



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Opening minds and hearts

New Albany Knights of Columbus host vocations fair for sixth-graders, page 16.

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The best feeling

The smiles of Alexandra "Alex" Daley, left, and Ella Spoonmore show their close friendship, a friendship that has helped the two fifth-grade students at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington lead drives that have collected nearly 10,000 pounds of food in the past two years to help families in southern Indiana. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

10-year-old friends lead children's 'army' and earn national honor for helping others

By John Shaughnessy

BLOOMINGTON—One of the best parts of meeting Ella Spoonmore and Alexandra "Alex" Daley is seeing their eyes light up with joy when these 10-year-old girls talk about how close they are as friends.

Then there are their laughs, their smiles and their animated

looks of delight when they rave about their favorite foods—pasta and French fries for Alex, pizza and macaroni and cheese for Ella, with both of them praising the deliciousness of dill pickles.

"That's something we share. And we always fight over pickles," Alex says, her smile mirrored by Ella's.

See ARMY, page 8

Pope: Synodal and Lenten journeys require effort, sacrifice and focusing on God

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking out new paths to take with Jesus and for avoiding the traps of stagnation

or impromptu experimentation, Pope Francis said.



Pope Francis

"Jesus is himself the way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey [of Lent] and in the journey of the synod, the Church does nothing other than enter ever more

deeply and fully into the mystery of Christ the Savior," the pope said in his message for Lent, which began on Feb. 22 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Released by the Vatican on Feb. 17, the text of the pope's message focused on seeing Lenten penance and the synodal experience both as arduous journeys that lead to the wondrous experience of Christ's divine light and splendor.

"Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross," he said.

The Gospel accounts of the transfiguration of Christ offer an illustration of this, he said.

Jesus led three of his disciples to Mount Tabor to pray after they failed to understand and accept the reality of his coming passion and death on the cross. On the mountaintop they witnessed his face shine "like the sun" (Lk 17:2) and his clothes become "white as light" (Lk 17:2), and they heard a voice from a cloud proclaiming Jesus as the "beloved Son" (Lk 17:5) of God.

"The disciples' experience on Mount Tabor was further enriched when, alongside the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared, signifying

See SYNOD, page 2

Emotional sheriff details arrest of suspect in shooting death of Bishop O'Connell; motive remains unclear

LOS ANGELES (OSV News)—A 65-year-old Hispanic man was taken into custody on the morning of Feb. 20 by Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies as the prime suspect in the murder of Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell of Los Angeles.

LA County Sheriff Robert G. Luna announced at a news conference on Monday afternoon local time at the Los Angeles County Hall of Justice in downtown LA that citizen tips led to the 8:15 a.m. arrest of Carlos Medina, the husband of a housekeeper who had worked at Bishop O'Connell's home in Hacienda Heights, after an all-night search.

Bishop O'Connell, a native of Ireland who spent most of his 43 years as a priest serving in LA's inner city, was found dead in his home on the afternoon of Feb. 18.

See O'CONNELL, page 9



Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell is pictured speaking with parishioners outside St. Frances X. Cabrini Church in Los Angeles on July 19, 2015. Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies found him dead of a gunshot wound at his home on Feb. 18 in what has been ruled a homicide. (OSV News photo/CNS file, John Rueda, The Tidings)

Pope from ‘ends of the earth’ brings new style to Rome

(March 13, 2023, is the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis’ election to the papacy. The Criterion will be publishing articles in the coming weeks marking this milestone.)

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Right from the start, upon his election, Pope Francis presented a whole new style of being pontiff.



Pope Francis

The way he spoke to the vast crowd after his election on March 13, 2013, was familial and down-to-earth, beginning with, “Brothers and sisters, good evening,” and ending with “We’ll see each other soon!” and “Have a good night and sleep well!”

He repeatedly referred to himself as “bishop of Rome,” which eventually ended up being his sole title in the “*Annuario Pontificio*,” the Vatican yearbook, and would be another sign of his vision for renewal by promoting a more collegial and decentralized Church.

And his invitation to the crowd on the day he was elected—“Let’s begin this journey” with “fraternity, love, trust” and prayer, and “may it be fruitful for evangelization”—was a clear sign of a new style he saw for the entire Church, that of synodality, with all brothers and sisters in the faith walking, praying and evangelizing together.

That first night also gave a glimpse into how Pope Francis would lead the universal Church in the uncharted situation of having a retired pope in the wings. He led everyone in prayer “for our Bishop Emeritus Benedict XVI.”

Many of his most unexpected choices on how he would live as pope were offered as a kind of, “Do as I do, not just as I say,” especially to his brother bishops around the world. He chose to live in a Vatican guesthouse instead of the Apostolic Palace; he has used an annual penance celebration at the Vatican to publicly go to confession; he responds to many people who write to him with a letter, note or phone call; he meets regularly with victims of abuse; and he has gone in person to pay a bill, to pick up a new pair of glasses and to visit the elderly and the sick.

The election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, marked the first time a Jesuit was made pope. He ushered in a number of styles characteristic of his order: the Ignatian practice of discernment for making decisions in the presence of God; seeking God’s presence in all things; and a penchant for boiling his talks down to three bullet points.

He was the first pope to come from the Americas, born of immigrant Italian parents; this second-generation experience lent lived authenticity to his insistence migrants be respected, integrated and appreciated for their hard

work and the rich diversity they bring to a host nation.

Most indicative of his unique style was choosing the name “Francis” to honor St. Francis of Assisi, known for his poverty, commitment to peace and love of creation. It was a signal of the style to come: simplicity, humility, working with the poor, desiring a Church that is poor and for the poor, and further deepening his namesake’s love of creation integrated with a respect for all life.

Under his watch, the papal charities office has increased its outreach, particularly to the homeless who live near the Vatican and in other parts of the world, such as Ukraine, where he has sent his papal almoner to deliver aid directly and convey his prayers.

He also set aside the usual practice of washing the feet of 12 priests during a public celebration of the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper. Instead, he has celebrated smaller Masses—closed to the public—in prisons, refugee centers and rehabilitation centers, washing the feet of Catholics and non-Catholics, men and women, in order to show Christ’s love for everyone, especially the most marginalized.

His idea of “outreach” has included reaching outside the Vatican bubble. He called in “outsiders” as the majority of the members of his International Council of Cardinals and of the Vatican safeguarding commission. He gets a new personal secretary every few years and gives dozens of interviews to big and small media outlets.

His desire to “speak from the heart” means many off-the-cuff comments, homespun anecdotes, sharp rebukes or critiques and an occasional statement that requires clarification or an apology.

A native-Spanish speaker who grew up with Italian-speaking relatives in Argentina, the pope merges a number of styles and, as a former high school teacher, often draws on literary themes and rhetorical devices.

His memorable metaphors and allegories have a religious message: priests need to be “shepherds living with the ‘smell of sheep’”; confession is not “sitting down in a torture chamber”; and Catholics must resist “a throwaway culture” that readily disposes of people’s lives and dignity.

Pope Francis also has offered a new approach to evangelization that he had mapped out in his brief address during the pre-conclave meetings of the cardinals. Cardinal Bergoglio’s words struck a chord with his listeners and formed the basis of his blueprint as pope.

The outline of his talk said that when the Church is self-referential with a kind of theological narcissism, it gets sick and is unable to carry out its mission to go out and evangelize; in effect, such a Church keeps Jesus within and does not let him out. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 24–March 7, 2023

February 24 – 11:30 a.m. PST
Los Angeles Religious Education Congress at Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles

February 26 – 2 p.m.
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

February 26 – 6 p.m.
Rite of Election at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

February 28 – 1 p.m.
Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

March 1 – 10 a.m.
Visit to St. Charles Borromeo School, Bloomington

March 1 – 12:15 p.m.
Mass and Lay Ecclesial Minister Formation gathering at St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington

March 2-4
The Way Forward Ecclesial Conference at Boston College, Boston, Mass.

March 7 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

March 7 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Christopher Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

SYNOD

continued from page 1

respectively the law and the prophets,” the pope said.

“The newness of Christ is at the same time the fulfillment of the ancient covenant and promises; it is inseparable from God’s history with his people and discloses its deeper meaning,” he said. “In a similar way, the synodal journey is rooted in the Church’s tradition and at the same time open to newness.”

Therefore, he said, “tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking new paths and for avoiding the opposed temptations of immobility and improvised experimentation.

“To deepen our knowledge of the Master, to fully understand and embrace the mystery of his salvation, accomplished in total self-giving inspired by love, we must allow ourselves to be taken aside by him and to detach ourselves from mediocrity and vanity,” the pope said.

“We need to set out on the journey, an uphill path that, like a mountain trek, requires effort, sacrifice and concentration,” he continued. “These requisites are also important for the synodal journey which, as a Church, we are committed to making.

“During any strenuous mountain trek, we must keep our eyes firmly fixed on the path; yet the panorama that opens up at the end amazes us and rewards us by its grandeur,” Pope Francis wrote.

In the same way, “the synodal process may often seem arduous, and at times we may become discouraged,” he said. “Yet what awaits us at the end is undoubtedly something wondrous and amazing, which will help us to understand better God’s will and our mission in the service of his kingdom.”

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, presented the Lenten message at a Vatican news conference.

Lent is a time for Catholics to “work on ourselves” and understand that a “change of mentality—conversion—and the communal nature of human life are blessed labors, on which depends ‘something wonderful and surprising’ for this broken world,” the cardinal said.

“If we want a Lent of charity, if we believe that prayer and fasting have real effects on the world,” he said, “we must broaden the idea of almsgiving to something larger, namely the biblical idea of restitution.


“The path is the mission. And the mission is charity, which calls into question an organization of the world and of the Church that may seem unchangeable, but is changeable, because it is the outcome of decisions, of freedom,” he said.

When asked about the role of fasting as a form of penance, Cardinal Czerny said fasting also has a positive side in that it is a form of “liberation and a gesture of solidarity with those who have nothing to eat.

“In fact, we eat too much and, perhaps, irresponsibly, so fasting reorients us toward a way of eating and drinking that is more in tune with our vocation” as followers of Christ, he said.


The cardinal also said the dicastery would be relaunching elements of the pope’s message each week during the 40-day period of Lent to help parishes live their own “transfiguration” in a more practical way.

People are encouraged to follow the #Lent2023 campaign on the dicastery’s Twitter and Instagram accounts and download new materials each week from its website: humandevelopment.va/en.html. †



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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



Phone Numbers:
Main office: 317-236-1570
Advertising: 317-236-1585
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Legislature shuts door on renters suffering from landlord negligence

By Victoria Arthur

The Statehouse has again proven to be an inhospitable place for those seeking to ensure safe and livable conditions for Hoosier renters, but advocates including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) vow to press on for change.

Days after a tenants' rights rally at the Statehouse earlier this month that spotlighted unlivable situations for countless Indiana apartment residents, lawmakers suddenly halted Senate Bill 202, a bipartisan measure designed to hold landlords accountable for providing their tenants with decent living conditions. Instead, the bill was sent to a summer study committee with no guarantee of further action.

"I'm frustrated, because this is justice delayed for hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers who are experiencing negligent behaviors from unresponsive corporate landlords, specifically out-of-state landlords," said Sen. Fady Qaddoura (D-Indianapolis), a co-author of the bill along with Sen. Greg Walker (R-Columbus).

Qaddoura has fought for several years at the Statehouse to protect tenants battling out-of-state landlords who refuse to provide the most basic services as outlined in their leases. One example is New Jersey-based JPC Affordable Housing, owner of a number of troubled apartment complexes in Indianapolis.

"In my district and in other places, [these landlords] took money from our tenants and then didn't pay the utilities," said Qaddoura, who formerly held roles at the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. "That caused the utilities to shut off water until we intervened and filed lawsuits. The living conditions in some of these places is unbelievable: no running water, mold growing through the carpets, holes in the ceilings, and we have young kids in those households. It's [an] injustice."

Senate Bill 202 would have allowed tenants living under such extreme conditions to place their rent money into a court-ordered escrow account. The landlord would be able to collect that money only when the issues at the property were fixed.

But just before a scheduled hearing on the bill set for Feb. 15, the Senate Judiciary Committee cancelled the proceedings and assigned the topic to a summer study committee, effectively killing the measure for this session. The legislation had been staunchly opposed by lobbyists representing the corporate landlords.

A similar measure authored by Qaddoura met the same fate last year.

"The General Assembly leans more toward protecting landlords at any expense more than tenants, so I designed my current bill to open the door of this discussion by focusing only on out-of-state negligent landlords," Qaddoura said. "We're not changing the law for Indiana; we're going after criminals. Why are we

reluctant as a General Assembly to give justice and protections for Hoosiers against criminals? I thought that our job as public servants was to protect our citizens."

For the second year in a row, Qaddoura had worked on the legislation in collaboration with partners, including advocates for fair housing and faith-based organizations such as the ICC.

