



# The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## From heartbreak to hope

Readers share how pandemic has impacted their faith, page 7.

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Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, preaches a homily on Feb. 27 in the St. Joseph campus church of the Batesville Deanery faith community during the sixth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

## 'How much has changed in one year'

# E6 Catholic Men's Conference in St. Leon continues despite coronavirus pandemic

By Sean Gallagher

ST. LEON—A year ago, 1,500 men filled the auditorium of East Central High School in St. Leon for the fifth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference organized by All Saints Parish in Dearborn County.

It took place on Feb. 22, 2020, a matter of weeks before the coronavirus pandemic made such gatherings impossible.

With the pandemic still affecting the daily life of people around the world, the sixth annual conference was held last

month on Feb. 27 on the St. Joseph campus of All Saints Parish with an in-person audience of 150.

Approximately 1,000 people viewed a livestream of the conference in 22 states and in the United Kingdom.

"E6" in the conference's title refers to the sixth chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians in which the Apostle calls believers to take up "the armor of God" in the spiritual fight against the devil (Eph 6:11).

"How much has changed in one year," said Father Jonathan Meyer. **See CONFERENCE, page 8**

# First 'Legacy Gala' will support Catholic schools, Catholic Charities and seminarians

By Natalie Hoefler

The archdiocese's inaugural Legacy Gala will be held online at 6:30 p.m. on April 16. The annual event will raise funds for three vital causes that touch every corner of the Church in central and southern Indiana:

Catholic schools, Catholic Charities and seminarian formation.

The event consolidates two long-standing, annual awards/fundraiser banquets—Catholic School Values and Spirit of Service.



Annette "Mickey" Lentz

The gala, which will include music, online bidding, social media posting and more, will also serve this year to honor archdiocesan chancellor Annette "Mickey" Lentz for her 60 years of service in the archdiocese.

The hope is for participants to have fun at themed "watch parties" while also raising a goal of \$60,000 to support Catholic Charities, Catholic schools and seminarian education, said Dana Stone, one of the event coordinators.

"Life as we knew it changed when the pandemic hit," said Stone, the archdiocese's director of appeals and creative services. "Many were left without jobs, leaving them without the means to support their families. Some found themselves homeless. Some were barely making ends meet. ..."

"When many places were forced to close their doors, our Catholic Charities agencies around the archdiocese worked tirelessly to meet this new demand."

So did Catholic schools by supplying meals "to children who depended on a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school every day," Stone added.

"The only reason we were able to serve so many in need during this very challenging time was because of the financial gifts that people had generously given up to that time. The resources were

**See GALA, page 8**

# Archbishop's pastoral high school visits lead to mutual encounters 'on more relational level'

By Natalie Hoefler

CLARKSVILLE—The advanced theater students were nervous as they took the stage at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville.

They were anxious for several reasons. It was their first performance of a new play, and their practice time had been cut short by snowstorms closing their school two weeks prior.

Adding to their shaky nerves was the presence of a certain audience member: Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

"The farther we got in the play, I think the more relaxed we got," said junior Victor Beeler.

Their performance was part of the

**See VISITS, page 10**



Providence Cristo Rey sophomore Juniya Hughes shows Archbishop Charles C. Thompson a presentation she is working on for a class. The archbishop visited the Indianapolis private Catholic high school on Feb. 23. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

# Business executive who is gospel singer, author to receive Laetare Medal

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (CNS)—Carla Harris, a top executive at the investment bank Morgan Stanley and a celebrated gospel singer, speaker and author, will be awarded the University of Notre Dame's 2021 Laetare Medal.



Carla Harris

The medal, the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics, will be awarded at the university's May 23 graduation ceremony.

"Harris has exemplified the highest ideals of American enterprise, championed the principle that opportunity should never be denied on the basis of gender or race, and generously mentored countless rising leaders," said Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, Notre Dame's president, in a March 14 announcement of this year's award recipient.

"Enriched by her gifts as a singer and public speaker, her work in the competitive world of banking is firmly rooted in her commitment to service, developing the next generation of leaders and her Catholic faith," he said.

The Laetare Medal is announced each year on Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent.

Harris, vice chairman of wealth management and senior client adviser at Morgan Stanley, began her career at a time when very few of her colleagues were Black or women. She was chair of the Morgan Stanley Foundation from 2005 to 2014 and is a member of the boards for Harvard University and Walmart.

In 2013, she was appointed by President Barack Obama to chair the National Women's Business Council, an independent counsel to the president, Congress and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

She is the author of *Expect to Win* and *Strategize to Win*, which she wrote to share what she has learned about pathways to career success.

Harris began singing at a talent show when she was 9 and progressed to Baptist and Catholic church choirs in her teens, Harvard's renowned Radcliffe Choral Society, the St. Charles Gospelites and her own band, Rhythm Company. She has released multiple albums and produced and performed sold-out benefit concerts at New York's Carnegie Hall and the Apollo Theater.

She was born in Port Arthur, Texas, and raised in Jacksonville, Fla., where she attended Bishop Kenny High School. A guidance counselor there suggested that Harris not apply to Ivy League schools because of their competitiveness, but she applied to them anyway.

She attended Harvard University where she graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in economics; she later earned a master's degree in business administration from Harvard Business School.

In 2001, she married Victor Franklin at St. Charles Borromeo Church, in the Harlem neighborhood of New York, where she remains an active parishioner. She and her husband have two daughters.

Established at Notre Dame in 1883, the Laetare Medal has been awarded annually to a Catholic "whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the Church and enriched the heritage of humanity."

Previous recipients of the medal include: President John F. Kennedy; Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement; Walker Percy, novelist; Msgr. George Higgins, labor activist; and Sister Norma Pimentel, a Sister of the Missionaries of Jesus, who is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville, Texas. †

# War in Syria must end; tormented people need relief, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—All sides need to come together to end the war in Syria and bring some sign of hope to an exhausted and tormented people, Pope Francis said.

The international community also needs to commit itself to helping rebuild the nation, so that once the fighting has stopped, "the social fabric can be mended and reconstruction and economic recovery can begin," the pope said after praying the *Angelus* with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square on March 14.

March 15 marked 10 years since the beginning of war in Syria, causing "one of the most serious humanitarian disasters of our time," the pope said.

Protesters began rallies demanding an end to repression in Syria on March 15,

2011, after being inspired by other "Arab Spring" demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

However, President Bashar Assad's government responded with the military shooting demonstrators and triggering an on-going civil war that has drawn in rebels, Islamic State militants and other nations in a proxy war.

The U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported in January 2020 it had estimated that nearly 585,000 people had been killed since the beginning of the war, of which more than 115,000 were civilians, including children. More than 11 million civilians have been displaced with 5.6 million of them registered as refugees outside of Syria. †



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 20-30, 2021

**March 20 — noon**  
Baptism at St. Francis Xavier Church, Mount Washington, Ky.

**March 21 — 8:30 a.m.**  
Mass at St. Augustine Church in Jeffersonville

**March 21 — 11 a.m.**  
Mass at St. Mary Church in Navilleton

**March 23 — 1 p.m.**  
Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

**March 24 — 11 a.m.**  
Mass for Deceased Priest, Reverend John Beitans at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

**March 25 — 10 a.m.**  
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

**March 27 — 11 a.m.**  
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, at St. Bartholomew Church

**March 28 — 10 a.m.**  
Palm Sunday Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

**March 30 — 2 p.m.**  
Chrism Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

# Easter liturgies are set at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Easter liturgies at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis are open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements, congregation size will be limited at the cathedral. Liturgies at St. Meinrad Archabbey will only be accessible online.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is scheduled to be the principal celebrant at the Easter Vigil Mass at the cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, at 8:45 p.m. on April 3. He is also scheduled to be the principal celebrant at the 10 a.m. Mass at the cathedral on Easter Sunday, April 4.

Starting times for all liturgies at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad are Central Time.

Due to space constraints, *The Criterion* is only able to list these Easter liturgical schedules. For information about

liturgies at parishes or other religious communities, contact them individually.

### SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

All Cathedral liturgies will be livestreamed at: [www.ssppc.org/streaming](http://www.ssppc.org/streaming):

- April 3, Holy Saturday—8:45 p.m. Easter Vigil.
- April 4, Easter Sunday—10 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass.

### Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln

While the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church remains closed to the public during the pandemic, Easter services will be livestreamed at [www.saintmeinrad.org/live](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/live):

- April 3, Holy Saturday—5 p.m. Vespers; 8 p.m. Easter Vigil.
- April 4, Easter Sunday—10:30 a.m. Easter Mass during the day; 5 p.m. Vespers. †

# Chrism Mass to be celebrated at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on March 30

The archdiocese's annual chrism Mass will be celebrated at 2 p.m. on March 30, Tuesday of Holy Week, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

Ordinarily celebrated yearly during Holy Week, the chrism Mass features priests renewing their ordination promises and the blessing of oils used for the celebration of several sacraments and the dedication of altars and churches.

At this time, because of limited seating capacity at the cathedral due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only priests

and parish life coordinators serving in central and southern Indiana and a representative number of archdiocesan deacons, men and women religious and lay faithful are guaranteed a seat for the liturgy.

A limited number of seats for others interested in attending the Mass may become available in the coming days. Check next week's issue of *The Criterion* or [www.archindy.org](http://www.archindy.org) for updated seating information.

The liturgy will be livestreamed at [www.archindy.org/streaming](http://www.archindy.org/streaming). †

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# Effects of veto override hitting home for vulnerable renters

By Victoria Arthur

While federal COVID-19 relief efforts are offering hope to the most economically disadvantaged in Indiana, hundreds of Hoosier families are still facing eviction each week following the state legislature's action on a controversial landlord-tenant bill.



Advocates for the poor, including the Catholic Church, are deeply concerned about the effects of Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 148, which became law in Indiana in February. They say the legislation severely undermines legal protections for renters, who make up about one-third of Indiana's population, and that it has the potential for increasing the state's homeless population amid the continued coronavirus pandemic.

These concerns persist even following the recent passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act—which includes \$50 billion for housing and homelessness assistance nationwide—and a December COVID-19 relief package that allocated \$448 million in rental assistance for Indiana.

Moreover, state advocates fear the potential consequences when a federal moratorium on evictions due to nonpayment of rent expires on March 31. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the national public health agency of the United States, originally called for the temporary halt on evictions in September to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and has since extended it twice. It is unclear whether the CDC will take further action beyond the end of this month.

"More than 950 families are being evicted every week on average in Indiana

despite the CDC moratorium and the federal relief efforts," said Andrew Bradley, policy director of the advocacy group Prosperity Indiana. "There is definitely a COVID-19 connection when evicted families have to double-up and cannot distance, and when people are forced to shelter in poor housing conditions. The eviction crisis, which is especially concentrated in places like Indianapolis and St. Joseph County, has been exacerbated by SEA 148."

