerings leading up to the Jubilee Year, during which the city of Rome estimates that 30 million people

will visit the Italian capital.

The Vatican will organize a concert of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5, to be performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in Rome on Nov. 3; three art exhibitions in November and December, including a display of rare Christian icons from the collection of the Vatican Museums; and a concert from the Sistine Chapel Choir two days before the opening of the Holy Door.

Archbishop Fisichella also unveiled the official mascot of the Holy Year 2025: "Luce" (Italian for light), a cartoon pilgrim dressed in a yellow raincoat, mud-stained boots, wearing a missionary cross and holding a pilgrim's staff. Luce's glowing eyes feature the shape of scallop shells, a traditional symbol of pilgrimage and hope.

The mascot, he said, was inspired by the Church's desire "to live even within the pop culture so beloved by our youth."

"Luce" will also serve as the mascot of the Holy See's pavilion at Expo 2025, which will take place in Osaka, Japan,



Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization's section for new evangelization and the chief organizer of the Holy Year 2025, presents the official mascot of the Jubilee Year during a news conference at the Vatican on Oct. 28. (CNS photo/Justin McLellan)

from April to October 2025. The Holy See pavilion—which will be hosted inside of Italy's national pavilion—will have the theme "Beauty brings hope," and display the 17th-century painting "The Entombment of Christ" by Caravaggio—the only one of his works housed in the Vatican Museums. †

Pope warns against becoming a 'sedentary' Church after synod's close

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Three years after he asked the world's Catholics to walk together in faith on a synodal journey, Pope Francis said that the Church cannot risk becoming "static" but must continue as a "missionary Church that walks with her Lord through the streets of the world."

"We cannot remain inert before the questions raised by the women and men of today, before the challenges of our time, the urgency of evangelization and the many wounds that afflict humanity," the pope said in his homily during the closing Mass for the Synod of Bishops in St. Peter's Basilica on Oct. 27.

"A sedentary Church, that inadvertently withdraws from life and confines itself to the margins of reality, is a Church that risks remaining blind and becoming comfortable with its own unease," he said.

Pope Francis delivered his homily seated in front of the basilica's newly restored 17th-century baldachin—the gilded bronze canopy that had been shrouded in scaffolding for restoration work since February.

Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, was the main celebrant at the altar under the baldachin.

The previous day, the pope received the final document approved by the more than 350 members of the synod. The document called for the increased participation of lay men and women in all levels of Church life, including in parishes, dioceses and in seminaries.

Pope Francis told the synod assembly on Oct. 26 that he did not plan to publish an apostolic exhortation after the synod due to the "already highly concrete indications"

in the final synod document, which he ordered published.

In his homily, the pope called on the Church not to remain in a state of "blindness" to the issues in the Church and the world, a blindness that can take the form of embracing worldliness, placing a premium on comfort or having a closed heart.

The Church must listen to men and women "who wish to discover the joy of the Gospel," he said, but it also must listen to "those who have turned away" from faith and to "the silent cry of those who are indifferent," as well as the poor, marginalized and desperate.

"We do not need a sedentary and defeatist Church," he said, "but a Church that hears the cry of the world and—I want to say it, maybe someone will be scandalized—a Church that gets its hands dirty to serve the Lord." †



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