"Landlords and tenants have an unbalanced relationship in the state of Indiana," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "A lease is a contractual agreement that a landlord will provide a place that's habitable and provide certain services, and the tenant has the responsibility to pay. But if the landlord doesn't live up to what it says in the lease—if the apartment is uninhabitable because of mold or rodents, or if the utilities or appliances aren't working—the tenant has very little recourse."

The working poor—who often devote between 50% to 80% of their monthly incomes to housing expenses—are especially vulnerable in these situations and have few alternatives, Espada noted.

Espada had been scheduled to testify in favor of Senate Bill 202 on the day that the bill was stripped and replaced by summer study committee topics. She and other advocates appeared the following day at a press conference sponsored by the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition to present the testimony they would have given and to call on the legislature to take further action.

"The General Assembly has a duty to all Hoosiers to address these issues," Espada said, adding that "landlords who operate in good faith have nothing to fear from Senate Bill 202."

Renters represent more than one-third of Hoosier households, but Indiana is one of only five states that do not have strong protections for renters, according to Qaddoura and coalition members who supported his legislation.

"Every week, we receive calls from Hoosiers living in sometimes deplorable conditions," said Amy Nelson, executive director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, who also brought her prepared Senate testimony to the Feb. 16 press conference. "This is a statewide problem and an overwhelming burden. These are people who pay their rent, but their landlords won't make needed repairs despite being asked over and over again. And for an increasing number, they can't even find their landlords because it's some out-of-state company and it's hard to determine even whom to contact. What are people to do?"

Qaddoura attributes the legislature's lack of urgency on these issues to what he believes is a misperception about the more than 800,000 people in Indiana who are renters instead of homeowners.

"My concern with the General



'A lease is a contractual agreement that a landlord will provide a place that's habitable and provide certain services, and the tenant has the responsibility to pay. But if the landlord doesn't live up to what it says in the lease ... the tenant has very little recourse.'

—Angela Espada, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

Assembly, aside from their inaction, is that there is a stigma in our state that tenants do not deserve rights or protections," Qaddoura said. "It seems that the General Assembly has forgotten that these tenants are property tax payers, just like homeowners. They pay their property taxes through their rental payments.

"These are people who decided to live in an apartment who maybe cannot afford home ownership, or maybe they decided to live there because it's their lifestyle," he continued. "My point is that they are humans, they are full citizens, and they deserve protections under state law."

Qaddoura is dismayed to see his legislation once again relegated to a summer study committee, and advocates including the ICC are equally frustrated.

"What is there to study?" Espada said. "We know this is a problem."

Meanwhile, the ICC did see success this month on another matter of concern to vulnerable Hoosiers. Along with other advocates for the poor, the ICC stood in opposition to House Bill 1547, which would raise interest rates for certain subprime loans and create a new loan product in the subprime market. The bill has now stalled and does not appear to have a path forward in this session.

While supporters positioned the legislation as an alternative to unregulated online and out-of-state lenders charging Hoosiers exorbitant interest rates, the ICC maintained that another high-interest loan product was not the answer. Alexander Mingus, the associate director of the ICC, testified against the bill at the Statehouse and noted that people seeking loans in this market are typically low-income individuals with poor credit or no credit.

As with all proposed legislation, the ICC decides to support or oppose measures based on the long history of Catholic social teaching.

"There is such a depth in the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor," Mingus said. "We always stand with the most vulnerable in our society."

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †



'There is such a depth in the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor. We always stand with the most vulnerable in our society.'

—Alexander Mingus, associate director of the Indiana Catholic Conference



Pope's prayer intentions for March

- **For victims of abuse**—We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

See Pope Francis' monthly intentions at archindy.org/popesintentions.



From a Boy to a Man

"Our job as God calls these individuals, is to form them as priests..."

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Editorial



A priest celebrates the sacrament of penance with a woman in front of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Yangon, Myanmar, on Nov. 28, 2017. (CNS photo/Jorge Silva, Reuters)

Hearing the heartbeats of God in the sacrament of penance

Feb. 22 was Ash Wednesday, and this weekend we will celebrate the First Sunday of Lent. The Church gives us this holy season to help us identify the spiritual sicknesses that affect all of us to some degree or another because of original sin.

During Lent, the readings at Mass, our prayer, the penitential practices we are called to observe (fasting and abstinence) and the good works we are invited to perform (almsgiving) all help us to admit our sinfulness and, with God's help, to change from a self-centered way of life to lives of generous service.

As described by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It's a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's resurrection at Easter. During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting. We are called not only to abstain from luxuries during Lent, but to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully.

Lent is the time of year when the Church encourages us to do a thorough examination of our spiritual health and then to take whatever steps are necessary to let the healing power of Jesus make us whole again.

The 40 days of Lent provide a structure for diagnosing the symptoms and the root causes of our sinfulness. During this special time of year, the Church encourages us to take advantage of the healing power of the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance, to admit our selfishness and sin (confession), to experience a change of heart (conversion), to deny ourselves (penance) and to change the way we live (healing).

Through this great sacrament, we allow Jesus to enter into our hearts and cleanse us of all the impurities—large and small—that have built up over time. We present ourselves to him for the healing of both our symptoms and their root causes.

Jesus Christ is the Divine Physician. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus reached out, by word and deed, to heal

those with illnesses of the body and sicknesses of the mind or soul. In his passion, death and resurrection, he conquered sin and death and became the source of ultimate healing for all.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus gave the Apostles a share in his very life so that the healing power of his words and deeds might continue to be present to the world through them. And through the sacraments, Jesus himself continues to be present in every time and place, healing us and drawing us into the communion that he shares with the Father and the Spirit.

During this season, we are reminded of the great gifts of healing and hope that are available to us in the sacrament of penance. Through this great sacrament, the Divine Physician brings us reconciliation and communion—with God, with each other and with ourselves in our inmost being.

According to Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty, a great spiritual writer who founded the Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere, Canada, which today serves the poor in six countries:

These 40 days are set aside every year for us to let go of the old and to enter into the new, because God is merciful. Now we can pass over from the old life that we led before Lent into the new life after. ... Lent is you and I, like St. John the well-beloved, putting our head on the bosom of Christ and hearing the heartbeats of God (Jn 13:21-25). When you hear the heartbeats of God, you change. We try to listen well to those heartbeats during Lent, so that we may not only repent and make our peace with God, but forgive all who have hurt us.

There is no better way to “hear the heartbeats of God” than by receiving the sacrament of penance. A good confession paves the way to curing our soul's sickness. It helps us to admit our sinfulness, to do penance and to resolve to sin no more.

As we begin this Lenten journey, let's take advantage of the great gift we have been given in the sacrament of penance. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts so that we can seek God's forgiveness, repent and change.

—Daniel Conway

Reflection/John Shaughnessy

An accusation leads to thoughts about the challenge of forgiveness

The accusation cut deeply.

Page Zyromski had just finished giving a talk about her journey of forgiveness



after the brutal rape and murder of her 94-year-old great-aunt, Winnie Harman, at the hands of Stephen Todd Booker—a talk in which she shared how she had reluctantly reached out to Booker and eventually forgave him.

In her talk, Zyromski had tried to convey how much she loved Harman, whom she considered as a surrogate grandmother.

She also expressed that forgiving Booker was one of the hardest challenges of her life, but something that God had called her to do.

Still, after the talk, a woman in the audience approached Zyromski and said, “You must not have loved Winnie if you could forgive the guy who killed her.”

No words could have hurt Zyromski more.

“That really kicked me in the gut,” she recalled in a recent conversation I had with her. “So I went home and thought about that. I realized she did not understand what forgiveness *was and wasn't*. So I made my little ‘Forgiveness 101.’”

It's a one-page primer that offers her thoughts on a reality that all of us have faced or will face at some point in our lives: Can we forgive someone who has deeply hurt us, disappointed us and betrayed us in some way?

Here are some of the thoughts that Zyromski, a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, wrote down about forgiveness—starting with what she believes forgiveness *doesn't* include.

“My forgiveness does *not* excuse, condone or approve of the action.”

“Does *not* erase accountability or remove legitimate consequences.”

“Does *not* ignore or deny the profound way my life has changed.”

“Does *not* invite the other to hurt me again.”

“Does *not* necessarily mean reconciliation.”

“Does *not* forget the wrongdoing.”

She then shared what she believes forgiveness does mean and what it can achieve.

“My forgiveness gives up revenge.”

“Recognizes the humanity of the other person.”

“Frees me from the past and looks to the future.”

“Sets the captive free—to discover I have been the captive.”

“Is healing for me, no matter what happens to the other person.”

“Is the key to the whole Christian life.”

Indeed, Christ certainly made forgiveness a major focus of his teaching, his ministry and his life—a life marked by many accusations against him. And there's no doubt that forgiveness is a central theme that resonates through the days of Lent and through the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

At every turn, Christ lived up to his challenge to Peter that we should forgive someone not just seven times, but 70 times seven, a way of saying that our forgiveness should never be limited.

So Christ forgave Peter, James and John when they fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He forgave Peter when he betrayed him three times.

He forgave the Good Thief as they both hung on their crosses.

His last words included, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34).

And by his death on the cross, he also forgives and redeems us.

Christ's approach of forgiveness is one of the defining challenges of life for all of us who seek to follow him.

Can we forgive someone who has deeply hurt us, disappointed us and betrayed us?

(John Shaughnessy is the assistant editor of The Criterion.) †

Letter to the Editor

Reader: Masses remind us of God's love and divine purpose for each of us

On Saturday, Feb. 11, I felt blessed and inspired by attending an early Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes that coincided with the World Day of the Sick.

That afternoon at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Beech Grove, a memorial Mass for 2,411 aborted babies of God was celebrated. The scriptural readings, the homilies and the prayers at both Masses were so meaningful.

Mary our Blessed Mother was a young woman. Though initially confused by a heavenly message, she accepted her role as Mother of God. She would for all time encourage all people to be drawn to her Son.

In 1858, Mary appeared to a young girl, Bernadette Soubirous, in Lourdes, France, and asked for prayers to be said for cures of physical, mental and spiritual ailments. The young woman didn't recognize the Lady's name, Immaculate Conception, but she knew the truth of the Lady's message.

The remains of aborted fetuses that were taken so disrespectfully as mere trophies also sends us a message: God loves us all and has a divine purpose for each of us. The circle is unbroken.

Jacqueline Carroll
Beech Grove

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.

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 are more likely to be printed.

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

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ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

This Lent, ask for God's grace to overcome life's temptations

In the Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Lent (Mt 4:1-11), St. Matthew tells us that Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit "to be tempted by the devil" (Mt 4:1). Why would the Spirit of God deliberately draw Jesus into a situation that would be uncomfortable, at best, and, at worst, dangerous to his physical and spiritual health?

We are rightly offended by the idea that the devil would be so bold and disrespectful that he would presume to tempt the Son of God. Who does Satan think he is, and what gives him the idea that he has any chance at all to succeed in persuading Jesus to betray his Father and his mission on Earth?

We know that Jesus was hungry, weak and very tired after fasting and being exposed to the elements for 40 days. When the devil offered him comfort, security and earthly power, Jesus was not at his best—humanly speaking. And yet, he resisted forcefully, reminding Satan that God alone provides what is needed to live in communion with him.

Jesus does not raise his voice or berate his tempter. He remains calm,

responding to each temptation with a simple statement of the truth. We do not live by bread alone, he says. It is not our place to put the Lord our God to the test. And we are commanded to love and worship God alone. No amount of earthly gain is worth betraying the Lord our God. No amount of money, success or worldly power can take the place of righteous living and accepting the will of God.

When we recite the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught us, we ask not to be led into temptation. We know that we don't have Jesus' strength or his confidence in the Holy Spirit's ability to sustain us in the face of the Prince of Lies and his seductive power.

But we also know that we can't completely avoid every form of temptation. That's why Jesus' desert experience is so instructive for us. If God's only Son was drawn into this kind of disturbing, uncomfortable situation, who are we to think it can't happen to us?

The first reading for this Sunday (Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7) reminds us that our first parents, who were given every possible advantage, were tempted

by the Evil One in the form of a serpent—"the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made" (Gn 3:1).

Unlike Jesus in the desert, the first man and the first woman gave into temptation and disobeyed the Lord's command. Their sins, and the sins of all humankind, are the reason God became man in the first place. Their weakness, and the weaknesses of their children, are the cause of Christ's suffering and death on a cross.

As St. Paul teaches in this Sunday's second reading (Rom 5:12-19), the same Jesus who calmly but firmly rejects the temptations of the devil is the one who is responsible for righting the wrongs that came into the world because of our first parents' sin.

For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:17)

Jesus is led into the desert by the Holy Spirit for our sakes—to confront

the Evil One and to foreshadow the decisive victory that will be won, once and for all, on Good Friday.

What we can learn from our Lord's experience is that we do not have to be fearful in the face of temptation. If we place our trust in God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and if we believe that God will deliver us from evil, we can be calm like Jesus was when he encountered Satan in the desert.

It's true that we don't have Jesus' wisdom or strength when we are faced with temptation, but we do have the certain knowledge that comes from faith that the final victory over sin and evil has already been won. If we stumble and give in to temptation, we need not worry that all will be lost. We only have to confess, resolve to sin no more, do penance, and all will be well.