Critics of the measure point to the lack of tenant protections against landlord retaliation and substandard living conditions. Among the most troubling aspects of SEA 148, according to Bradley, is the addition of seven new forms of expedited three-day evictions.

SEA 148 was the result of language added to an unrelated Senate bill in the state legislature in 2020 and passed with virtually no opportunity for public debate. It was the only bill vetoed last year by Gov. Eric Holcomb, who cited among his concerns the coronavirus pandemic, which was then beginning to profoundly alter life for Hoosiers.

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), Prosperity Indiana and numerous other advocates wanted the veto to stand because the legislation placed an even greater imbalance in the relationship between landlords and tenants, which in Indiana typically favors landlords. However, lawmakers overturned the veto in February.

"We were incredibly disappointed by this outcome, and we are now witnessing the impact on the people already hit hardest by the pandemic and its economic effects," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "The enactment of SEA 148 is opening avenues of harm for renters at most risk of eviction, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul."

Holy Family Shelter, a program of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, is a prime example. The facility, which opened in 1984 as the first shelter specifically for homeless families in Indianapolis, can house up to 22 families per night, but due to COVID-19 has had to make other housing arrangements for some of those it serves. The shelter is currently serving 29 homeless families with a combination of the shelter itself, hotels and other alternative housing.

"There is certainly an uptick in demand for emergency shelter for homeless families, which seems to be due to a combination of factors,



**'The enactment of SEA 148 is opening avenues of harm for renters at most risk of eviction, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.'**

—Angela Espada, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

including the overall pandemic effect with loss of jobs and loss of child care," said Bill Bickel, associate director for Catholic Charities in the archdiocese. "Certainly, the override of the governor's veto of SEA 148 is causing part of this demand, but the most profound effects I think are yet to come."

At the same time, Bickel said many landlords are waiting to see how the American Rescue Plan Act may benefit them with past tenant debt assistance.

"We are hopeful that serious absolving of past rent can happen quickly and that the process is user-friendly for the poorest of the poor," said Bickel, who fields 10 to 12 calls each day from families searching for help. "So many of the families we serve have fallen through all of the community's safety nets—rent assistance included—which lands them on the streets and into the homeless system. Of course, we have a particular concern considering that our largest percentage of individual residents at the shelter are homeless children."

The Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition, an umbrella organization of various advocacy groups formed last spring due to concerns over the pandemic as well as SEA 148, is seeking

input from people whose housing situation has been directly affected by either or both. One of the driving forces behind the coalition is Prosperity Indiana, with Bradley and his colleagues at the forefront of the efforts.

"We are working to build momentum for amendments that would address some of the worst dangers of SEA 148," Bradley said. "That's why the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition wants stories from tenants and community partners who are affected by the fallout of this legislation."

Personal stories may be directed to Natalie James, coalition builder for Prosperity Indiana, at [www.housing4hoosiers.org/share-your-experience](http://www.housing4hoosiers.org/share-your-experience).

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit [www.indianacc.org](http://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.) †

**'We are hopeful that serious absolving of past rent can happen quickly and that the process is user-friendly for the poorest of the poor.'**



—Bill Bickel, associate director for Catholic Charities in the archdiocese



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# The Criterion

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## Editorial



A depiction of St. Joseph cradling the infant Jesus while Mary sleeps is seen in this illustration photo. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

## Quiet St. Joseph had a dramatic life

For someone with the reputation for being quiet, St. Joseph, whose feast day is today (March 19) certainly had a dramatic life.

It is often noted that St. Joseph doesn't speak a single word in the four Gospels. That would lead you to think that he never spoke. We don't believe it.

As for the drama in his life, what could be more dramatic for a man than to learn that the woman he has just married, but hasn't yet taken into his home, is pregnant and he knows that the child isn't his? Can we honestly believe that Joseph kept quiet about that?

Of course not. Matthew's Gospel says that he decided to divorce Mary quietly, but they had to talk about it first. It's clear that he had doubts about her explanation that an angel had appeared to her and told her that she would conceive a child when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. Really? Can we imagine an angry Joseph leaving Mary's home on hearing that?

But then Joseph, too, got a message from an angel, in a dream. The angel told Joseph that what Mary told him was true, and he believed. Can we now imagine a contrite Joseph returning to Mary's home in the morning? Since Matthew's Gospel doesn't tell us what was said, we have to supply our own dialogue, but certainly there was some.

That should be enough drama for anyone, but more was to come—much more. The emperor decided that he wanted a census that required everyone to register at their family's original hometown. Joseph was from the house and family of King David, who was born in Bethlehem 1,000 years earlier. So that's where they had to go—about 90 miles away.

Where would they stay in Bethlehem? How long would they be there? Joseph figured that Mary's baby would be born there, and they would stay at least until it was time for Mary's purification 40 days after the birth. He had better take his carpentry tools with him so he could work while they were gone. They probably loaded everything on a couple donkeys, or perhaps in a cart pulled by a

donkey, for the long journey.

Once they arrived, it was as Joseph feared: so many people were descended from King David that the inn in Bethlehem was full. He was directed to a cave a cave that was being used to house a few animals. And that's where Jesus was born.

After the birth, Joseph apparently was able to find a house for his family until they could return to Nazareth. When Jesus was 40 days old, Joseph took his family to the Temple in Jerusalem, about five miles away, for Mary's purification and Jesus' presentation, as prescribed by the Law of Moses. He undoubtedly heard Simeon's prophecy about Jesus.

Then came more drama. We can imagine the Holy Family fast asleep when Joseph woke up and gently shook Mary. He had to talk now, saying something like, "Mary, we have to leave. I just had a dream during which an angel told me that King Herod is sending soldiers to kill Jesus."

So, Mary and Joseph loaded their few things on a donkey and were out of Bethlehem by dawn, on the way to Egypt. They lived as refugees there until Joseph got word that King Herod had died. Then he moved his family back to Nazareth.

Finally, the drama in Joseph's life was over. He was able to work quietly to support his family, observing the Jewish laws, including an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. There was a bit more drama when Jesus was 12 and decided to remain in Jerusalem at the end of a family pilgrimage there. When Joseph and Mary discovered he was missing, they hurried back to Jerusalem to look for him. But that was a minor drama compared with earlier events.

We believe that Jesus was a grown man when Joseph died. Joseph had fulfilled his responsibilities as a foster father. He died in the arms of the world's two holiest people.

Perhaps St. Joseph was a quiet man who didn't speak much. But he played an important role in our redemption.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

—John F. Fink

Sight Unseen/Brandon A. Evans

## A sky filled with invisible stars

Lent consistently strikes me as one of the most ill-timed of seasons—an idea that our yearlong pandemic has only served to make more obvious.

In the U.S., we've already endured the long slog through winter: its dark nights, barren trees, cold stars and frigid temperatures. And then, just as springtime starts to fill the air with its heavy, earthy smell and the sun slows its dip into the evening sky—just as the birds begin chirping again and we all breathe a sigh of relief—the Church drives hard in the opposite direction.

She proclaims a fast, and declares the days to become a time for penance and prayer, for reflection on the sorrows of Jesus and the sufferings of the world.

Liturgies become more solemn and the hymns more sparse, the sanctuaries plain and eventually the statues covered.

The whole of Catholicism leans in toward the darkening of Lent.

It seems like a cruel trick, but I think that it's actually an *old* trick, one meant to help us celebrate joy more fully. It's a quirk built right into our human nature: namely, that it's in the stilling of our senses that we find new depths to them.

The same rule is woven through the fabric of the universe.

Take the night sky, for example.

You have, even on the darkest night and in the most remote of places, never seen but a handful of the stars in our own Milky Way, and beyond that only the faint glow of our closest neighboring galaxies.

We know there is much more out there, but just *how much*?

Nearly 30 years ago a team of NASA scientists asked the same question and came up with an idea.

They tasked the Hubble Space Telescope to take the longest exposure ever attempted in photography: to open its camera for more than 100 hours while pointed at a small, dark patch in the constellation Ursa Major.

For 10 days during Christmastime in 1995, Hubble swung around the Earth in silent arcs, opening its lonely eye into a void that looked out past our galaxy. More than 340 times it opened, stared, then closed.

Patiently. Quietly. Consistently. One bit of light at a time.

Finally, the image was processed. What it showed was not a new star—or even a dozen—but whole galaxies whose light had travelled from the distant past and all the way from the edge of the universe to reach us.

And not just a few galaxies, but nearly 3,000 of them, each with worlds and stars and nebulas of untold diversity,

all hanging up there in the cosmos—far beyond our reach—as if only to give us the slightest hint of what *infinite creativity* really means.

Within that experiment there is a lesson, and it's the same one the Church is driving home during Lent:

Whether it be in our voluntary sacrifices or the ones that are forced upon us by life, there are times when our spirits and senses are called to be still.

It is in those dim nights of the soul that there are stars we can see that *no one else can*: insights, revelations, visions, stories, *dreams*—all things that only we are privy to and that the whole world will miss if we don't find and share them.

It is just *one* of the purposes of penance and suffering, because beauty—*deep beauty*—is found not just in the boisterous and luminescent, the obvious and plainly delightful, but also in the faint and delicate, in the small and hidden spaces of our stories. Some splendors can only be seen after one's spiritual eyes have waited and watched—and grown accustomed to the dark.

This is part of what the Church is doing in Lent, and even more so in the final days before Easter, when all the altars are laid bare and the Good Friday service ends in a silent walk back down the aisle.

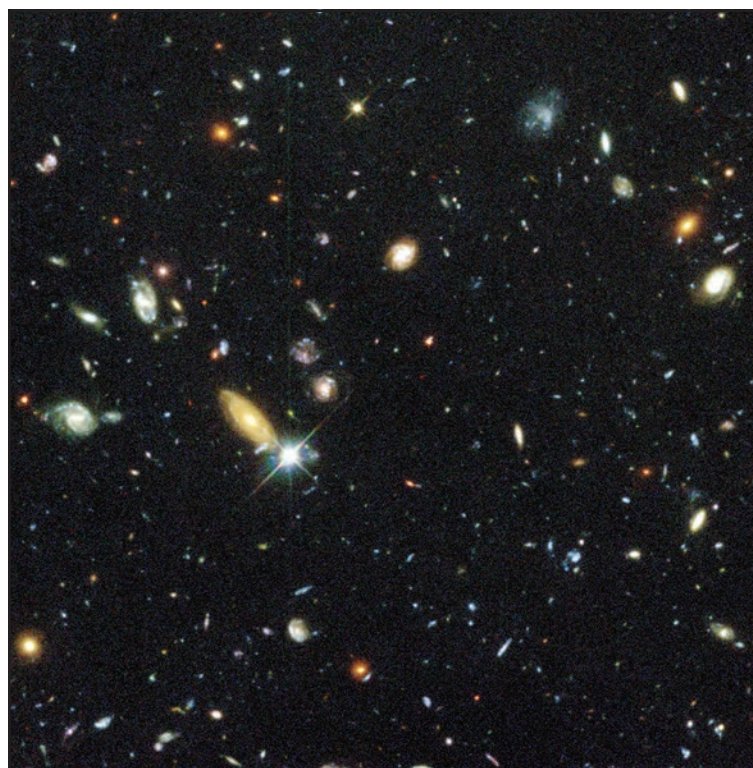
The whole Church is hushed; she closes her eyes on Holy Saturday and settles into that night, her sanctuaries darkened and stained-glass wonders obscured.