As we continue our Lenten journey, let's ask for the grace to face temptation without giving in. Let's pray that by our prayer, fasting and almsgiving we will be better prepared to confront the devil. And let us pray that our acceptance of the cross of Christ will deliver us from all evil. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Pidamos la gracia de Dios para superar las tentaciones de la vida en esta Cuaresma

En la lectura del Evangelio del primer domingo de Cuaresma (Mt 4:1-11), san Mateo nos cuenta que el Espíritu Santo llevó a Jesús al desierto "para ser tentado por el diablo" (Mt 4:1). ¿Por qué el Espíritu de Dios atraería deliberadamente a Jesús a una situación que sería incómoda, en el mejor de los casos y, en el peor, peligrosa para su salud física y espiritual?

Con toda razón nos ofende la idea de que el demonio sea tan osado e irrespetuoso que se atreva a tentar al Hijo de Dios. ¿Quién se cree Satanás y qué le hace pensar que tiene alguna posibilidad de convencer a Jesús de que traicione a su Padre y su misión en la Tierra?

Sabemos que Jesús estaba hambriento, débil y muy cansado después de ayunar y estar expuesto a los elementos durante 40 días. Cuando el diablo le ofreció consuelo, seguridad y poder terrenal, Jesús no estaba en su mejor momento, humanamente hablando. Y, sin embargo, se resistió con fuerza, recordando a Satanás que solamente Dios nos da lo que necesitamos para vivir en comunión con Él; no le alza la voz ni reprende a su tentador sino que mantiene la calma

y responde a cada tentación con una simple declaración de la verdad: no solo de pan vive el hombre. No nos corresponde poner a prueba al Señor, nuestro Dios; se nos ordena amar y adorar únicamente a Dios. Ninguna ganancia terrenal merece traicionar al Señor, nuestro Dios. Ninguna suma de dinero, cantidad de éxito o poder mundano puede sustituir una vida recta y la aceptación de la voluntad de Dios.

Cuando recitamos el Padrenuestro, la oración que Jesús nos enseñó, pedimos no caer en la tentación. Sabemos que no tenemos la fuerza de Jesús ni su confianza en la capacidad del Espíritu Santo para sostenernos frente al Príncipe de la Mentira y su poder seductor, pero también sabemos que no podemos evitar por completo toda forma de tentación. Por eso la experiencia de Jesús en el desierto nos resulta tan ilustrativa. Si el Hijo único de Dios se vio arrastrado a este tipo de situación inquietante e incómoda, ¿quiénes somos nosotros para pensar que no nos puede pasar?

La primera lectura de este domingo (Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7) nos recuerda que nuestros primeros padres, que gozaban de todas las

ventajas posibles, fueron tentados por el Maligno en forma de serpiente, "el más astuto de todos los animales del campo que el Señor Dios había hecho" (Gn 3:1).

A diferencia de Jesús en el desierto, el primer hombre y la primera mujer cayeron en la tentación y desobedecieron el mandato del Señor. Sus pecados, y los de toda la humanidad, son la razón por la que Dios se hizo hombre en primer lugar. Su debilidad, y la de sus hijos, son la causa del sufrimiento y la muerte de Cristo en una cruz.

Como enseña san Pablo en la segunda lectura de este domingo (Rom 5:12-19), el mismo Jesús que rechaza con calma, pero con firmeza las tentaciones del diablo es el responsable de reparar los males que vinieron al mundo a causa del pecado de nuestros primeros padres.

Porque si por la ofensa de uno reinó la muerte por aquel uno, cuánto más reinarán en vida los que reciben la abundancia de su gracia y la dádiva de la justicia mediante aquel uno: Jesucristo. (Rom 5:17)

El Espíritu Santo lleva a Jesús al desierto por nosotros, para enfrentarse al Maligno y presagiar

la victoria decisiva que obtendrá, de una vez por todas, el Viernes Santo.

Lo que aprendemos de la experiencia de nuestro Señor es que no debemos temer ante la tentación. Si ponemos nuestra confianza en Dios Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo, y si creemos que nos librará del mal, podemos estar tranquilos como lo estaba Jesús cuando se encontró con Satanás en el desierto.

Es cierto que no tenemos la sabiduría ni la fuerza de Jesús cuando nos enfrentamos a la tentación, pero sí tenemos el conocimiento certero que proviene de la fe de que la victoria final sobre el pecado y el mal ya ha sido ganada. Si tropezamos y cedemos a la tentación, no debemos preocuparnos de que todo esté perdido; solo debemos confesarnos, proponernos no pecar más, hacer penitencia, y todo pasará.

Al continuar nuestro camino cuaresmal, pidamos la gracia de afrontar la tentación sin ceder. Recemos para que, con nuestra oración, ayuno y limosna, estemos mejor preparados para enfrentarnos al demonio. Y recemos para que nuestra aceptación de la cruz de Cristo nos libre de todo mal. †

Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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

Batesville Deanery

Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
 March 3, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at All Saints, St. Martin
 Campus, Dearborn County
 March 17, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
 March 17, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate
 Conception, Aurora
 March 21, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
 March 21, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
 March 22, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
 March 28, 6-8 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood
 March 28, 7 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena, St. John
 Campus, in Decatur County
 March 29, 6:15 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby
 County
 March 29, 6-8 p.m. at Immaculate Conception,
 Millhousen
 March 30, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:

Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
 Fridays 6-7 p.m. at St. Nicholas, Ripley County
 Saturdays 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
 Before and after weekend Masses at St. Maurice,
 Napoleon
 Half-hour before daily Masses at St. Lawrence,
 Lawrenceburg, and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross,
 Bright

Bloomington Deanery

March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
 March 22, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
 March 28, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent
 de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
 March 29, 6 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
 April 5, 6 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John
 the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, all in
 Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

Connersville Deanery

March 2, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
 March 8, 6 p.m. at St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty
 March 19, 11 a.m. at St. Anne, New Castle
 March 26, 1 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary,
 Cambridge City
 March 31, 5:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Anne Seton, Holy
 Family Campus, Richmond

Indianapolis East Deanery

Feb. 28, 7 p.m. for St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little
 Flower) and Our Lady of Lourdes at Our Lady of
 Lourdes

March 4, 9-11 a.m. at St. Philip Neri
 March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Rita
 March 16, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation

in the East Deanery are as follows:
 Sundays 9 a.m. (except Palm Sunday and Easter
 Sunday) at Our Lady of Lourdes

Indianapolis North Deanery

March 20, 6:30 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist
 March 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Pius X

Indianapolis South Deanery

Feb. 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Thomas
 More, Mooresville (Indianapolis West Deanery), at
 St. Ann
 March 9, 6:30 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech
 Grove, and Good Shepherd at Holy Name of Jesus
 March 18, 8:30 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi,
 Greenwood
 March 22, 7 p.m. for St. Jude and St. Mark the
 Evangelist at St. Mark the Evangelist
 March 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann and St. Thomas
 More, Mooresville (Indianapolis West Deanery), at
 St. Ann

Indianapolis West Deanery

Feb. 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann (Indianapolis South
 Deanery) and St. Thomas More, Mooresville, at
 St. Ann
 March 22, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
 March 23, 7 p.m. for St. Michael the Archangel and
 St. Monica at St. Michael the Archangel
 March 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. for St. Ann (Indianapolis
 South Deanery) and St. Thomas More, Mooresville,
 at St. Ann
 March 29, 7 p.m. at Holy Angels

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the West Deanery are as follows:

Wednesdays 6-7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace,
 Danville
 Fridays 3:30-4:30 p.m. at St. Christopher and 5:30-6:30 p.m.
 at St. Gabriel the Archangel
 Saturdays 4-6 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel

New Albany Deanery

March 9, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
 March 14, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
 March 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd
 County
 March 22, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Mary,
 New Albany
 March 22, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New
 Albany
 March 23, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg



A World Youth Day pilgrim offers her confession to Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, England, in 2016 in Krakow, Poland. (OSV News photo/CNS file, Bob Roller)

March 27, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight
 March 28, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Navilleton
 March 29, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
 March 29, 7 p.m. in English and Spanish at St. Michael,
 Charlestown
 March 30, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Seymour Deanery

March 8, 7 p.m. for St. Bartholomew, Columbus, and
 Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, at St. Bartholomew
 March 14, 6 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God,
 Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of
 Peace
 March 15, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour

Tell City Deanery

March 5, 3 p.m. at St. Boniface, Fulda
 March 12, 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

March 10, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. for St. Patrick and St. Margaret
 Mary, Terre Haute, at St. Margaret Mary
 March 13, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph University, Terre Haute
 March 22, 6:30 p.m. for St. Joseph, Rockville, and
 Sacred Heart, Clinton, at Sacred Heart
 March 23, 7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
 April 1, 10-11 a.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
 April 2, noon-3 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Terre Haute Deanery are as follows:

Thursdays 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Joseph University,
 Terre Haute
 Saturdays 3:30-4:30 p.m. at St. Joseph University,
 Terre Haute †

Noem signs bill banning surgeries, interventions for transgender minors

(OSV News)—South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem signed legislation on Feb. 13 banning certain types of medical or surgical gender reassignment procedures for minors who identify as transgender.

The bill, HB 1080, scheduled to go into effect on July 1, prohibits health care providers in the state from performing certain types of hormonal or surgical gender reassignments on minors. Violators face having their medical license revoked and the potential for civil action.

The bill text states that health care professionals “may not, for the purpose of attempting to alter the appearance of, or to validate a minor’s perception of, the minor’s sex, if that appearance or perception is inconsistent with the minor’s sex, knowingly.”

In a statement calling the legislation the “Help Not Harm” bill, the governor’s office said the bill prohibits certain medical and surgical interventions for minors.

“South Dakota’s kids are our future. With this legislation, we are protecting kids from harmful, permanent medical procedures,” Noem said in a statement. “I will always stand up for the next generation of South Dakotans.”

Noem’s signature on the bill follows comparable legislative actions. Earlier in February, she signed a bill blocking transgender student athletes from competing on sports teams opposite their biological sex. Noem vetoed a similar transgender sports bill in 2021, citing concerns about potential litigation from the National Collegiate Athletic Association if she did so.

Noem, who is Republican, has recently fueled speculation she may enter the 2024 Republican presidential primary, while also striving to remain allied with former President Donald J. Trump, who is running for a second term. Noem has sharply criticized former U.N. Ambassador and South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who declared her Republican candidacy on Feb. 14, as well as Gov. Ron DeSantis, R-Fla., a Catholic who also is seen as a likely contender although has not yet declared his candidacy.

The controversial issue of gender will likely become a frequent topic of the Republican primary as states either move to restrict or protect such interventions. Lawmakers in Minnesota recently proposed legislation that would make the state a “trans refuge” for youth experiencing gender dysphoria.

Joseph Meaney, president of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, praised the new South Dakota law’s “emphasis on children.”

“If they are given large doses of puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones,

that tends to trap people into a gender transition,” Meaney told OSV News, explaining children aren’t equipped to make such “life changing” decisions that could come at the future cost of their health or their fertility later in life.

Meaney said the Church teaches that God created each person, including their sex, and that it cannot be changed, but young people are uniquely vulnerable to attempts otherwise.

“It’s particularly important for young people to have a non-interventionist approach,” he said.

Matt Sharp, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom and director of its Center for Legislative Advocacy, praised the bill, arguing that “denying the truth that we are either male or female hurts real people, especially vulnerable children.

“By enacting this legislation, South Dakota has taken critical steps to protect children from radical activists that peddle gender ideology and pressure children into life-altering, experimental procedures and drugs,” he said.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an LGBTQ+ political advocacy group, criticized the bill, calling it discriminatory.

Cathryn Oakley, HRC’s state legislative director and senior counsel, said in a statement that Noem was “wielding the power of the state to discriminate against these kids simply because they’re transgender.

“This dangerous and discriminatory

policy ignores the facts about gender-affirming care and only breathes more oxygen into the misinformation and extremism that far-right politicians like Governor Noem seem all too eager to dabble in for their own purposes and at the expense of these kids,” Oakley said.

But Sharp said “science and common sense tell us that children aren’t mature enough to properly evaluate the serious ramifications of making certain decisions; the decision to undergo dangerous and likely sterilizing gender transition procedures is no exception.”

“We commend Gov. Noem and the South Dakota Legislature for standing up for the truth by enacting these vital protections for our children,” Sharp said.

Catholic dioceses are starting to grapple with pastoral approaches to gender dysphoria. The Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, issued in 2022 new guidelines for transgender youth stating that diocesan schools should demonstrate “conformity with the student’s biological sex as determined from conception and manifest at birth and at the time of the student’s enrollment.”

The Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, issued on Jan. 16 new guidance and policies on ministering to people experiencing gender dysphoria. It called for coherence with the Church’s teaching on the inseparability of gender from biological sex while emphasizing pastoral compassion for children and adults experiencing an incongruence between their sex and gender. †



Gov. Kristi Noem

ARMY

continued from page 1

Still, *the* best part of meeting them is learning how they've combined the joy of their friendship and their love of food in a wonderful effort that helps others—an effort that has led to national recognition for these two fifth-grade students at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington.

Alex and Ella are among the 11 Catholic school students across the country to receive this year's Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision Award from the National Catholic Educational Association.

The award "recognizes students in elementary and secondary schools who through selfless service, determination, innovation and strong ideals are changing the world while bearing witness to their Catholic faith."

The girls received the honor for leading a student-run organization called "Alexandra's Army," which has collected nearly 10,000 pounds of food in the past two years to help feed families in need in southern Indiana.

When the girls learned about the honor, it took some time for it to sink in.

"I was really excited," says Alex, the daughter of Skip and Heather Daley. "And then I kind of just sat down for a while because the TV was on. So I thought about it while watching TV."

"I had just come home after gymnastics practice and my mom was like, 'I have a surprise for you,'" says Ella, the daughter of Eric and Lindsey Spoonmore. "I was thinking she was going to get me chocolate. Then she said, 'You won the award.' And I was like, 'What?!' I had ice cream after it, so that was good, too."

A touch of fun and the start of an army

Actually, the award is not something the two friends ever dreamed of receiving. Instead, their focus has always been on *giving*—a focus that began for Alex when she was 4, going door-to-door in her neighborhood collecting cans of food for the Hoosier Hills Food Bank.

"Randomly one night, when me and my dad were in the kitchen, he asked me if I wanted to do something to help the community somehow," Alex recalls. "I was like, 'Yeah, sure.' Then he gave me a whole bunch of options. I chose to do a food drive because it sounded fun. I did my own food drive for four years, and each year I got more and more food."

After she collected about 150 pounds when she was 8, her approach and her vision expanded. Alexandra's Army was born from her idea of inviting friends and recruiting other children to work together to collect food for people in need. Ella joined the effort as the secretary and community chair.

"From the beginning, Alexandra's Army was truly student-led," notes Kirstin Maxwell, a science teacher at St. Charles Borromeo School.

Maxwell's admiration shows as she shares how Alex, Ella and their team developed a website to recruit volunteers, contacted businesses for sponsorships and created T-shirts for the volunteers to wear.

"The real heart of the initiative was the recruitment and training of their young peers who hit the streets in an organized operation," Maxwell says. "Not only had Alexandra and Ella written a script to be read by the volunteers, they had even made a video of the do's and



The children who form Alexandra's Army do everything from collecting food donations to sorting them—efforts that have led to the collection of nearly 10,000 pounds of food to help families in southern Indiana. (Submitted photo)

don'ts of knocking on doors and asking for donations."

As organized and impressive as the effort was, it all started in the midst of a challenging pandemic that had created a food and hunger crisis for a growing number of families throughout Monroe County and its surrounding counties.

"In Indiana, 14% of the population live below the poverty line, and 12% of Hoosiers struggle to put food on the table daily. This means one in six Indiana children are food insecure," Maxwell notes. "In our region, these statistics would be much higher without the support of groups such as Alexandra's Army."

"Our neighboring counties are quite disadvantaged and can offer very little services to their residents. Bloomington supplies many services, including food donations, to all the nonprofit organizations in our county, as well as the surrounding counties. The COVID-19 pandemic turned this long-term problem into a crisis situation."

Amid that crisis situation and a global pandemic, two girls and their "army" of about 70 children hit the streets to fight hunger and offer hope. In 2021, they collected 4,585 pounds of food. In 2022, their haul increased to 5,011 pounds.

The best feeling

One of Ella's and Alex's favorite parts of Alexandra's Army is the day of the food drive. Each child's haul of food is individually weighed and announced, leading to a round of cheers and applause for each child. Then the total amount of food collected is added, and the cheers and the applause soar again.

At the end of the day, all the children receive a treat. The first year, it was ice cream. The second year it was pizza. Yet as much as both girls enjoyed the treats, there's one reward they savor more.

"I really like the feeling afterward knowing that we've really helped a lot of people," Alex says as Ella nods in agreement.

"It's outstanding what they've done," says Jake Bruner, associate director of Hoosier Hills Food Bank, which serves about 100 member agencies in southern Indiana that ultimately helps feed about 30,000 people each year.

"I think that's what we should be doing with our youth today. When I started working here about 13 years ago, one of the concerns I had was that the population of our food pantry volunteers was aging. We need to think about the future of social services and security nets in our communities, and that's going to start from our youth. One of the most important things about Alexandra's Army is getting kids involved in volunteering and realizing there's a need out there."

Alex and Ella and their fellow members of Alexandra's Army are already starting to gear up for this year's food drive, which right now they're planning to hold in June.

The girls see their efforts as living the faith-filled education they are receiving at St. Charles.

"In religion class, we have stories about what Jesus did," Alex says. "We talk about how to help people."

"It helps us understand what we can do," Ella says.

The mention of Jesus leads the girls to consider what he would say about what they and all the members of Alexandra's Army are doing to help others.

"I think he would be very proud of us," Alex says. Ella adds, "I think he would like it."

Both girls look at each other and smile. It's a shared smile of accomplishment, satisfaction and, most of all, the joyous feeling of how wonderful it is to have such a close friend. †

U.K. priest, lay volunteer acquitted after being charged for silent prayer

BIRMINGHAM, England (OSV News)—A court has acquitted a Catholic priest and a pregnancy counselor of crimes in connection with the "harassment of abortion clinic clients."

District Judge David Wain on Feb. 16 dismissed charges against Father Sean Gough and Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, in a matter of seconds, in a hearing at Birmingham Magistrates Court.

Vaughan-Spruce, co-director of March for Life UK, was arrested, searched, detained and charged in December after she was approached by three officers outside a closed British Pregnancy Advisory Services abortion facility and admitted to them that she "might be" praying in her head.

Father Gough, a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, was charged the same month after he subsequently held up a placard outside the clinic, also closed at the time, which read: "Praying for Free Speech."

"Nobody should be criminalized for offering help. Nobody should be criminalized for their prayers. Nobody should be criminalized for their thoughts," Vaughan-Spruce said in front of the court after being acquitted.

Father Gough similarly expressed relief at having been cleared of all charges and said afterward that "whatever your views are on abortion, we can all agree that a democratic country cannot be in the business of prosecuting thought crimes."

In November, Birmingham City Council imposed a Public Spaces Protection Order prohibiting any activity within 492 feet (150 meters) of the clinic which might be aimed at influencing or harassing clients.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dropped the charges against Father Gough and Vaughan-Spruce in January, but the two decided to exercise their legal right for a court verdict on whether their behavior had been criminal.

In court on Feb. 16, the CPS offered no evidence against either of them.

Wain said: "Because the prosecution decided to offer no evidence the matter is brought to an end. That brings proceedings to an end. ... You are free to go."

Speaking outside the court, Vaughan-Spruce said: "I'm glad I've been completely vindicated of any wrongdoing but I should never have been arrested and

treated like a criminal simply for silently praying on a public street."

After being arrested she was asked by the police "what I was silently praying for."

"I told them I was praying for people like my friend Amy, who was raped and became pregnant and was pressured into having an abortion which she deeply regretted; for people like Natalia, who took the abortion pills then passed her baby at home and saw that child down the toilet, which deeply traumatized her; for people like Kirsty, who also passed her child at home, in her own bed, and on lifting up the covers saw what she described as being like a scene from a horror movie," she said.

"This is where the true crime exists—women being sold the lie that abortion will solve their difficulties in pregnancy, that this is being endorsed by the government and that attempts to offer women alternatives are being described as either criminal or anti-social," Vaughan-Spruce said.

"What is profoundly anti-social is that it is still legal to deprive certain human beings of their most basic freedom—the

freedom to live—and that steps are now being taken to censor freedom of speech, freedom to offer help, freedom to pray and even freedom to think," she continued.

Father Gough said, "I pray every day, everywhere I go. Prayer can never be a crime."

Jeremiah Igunnubole, legal counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom UK, an advocacy group which has supported the pair, said the court case was "of great cultural significance."

"It's a great moment to celebrate the vindication of Father Sean and Isabel. But our Parliament is considering rolling out censorial legislation, which could lead to more situations where people's thoughts are on trial."

In January, the House of Lords, Britain's second political chamber, voted for the national roll out of buffer zones around all abortion centers.

They supported Amendment 45 to the Public Order Bill, tabled by Conservative peer Baroness Sugg of Coldharbour, to make it a crime to influence "any person's decision to access, provide or facilitate the provision of abortion services." †

Compassion, communion resonate in Syria among Christians affected by quake

BEIRUT (OSV News)—“My uncle. Please pray for us.” Jesuit Father Tony Homsey received the WhatsApp text message before dawn on Feb. 6 from his 14-year-old nephew in Aleppo, Syria.

Sleeping at the Jesuit residence in Beirut, Lebanon, where he was visiting, Father Homsey was not yet aware of the catastrophic 7.8 magnitude earthquake that had struck Turkey and Syria shortly after 4 a.m., severely hitting his native Aleppo.

A second earthquake struck the border region of Turkey and Syria on Feb. 20, authorities said, killing six people, two weeks after the massive quake killed more than 47,000 people and damaged or destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes. The Feb. 20 magnitude 6.4 earthquake, which hit just as the rescue work from the initial devastating earthquake was winding down, was centered near the Turkish city of Antakya and was felt in Syria, Egypt and Lebanon.

Within a few days of the first earthquake, Father Homsey returned first to Homs, Syria, where he serves as a parish priest and director of the Jesuit Cultural Center.

While Homs, 115 miles from Aleppo, suffered damage in the catastrophic earthquake—many buildings have already been destroyed and scarred by the 12-year war—“it’s the psychological impact of the disaster that has struck the people,” Father Homsey told OSV News.

“People are reliving again this story of a horrible tragedy,” the priest said. “It’s not only the devastating earthquake, but 12 years of war.”

Father Homsey said he felt that people need to share trauma and express themselves more than before the Feb. 6 tragedy.

“It was like the earthquake had released to the surface all their emotions

and fear,” he said. “There are scars from the war still not healed yet.”

Father Homsey’s 14-year-old nephew, whose father was killed by a bomb in Aleppo in 2016, once again faced “the nightmare of death” all around him.

What was especially striking for the young boy was the death of Melkite Father Emad Daher, who had been the youth minister in Aleppo. Father Daher perished in the earthquake rubble when part of the building near the residence of Archbishop Jean-Clement Jeanbart of Aleppo collapsed.

Such sorrow and shock stirred up existential questions from Father Homsey’s nephew, such as, “Why didn’t God stop the earthquake?”

The priest noted that his nephew is representative of the new generation of youth in Syria who have experienced war and now yet another horrific tragedy.

Father Homsey said his parents, who are in their 70s, his widowed sister and nephew were not injured and their home is liveable.

People ran to the churches, he said, noting that “the very first response was there. People remember that the Church is a mother that can hold them.”

During a brief visit to Aleppo, Father Homsey visited his childhood parish, the Latin-rite church of St. Francis of Assisi.

In the parish center where he had studied catechism in his youth, families were preparing to sleep. “Every church is a shelter now,” he said.

At the Jesuit center in Homs, where Father Homsey serves with five Jesuit priests, people immediately mobilized after the earthquake, volunteering.

Many families, displaced from Aleppo, have sought refuge in Homs, some two hours away from their destroyed homes, despite transportation difficulties amid already-existing fuel shortages.

“I am so touched by the generosity of



In a courtyard at the Jesuit center in Homs, Syria, volunteers prepare meals on Feb. 17 for people displaced, mostly from Aleppo more than 100 miles away, as a result of the catastrophic Feb. 6 earthquake. The Jesuits currently serve daily meals for the displaced, which is double the amount earlier in February, and the needs keep increasing as more displaced people arrive. (OSV News photo/ Courtesy of Jesuit Father Tony Homsey)

the people of Homs, considered one of the poorest, most damaged” from the war, Father Homsey said.

The center in Homs quickly filled with clothes, mattresses, blankets and food.

“The response of the people is amazing. It’s very moving for me,” the priest said. “Anything they have, they want to share, giving out of their own needs” amid a severe economic crisis, Father Homsey added. Such outreach is happening all over Syria.

“I can see in each one, the widow giving two pennies,” he said referring to the “widow’s mite” (Mk 12:41-44, Lv 21:1-4), even though before the earthquake, 90% of Syrians were living below the poverty line.

“One thing we need to make known: Every single family in Syria is suffering in a severe economic situation,” Father Homsey told OSV News.

In Homs, the Jesuit field kitchen is

currently preparing daily meals for 700 displaced people who came to the city, mostly from Aleppo, double the amount of meals a few days earlier. And the needs keep increasing.

“The numbers of displaced are getting higher as more buildings are marked as unsafe,” Father Homsey pointed out.

“We cannot blind ourselves to our brothers and sisters who are in need. God’s love will translate by acts of charity and love,” he pointed out.

(Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Catholic Church’s overseas relief and development agency, is accepting donations. They can be made online by going to the CRS website, support.crs.org/donate/earthquakes. Donations can also be mailed to: Catholic Relief Services, Turkey Earthquake Relief [include in memo line], P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, MD 21203-7090.) †

O’CONNELL

continued from page 1

The next day, the LA Sheriff’s department announced that Bishop O’Connell’s death was being investigated as a homicide.

Luna established a timeline based on the work of detectives that indicated that at 7 p.m. on Feb. 19 a tip was received linking Medina to the murder.

“They were concerned he was acting strange [and] irrational, and made comments about the bishop owing him money,” Luna said of the tip from the informant.

The tipster also said Medina had left his residence in Torrance and was headed for the central California area.

After obtaining an arrest warrant, police began a search of Medina’s home. Another tip at 2 a.m. on Feb. 20 indicated that Medina had returned home, and Carson deputies were dispatched to the scene. Medina refused to come out of his residence when asked to surrender, Luna said.

The original search warrant was amended so Medina’s house could again be searched. A tactical team dispatched again called for Medina’s surrender, and he was then taken into custody around 8:15 a.m. without further incident.

Luna said two firearms were recovered and are being tested to see if they were used in the murder.

In an emotional press conference, Luna said “my heart grieves” for the death of Bishop O’Connell, based on all the calls of support he received in the investigation during the last 48 hours.

“This man, this bishop, made a huge difference in our community,” said Luna. “He was loved. It is very sad that we are gathered here today about this murder.”

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, one of the speakers at the press conference, stopped several times during his remarks to collect himself. At one point, Luna put his arm around the archbishop’s shoulder to comfort him.

“On behalf of our entire community, I want to share thanks for your professionalism and sensitivity,” Archbishop Gomez said of the investigation. “It is a sad and painful moment for all of us. Let us keep praying for Bishop Dave and his family, just as he prayed for law enforcement officials.”

Archbishop Gomez on Feb. 19 called on Catholics to pray for the late bishop and those investigating his death.

“We continue to pray for Bishop Dave, and for his family in Ireland, and we pray for law enforcement officials as they continue their investigation into this terrible crime,” he said at a Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels that morning.

In his homily at a liturgy on Feb. 19, Archbishop Gomez pointed out that he and Bishop O’Connell had just celebrated the annual Mass for the Sick together a week earlier on Feb. 11.

“We had a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary on that side of the sanctuary,” explained Archbishop Gomez. “So as he was starting the homily, he went over there and prayed to the Blessed Mother. And then he turned around and said at the beginning of the homily: ‘She told me to tell you that she loves you.’”

“That is who Bishop Dave was,” continued the archbishop. “He had a wonderful sense of humor and a beautiful devotion to Our Blessed Mother. We all miss him very much.”

In an earlier statement on Feb. 18, Archbishop Gomez called the death of Bishop O’Connell a “shock” and said he had “no words to express my sadness.”

Luna confirmed that a deacon from nearby St. John Vianney Parish in Hacienda Heights was the first to find Bishop O’Connell, making a welfare check on him after he was late for a meeting, then dialing 911. Bishop O’Connell was found in his bed with at least one gunshot wound. No firearm was recovered at the home, nor were there signs of forced entry, Luna said.

After interviewing neighbors, Luna said surveillance video showed a vehicle had pulled into Bishop O’Connell’s driveway—a dark-colored compact SUV—which was later linked to the car his housekeeper had used.

Luna emphasized their investigation has not confirmed anything about a financial dispute between Medina and Bishop O’Connell, only that information came from a witness.

“Our investigation continues ... to get a better picture of what happened here,” said Luna. “The detectives will go out and validate.”

Luna added that not all information from the investigation will be revealed yet, as “keeping the integrity of the investigation is a priority,” he said. “The next step is to present all of

the evidence and try to get a criminal prosecution [filed against] Medina.”

Bishop O’Connell was originally from Brooklodge, Glanmire, in County Cork, the largest county in Ireland. He studied for the priesthood at the former All Hallows College in Dublin and was ordained to serve in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1979.

Bishop O’Connell was named an auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles by Pope Francis in July 2015. Since then, he had served as episcopal vicar for the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, one of the LA archdiocese’s five regions.

During his time as auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, evangelization, pastoral care for immigrants and ensuring the future of his region’s Catholic schools were all top priorities for Bishop O’Connell, who believed that “parishes and schools are powerful instruments of transformation of people’s lives and of neighborhoods.”

Before being named a bishop, he was well-known for his pastoral work in south LA—where he served as pastor of four different parishes—in the years before and after the 1992 Rodney King riots. He played a key role, along with other local faith leaders, in bringing together communities already suffering from gang violence, poverty and drugs, while working to restore trust between community members and law enforcement. †

Message of condolence from Archbishop Thompson to Archbishop José H. Gomez

Dear Archbishop Gomez:

Peace in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, I express deepest sympathy and assurance of prayer for you and the good people throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as you grieve the tragic death of Auxiliary Bishop David O’Connell. No doubt, such a horrendous act stirs up much emotion and triggers many questions.

Please be assured of our thoughts with you in this very difficult time as well as in the days, weeks and months ahead while dealing with the impact of this tragedy. Our prayers are especially offered for the mending of wounds,

the healing of hearts, the rendering of justice tempered with mercy, and the reconciliation of all involved. May Bishop David, a good and faithful servant, enjoy eternal peace gazing on the face of God. May the Holy Spirit console you and all those who mourn in abundance of faith and hope.

Entrusting you and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary, I remain

Faternally yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Ukrainian Catholics hail President Biden's surprise visit to Kyiv for bravery, 'amazing boost of hope'

(OSV News)—U.S. President Joe Biden's unexpected Feb. 20 visit to Kyiv, calmly walking alongside Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as air raid sirens wailed in the capital, is being hailed as a surprise and a signal to the world, Ukrainian Catholic leaders told OSV News.

Ahead of the first anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Biden arrived in Kyiv at 8 a.m. local time, following an unannounced 4:15 a.m. Eastern time departure the day prior from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

Biden spent more than five hours in Kyiv, meeting with Zelenskyy at Mariinsky Palace and walking to key sites in the city, including St. Michael Cathedral—with air raid sirens sounding, a near constant feature of life for Ukrainians living there.

"We wouldn't expect that President Biden would come to the capital. Maybe Lviv, as it's safer, but Kyiv? It's really an amazing boost of hope and strength for us," Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia told OSV News. "People were shocked. Some even thought this was an early April fool's [joke], but it is for real, and somehow we all got the positive feeling that maybe war is finally coming to an end."

Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia and head of all Ukrainian Catholics in the U.S. told OSV News Biden's decision to head to Kyiv caught him off guard.

"I was pretty much convinced [Biden] would come to Ukraine, but I was not sure he would go all the way to capital," Archbishop Gudziak said. "I thought he would meet [with Zelenskyy] somewhere near the Polish border because of security concerns."

Archbishop Gudziak, who has just returned to the U.S. following his sixth visit to Ukraine during the past year, said Ukrainians are deeply grateful for what he called "outstanding" American support. He said one woman in Bucha—where a mass grave of Ukrainian civilians murdered by Russian troops was discovered in April 2022—urged him to "thank all Americans and President Biden."

"There's nothing stronger than presence, and the presence of the president underlines his personal commitment, and that of the U.S. government and people, to freedom and democracy," Archbishop Gudziak told OSV News.

Biden and Zelenskyy laid wreaths at Kyiv's Wall of Remembrance, which honors Ukrainian soldiers killed since Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014 by annexing Crimea and arming a separatist movement in Ukraine's Donbas region.

"One year later, Kyiv stands. And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you," Biden said in an address, according to reporters present.

Biden's visit was "a very brave move," Eugene Luciw, president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America's Philadelphia chapter and a member of



U.S. President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy walk next to St. Michael's Orthodox Cathedral in Kyiv on Feb. 20. Biden made an unannounced visit to Ukraine to meet with Zelenskyy, a gesture of solidarity that came days before the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of the country on Feb. 24, 2022. (OSV News photo/Gleb Garanich, Reuters)

Presentation of Our Lord Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Lansdale, Pa., told OSV News.

Seeing pictures of Biden—the U.S.'s second Catholic president—and Zelenskyy before St. Michael Orthodox Cathedral was particularly striking, Luciw said.

"I got this feeling, with St. Michael the Archangel, the patron of Kyiv, and with President Biden as a worldly sort of guardian of Ukraine—to have both spiritual and earthly guardians in that image was very moving," he said.

Luciw also pointed out that St. Michael Cathedral was used as a field hospital during the 2014 Revolution of Dignity (also known as the Maidan Revolution), when scores of Ukrainians were killed and hundreds injured as Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovych, then president of Ukraine, cracked down on thousands of protesters who sought to align Ukraine with the European Union.

"The injured were treated there when hospitals were inaccessible," said Luciw. "This cathedral has always been symbolic. It stands regardless of how many times Ukraine has been attacked over the centuries. The bells have always rung, warning of an attack coming. The cathedral itself is a bulwark to Ukraine's defense, with St. Michael as the patron of Kyiv."

Luciw said Biden's visit "gave me the feeling that Ukraine is going to win, at a terribly massive cost—but Ukraine is destined to win with all that strength behind it."

Father Roman Pitula, rector of the

Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia, said he was struck by the fact the visit coincided with the Feb. 20 memorial of Ukraine's "Heavenly Hundred"—the 107 protesters killed during the Revolution of Dignity.

With fears that China could move to invade Taiwan in the coming years, Biden's visit had a message for more than Moscow, said Nicholas Rudnytzky, professor of history and dean of academic services at Manor College in Jenkintown, Pa., a school with deep historical roots in the U.S. Ukrainian-Catholic community.

"Democracies are undaunted," Rudnytzky told OSV News. "A free people should not be allowed to be suppressed and dominated by a greater power. Might does not make right in the 21st century. The dogmas of the past need to be buried, and certain fundamental principles and rights we've all agreed upon since World War II cannot be violated."

Archbishop Gudziak agreed, saying he hoped Biden's visit would "help many Americans refocus on the fact that Ukraine today is the epicenter of global change."

A victorious Ukraine will ensure that "tyranny and dictators will be humbled," said the archbishop. "The imperialism and colonialism of not only Putin, but that of other dictators will be undermined."

With a renewed Russian offensive expected soon, Bishop Sobilo said Biden's visit was "like a movie scene—and we're hoping for a happy ending."

"I hope this visit is the beginning of the end of this war," said Father Pitula. †



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SIMPLY CATHOLIC



Bishop Ronald W. Gainer of Harrisburg, Pa., greets Jessica Bassili of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, Pa., and her sponsor during a Rite of Election at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg. Catholics interested in learning about the faith and passing it on to others can help evangelize by participating as a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults team member or sponsor. (CNS photo/Chris Heisey, *The Catholic Witness*)

Effective evangelization uses our God-given gifts and talents

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

All believers are called to do their part in the Church's mission in proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples of all nations.

How that mission is carried out in particular situations can depend on both the qualities and gifts of individual believers as well as how the person being evangelized can best receive the Gospel.

People have different talents or life experiences that make certain ways of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others more effective for them.

Here are some examples.

—Some people are active. They might help clean their parish church or help with its clothing drive. They evangelize by inviting others to join them. One woman decided to become Catholic after a friend invited her to help at her parish's soup kitchen.

—Some people have had difficult lives. They can relate to others in similar situations. They evangelize by sharing how their Catholic faith helped them through a death in the family, an illness or some other difficulty.

—Some people are willing to share their own personal story of being away from the Church for a while and finding a new life in Christ when they returned.

—Some people like to study the Catholic faith and share what they've learned with others. They evangelize by becoming catechists, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults team members or by becoming involved in adult faith formation and apologetics.

—Some people love to meet new people. They evangelize by helping to make the parish more welcoming. One lapsed Catholic came back to the Church after someone in the pews asked if he would like to join the choir.

—Some people join an evangelization ministry in their parish and develop creative ways to invite inactive Catholics and people who are unchurched to parish events.

—Some people casually bring God into the conversation at work or in the community without being overbearing or offensive.

—Some people are willing to pray with people who are going through a difficult time. You should be constantly on the lookout for people who may be open to a conversion experience.

In addition to Catholics using the particular gifts God has given them to share the Gospel more effectively, all people involved in evangelization—and that means all the Church's faithful—should discern how best to reach those with whom they seek to share the Gospel.

Here are seven signs that someone might be open to evangelization:

1. The most common sign is when people begin to ask questions about God, good and evil or the meaning of life.
2. Reminiscing about Catholic school, nuns, priests or parish activities is another sign that someone may be open to having God or the Church play a larger role in his or her life.
3. Asking about where they can find Catholic reading materials is yet another sign. It's a good idea to keep a supply of Catholic books, newspapers, magazines and pamphlets on hand.
4. Comments about the pope, the Church or parish activities can be someone's way of starting a conversation about faith.
5. Major life events or crises such as illness, death, the birth of a baby, graduations, a job loss or transfer, moving to a new home, separation and divorce, financial difficulties, tension and other stress-related situations can trigger a desire to find a closer connection to God and the Church.
6. Experiencing the presence of God during a Mass, a funeral or the celebration of a sacrament might lead a person to explore the role of faith in his or her life.
7. Noticing your faith, love and deep sense of inner peace can capture the attention of people who are searching for God. Don't be surprised if people begin to ask about your spiritual life. At that point, you'll know that you are truly an evangelizer and the Holy Spirit is working through you.