In that last silence, Easter finally comes at the nighttime vigil, not with clanging bells and *Alleluias*, nor bright lights, flowers and smiles—*not at first*, anyway. The triumph of the Resurrection arrives with a single flame processed into a church and shared with each person holding their own taper. For a moment, the light of Christ twinkles softly against the illumined faces of those who have waited and willed just a bit more spiritual winter before allowing in the spring air.

That all Lent is broken by the beauty of a single flame reminds us of what we already know deep down, and have felt in one way or another throughout our own inspirations and experiences:

That each of us is ever walking beneath a sky filled with invisible stars. They are ours to find in the still places of life, and more terribly wonderful, we are their sole bearers to a world which badly needs their light.

(*Sight Unseen* is a regular column that explores the beauty of God and his creation. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of The Criterion and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †



This is just a portion of the Deep Field image taken in 1995 by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope. Representing a narrow "keyhole" view stretching to the visible horizon of the universe, the image covers a speck of the sky only about the width of a dime 75 feet away. In this small field, Hubble uncovered an assortment of galaxies at various stages of evolution. (Photo credit: R. Williams (STScI), the Hubble Deep Field Team and NASA/ESA)



# Christ the Cornerstone

## We are invited to follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross

*“Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am, there also will my servant be” (Jn 12:26).*

This weekend, we will observe the Fifth Sunday of Lent, which means that Lent 2021 is nearly over. In a little more than one week, we will begin the Easter Triduum, walking with Jesus on the Way of the Cross.

How can we assess our progress to date in this Lenten journey? Have we renewed ourselves spiritually through the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving? Have we grown closer to Christ through our reflections on the Word of God? Are we becoming more faithful in our missionary discipleship?

The Scripture readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent provide us with an opportunity to examine our progress as followers of Jesus. The examination of conscience that we are invited to make now that we are well into the season of Lent concerns the purity of our hearts.

As the prophet Jeremiah reports in the first reading (Jer 31:31-34), God has made a new covenant with Israel. “I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts,” says the Lord. “All,

from least to greatest, shall know me ... for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:33, 34).

We acknowledge that God’s law is written on our hearts when we follow the promptings of an informed conscience, and when “doing the next right thing” has become second nature to us. This is when we recognize God’s will for us without hesitation or doubt, even (or especially) when what is being asked of us is painful or difficult to do.

The Gospel reading for this Sunday (Jn 12:20-33) tells us that Jesus struggled with the demands placed on him by his Father. “I am troubled now,” Jesus says. “Yet what should I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour” (Jn 12:27). Clearly God’s law was written in Jesus’ heart. Regardless of the sacrifices it required, Jesus was committed to fulfilling his mission.

In the second reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent (Heb 5:7-9), we learn that when Jesus says, “I am troubled now,” he means that he is experiencing intense anguish. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us, “When

Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence” (Heb 5:7). Because Jesus was fully human, the prospect of enduring unimaginable humiliation, torture and death on a cross occasioned “loud cries and tears” (Heb 5:7). But he accepted his Father’s will because he recognized that “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (Jn 12:23). As a result, “Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:8-9).

All who obey God’s law, as Jesus did, receive the gift of eternal salvation. But the demands placed on Jesus’ followers are serious. “Whoever serves me must follow me,” Jesus says, “and where I am, there also will my servant be” (Jn 12:26).

Are we ready? Has our Lenten observance prepared us to walk with Jesus on the Way of the Cross? Or are we still hesitant to let go of our comfortable existence?

As if in response to our hesitation, St. John’s Gospel forcefully reminds us of one of the greatest truths of our Christian faith:

*“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life” (Jn 12:24-25).*

Unless we surrender as Jesus did, and unless we are willing to lose our egos, our possessions and our need to control our lives, we cannot inherit eternal life. We cannot know true freedom or joy as long as we cling to our own will. Unless our hearts are pure and our actions are truly selfless, we cannot follow Jesus.

During these remaining days of Lent, let us pray:

*“A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me ... Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me” (Ps 51: 12, 14).*

May our Lenten observance prepare our hearts for the suffering, and the joy, that is promised us as faithful missionary disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Se nos invita a seguir a Jesús en el camino de la cruz

*“Si alguno me sirve, sígame; donde yo esté, allí también estará mi servidor” (Jn 12:26).*

Este fin de semana celebraremos el quinto domingo de Cuaresma, lo que significa que la Cuaresma de 2021 está a punto de terminar. En poco más de una semana comenzaremos el Triduo Pascual, caminando con Jesús en el Vía Crucis.

¿Cómo podemos evaluar nuestro progreso hasta la fecha en este viaje cuaresmal? ¿Nos hemos renovado espiritualmente a través de las prácticas cuaresmales de oración, ayuno y limosna? ¿Hemos crecido más cerca de Cristo a través de nuestras reflexiones sobre la Palabra de Dios? ¿Estamos siendo más fieles en nuestro discipulado misionero?

Las lecturas de las Escrituras del quinto domingo de Cuaresma nos brindan la oportunidad de examinar nuestro progreso como seguidores de Jesús. El examen de conciencia que se nos invita a hacer ahora que estamos bien adentrados en el tiempo de Cuaresma tiene que ver con la pureza de nuestros corazones.

Tal como lo establece el profeta Jeremías en la primera lectura (Jer 31:31-34), Dios ha hecho una nueva alianza con Israel. “Pondré mi ley en su mente, y la escribiré en su corazón,” dice el Señor. “Porque todos

ellos, desde el más pequeño hasta el más grande, me conocerán. Y yo perdonaré su maldad, y no volveré a acordarme de su pecado” (Jer 31:33, 34).

Reconocemos que la ley de Dios está escrita en nuestros corazones cuando seguimos los impulsos de una conciencia informada, y cuando “hacer lo más correcto” se ha convertido en algo natural para nosotros. Es cuando reconocemos la voluntad de Dios para nosotros sin vacilar ni dudar, incluso (o especialmente) cuando lo que se nos pide es doloroso o difícil de hacer.

La lectura del Evangelio de este domingo (Jn 12:20-33) nos dice que Jesús luchó contra las exigencias que le imponía su Padre. “Ahora mi alma está turbada—dice Jesús—¿Y acaso diré: ‘Padre, sálvame de esta hora’? ¡Si para esto he venido!” (Jn 12:27). Está claro que la ley de Dios estaba escrita en el corazón de Jesús. A pesar de los sacrificios que requería, Jesús se comprometió a cumplir su misión.

En la segunda lectura del quinto domingo de Cuaresma (Heb 5:7-9), descubrimos que cuando Jesús expresa: “Ahora mi alma está turbada” quiere decir que está experimentando una intensa angustia. Como nos dice el autor de la Carta a los Hebreos, “Cuando Cristo vivía en este mundo, con

gran clamor y lágrimas ofreció ruegos y súplicas al que lo podía librar de la muerte, y fue escuchado por su temor reverente” (Heb 5:7). Dado que Jesús era plenamente humano, la perspectiva de soportar una humillación, una tortura y una muerte inimaginables en una cruz provocó “gran clamor y lágrimas” (Heb 5:7). Pero aceptó la voluntad de su Padre porque reconoció que “ha llegado la hora de que el Hijo del Hombre sea glorificado” (Jn 12:23). Y como resultado “aunque era Hijo, aprendió a obedecer mediante el sufrimiento; y una vez que alcanzó la perfección, llegó a ser el autor de la salvación eterna para todos los que le obedecen” (Heb 5:8-9).

Todos los que obedecen la ley de Dios, como hizo Jesús, reciben el don de la salvación eterna. Pero las exigencias que se imponen a los seguidores de Jesús son serias. “Si alguno me sirve, sígame; donde yo esté, allí también estará mi servidor” (Jn 12:26).

¿Estamos listos? ¿Acaso la observancia de la Cuaresma nos ha preparado para caminar con Jesús en el Camino de la Cruz? ¿O todavía dudamos si dejar de lado nuestra cómoda existencia?

Como si respondiera a nuestras dudas, el Evangelio según san Juan nos

recuerda con fuerza una de las mayores verdades de nuestra fe cristiana:

*“De cierto, de cierto les digo que, si el grano de trigo no cae en la tierra y muere, se queda solo; pero si muere, lleva mucho fruto. El que ama su vida, la perderá; pero el que aborrece su vida en este mundo, la guardará para vida eterna” (Jn 12:24-25).*

A menos que nos rindamos como lo hizo Jesús, y a menos que estemos dispuestos a renunciar al ego, a nuestras posesiones y nuestra necesidad de controlar nuestras vidas, no podremos heredar la vida eterna. No podemos conocer la verdadera libertad ni la alegría mientras nos aferramos a la propia voluntad. A menos que tengamos el corazón puro y nuestras acciones sean verdaderamente desinteresadas, no podemos seguir a Jesús.

Durante estos días que quedan de Cuaresma, recemos:

*“Dios mío, ¡crea en mí un corazón limpio! ¡Renueva en mí un espíritu de rectitud! [...] ¡Devuélveme el gozo de tu salvación! ¡Dame un espíritu dispuesto a obedecerte!” (Sal 51:10, 12).*

Que nuestra observancia de la Cuaresma nos prepare el corazón para el sufrimiento, pero también para la alegría que se nos promete como fieles discípulos misioneros de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. †

# Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

## March 24

**Virtual Storm the Castle**, sponsored by Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, 5:30-7:30 p.m., for young men in grades 9-12, learn about life at the college seminary, includes tour and chance to chat with college seminarians. Register: [heargodscall.com](http://heargodscall.com). Information: 317-236-1490 or [vocations@archindy.org](mailto:vocations@archindy.org).

## March 25

**The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class**, "Personality Difference," 7-8 p.m., series offered most Thursdays through May 20, no registration needed, free. Go to [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), click on link at top of page. Information: [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), or Keith Ingram, [kingram@aicinvest.com](mailto:kingram@aicinvest.com) or 317-324-8446.

**The Eucharist, Source and Summit of Faith, through Old Testament and the Gospels**, via Zoom, sponsored by St. Michael Parish, Greenfield, 1-2:30 p.m., sixth of six stand-alone sessions, led by graduates of Guadalupe Bible College, free. Information and registration: Darlene Davis, [ldarlene@gmail.com](mailto:ldarlene@gmail.com).

## March 26

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union Street, Indianapolis. **Praying the Stations with St. John XXIII**, 6:30 p.m., meditation, prayer, song. Information: 317-638-5551.

Planned Parenthood abortion center, 8590 Georgetown Road, Indianapolis. **Indianapolis 40 Days for Life Closing Rally**, noon, former abortionist Dr. Haywood Robinson speaking, bring baby items to support the Great Lakes Gabriel Project or donate online at [glgabrielproject.org](http://glgabrielproject.org). Information: 317-213-4778.

## March 26, April 2

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish Knights of Columbus #15712, 523 S. Merrill St., Fortville. **Friday Night Lenten Fish Fry**, 5 p.m. until supplies last, includes fish sandwich, steak fries, coleslaw, dessert, \$10. Information: [kofc115712info@gmail.com](mailto:kofc115712info@gmail.com) or 317-485-5102.

## March 27

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary**

**Walk**, 10:45-11:45 a.m., meet in front of church. Information: [faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com](mailto:faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com).

## April 1

**Catholic Charities Indianapolis Crisis Office virtual Breaking of Bread fundraiser**, noon-1 p.m., in response to three times the normal requests during the pandemic, prayer, stories and facility tour. Event link: [facebook.com/CatholicCharitiesIndianapolis](https://facebook.com/CatholicCharitiesIndianapolis). Donations: [helpcreatehope.org](http://helpcreatehope.org). Information: [cbush@archindy.org](mailto:cbush@archindy.org) or 317-236-1411.

## April 2

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Way of the Cross**, noon. Information: 317-784-4439 or [www.catholiccemeteries.cc](http://www.catholiccemeteries.cc).

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **First Friday bilingual celebration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, Mass, 5:45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass until 9 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation available. Information: 317-750-7309, [mross1@hotmail.com](mailto:mross1@hotmail.com).

[hotmail.com](mailto:hotmail.com).

## April 3

John Paul II Parish, St. Paul Chapel, 216 Schellers Ave., Sellersburg. **First Saturday Marian Devotion**, 8 a.m. rosary, meditation, prayer; 8:30 a.m. Mass with confessions prior. Information: 812-246-3522.

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Marian Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, devotional prayers, rosary, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

## April 7

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—age 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday night dinner events. Information: 317-796-8605 or 317-243-0777.

## April 8

**The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class**, "Childhood Issues and Emotional Baggage,"

7-8 p.m., series offered most Thursdays through May 20, no registration needed, free. Go to [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), click on link at top of page. Information: [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), or Keith Ingram, [kingram@aicinvest.com](mailto:kingram@aicinvest.com) or 317-324-8446.

## April 9

St. Barnabas Church, 8300 Rahke Road, Indianapolis. **IndyCatholic First Friday Adoration**, (held on April 9 due to Good Friday on April 2) 7 p.m., sponsored by archdiocesan Young Adult and College Campus Ministry, for young adults ages 18-39. Information 317-261-3373.

## April 14

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or [www.catholiccemeteries.cc](http://www.catholiccemeteries.cc).

## April 15

St. Joseph Church, 1401 S. Mickle Ave., Indianapolis. **Third Thursday Adoration**, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery

and Mausoleum, 9001 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or [www.catholiccemeteries.cc](http://www.catholiccemeteries.cc).

**The Third Option virtual marriage crisis/enrichment class**, "Handling Anger Constructively," 7-8 p.m., series offered most Thursdays through May 20, no registration needed, free. Go to [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), click on link at top of page. Information: [carmelthirddoption.org/web](http://carmelthirddoption.org/web), or Keith Ingram, [kingram@aicinvest.com](mailto:kingram@aicinvest.com) or 317-324-8446.

## April 16-17

**Come and Zoom retreat: "Living the Mission of God" on Zoom**, Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Fri. 7-9 p.m., Sat. 2-7 p.m., for women ages 18-42 exploring religious life, free. Register online: [cutt.ly/ComeSeeRetreat](http://cutt.ly/ComeSeeRetreat). Information: Sister Joni Luna at 361-500-9505 or [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org).

## April 21

Calvary Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Monthly Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or [www.catholiccemeteries.cc](http://www.catholiccemeteries.cc).

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

### April 1-4

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Triduum Retreat**, 4:30 p.m. Thurs. - 1 p.m. Sun., includes room and meals, \$350. Registration: [www.benedictinn.org/](http://www.benedictinn.org/)

[programs](mailto:programs). Information: [benedictinn@benedictinn.org](mailto:benedictinn@benedictinn.org), 317-788-7581.

### April 2

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Good Friday**

### Personal Day of Retreat

9 a.m.-4 p.m., includes private room for the day and lunch, \$40. Registration: [www.benedictinn.org/programs](http://www.benedictinn.org/programs). Information: [benedictinn@benedictinn.org](mailto:benedictinn@benedictinn.org), 317-788-7581. †

## Benedict Inn will offer four sessions on Benedictine spirituality in April

A series of four sessions on Benedictine spirituality will be offered at the Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., in Beech Grove, from 7-8:30 p.m. on April 6, 13, 20 and 27.

In a world where pop culture promotes self-love, self-praise and self-promotion, those who practice Benedictine spirituality instead seek inner peace and happiness through the concepts laid out by the *Rule* of St. Benedict.

Benedictine spirituality is not just for religious living a monastic vocation. This series explores how the centuries-old

*Rule* still applies today and can enhance anyone's day-to-day spirituality.

Benedictine Sisters Kathleen Yeadon, Julie Sewell, Carol Falkner and Antoinette Purcell will lead the sessions, explaining how to incorporate the *Rule* into daily life.

The cost for the series of four sessions is \$90, or sign up for individual sessions for \$25 each.

To register, go to [www.benedictinn.org/programs](http://www.benedictinn.org/programs). For specific questions, send an e-mail to [benedictinn@benedictinn.org](mailto:benedictinn@benedictinn.org) or call 317-788-7581. †

## Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties will host euchre tournament on March 20

Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties will host its third annual euchre tournament at Concordia Lutheran Church, 305 Howard Road, in Greenwood, at 12:30 p.m. on March 20.

Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties is an affiliate of Indiana Right to Life. Its mission is to protect and promote the respect of unborn children.

The event will benefit CareNet

Pregnancy Centers local to the two central-southern Indiana counties.

The cost to enter the tournament is one package of diapers. The first place winner will receive a cash prize of \$150, and the second place winner will receive a cash prize of \$50.

Registration is encouraged but not required. To register or for questions, contact Emily McNally at 317-697-2441 or [ebrookehaskins@gmail.com](mailto:ebrookehaskins@gmail.com). †

# Wedding ANNIVERSARIES

## ROBERT AND GAYLE DOWELL



**ROBERT AND GAYLE (NORTHERNER) DOWELL**, members of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Terre Haute, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on March 20.

The couple was married in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Terre Haute on March 20, 1971.

They have two children: Kimberly and Scott Dowell. †

## GERALD AND MARY MONTGOMERY

**GERALD AND MARY (ESSLINGER) MONTGOMERY**, members of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on March 20.

The couple was married in the former St. Francis de Sales Church in Indianapolis on March 20, 1971.

They have two children: Amy Lee Heim and Anne Marie Montgomery.

The couple also has seven grandchildren. †



# Wedding ANNOUNCEMENT



## MCCRAY-HORNER

**WHITNEY LEE CATHERINE MCCRAY AND AARON JOSEPH MICHAEL HORNER** will be married on April 10 at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Morris. The bride is the daughter of Benjamin and Elizabeth McCray. The groom is the son of Melvin and Diane Horner. (*correction*)

Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to [bit.ly/2M4MQms](http://bit.ly/2M4MQms) or call 317-236-1585.

# Heartbreak and hope: readers share how pandemic impacted their faith

(Editor's note: As part of our coverage of the ongoing influence that the pandemic is having on the faith lives of people, The Criterion invited our readers to share their experiences. Here are some of their stories.)

## First part of a series

By John Shaughnessy

Dr. Patrick Knerr never imagined the journey of faith he would take during the pandemic—from feeling “hurt and betrayed” to being more connected and



Dr. Patrick Knerr

grateful than he ever has.

“Like many in our area, I was shocked and saddened by the announcement of the closing of all archdiocesan churches in March 2020,” says Knerr, a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.

“I was even further disheartened to learn that not only were communal events like Masses and weddings suspended, but even practices like confession and eucharistic adoration were discouraged.

“Admittedly, I felt hurt and betrayed. I didn’t realize it right away, but my frustration was a reflection of a hunger for the sacraments. The ‘Mass on YouTube’ phenomenon provided some comfort, but I was quick to learn there’s nothing like the real thing.”

As soon as St. Susanna Church re-opened in mid-May, Knerr was there. And his return to church has sparked a revival in his faith.

“Since the reopening, I have found myself attending the sacraments and other public devotions much more often than I had ever done. I feel the joy and awe of being in the real presence of Christ in a much stronger sense. I’ve also been given the opportunity to serve as a lector for the first time, which has allowed me to get to know many more of my

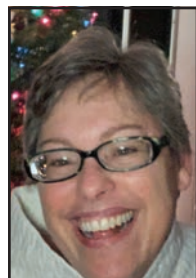
fellow parishioners.”

As much as Knerr has grown in his faith, he’s hoping for another kind of revival.

“Unfortunately, the pews of St. Susanna are not yet as full as they were before the pandemic began. I can only pray that many more will feel called to return to the sacraments as I was. I feel more connected to, and appreciative of, my faith than ever before—something I never could have anticipated when this whole thing began.”

## ‘I know the pain’

It’s a touching gesture of faith and compassion, a prayer that Karen Rushka has offered during the most heartbreaking times of the pandemic.



Karen Rushka

As a health care professional, Rushka has many duties, including keeping up-to-date data on COVID-19 patients in the IU Health hospital system.

“One data point in particular is the number of deaths for the previous day,” says Rushka,

a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. “I can’t explain the feeling when everything shows all zeroes. But as I enter a number for a death, I always stop and pray a Hail Mary for each one of them. I offer up the prayer for that family’s suffering.”

Rushka’s family has had to face that suffering.

“I know the pain,” she says. “We lost my 89-year-old mother-in-law back in May. She lived in California, and so our goodbye was via a FaceTime call.”