The word "evangelization" comes from the Greek word *euaggelizomai*, which means "to announce good news" or "proclaim glad tidings." The early Christians used the word when they spread the news about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the Church, evangelization has played a key role in converting people to Christ. Some of the greatest saints sacrificed their lives to spread the good news of Jesus.

Today, evangelization is becoming an increasingly important part of Catholic life following the direction of Pope St. John Paul II, whose call for a "new evangelization" captured the minds, hearts and imaginations of Catholics all over the world.

(Lorene Hanley Duquin is the author of Catholic books, pamphlets and articles on a variety of evangelization and ministry topics. She has conducted workshops in parishes and at diocesan conferences in the United States and Canada.) †



Volunteers Wilman Gonzalez and Marta Corradi prepare to distribute plates of food at a soup kitchen run by the Missionaries of Charity in an apartment building in the South Bronx section of New York. Some people share the Gospel by helping people in need and inviting others to help them. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Hispanic Ministry/Felix Navarrete

The Church, though many, makes up one body of Christ

As we go through an era of divisiveness and irrationalism, we find ourselves in a world that increasingly cries to find a point of balance, a true understanding of cultures, races and languages. This need is indisputably authentic and must be categorized as urgent in society and, especially,



within our Church.

As Catholic Christians, we are called to understanding, service, solidarity and a search for the common good.

The Apostle Paul continues to be a prophet for our times. In his letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us that whoever fails to love has nothing of worth. Even when our actions are good, if we do not act out of love, those actions are useless.

This form of evangelization might sound a bit unorthodox to some, but when we leave behind our pride and objectively reflect on these words, we realize that it is actually Christ through Paul who calls us to a deep conversion through love.

Understanding is only reached through love. It is as if a veil comes off or a bandage is removed to let us know and interpret the needs of others.

Our faith reminds us it is not enough to have good intentions; in reality, what matters is to love. When one loves, a sublime feeling exists and good acts, including acts of mercy, are released. It is at that point that we

reach a true understanding of our call to discipleship.

Where there is love, there is no room for division. Where there is love, the wicked are not applauded. Where there is love, there is no pride.

If we claim to be the Church of Christ, why do we allow divisions to exist within our communities? Have we not been called to love? Our duty as members of the Church is, above all, to accept the will of God—even when the will of God today translates into a series of challenges that make us leave our comfort zone.

Our communities today are increasingly diverse. They no longer minister to a specific ethnicity, nor do they all speak the same language, nor are all professionals who have knowledge of the blessings of our intercultural family of faith.

Our Church has undergone a transformation, where migration is a determining factor in the evangelization process; where the influence of cultures has generated and will continue to generate changes in the representation of our parish ministries and Catholic schools; where we need to update the mission of each of our parishes and adapt the Gospel message we live.

In this movement of the Holy Spirit in each of our communities, we can experience a diversity of works, but we must realize it is the same God who works in us all.

St. Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, tells us, “The manifestation of the Spirit that each one is given is for the common

benefit” (1 Cor 12:7). In other words, all the gifts and charisms that come from the Holy Spirit and are manifested in each of the members are a gift to the community and promote the common good.

The rationality of our senses must be in perfect harmony with the Gospel message that calls us to be bearers of the good news, of a message of salvation that does not exclude people because of culture and the nuances of each race or language, but rather finds strength in a Church that by God’s will is diverse and whose diversity contributes to the extension of the kingdom toward the peripheries.

All of God’s people have a duty to incorporate their gifts at the service of the Church of Christ. It is imperative to seek the unity of his mystical body. “The parts of the body are many, but the body is one; no matter how many parts there are, they all form a single body. So also, is Christ; ... a single member is not enough to form a body, but many are needed; ... God has arranged the various members, placing each one in the body as he wanted; ... even more, the parts of the body that seem to be weakest are the most necessary” (1 Cor 12:12, 14, 18, 22).

In the Church of Christ, we are all necessary. Our diversity of talents makes it a continuous school of learning where we all share a single mission, to be disciples of the Master. What are you waiting for to accept God’s will in your ministry?

(Felix Navarrete is archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic Ministry.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

During Lent, hope can be reborn ‘even now’

“Even now.”

Those are the first words of the first reading for the first Mass in Lent, proclaimed two days ago on Ash Wednesday (Jl 2:12).



Those two little words should echo in our hearts from now until we celebrate Christ’s resurrection on Easter.

For they are words of hope. To the Lord,

it matters not what bad choices we’ve made or what bad habits we’ve fostered that bury hope deep under dark memories and dim views of ourselves.

He who was betrayed by one disciple and abandoned by the others save one, who was scourged and crucified, knows all too well how the hurts we’ve received from others through the years have torn hope out of our hearts.

It doesn’t matter what’s happened in the past to make hope an empty word. Even now, says the Lord, hope can be reborn within us.

The start of this rebirth can begin when we heed the voice of the Lord speaking to us through the prophet Joel: “return to me with your whole heart” (Jl 2:12).

Our hearts have been broken into pieces by our own faults and failings, by those of others and simply by life in a world marred by the ever-continuing ripple effects of original sin.

So, Our Lord invites us at the start of Lent to pick up the pieces of our broken hearts and give them to him.

Then the blood that flowed from his pierced and broken heart can heal our own, restoring wholeness to our hearts.

The message of mercy in those two little words, “even now,” should echo in our hearts all the more during Lent as we live in a world where our increasingly secular culture focuses more and more on sin, but less and less on forgiveness.

It’s important for us parents to foster the message of “even now” in the hearts of our children who are growing up and coming of age in this culture. And Lent is a good time to do this.

We parents know full well from past experience that the bright promises made on Ash Wednesday will be broken sooner or later, probably sooner.

But Our Lord invites us to make these oh-so-fragile resolutions nonetheless because of “even now.” He always has hope in us, even when we don’t have hope in ourselves. And not only does he have hope in us, he offers us his grace to make this Lent more like what he envisions for us, not the jaded view we might have because of the broken Lents of the past.

The seeds of such cynicism can be planted in the hearts of our children when they make their own resolutions and fail in carrying them out because, well, they’re broken humans like the rest of us.

The key for parents, grandparents, teachers and other adults who can form children is to be channels of God’s grace, instilling in them the message of “even now.” Then they can hold on to the hope of a better future for themselves, despite the mistakes they’ve made in the past and in the face of a culture that tells them to give up on hope-filled ideals, shrug their shoulders and give in to sin.

Helping our children to make the message of “even now” their own during Lent is a practice for us to do the same in the bigger moments of life.

When children and adults build their everyday lives with the help of God’s grace on the foundation of an “even now” hope, we can joyfully bring God’s light into our world that needs it so much. †

Ministerio Hispano/Felix Navarrete

La Iglesia, aunque numerosa, constituye el único cuerpo de Cristo

Mientras atravesamos la era del divisionismo y el irracionalismo desmedido, nos encontramos ante un mundo que cada vez más, gime por encontrar un punto de equilibrio, donde exista una verdadera comprensión de las culturas, razas y lenguas, esta necesidad es indiscutiblemente auténtica y debe ser categorizada como urgente en nuestros espacios sociales y en especial, dentro de nuestra iglesia.



Como Cristianos Católicos, estamos llamados a la comprensión, al servicio, a la solidaridad y a la búsqueda del bien común, el apóstol Pablo es un profeta para nuestros tiempos, en su carta a los Corintios, nos recuerda que, quién no tiene amor, nada vale, aún cuando nuestras acciones sean buenas, si no actuamos por amor, de nada sirven.

Esta forma de evangelización podría sonar un poco ortodoxa para algunos, no obstante, cuando dejamos nuestro orgullo y reflexionamos objetivamente en estas palabras nos damos cuenta, que en realidad es Cristo a través de Pablo quién nos llama a una profunda conversión mediante el amor, solamente mediante el amor se llega a la comprensión, es como si un velo se desprendiera o como si una venda se soltara para dejarnos conocer e interpretar las necesidades de los demás, no basta con ser bueno o tener buenas intenciones, en realidad lo que vale es amar, cuando se ama, es decir, cuando en nosotros existe ese sentimiento tan sublime, entonces se desprenden únicamente

actos buenos, actos de misericordia hacia nosotros mismos y hacia los demás, y alcanzamos la verdadera comprensión.

Donde hay amor, no hay lugar a la división, donde hay amor, no se aplaude a los malvados, donde hay amor, no hay orgullo. Si decimos ser la Iglesia de Cristo, ¿Porqué creamos espacios de división en nuestras comunidades? ¿Acaso no hemos sido llamados al amor? Nuestro deber como miembros de la iglesia es, ante todo, aceptar la voluntad de Dios, pues la voluntad de Dios hoy se traduce en una serie de retos que nos hacen salir de nuestra zona de confort, nuestras comunidades hoy en día son cada vez más diversas, ya no son todos blancos o negros, tampoco todos hablan un mismo idioma, ni todos son profesionales con conocimientos interculturales.

Nuestra iglesia ha sufrido una transformación en países como el nuestro, donde la migración es un factor determinante en el proceso de evangelización; donde la influencia de culturas ha generado y seguirá generando cambios en la representación de nuestros ministerios parroquiales y escuelas católicas, en la misión de cada una de nuestras parroquias, y en la adaptación del evangelio.

En este movimiento del Espíritu Santo en cada una de nuestras comunidades, podemos experimentar la diversidad de obras, pero a un mismo Dios que obra en todas, San Pablo nos dice en la Primera Carta a los Corintios, “La manifestación del Espíritu que a cada uno se le da es para provecho común” (1 Co 12:7). En otras palabras, todos los dones y carismas que provienen del Espíritu Santo y que se manifiestan

en cada uno de los miembros en nuestra iglesia son un regalo para la comunidad y fomentan el bien común.

La racionalidad de nuestros sentidos debe estar en perfecta armonía con el mensaje del evangelio que nos llama a ser portadores de la buena nueva, de un mensaje de salvación que no excluye a las personas por razón de la cultura y los matices propios de cada raza o lengua, sino más bien encuentra fortaleza en una iglesia que por voluntad de Dios es diversa y cuya diversidad coadyuva en la extensión del reino hacia las periferias.

No solo latinos y anglos, sino todo el pueblo de Dios, tenemos el deber de incorporar nuestros dones al servicio de la Iglesia de Cristo, es imperativo buscar la unidad del cuerpo místico de Cristo. “Las partes del cuerpo son muchas, pero el cuerpo es uno; por muchas que sean las partes, todas forman un solo cuerpo. Así también es Cristo; ... un solo miembro no basta para formar un cuerpo, sino que hacen falta muchos; ... Dios ha dispuesto los diversos miembros, colocando cada uno en el cuerpo como ha querido; ... aún más, las partes del cuerpo que parecen ser más débiles son las más necesarias” (1 Co 12:12, 14, 18, 22).

En la Iglesia de Cristo, todos somos necesarios, la diversidad de talentos hace de ella una escuela continua de aprendizaje, en donde todos compartimos una sola misión, ser discípulos del Maestro. Y tú, ¿Qué esperas para aceptar la voluntad de Dios en tu ministerio?

(Felix Navarrete es el coordinador del Ministerio Hispano en el Arquidiócesis de Indianapolis.) †

First Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 26, 2023

- Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
- Romans 5:12-19
- Matthew 4:1-11

The first reading for Mass on this first weekend of Lent 2023 is from the Book of Genesis.



Few passages in Scripture are as abundant in literary technique and in theological message as is this reading from Genesis. Bluntly confronting paganism and the tendency of all humans to avoid accusing themselves

of fault, it goes to the heart of sin.

The heart of sin is that it is the result of a freely chosen act by humans. While in this reading the role of the tempting devil is clear, it also is clear that the devil only tempts. The devil does not force the first man and woman to sin. They sinned of their own will.

The temptation has a lesson. Rebellious against God, the perfect and the perfectly just, was foolhardy. Yet, imperfect even in their pristine state of holiness, the first man and woman listened to bad advice and trusted not God but another.

It is a process that has been repeated untold number of times in the lives of us all.

The second reading is from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

In this reading, Paul looks back to the incident described in Genesis. He reminds us that by the original sin the first humans introduced sin and resulting chaos and trouble into earthly existence.

Thus, death and hardship are not God's designs for us. They were not curses sent upon the human race by an angry God. Believe it or not, the first humans chose them when they sinned. Sin, voluntary and deliberate, brought such devastatingly bad results into the world.

God is the center and source of everlasting love and mercy. He did not leave humanity in the whirlpool of death and despair created by human sin. Instead, God sent Jesus, the Redeemer, his own Son.