While Rushka has responded to the heartbreak with faith and compassion, she also marvels at the extent her colleagues have shared those same gifts with so many patients and their families.

“Although a typical 40-hour work week no longer exists for most of us,

we’ve done our jobs with a renewed commitment to helping our fellow Hoosiers. I’ve watched my colleagues work seven days a week and late into the evenings, even on Christmas Day. I remember one co-worker handing over her young children to her parents for an extended period so she could focus on her job in infection prevention because she knew her expertise was vital to fighting the pandemic.

“And now as we’ve transitioned to the vaccine stage of this pandemic, so many work at the clinics after they finish with their regular jobs.”

She especially remembers one of the people who received the vaccine—Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

“Archbishop Thompson received his vaccine at one of our clinics, and blessed it the day he was there. He truly gave us our shot in the arm that day.”

## ‘After our year of Lent, Easter will come’

In the midst of the fasting and sacrifices of Lent, Leslie Lynch has always looked forward to the hope and joy of Easter.

That longing is even more poignant this year after 12 months of enduring a pandemic that has created challenges, hardships and adjustments in nearly every part of life, including the celebration of one’s faith.

“Though I am an introvert and could easily embrace the contemplative life, the isolation of COVID life leaves me longing for my faith community,” says Lynch, a member of St. Mary Parish in the southern Indiana community of Lanesville.



Leslie and Chuck Lynch

“Zoom Bible study brings us together in faith and prayer—a blessing!—but underscores our separateness when we cannot comfort each other with a hug. It has been a year of letting go of ‘normal,’ and letting go of control. It has been a year of Lent.

“And like Lent, my faith has traveled a sorrowful path at times. A friend died of COVID, and I found myself as Martha greeting Jesus after Lazarus had died: ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died’ [Jn 11:21]. Yet that cry of abandonment is itself a cry of faith. From the struggle comes this: I wept with joy when our long fast from the Eucharist was broken with a deacon’s visit. God *does* comfort his people in their need.”

Lynch says that she and her husband Chuck also find comfort in their anticipation of Easter. The celebration of Christ’s resurrection will be even more meaningful for them this year.

“It will be a very poignant Holy Week this year,” she says. “After our year of Lent, Easter will come. We are looking forward to being in church for Easter.” †

# Vatican says no blessing gay unions, no negative judgment on gay people

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While homosexual men and women must be respected, any form of blessing a same-sex union is “illicit,” said the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.



Pope Francis

The negative judgment is on the blessing of unions, not the people who may still receive a blessing as individuals, it said in a statement published on March 15.

The statement was a response to a question or “*dubium*” that came from priests and lay faithful “who require clarification and guidance concerning a controversial issue,” said an official commentary accompanying the statement.

The response to the question, “Does the Church have the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex?” was “Negative.”

“It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage—i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life—as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex,” the doctrinal office said in an explanatory note accompanying the statement. Pope Francis approved both the statement and the note for publication.

“The Christian community and its pastors are called to welcome with respect and sensitivity persons with homosexual inclinations and will know how to find the most appropriate ways, consistent with Church teaching, to proclaim to them the Gospel in its fullness,” the explanatory note said.

The clarification “does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to the revealed plans of God as proposed by Church teaching.

“Rather, it declares illicit any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such. In this case, in fact, the blessing would manifest not the intention to entrust such individual persons to the protection and help of God, in the sense mentioned above, but to approve and encourage a choice and a way of life that cannot be

recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God,” said the doctrinal office.

The statement came days before the launch on March 19 of a yearlong reflection on “*Amoris Laetitia*” that will focus on the family and conjugal love.

The date marks the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “*Amoris Laetitia*” (“The Joy of Love”), which affirmed Church teaching on family life and marriage, but also underlined the importance of the Church meeting people where they are in order to help guide them on a path of discernment and making moral decisions.

The doctrinal congregation said in its note that some Church communities had promoted “plans and proposals for blessings of unions of persons of the same sex.

“Such projects are not infrequently motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons, to whom are proposed paths of growth in faith,” it said.

In fact, the question of blessing same-sex unions arose from this “sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons” as indicated by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the two synodal assemblies on the family, it said.

That invitation, it added, was for communities “to evaluate, with appropriate discernment, projects and pastoral proposals directed to this end,” and in some cases, those proposals included blessings given to the unions of persons of the same sex.

The doctrinal congregation said the Church does not and cannot have the power to impart her blessing on such unions and, therefore, “any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such” is illicit.

That is because a blessing “would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of matrimony,” it said, citing paragraph 251 of “*Amoris Laetitia*,” which reiterated the synod members’ conclusion that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.

“Only those realities which are in themselves ordered to serve those ends are congruent with the essence of the blessing imparted by the Church,” it said. As such, it is illicit to bless any relationship or partnership that

is outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open to the transmission of life, it added.

Declaring “the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not therefore, and is not intended to be, a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite and of the very nature of the sacramentals, as the Church understands them,” the doctrinal office said.

The Church teaches that “men and women with homosexual tendencies ‘must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided’ ” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2358).

As such, the doctrinal note makes a “fundamental and decisive distinction between persons and the union. This is so that the negative judgment on the blessing of unions of persons of the same sex does not imply a judgment on persons,” it said.

Such blessings are illicit for three reasons, it said:

- In addition to such a blessing implying “a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing” imparted to a man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, there is the nature and value of blessings.

- Blessings belong to “sacramentals, which are ‘liturgical actions of the Church’ that require consonance of life with what they signify and generate,” so “a blessing on a human relationship requires that it be ordered to both receive and express the good that is pronounced and given by the blessing.”

- And, “the order that makes one fit to receive the gift is given by the ‘designs of God inscribed in creation, and fully revealed by Christ the Lord.’ ” The Church does not have power over God’s designs nor is she “the arbiter of these designs and the truths they express, but their faithful interpreter and witness.”

“God himself never ceases to bless each of his pilgrim children in this world, because for him ‘we are more important to God than all of the sins that we can commit,’ ” the congregation said. “But he does not and cannot bless sin: he blesses sinful man, so that [man] may recognize that he is part of [God’s] plan of love and allow himself to be changed by [God]. He in fact ‘takes us as we are, but never leaves us as we are.’ ” †

# CONFERENCE

continued from page 1

Meyer, All Saints' pastor, in his homily during a Mass that was part of the conference.

He then said to his listeners, "Raise your hands if you want things to get back to normal."

Many in the congregation did.

Father Meyer paused and said, "I wish you hadn't raised your hand."

He doesn't want the pandemic and the changes to social interaction it's caused to continue, but he doesn't want "things to get back to normal" in the life of the Catholic faithful.

What Father Meyer referred to was the normal state of affairs for many Catholics in the U.S. prior to the pandemic: low percentages of regular Mass attendance, and high percentages of Catholics who don't believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and who disagree with the Church's teachings on the sanctity of life, marriage and contraception.

"If you're looking to get back to normal, normal is toxic," Father Meyer said. "We should never want to get back to normal."

The conference's three speakers—Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, Jason Evert and Patrick Coffin—encouraged the attendees to go back to their homes, putting pre-COVID normal behind them and more fully embracing a daily life of faith.

The conference's presentations, its Mass, the availability of the sacrament of penance throughout and its conclusion with adoration and Benediction were all means for attendees to embrace this new and different kind of normal.

## 'Men, pick up your weapon and fight'

Catholic author Deacon Burke-Sivers of the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., challenged his listeners near the start of the conference's first presentation to "go and tell somebody about Jesus" when they go back home.

"The problem is, we keep our faith to ourselves," said Deacon Burke-Sivers. "We never talk about that encounter with Jesus Christ that changes us from the inside out, that helps us become the men who God created each one of us to be."

One of the reasons he said men have difficulty sharing the Gospel is their passivity, something which he said also affects husbands and fathers living out their duty to "serve, protect and defend" their families.

Deacon Burke-Sivers traced this shortcoming back to Adam in the creation account in the Book of Genesis. When his wife Eve was tempted by the serpent to disobey God, Adam "stood there and said and did nothing. We have too many men who are standing by and doing nothing while Satan takes your family right out from under you."

Scripture offers a better role model for husbands and fathers, Deacon Burke-Sivers noted.

"Adam failed. Joseph did not," he said. "Joseph [like Adam] also says nothing in the Scriptures. His actions spoke louder than his words. He did everything faithfully that God asked him to do."

Deacon Burke-Sivers also pointed to David in his fight against Goliath.

Many Israelite soldiers were afraid of the giant Philistine warrior. They were comfortable in sitting on the sidelines avoiding conflict.

"Sometimes, men, when we get stuck, we get comfortable," the deacon said. "God is telling us men that if we want to take anything in our lives to the next level, we've got to get uncomfortable—like Jesus on the cross."

When David stepped forward to fight Goliath, he rejected the sword and armor offered to him, relying instead upon a simple slingshot, some stones—and the power of God.

"David understood that you could only defeat the Goliaths of life with the weapons of God," he said. "And men, we Catholics, we have an arsenal."

With that, Deacon Burke-Sivers picked up a rosary and showed it to his listeners.

"Men, pick up your weapon and fight," he said.

## 'Use your strength to serve'

Jason Evert, an internationally-known Catholic speaker on chastity and the Theology of the Body, reflected on the power of marriage and the threat to it posed by the devil.



Jason Evert

"When [spouses] are united, their unity is so profoundly rooted in the image of God that the devil cannot bear it," Evert said. "He isolates them from one another so that he may act."

Pornography is a prime means of isolation and the demeaning of authentic masculinity for many men in society today, Evert said.

"Masculinity is the crucifix, the lover who empties himself for the beloved," he said. "Porn flips it backward, where men learn to empty women for the sake of themselves."

Pornography and lust also turn men away from the true use of the strength with which they were created, Evert said.

"What is the purpose of a man's strength? Because of original sin, instead of serving and sacrificing, we dominate and manipulate," he said. "But the purpose of the body is to serve. Use your strength to serve."

Like Deacon Burke-Sivers, Evert pointed to St. Joseph as a role model for his listeners.

"We look to men like St. Joseph, who was authentically a servant," he said. "In our vocations, we're obviously called to the works of mercy. Most of you are married men. One of the beauties of married life is that works of mercy are demanded of you daily."

## 'If you want to know what a real man is, read the Gospels'



Patrick Coffin

Patrick Coffin, known for his popular weekly podcast "The Patrick Coffin Show," said perfectionism, pornography and passivity are three factors that keep men from authentic masculinity.

Perfectionism, he said, "is not the Christian ideal." Any perfection people experience, Coffin noted, is what "God the Father imparts to us as a gift."

"The standard of the Gospel is not the ceiling. The standard of the Gospel is the sky—unlimited growth," he said. "Unlimited potential that will become actual only in heaven. Here below, we have to get out of the idea that we have to be perfect."

"We have to ask for the grace to give up the perfection ideal that we have, because it's a false god and we can never live up to it."

The ultimate example of authentic masculinity, Coffin said, is seen in Jesus Christ.

"If you want to know what a real man is, read the Gospels," he said, "and get to know [Christ], his emotional life, his yearnings, his loneliness, his desire for solitude, his work ethic, his patience [and] his humor ... ."

## 'Live your lives with tremendous peculiarity'

John Rennekamp, a member of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour, attended last year's E6 Conference in the packed auditorium at East Central High School.

He also attended this year's conference and was glad its organizers didn't let the pandemic keep them from offering it.

"It's nice that they were able to overcome that challenge and still find a safe way to put this together to have this conference," he said.

Rennekamp attended this year's conference with his teenage sons. "It's important for them to continue growing in their relationship with Jesus," he said. "These opportunities allow the Holy Spirit to work."

His son Josh, 16, appreciated the example set for him by his father and other men at the conference.

"It's been a cool experience to see all these older men learning more about their religious life and me learning about mine," Josh said.

It's this kind of experience that Father Meyer and the conference organizers hope will change the daily lives of attendees.

He spoke of this hope in his homily, referring to a verse from the first reading for the liturgy in which Moses told the Israelites that God had said they were "a people peculiarly his own" (Dt 26:18).

"How peculiar are you?" Father Meyer asked them. "Among your family and friends? How peculiar is your way of life among those who live in your



Father Jonathan Meyer celebrates Mass in the St. Joseph campus church of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County on Feb. 27 during the sixth annual E6 Catholic Men's Conference sponsored by the Batesville Deanery faith community. (Photos by Sean Gallagher)



Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers of the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., holds a rosary while giving a presentation.

area? Is your way of life different, or is it normal?

"... Live your life with tremendous peculiarity. Live it differently. Make your decision today at this Mass, in the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, to refuse to be normal. Make the radical decision today to be a saint. Love your brothers, your sisters. Love your grandchildren. Let them know the Father's love.

"If there's any grace that comes from this conference, it needs to be that men are set on fire to live their lives differently from what the world sets before them. Through God's grace, may it be so."

(To purchase video or audio recordings of this year's E6 Catholic Men's Conference visit [cutt.ly/xzYoEPD](http://cutt.ly/xzYoEPD).) †

# GALA

continued from page 1

there thanks to our donors."

Now, she said, financial gifts "are needed more than ever because the need is greater than we have ever seen."

While a small group will be present for the gala at the JW Marriot in Indianapolis, all other participation will be virtual.

But joining online doesn't mean passively watching a screen, said Stone.

"We are giving people the opportunity to host their own 'watch party' in the comfort of their own home, inviting close family and friends to enjoy the evening with them," she said.

The online registration form offers several suggestions

for how a watch party might look. Go with a wardrobe theme, having guests dressing in plaid in support of Catholic schools or in black for future priests. Make it a prom event. Offer wine-tasting, have a euchre tournament or play yard games.

"The only limit is your imagination," said Stone. "That, and checking the screen to see what's going on with the gala."

Watch party groups can enjoy music from The Doo at 6:30 p.m. as they register for the gala's online auction or donate online.

The event program begins at 7 p.m. It will include prayer with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, witness stories of those helped by archdiocesan ministries, speakers (including Indianapolis Colts' tight end Jack Doyle) and a presentation honoring Lentz for her six decades of service in the archdiocese.

At 8 p.m., live-streamed music from The Doo will play as participants share, on social media, videos and photos from their watch party and favorite memories of Lentz, finalize bidding and make donations online.

Auction award winners will be announced at 8:30 p.m. The list of items up for bid is still being finalized, said Stone, but people can keep an eye on the gala's website, where the list will soon be posted.

The online event will conclude at 9 p.m.

(For more information about the Legacy Gala, go to [www.archindy.org/legacygala2021](http://www.archindy.org/legacygala2021). To register or for more information on watch parties, go to [www.archindy.org/galawatchparty](http://www.archindy.org/galawatchparty). For questions, send an e-mail to Dana Stone at [dstone@archindy.org](mailto:dstone@archindy.org) or call her at 317-236-1591 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1591.) †



# Teen's tribute to veterans leads her to Eagle Scout honor

By John Shaughnessy

After a week of living aboard a 40-foot sailboat in the beautiful waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Renee Bauer knew it would be hard to top the adventures of snorkeling, coming close to a shark and ordering pizza from a floating restaurant.

The 18-year-old member of St. Louis Parish in Batesville shared that experience with four other youths and the boat's crew members last summer

More Scouting news, page 15.

as part of the Sea Base program of the Boy Scouts of America. "The whole experience was like a big adventure," says Renee, a junior at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg. "You get to see things you've never seen before, and you get to do things you've never done before."

Renee also had another defining experience in 2020 as she earned the distinction of Eagle Scout. She became part of the first wave of females to earn that high honor from the Boy Scouts, which opened its membership to girls in 2019.

Compared to the Sea Base adventure, Renee describes becoming an Eagle Scout as exciting in a different way.

"The Eagle Scout project is the biggest lesson in leadership," she says. "You have to do a lot of things yourself—doing the paperwork, finding people to help, giving directions to people."

Her project involved honoring men and women who have served the United States in the military.

"In looking around the internet for ideas for my project, one thing they said is that as long as your project helps the community, it doesn't matter if it's small or huge," she says.

Renee remembered how she had

volunteered at the St. Leon American Legion Post 464 in her earlier years as a Girl Scout—helping during its Oktoberfest and serving dinners when the post honored people who served in the military.

She approached the post leaders about creating a new sign for the post and placing a boulder beneath it that would be engraved with the words, "Dedicated to all who have served."

"The American Legion is all about honoring soldiers," she says. "I thought it would be nice to do something to honor the soldiers who have served our country and are still serving our country."

Besides the sign and the boulder, Renee added plants and gravel to the area and two spotlights to illuminate it at night. All her 121 hours of effort in planning and creating the tribute impressed the members of the American Legion Post.

"It's awesome," says Jerry Maune, post commander. "She did an excellent job. And it looks great at night. I couldn't thank her more for what she's done."

Renee was pleased and thankful, too.

"It ended up looking better than I thought it would," she says. "I did have

a lot of help from my troop, my family and my scoutmaster Ron Bacu."

Renee's Troop 1974 has its meetings in West Chester, Ohio, which is a 42-minute drive—each way—from her family's home in the southeastern Indiana community of Sunman.

Renee says her experience in both the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts has provided her with a different kind of "drive."

"I learned that it's important to make a list of goals for yourself and to follow through on your goals. Another thing I've learned is leadership. It's important for people to experience being a leader so they can have that experience in the future."

She also sees a connection between Scouting and her Catholic faith.

"They're both about doing a good turn for others—treat others the way you want to be treated." †



Renee Bauer earned the distinction of Eagle Scout by creating a tribute to military veterans at the St. Leon American Legion Post 464. A junior at Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, Renee poses for a photo by the tribute with Jerry Maune, commander of the St. Leon American Legion Post. (Submitted photo)

## Catholic scholars: Any available COVID-19 vaccine is morally acceptable

WASHINGTON (CNS)—A group of prominent Catholic scholars said they believe it is morally acceptable for anyone to receive any of the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States.

"Catholics, and indeed, all persons of goodwill who embrace a culture of life for the whole human family, born and unborn, can use these vaccines without fear of moral culpability" for abortion, the eight scholars said in a statement released on March 5 through the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington.

The statement references the vaccines developed by Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson as well as from AstraZeneca, which is expected to soon file for emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The scholars said they agreed with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine, who reiterated in a March 4 video the Johnson & Johnson vaccine "can be used in good moral conscience."

Bishop Rhoades cited in the video an earlier Vatican statement that "has made clear that all the COVID vaccines recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience."

The bishop also repeated comments that he and



A Walgreens health care professional prepares a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTec COVID-19 vaccine in Evanston, Ill., on Feb. 22. (CNS photo/Kamil Krzaczynski, Reuters)

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, made on March 2 that if a choice of vaccines is available "we recommend that you pick one with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines.

"Pfizer and Moderna's connection is more remote than that of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine," he said in the video.

The scholars said, however, "we think it [is] a mistake to say both that these [vaccines] are morally permissible to use and yet that some ought to be preferred to others.

"There appears to be no real distinction between the vaccines in terms of their connection to an abortion many decades ago, and thus the moral starting point of equivalence," they said.

Ryan T. Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, joined seven other scholars in developing the statement.

The others are: Dominican Father Nicanor Austriaco, professor of theology and biology at Providence College; Maureen Condic, associate professor of neurobiology at the University of Utah; Jesuit Father Kevin Flannery, retired professor of philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University; Robert P. George, professor of law at Princeton University; O. Carter Sneed, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame and director of the school's Center for Ethics and Culture; Christopher Tollefsen, professor of philosophy at the University of South Carolina; and Dominican Father Thomas Joseph White, professor of systematic theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, known as the Angelicum.

The scholars explained that their conclusion is based on the fact that the cell line used in the development of the vaccine, known as HEK293, is far removed from the embryonic kidney cells originally obtained from an unborn child that was aborted in the early 1970s.

"The exact circumstance of the abortion are not known, but the scientists producing the cell line were not directly involved and, crucially, the abortion was not performed for the sake of providing biological materials to researchers," the statement said.

Importantly, there is no ongoing use of aborted tissue to generate HEK293 cells, to modify these cells or to maintain them in the laboratory. Thus the use of HEK293

[and similar immortalized lines] does not create future incentives for more abortions," it added.

The statement expressed as "scientific fact" that "no fetal 'body parts' are present in these immortal cell lines.

"The immortal cell lines are artifacts—biological products that have been modified and reproduced many times over, and they do not retain the natural function of the tissue from which they were derived," the statement explained.

In response to the question regarding whether the production and use of any of the COVID-19 vaccines "contribute to, cooperate with, or promote any abortion," the scholars said such was not the case because the abortions from which cell lines such as HEK293 were derived occurred decades ago.

In addition, they said, no new fetal tissue is being used or needed to maintain the cell lines, which are produced in research laboratories.

The scholars also said that HEK293 cells are commonly used in testing other products, including processed foods, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. The cell line also is used as an alternative to animal testing, they noted.

Calling use of HEK293 cells in biomedical research "ubiquitous," the scholars said their use "has contributed to an enormous number of new medications and medical procedures developed over the last several decades.