St. Matthew's Gospel provides the last reading. It recalls the temptation of Jesus. It is a story found in the synoptic Gospels of Mark and Luke, as well as Matthew.

As was the case with Genesis, this reading is heavy in its symbolism. For example, bread in the time of Jesus much more obviously represented survival than bread would today.

Modern refrigeration and quick transportation of food products have given us in our day a great variety of possible foods to consume.

In the time of Jesus, the selection was considerably less. There was no refrigeration. Few foodstuffs could be transported at any distance without spoiling. But grain and flour could be stored. Bread therefore was a principal food. So, as the devil tempts Jesus, bread is a familiar symbol of life and strength.

Then, the devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple and then to a high mountain peak to survey the world. It is diversion to think of the earthly and not the heavenly.

The final, most powerful message is that Jesus commands the devil. Jesus is God.

Reflection

This is the first weekend of Lent. The Church uses the opportunity of this weekend to teach us one of the most basic facts of spiritual life. Sin removes us from God. We are tempted, but we are not helpless before temptation. Sin cannot capture us against our will. We choose to sin.

Two deadly effects of original sin were to leave humanity with the mind that sin is not so important and that we are without the power to resist sin.

In these readings, the Church calls us to awake and turn away from sin. It reminds us of our own personal role in sin. It pleads with us not to underestimate temptations. They may be strong, but Jesus is God and gives us strength sufficient enough to overcome any temptation.

The Lord's strength fortifies us. This is the purpose of Lent. †

Daily Readings

Monday, February 27

St. Gregory of Narek, abbot and doctor of the Church
Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18
Psalm 19:8-10, 15
Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday, February 28

Isaiah 55:10-11
Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19
Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, March 1

Jonah 3:1-10
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19
Luke 11:29-32

Thursday, March 2

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25
Psalm 138:1-3, 7c-8
Matthew 7:7-12

Friday, March 3

St. Katharine Drexel, virgin
Ezekiel 18:21-28
Psalm 130:1-8
Matthew 5:20-26

Saturday, March 4

St. Casimir
Deuteronomy 26:16-19
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8
Matthew 5:43-48

Sunday, March 5

Second Sunday of Lent
Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
2 Timothy 1:8b-10
Matthew 17:1-9

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Orthodox, Eastern Catholics confer all sacraments of initiation on infants

Why do Orthodox Christians confirm their infants at baptism and also permit babies to receive the Eucharist, and why do Catholics wait? (New York)



Thank you for your interesting question. First, it's not only Orthodox Christians who confer all three sacraments of initiation at the time of baptism—Eastern

Catholics do this as well.

For some background, the universal Catholic Church includes not only the Latin (a.k.a. "Roman") Catholic Church to which most Catholics in the United States belong, but also a number of smaller Eastern Catholic Churches. Eastern Catholics are fully Catholic and fully in union with the pope, but they follow a slightly different form of canon law, and they are organized into their own dioceses led by their own bishops.

Often, individual Eastern Catholic

Churches are connected to a particular geographical area and culture. For example, Byzantine Catholics are generally of Slavic descent, and the Syro-Malabar Church has its roots in India. Because of cultural and historic reasons, Eastern Catholics have their own distinctive liturgical traditions and customs.

The difference in customs regarding the Christian initiation of infants amounts to a difference in emphasis between the broad liturgical traditions of Christian East and West.

In the Church's early days, when most Christians were adult converts, it was standard practice for the local bishop to baptize each new Christian personally, conferring confirmation in the same liturgy as the baptism.

As Christians grew more numerous and as more Christian

parents brought their children to be baptized, it became impractical for the bishop to baptize and confirm every new Catholic. Eventually, it became clear that other clergy would need to celebrate most baptisms.

In the Christian East, there was a great emphasis on the fundamental theological unity of the sacraments of initiation, which is why Eastern priests confirm and give the Eucharist to the babies they baptize.

In the Latin Catholic West, there was a greater sense of the importance of maintaining a direct connection with the diocesan bishop as the father of the local diocesan church. For Latin Catholics, the sacrament of confirmation came to be celebrated at a separate, later liturgy—the idea being that even if a simple parish priest celebrated an infant's baptism, the child could still be confirmed by the bishop himself.

For Latin Catholics, the history of our practices surrounding first Communion is long and rather complicated, as customs varied across the centuries. But our modern practice of children receiving their first Communion around the age of 7—the canonical "age of reason"—was established by Pope Pius X in 1910 with his decree "*Quam Singulari*."

Sometimes I become distracted at Mass and only really get refocused when I hear the consecration bells. Is that a sin? (Florida)

No. If you are accidentally getting distracted on occasion, this is not a sin. The Catholic faithful have an obligation to attend Mass by being physically present on Sundays and holy days of obligation; but the Church's law doesn't and can't require the faithful to have their minds perfectly focused for the entire length of the liturgy.

Of course, the more focused we reasonably can be, the better. Sometimes there are actions we can take to minimize distractions—perhaps turning off gadgets or taking time before Mass to recollect ourselves—and we should do what we can in this regard.

But God understands that we are human and our active minds wander sometimes. The important thing is just that we keep turning our focus back to the Mass whenever we catch our attention straying.

(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.) †

From 'I do' to 'They did!'



Married couples smile at the "Wedding Reception for Married Couples" event at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish on Feb. 11. The evening is one of four annual events offered by the Celebrate Marriage ministry, a Catholic organization seeking to help married couples live their marriage by God's design. For more information, go to celebratemarriage.org. (Submitted photo)

Rest in peace

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

BARTLEY, Michael R., 62, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 14. Husband of Joyce Bartley. Father of Dr. Micaela Harrison. Son of Sandra Bartley. Brother of Debra Strahl.

BEDEL, James L., 75, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 12. Husband of Donna Bedel. Father of Mark, Matt and Tom Bedel. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of four.

CARROLL, Elizabeth A., 93, Holy Family, New Albany, Dec. 12. Mother of Lisa Bennet, Mickey Boysza, Christie Gulley, Susan Reed, Shelia Wanner and Kevin Carroll. Sister of Lila Foster, Patricia O'Leary, Gerald and Peter Nulty. Grandmother and great-grandmother of several.

DONOHUE, Jr., Joseph T., 75, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Feb. 7. Husband of Sharon Donohue. Father of Matthew Donohue. Brother of Marsha Fecht, Jim and Kevin Donohue. Grandfather

of three. Great-grandfather of two.

DRISKELL, Hortencia (Aguilar), 85, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Feb. 3. Mother of Tannie Childress, Connie Pursel, Jackie Reed, Kathy and Ralph Driskell. Sister of Nancy Ryan. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 43. Great-great-grandmother of four.

FLYNN, Robert T., 61, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Jan. 29. Father of Sue Hambrick, Sharon Smith, Mary, Kevin and Robert Flynn. Brother of Dan, David, John, Matt and Steve Flynn. Grandfather of three.

GESWEIN, Bert, 87, Annunciation, Brazil, Feb. 11. Father of Cindy Rodman, Chuck and Jerry Geswein. Brother of Dave, Ed, Joe and Paul Geswein. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of several.

HERBER, William, 87, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 6. Husband of Ilonka Herber. Father of Ruth Anne Herber. Grandfather of one.

KUNKLER, Jerome P., 93, St. Mark, Perry County, Feb. 9. Husband of Marlene Kunkler. Father of Jerene Gilliam, Tina Kunkler-Laake, Jenny, Bill, Chris, Dan, David and Tony Kunkler. Brother of Albert Kunkler. Grandfather of 15. Great-grandfather of seven.

LECHER, Dennis J., 80, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 7. Husband of Gayla Lecher. Father of Jana Scott. Brother of Eugene, Robert, Ronald and Steven Lecher. Grandfather of seven.

MERRICK, Alice R., 87, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Jan. 31. Sister of Cleo Shadley and Larry Cecil. Aunt of one.

MORRIS, Ann (Cronin), 73, St. Pius X, Indianapolis,



Bishop Silvio Báez, auxiliary bishop of Managua, Nicaragua, in exile in Miami, speaks with Father José Luis Díaz, one of the priests released by President Daniel Ortega's regime on Feb. 9. On the far right is Father Benito Martínez Gamboa, another freed priest. The two concelebrated a Mass with Bishop Báez on Feb. 12 at St. Agatha Church in Miami, in thanksgiving for the release of more than 222 other Nicaraguan political prisoners. (OSV News photo/Rocio Granados, La Voz Católica/Florida Catholic)

Feb. 7. Mother of Greg and Matthew Morris. Sister of Jacque Disinger, Catherine Hayes, Patsy Sites, Mollie Weinberg, Marie and Tom Cronin. Grandmother of five.

PROCTOR, Jr., Walter J., 87, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Feb. 10. Father of Julie Cundiff and

Jody Proctor. Grandfather of two.

RODEWIG, Ronald, 65, St. Mary, New Albany, Jan. 29. Husband of Arlene Rodewig. Father of Cindy Hemmelgarn and Josh Bailey. Brother of Debbie. Grandfather of four.

ROSENGARTEN, H. Richard, 95, St. Pius X,

Indianapolis, Feb. 10. Father of Jean, Mary Beth, Jim and Rick Rosengarten. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of two.

TUCHER, Vincent J.P., 96, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 22. Husband of Alice Tucher. Father of Sccecina Hellenburg and Angeline

Veerkamp. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of two.

WERLE, William, 96, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Feb. 3. Father of Mary Norman, John and Joseph Werle. Grandfather and great-grandfather of several. †

Partners in mission: Dicastery promotes 'co-responsibility' of clergy, laity

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—For too many Catholics, ordained or lay, the responsibilities of the laity are those “delegated” by the priest or bishop.

As the continental assemblies for the Synod of Bishops make clear that hot-button issues—like sexuality, climate change and the role of women in the Church—are not going away, the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life is pointing at a more fundamental issue at stake in learning to be a “synodal Church”: What responsibility comes from baptism and unites all Catholics?

And, related to the synod's goal of promoting a Church where people listen to one another and work together to share the Gospel and care for the poor, the dicastery is asking: How do clergy and laity walk and work side by side?

The dicastery explored those questions on Feb. 16-18 at a conference titled, “Pastors and lay faithful called to walk together.” The meeting, in the Vatican Synod Hall,

had 210 participants from 74 countries: 107 laypeople, 36 priests and 67 bishops.

Cardinal Gérald Lacroix of Quebec, who was one of the main speakers, told reporters on Feb. 14 that before he was ordained, the Canadian bishops asked him to give his input ahead of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity.

“I said when you see a young person who comes to Church often, sometimes goes to Mass on weekdays, you often ask us, ‘Would you like to be a reader? Could you become a member of the pastoral council? How about joining the choir or being a catechist?’—which are all good things—but rarely do you encourage us in what we do in the midst of the world, not inside the interior of the Church.”

Obviously, laypeople have roles to play in the life of a parish, he said, but priests, bishops and cardinals also need to recognize the way Catholic laity are bringing the Gospel to the world through their jobs, their family life, their volunteering and their social engagement.

“The laypeople are not there at our service,” Cardinal Lacroix said. “We are together at the service of the mission of the Church.”

Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the dicastery, said, “I can assure you the laity have a lot more to offer than

a mere function that they can perform, such as being the accountant of the diocese or the finance officer of the diocese or overseeing the schools.

“We must go to a much deeper understanding of what it means to be co-responsible for the life of the Church” and that, he said, demands “a change of heart, a change of attitude. The laity are not always welcomed in every diocese of the world.”

As baptized Catholics, “we are all responsible for the Church,” he said. When Christ said to go baptize in the name of the Lord, to go preach the word of God to the ends of the Earth, he wasn't speaking just to the priests; he was speaking to everybody.”

In too many cases, Cardinal Farrell said, people think the word of God can be preached “only inside of the church” without accepting responsibility for preaching the Gospel “by what we say, by what we do, whether we are doctors, teachers, nurses, professors, journalists, editors—whatever it may be. And that requires coordinated work between the laity and priests.”

A first step in building a synodal Church, he said, is for pastors to stop seeing laypeople as those they “delegate” to fulfill certain tasks, as if their contribution to the Church is by invitation only.

At the same time, he said, the answer is not “the simple logic of replacement,” which is a position held by some people who think everything in the life of the Church would improve if laypeople replaced clerics in most positions, especially in decision-making and finance.

The solution is to accept “a renewed call by the Lord to walk together, each according to his or her own vocation, without attitudes of superiority, uniting energies, sharing the goals of the mission and assuming responsibility for the good of the Christian community,” Cardinal Farrell said.

Linda Ghisoni, an undersecretary of the dicastery and a canon lawyer, said the conference, like the synod, is trying to give people the tools to “reawaken an awareness of being the Church together” and “to promote shared processes, including shared decision-making processes,” with respect for the different gifts and roles people have.