"It thus seems fair to say that in addition to the use of HEK293 cells by the scientific community, nearly every person in the modern world has consumed food products, taken medications or used cosmetics/personal care products that were developed through the use of HEK293 cells in the food, biomedical and cosmetic industries," the statement said.

They concluded there is a strong moral reason for people to receive the vaccines when they become available because it will provide the "greatest possible protection for the most vulnerable among us.

"The attenuated and remote connection to abortions decades ago and the absences of any incentive for future abortions offer little if any moral reasons against accepting this welcome advance of science."

(The full statement from the scholars is online at <https://bit.ly/2PN4spw>.) †

# VISITS

continued from page 1

archbishop's scheduled visit to the high school on March 3.

And that stop was part of Archbishop Thompson's effort to make pastoral visits to Catholic high schools in central and southern Indiana before the end of the 2020-21 school year.

## 'Spiritual, pastoral, not business'

Archbishop Thompson was adamant about the nature of the high school stops.

"I'm not coming there for administration," he said. "I'm not coming there for boards. I'm coming for the students and the faculty. I want to make sure it's a spiritual, pastoral visit, not a business visit. I want to make that connection as pastor and bishop to the young people."

He noted that he does meet many youths briefly when celebrating confirmation Masses and at high school graduations.

But these occasions are "more formal," Archbishop Thompson said. His current in-person visits "are more informal, where I get to actually interact with young people."

"It's important, I think, for them to have that connection with me. It's a way of encountering each other on a more relational level—as persons."

He left it to each school to plan the few hours he would be on site. Consequently, each visit has been unique.

Celebrating Mass, student- and administration-led school tours, in-class visits, questions-and-answer sessions, watching the play at Our Lady of Providence High School—"I've done everything," Archbishop Thompson said.

"It's good to go into the buildings, too, to see the great things they're doing. One has a new gym, one has a new chapel, one has a new weight room. So, I not only get to see [their accomplishments] but I get to hear the enthusiasm in their voices."

Still, he said, "I enjoy most the dialogue with the young people, whether that's [through questions and answers] or talking to them as they show me around. I enjoy the opportunity to interact with them."

## 'He supports and cares about us'

The students seem to enjoy talking with him as well.

"He made jokes. He was easy to

talk to," said Jacqueline Hughey, a senior at Providence Cristo Rey High school near downtown Indianapolis where the archbishop visited on Feb. 23. The private school offers Catholic education and corporate work experience for students of families with limited incomes regardless of their faith background.

"We're a smaller school, and nobody really knows about us," Jacqueline added. "The fact that the archbishop came to our little school—it's so exciting!"

Her classmate, Alonso Granados, agreed.

"It's a really big honor for someone like him to come to a school so small," he said. "It shows he supports us, and he cares about us."

They were two of a group of students the archbishop spoke with in the school's chapel after visiting several classrooms. During the small group discussion, he asked each scholar about their faith and their future plans.

Sophomore Florgisel Garcia described the opportunity to speak with Archbishop Thompson as "really special."

"Not everyone gets a chance to meet the archbishop and actually talk to him," she said. "He's a really faithful man, and he believes in us [students]."

"When he talked to us about our classes and our plans for college, he was like, 'You've got this. You can do this,'" she said.

Alonso nodded, adding, "Yeah, he gave us hope."

Their words confirmed the opinion of school campus minister Facundo Gonzalez Icardi regarding the archbishop's visit.

"I think it is really important for our



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson poses with students who performed a play for his visit to Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville on March 3. From left to right are Beth Wimsatt, Penny Trinkle, Brooklyn Stocksdale, Kieran Kelly, Archbishop Thompson, Mara Holifield, Victor Beeler, Cai Celestin and Anna Isler. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson stands in the chapel of Providence Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis on Feb. 23 after a small group discussion with a few students and faculty. Standing from left to right are Alonso Granados, Jacqueline Hughey, principal Leslie Napora, Jose Sanchez, Florgisel Garcia, Archbishop Thompson, Lovee Waldon, Alexcia Thorpe, campus minister Facundo Gonzalez Icardi and Dakota Toomer. (Submitted photo by Allison Dethlefs, Providence Cristo Rey director of marketing and communications)

students to interact with the leader of our archdiocese and be able to share their experiences of faith with him," he said. "Not only this, but they were also able to hear about Archbishop Thompson's own journey of faith."

"Something that I think resonated with a few of our students was when he shared that he used to study business in college, but he ended up entering the seminary. [He said,] 'You never know where God is calling you!'"

## 'The Church is more than school or parish'

Icardi's thoughts were echoed more than 100 miles away in Clarksville by Our Lady of Providence principal Melinda Ernstberger.

"Anytime that any of our priests—and especially the archbishop—can be involved, the kids need that presence," she said.

"I think his visit helps them feel connected with the archdiocese. They need the understanding that the Church is more than their parish or our school. The Church is the body of Christ. The archbishop represents that concept of the body of Christ and how we're all connected."

Despite the nerves she felt before performing the play for the archbishop, senior Beth Wimsatt appreciated his visit.

"It shows how much he cares, that he chose to go around to the high schools," she said. "That takes a lot of time, especially since we have a large archdiocese."

Prior to watching the play, the archbishop met with a group of seniors for a question-and-answer session.

The questions started simple, such as how and when he discerned his vocation. They grew in complexity, ending with one on "how to handle Catholics who don't abide by all of the Church's teachings."

"Dialogue," Archbishop Thompson answered. "And keep on dialoguing. And put Christ at the center of the dialogue."

## 'A good witness of spirit'

His own dialogue with students at the high schools he's visited so far has made an impact on the archbishop.

"I've been impressed with their enthusiasm, their focus, their demeanor," he said.

He's also been impressed with how school administrations, faculty and students have handled the pandemic.

"I have a great appreciation for how well everyone has handled these challenges and how everyone has done their part to make this work. ..."

"In practically every classroom I went, there were students in-person and virtual. That can't be easy for the teachers to do day in and day out. They've just been incredible in how they've balanced all that out."

As of *The Criterion* going to press, Archbishop Thompson had been to six high schools, with more visits scheduled in March and April. By the time his tour is finished, he will have traveled more than 625 miles. And every one of them is worth it, he said.

"It's a breath of fresh air to get out of the office," he admitted.

More importantly, he added, "It seems there's been a good witness of spirit in our schools, both among the faculty, the administration and the students." †

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# Faith *Alive!*

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## Lent reminds us, with God's help, 'you can do hard things'

By Katie Prejean McGrady

"You can do hard things."

The text flashed on my phone, the words precisely what I needed to see at that moment.

I was sitting on the bathroom floor in my grandfather's house. I'd been crying. Overwhelmed by the circumstances, I was unable to keep it together any longer, and the tears flowed. I was nine months pregnant.

We were evacuated from our home due to Category 4 Hurricane Laura and still didn't know if our house had sustained any damage. I needed to find a new doctor because I was due to deliver any day. And, to top it off, we had not had air conditioning for more than three days due to widespread power outages from the storm.

So, at my wit's end, I locked myself in the bathroom, sat on the floor and cried. I gave myself permission to just sob, letting it all out. And providentially, right at that moment, my friend Alison texted me.

She'd been through hurricane evacuation and recovery before, having endured Hurricane Michael just a couple of years before. She knew the stress and exhaustion and fear I was experiencing, so she said to me what had been said to her time and time again:

You can do hard things.

And I'll add just one important note to such a vital message: You can do hard things—with the help of God.

I think we can all stand to hear those words, especially now, during the season of Lent.

You can do hard things. You can—you, made in God's image and likeness; you, with the capacity for rational thought and the ability to freely choose; you, who are so abundantly loved and strengthened by God that he longs for relationship with you—you, precious and valuable.

You can do hard things. You're capable. You're able with God's help. He's equipped you to charge forward and take on whatever you set your mind to (within reason), and



A woman attends a rosary prayer service on a Rome street on May 14, 2020, amid the coronavirus pandemic. Another Lent in the midst of the pandemic reminds Catholics that, with God's help, they can overcome difficult obstacles in the goal of growing in holiness. (CNS photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters)

it is entirely possible that you will succeed—that you can (and will) come out on the other side successful.

You can do hard things. What you have set your mind to, taken on as a challenge or find yourself facing can be difficult. It will be hard. It isn't for the fainthearted or the unwilling. It's for the bold, the brave, the committed and those who lean hard on God's grace. Yet those hard things we tackle are worth it, drawing us ever closer to the one who loves us best and knows us most.

You can do hard things.

Lent is a "hard thing." An entire season of hard things, in fact. Fasting

and sacrifice. Generosity, perhaps when we don't want to be generous. A season for prayer, even (and especially) when we don't have much to say.

This Lent has felt particularly hard. It's a Lent after a year that felt like a never-ending Lent. Last year during Lent, we learned of COVID-19, of what it could do and what we would have to do to keep safe and slow the spread. The world shut down during Lent, and I don't think we imagined it still wouldn't be entirely re-opened by and through the next Lent.

Yet here we are, once again finding ourselves in a season where we voluntarily embrace hard things like fasting and giving alms amid the hard things of the current circumstances in the world.

I could use a good bathroom floor cry just thinking about it.

But we can do, and have done, these hard things. God has helped us do these things. Fasting from the snooze button, the sodas, the Netflix binges, the social media scrolling—giving those things up has given us the chance to turn our attention more fully to the Lord.

Taking on the practice of reading Scripture, praying a rosary in the evening, trying to attend daily Mass and a weekly holy hour—the

commitment of our time has given us renewed purpose.

Giving from our abundance, not just our leftovers, has made us more patient, hospitable and kind. We've given, knowing that our grace-empowered generosity reflects God's abundantly generous outpouring of himself.

Fasting, praying and giving alms are hard things to do. They are practices that have stretched us, pushed us sometimes to the very margins of our hearts and minds. But it is in that stretching and at the margins that we have begun to see the hand of God, inviting and helping us to endure—to persevere—to take comfort in what I think he would say to us: You can do hard things.

Lent is a time where we hear more clearly each day: You can step away from this and you can begin to do that, and you can do it all for love of me.

With God's help, we can endure, have endured, the Lenten desert, not merely because we want to seem holy or appear faithful, but because we actually want to grow in holiness and deepen our faith. We carry our cross, knowing we are not the first or last ones to do so, and confident the Lord carries it beside us.

You can do hard things. You can endure the Lenten season, even though there isn't much of it left. And you can do that, and journey through what seems to be this permanent Lent, because he is with us as we do. He's with us to help us in each step along the way.