A constant effort is necessary to leave behind a notion that the ordained have one “domain” and the laity have another, and the two cross only with specific permission, she said. Learning to actually live and work as “one body” takes practice. †



Speakers at a Vatican news conference pose for a photo on Feb. 14 after talking to journalists about the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life's international gathering to promote closer cooperation and a sense of co-responsibility between clergy and laity. From the left: Andrea Poretti, a leader of the Sant'Egidio Community in Argentina; Cardinal Gérald Lacroix of Quebec; Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, dicastery prefect; and Linda Ghisoni, dicastery undersecretary. (CNS photo/Cindy Wooden)

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

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



REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

- 1 Ethics Point**
Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810
- 2 Victim Assistance Coordinator**, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

Investing with Faith/Jim Maslar

Charitable Lead Trusts make a substantial difference you can see

When it comes to “big picture” charitable plans, there are many options for Catholics considering how to best



share with others the resources God has given them.

But because each person’s goals are different and their situation unique, no single approach to what’s known as “planned giving”:

giving incorporated into one’s annual, multi-year or lifetime/estate financial plans.

Planned giving can be a lot like farming. The land is prepared and tilled before seeding. And in many cases, those who do the planting leave a legacy of financial support but do not get to see the impact of their generosity.

That’s not the case, however, with a Charitable Lead Trust (CLT). In fact, with CLTs donors often arrange for the giving to happen during their life over a long period of time so they are able to see the fruits of their gifts to the organizations and causes they care about.

This is a major, though not only, way

in which CLT’s stand out and differ from other vehicles of charitable planned giving.

What is a Charitable Lead Trust and how does it work?

A CLT is an irrevocable agreement that creates a stream of income for a charitable organization from a donor’s transfer of assets. Payments are made for a predetermined period of time, and at the end of the trust’s term the remainder of the assets are transferred back to the donor or to the donor’s heirs.

What are the benefits of a CLT?

- A CLT can reduce or even eliminate estate taxes that are due when your wealth passes on to your family members. Lower interest rates mean greater savings in both gift and estate taxes.

- When the applicable federal rate is low, the calculated value of the charity’s income interest is greater, and that generates a higher charitable deduction. The value of the calculated remainder passing on to heirs is lower, and this is the amount on which the transfer tax is based.

- When you establish the trust, you

can take a sizable tax deduction that substantially reduces your taxable income. This is especially helpful for those who are looking for a way to offset a significant income event, such as the sale of a business or marketable securities.

- Creating a CLT during your lifetime reduces the size of your taxable estate when you die. And all appreciation in the value of your funded trust is completely free of gift and estate taxes, so you can pass more of your blessing on to the people you love.

You can set the payments to a qualified charitable organization as a fixed amount or as a percentage of trust assets. If you establish the CLT during your lifetime, you’ll be able to see your gift make a tangible difference in your community. The archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation welcomes such gifts designated for a specific purpose, but we are also grateful for unrestricted CLT gifts that allow us to direct support to our mission where it is most needed.

Who is a CLT for?

The quick answer is “not everyone.” A Charitable Lead Trust requires a substantial financial commitment over a long period of time. Individuals of

significant means who are interested in maximizing both charitable giving and their family’s eventual inheritance in a tax-friendly way might explore CLTs. These trusts can allow donors to make an immediate impact with charitable giving while reducing the gift and estate taxes that are incurred when passing wealth on to heirs.

Learn more

If you are interested in learning more about Charitable Lead Trusts or how a CLT may help you meet your personal giving and financial goals, the staff of the Catholic Community Foundation is here to help you. Please contact us at ccf@archindy.org or 317-236-1482.

(Jim Maslar is a Catholic philanthropic advisor for the archdiocese’s Catholic Community Foundation. Tax or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult with your legal, tax or financial advisors before implementing any gift plan. To learn more about charitable gift annuities that support the mission of Christ in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, e-mail ccf@archindy.org or call 317-236-1482.) †

FBI faces scrutiny about memo on ‘radical traditionalist Catholics’

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The FBI is facing scrutiny after a leaked memo suggested some “radical traditionalist” Catholics pose threats of racial or ethnically motivated violence. The memo has since been retracted by the bureau, a spokesperson told OSV News.

In a leaked memo dated Jan. 23, an analyst at the FBI’s Richmond Division said “radical traditionalist Catholics” are “typically characterized by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council.” The memo said the ideology can amount to an “adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and white supremacist ideology.” The memo also names far-right personality Nick Fuentes, who publicly self-identifies as Catholic and who the memo says has ties to “white Christian nationalism.”

However, the memo distinguishes “radical traditionalist” Catholics as “separate and distinct” from “traditionalist Catholics.” Catholics who “simply prefer the traditional Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II teachings.”

Nevertheless, the leaked FBI memo generated everything from unease over its contents to outrage from some quarters alleging the FBI was labeling all Catholics a threat.



Rick Garnett

Rick Garnett, a professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, told OSV News that although the FBI retracted the memo, “that it was ever composed is troubling.”

“While it probably does not violate America’s religious freedom laws for a law enforcement agency to discuss threats in particular communities, the memo echoes an ugly and long-standing tendency in the United States of seeing Catholics as somehow disloyal or particularly problematic,” Garnett said.

Robert A. Destro, a professor of law at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, told OSV News the FBI’s memo overstepped the agency’s realm of authority.

If the FBI had evidence of criminal conduct from a member of one of the groups, Destro said, “then it seems to me they should do exactly what they would do in a criminal case, which is they would get a warrant to wiretap them, maybe search their house.”

Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Va., expressed alarm at the memo’s contents.

“People of all faith groups have long found refuge in the constitutional protections of our great nation,” Bishop Knestout said in a statement. “We all seek to share in God’s gift of life, enjoy the fruits of liberty that our nation offers and assist one another in ensuring the common good.”

Bishop Knestout noted in his statement that some of the groups named in the memo are not in full communion with the Church, adding, “If evidence of extremism exists, it should be rooted out, but not at the expense of religious freedom.”

“A preference for traditional forms of worship and holding closely to the Church’s teachings on marriage, family, human sexuality and the dignity of the human person does not equate with extremism,” he said.

In a Feb. 16 statement, New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ religious liberty committee, said:

“Let me first be clear: Anyone who espouses racism or promotes violence is rejecting Catholic teaching on the inherent dignity of each and every person.”

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, he said, “roundly condemns such extremism and fully supports the work of law enforcement officials to keep our communities safe.”

Cardinal Dolan said he agreed with Bishop Knestout “that the leaked memorandum was nonetheless ‘troubling and offensive’ in several respects—such as in its religious profiling and reliance on dubious sourcing—and am glad it has been rescinded. We encourage federal law enforcement authorities to take appropriate measures to ensure the problematic aspects of the memo do not recur in any of their agencies’ work going forward.”

Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares, alongside attorneys general from 19 other states, including Indiana, sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland condemning the memo as “anti-Catholic.”

Miyares said in a statement that “Virginia is the birthplace of religious freedom and has a long history of protecting the inalienable right to live your faith free from government interference or intimidation.

“The leaked memo from our state capital’s FBI office is unacceptable,

unconstitutional and un-American. Frankly, it’s what I would expect from Communist Cuba,” Miyares said. “As attorney general, I’m responsible for defending Virginians’ rights, and religious freedom is the bedrock of the constitutions of the United States and of Virginia. Virginians should not and will not be labeled ‘violent extremists’ by their government because of how they worship or because of their beliefs.”

The same FBI memo noted that “conversely, deep-seated anti-Catholicism remains a characteristic of many far-right white nationalists.”

A cited source in the FBI memo is the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that monitors “hate groups” but has faced criticism from some who say the group too widely applies that label.

A spokesperson for the FBI said in a

statement provided to OSV News, “While our standard practice is to not comment on specific intelligence products, this particular field office product—disseminated only within the FBI—regarding racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism does not meet the exacting standards of the FBI.

“Upon learning of the document, FBI Headquarters quickly began taking action to remove the document from FBI systems and conduct a review of the basis for the document,” the statement said. “The FBI is committed to sound analytic tradecraft and to investigating and preventing acts of violence and other crimes while upholding the constitutional rights of all Americans and will never conduct investigative activities or open an investigation based solely on First Amendment protected activity.” †

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New Albany Knights of Columbus open youths' 'minds and hearts' to religious life, ordained ministry

By Natalie Hoefler

NEW ALBANY—Recalling his childhood growing up in Mt. St. Francis, Greg Brodfehrer remembers knowing religious men and women of various orders—particularly the Conventual Franciscans whose Province of Our Lady of Consolation is based in the town.

"I had a lot of exposure to religious life, which led to my own vocation journey," said Brodfehrer, who spent five years in formation with the Conventual Franciscans. "A lot of us had religious sisters or brothers teach us [in Catholic schools]."

"But that's not happening as much now. A lot of kids know what a priest is, but don't really understand there's more than just being a priest" when it comes to vocations.

To make local youths more aware of various priestly and religious orders, the member of the Knights of Columbus Cardinal Ritter Council #1221 in New Albany enlisted the help of his fellow Knights in hosting a vocations fair on Feb. 2 for sixth-graders of six Catholic schools in the New Albany Deanery.

"I just wanted to expose them to different kinds of religious life," said Brodfehrer. "I figure with changes in the world today, we need to think of new ways to do that."

He said the event was designed to "help kids know there are more vocations out there than marriage and parish priests, that a religious vocation is one of those, and that there are many ways to live out a religious vocation, like as doctors or teachers."

The day—which included lunch and prizes—began with a silent procession from the Knights' headquarters to St. Mary Church in New Albany for Mass.

"I asked the Holy Spirit at Mass today to bless us and the kids so that a seed might be planted in whoever a seed was meant to be planted," said Mercy Sister Paulanne Diebold.

She represented one of three women's religious orders that Brodfehrer invited to the vocations fair. He also invited members of the Conventual Franciscans at Mount St. Francis, the Benedictine monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, a Dominican priest, a permanent deacon of the archdiocese and two archdiocesan priests to participate in the fair—the first of what he hopes will become an annual event.

Each order provided him with questions and answers to add to a questionnaire. To complete the questionnaire, students visited stations with representatives from each order.

"There's a lot more religious orders than I originally thought," said Ambrose Krueger of Holy Family School in New

Albany. "And it's not just that they do one thing—they do different things like charity and teaching."

His classmate, Cecilia McGovern, said she "definitely thought [the event] helped me learn more about the different orders. Some I knew about, but others I didn't. I thought it was very interesting."

So did Nicholas Smith of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School in Floyd County.

"I learned that the Sisters of Charity helped in the Civil War," he said. "And [President Abraham] Lincoln sent a special notice that nobody could hurt them because they were helping care for people on both sides of the war. They cared for all life."

The timing of the event was "excellent," said Brittany Geswein, who teaches sixth-grade theology at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School. "We have a whole unit where we focus on vocations. Talking about the different options versus hearing from people who are living this life is a great opportunity."

The religious and priests present also felt the timing was right.

"I think that this is a good age range," said Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding, a monk of Saint Meinrad. "They're coming into adolescence. It's a time that they start thinking about what they might want to do with their future."

"I think [events like this are] very important for helping kids know what's available to them in terms of service to the Church, service to the community and finding their way in life."

Father Adam Ahern agreed. "It's great exposure for the kids to the different types of religious life and to the priesthood," said the pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes in Jeffersonville. He is also an associate director of vocations for the archdiocese.

"And it's great exposure to asking that question of discernment, 'What is God calling me to do?' The more often we ask these kids to ask that question, the better. It opens their minds and hearts to religious life as a viable option for their future."

He was grateful to the New Albany Knights of Columbus for hosting the



Mercy Sister Paulanne Diebold interacts with sixth-graders of New Albany Deanery Catholic schools during a religious and ordained ministry vocations fair hosted by the New Albany Knights of Columbus on Feb. 2. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



New Albany Knights of Columbus member Greg Brodfehrer offers instructions to sixth-grade students of six New Albany Deanery Catholic schools during a religious and ordained ministry vocations fair he organized that was hosted by the Knights on Feb. 2.

vocations fair, which the sixth-grade students of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus School attended.

"The more we can do stuff like this, the better," said Father Ahern. "Men's clubs at parishes, Knights of Columbus, ladies' sodalities—any organization that cares about the life of their parish and the life of the Church could put on something like this."

Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan director of vocations, was also grateful to the Knights of Columbus in New Albany for organizing and holding the vocation fair.

He said the organization's founder Blessed Father Michael McGivney "always saw the promotion of priestly vocations as perhaps the most important

work of the Knights. He knew that without priests, there is no Eucharist, no sacraments. ... Events like this go a long way to supporting [religious and priestly] vocations."

Vocations that might be considered by young people like Ambrose, Cecilia and Nicholas, as well as St. Mary-of-the-Knobs sixth-grader Lillian Boelker.

"I like to help people, so I think there could be a possibility of becoming a sister," she said. "It's not something I really ever thought of before. But now that we did this project, I think I'll start thinking about it a lot more."

(To learn more about priestly and religious vocations in the archdiocese, visit www.HearGodsCall.com.) †



A crucifix-led procession of sixth-graders from six New Albany Deanery Catholic schools makes its way to St. Mary Church in New Albany for a Mass that opened a religious and ordained ministry vocations fair hosted by the New Albany Knights of Columbus on Feb. 2. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)