(Katie Prejean McGrady is a Catholic speaker, award-winning author, and host of *The Katie McGrady Show* on *The Catholic Channel* on Sirius XM. She lives in Louisiana with her family.) †

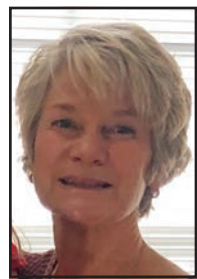


A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is seen outside of St. Pius X Church in Ragley, La., on Sept. 1, 2020, with signs of damage from Hurricane Laura. The experience of Catholics on the Gulf Coast who endured the hardship of this and other hurricanes in 2020 on top of the coronavirus pandemic showed them that, with God's help, they can carry great crosses in their daily lives. (CNS photo/courtesy Father Jeffrey Starkovich, St. Pius X Church)

## Worship and Evangelization Outreach/Teresa Venatta

## Spiritual direction: A blessing throughout the ages

Viewing the ministry of spiritual direction as a blessing throughout the ages has a dual meaning. It is not only timeless



in the sense that it has been beneficial for souls of every tradition throughout history, but also a blessing for every season of adult life—from vibrant young adults to those facing their mortality.

Spiritual direction has deep roots in Christian communities. The perennial three “person” encounter between the spiritual director, the directee and the Lord has enabled directees to grow in their relationship with God since the early Church.

Unlike counseling, there isn’t necessarily a problem to be solved but something to be discovered, deepened and celebrated in the spiritual life of the directee. God’s call to greater awareness and holiness in the midst of our life is explored in spiritual direction. Though the blessings are universal and timeless, there are common spiritual opportunities and challenges in each season of life.

“Adulthood” in today’s world is particularly challenging. Marian University in Indianapolis recognizes this and has offered spiritual direction to their San Damiano Program for Church Leadership scholars for several years now—and more recently to the broader student population.

For young university-age students—often living away from home for the first time—spiritual direction has provided a safe space to “feel at home” and unafraid to talk about their new challenges and joys in light of God’s loving presence.

The spiritual director in this setting offers hospitality (a safe space for their inner self to emerge and grow with integrity), challenge (sometimes a gentle nudge), support in discernments and encouragement in greater self-awareness.

In the early generative years (beyond the student years), spiritual direction can be helpful in discerning a vocation, navigating relationships, career choices, family, etc.

For most, this is the busiest and most pressure-filled time of life. The Christian call to give our life away (to live more for others than ourselves) surfaces in the midst of this busyness.

A spiritual director can be the loving companion who provides a safe space to slow down and explore where God is calling us and how to find spiritual substance, balance and integrity in this preoccupied season of life.

In later generative years, the question becomes: how do I continue to live for others now that my life is slowing down? This is often around the time of empty-nesting, retirement and grandparenting. A Swedish proverb states that “afternoon knows what the morning never suspected,” and often thoughts turn toward reflecting on the timeline of life and what we “know” now in hindsight. This can be a paradoxical

time of deep gratitude and regret, awareness and disillusionment. Sometimes unresolved wounds surface.

Spiritual direction in this season provides a place to speak out loud these holy tensions and reflect on where God continues the call to give our life away.

In the most mature time of life (or in times of grave illness), spirituality moves toward reflecting on increasing limitations and mortality. The challenge becomes how to live in hope and purpose with the more immanent awareness of limited time and shifting abilities. This space of stillness and reflection can mellow the soul.

Spiritual direction in this season can help us stay rooted and grounded in the love that will receive us in the end as we navigate how to “give our death away.” Henri Nouwen explains this as letting go of life with a freedom and peace that offers hope to those around us.

Something deep, mysterious and sacred is happening in all our lives right now, regardless of where you are on the timeline of life. God always invites us to prosper in every season of our journey. Spiritual direction provides the space to notice and speak about God’s loving presence in the present of our lives.

*(Teresa Venatta is a spiritual director and discernment companion within the Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. She can be reached at [spiritualdirection@archindy.org](mailto:spiritualdirection@archindy.org).) †*

## Faith at Home/

Laura Kelly Fanucci

## We need rituals to mourn

Our youngest recently turned 1 year old. We baked a cake, hung the birthday banners and set his presents on the kitchen table.

The same rituals we do for every child, every year.

Family life is full of rituals: school pictures, special desserts, summer reunions, game nights and grace before meals. Anthropologists and sociologists tell us that rituals are essential. We need to mark the milestones of our lives and the passage of time in order to bring meaning and coherence to changes we face.

Theologians and liturgists praise the power of rituals at the core of our faith. Rhythms of prayer and traditions of worship orient our lives toward God and set a solid foundation in an ever-shifting world.

But we’ve neglected ritual in a stark and sobering way this year.

We haven’t mourned our dead.

In February, the United States passed a terrible milestone of 500,000 lives lost to COVID-19. I watched the media coverage and the president’s ceremony, but I saw next to nothing from our Church on national or local levels. While I’m sure there were responses I missed, I felt the ache of emptiness at so many lives lost—at that time, 2.5 million worldwide—without a loud cry of lament from the faithful.

We could change this: as individuals, families and communities.

We don’t need to make up new rituals for mourning. We can draw from the beauty of our tradition, bringing all that we have to this current crisis.

We can keep praying for the dead at each Mass, remembering in the prayers of the faithful those who have died from COVID-19, their caretakers and loved ones. Repetition is key to ritual.

We could keep a votive candle lit in vigil for those who have died during the pandemic. Constant prayer is part of our Catholic identity.

We could offer a special prayer service—virtual or in-person—to remember all the lives lost to COVID-19. As we mark the one-year milestone of the virus’ outbreak in the United States, this would be a powerful time to gather and pray during Lent.

Rituals can come home, too. What if parishes sent home a psalm of lament for parishioners to pray together? Or a small candle to light in memory of those in the parish who have died of the virus?

Every night, one of our kids prays for “those who are dying from COVID and the doctors and nurses who are caring for them.” The simple act of remembering has been transformative for our family during the pandemic, as we reach out across our isolation.

Plenty of parishes make space for rituals that matter to their community: daily Masses offered for beloved dead, weekly prayers for vocations to religious life or yearly displays of crosses for babies lost to abortion.

If we believe each life is sacred, then we must also ask how to honor half a million who have died here in the past 12 months.

What we cannot do is become complacent—or worse, callous. We are called to care more, not less. We must mourn each life lost, no matter the circumstances, because each life matters to God.

My youngest son recently turned 1. My faith taught me that his body and soul

See FANUCCI, page 14

## That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

## Celebrations are part of other faith traditions this time of year

The warmth of spring is washing over us. Among people of varied faiths, high holidays are near.

For we Catholic Christians and other Christians, the great days of Holy Week will commence on Saturday afternoon, March 27.

Palm fronds, holy oils, tabernacles renewed, the Passion proclaimed and crosses adored—each a tangible reminder of the journey of salvation.

All of these culminate in the great Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday on April 3-4.

Our baptismal promises find renewal, bells and “Alleluia!” are no longer muffled, and our hearts sing of resurrection hope!

For other faith communities, other moments of joy and hope are soon to unfold as well.

Jainism is one of the three great religions of India. Jains celebrate annually Mahavir Jayanti, a one-day festival marking the birth of Tirthankar Mahavir, the founder of Jainism whom the call “the enlightened one.”

Tirthankar Mahavir was born in the early part of the 6th century BC—the same era as Gautama Buddha—in the state of Bihar, India. His life was punctuated by royal birth, abandonment of royal standing, penance, fasting, silence and contemplation.

From this lifestyle emerged the five principles of Jainism—non-violence, truth, honesty, personal restraint and non-attachment. A love for all things living infused his entire belief structure.

On March 25, Jains around the world will observe special ceremonies in Jain temples. Among the ceremonies will be ceremonial bathing of the statue of Tirthankar Mahavir, cultural programs with music and dance, a feast for visitors to the temple and donations to the poor and needy.

To learn more about Jainism, one can visit their worship space housed within the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana,

3350 N. German Church Road, in Indianapolis. For the basics of Jainism, visit [umich.edu/~umjains/overview.html](http://umich.edu/~umjains/overview.html).

Just as the Jain community completes its festival, the great Jewish festival of Passover commences on the evening of March 27 and concludes on the evening of April 4.

Passover celebrates Hebrew freedom from slavery in Egypt. It is the onset of the great Exodus experience retold in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Numbers.

Specifically, Passover commemorates the 10th plague.

As the Book of Exodus relates, God, through his prophet Moses, enjoins the Hebrew people to prepare a feast of roasted lamb and unleavened bread. They are told to stand as they eat, as if on a journey.

Blood from the sacrificed lambs was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of their dwellings. This marking protected their homes from the angel of death. This angel moved about the Egyptian households, destroying their firstborn sons and animals.

The Exodus through the Red Sea, initial wanderings in the desert and arrival at Sinai follow, making the Passover the root of God’s Sinai Covenant with his people.

Our contemporary Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate the Passover meal in their homes. They gather as families of faith. Blood relatives and other Jews without local family often gather as one. For we non-Jews and citizens of the United States, these extended family gatherings are similar to large family gatherings at Thanksgiving.

As we Catholics and other Christians approach Holy Week and Easter, let us remember Jains and Jews as they prepare to celebrate their special festivals both historic and faith-based. Let us join our hope to theirs in the one family of humankind!

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

## Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson

## How badly do we want to return? Community will help determine it

What if you were a Catholic who had not seen a priest in 60 years? What if you had not seen a priest in one year?

Jesuit Father Anthony Corcoran was visiting a senior citizens’ facility in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan when he met a man who had waited six decades to see a priest.

“Priest! I’m Polish,” the old man yelled excitedly when he saw Father

Anthony. For those six decades, he had no contact with the Church. He had prayed the rosary on his fingers. Now, he was begging for the sacraments.

A lot of us today in this country may not have seen a priest or attended Mass in person in almost a year. What will our level of excitement be when we have the opportunity to return? Will we return?

As our country considers what a post-pandemic society will look like, many priests and bishops are worried that their people might not all come back.

In a recent survey of a sampling of bishops, Francis X. Maier found that

they predicted a 25% to 40% “permanent falloff in Mass attendance and parish engagement” after the pandemic recedes. If true, through time, this will mean less lay involvement, fewer marriages and baptisms, declining school enrollment and of course a decline in revenues supporting Church ministries.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported recently that all sorts of sacramental and religious education efforts in Catholic parishes were very impacted by the pandemic, ranging from baptisms to funerals to Rite of Christian

See ERLANDSON, page 14

Fifth Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 21, 2021

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Hebrews 5:7-9
- John 12:20-33

The Book of Jeremiah is the source of the first Scriptural reading for Mass this weekend. Jeremiah ranks among the greatest of the ancient Hebrew prophets. He wrote at a very difficult time for his people.

Outside pressures had come to be so strong that the very future existence of the nation, and indeed of the Hebrew race, was at risk. Nervous and uneasy, many blamed God for all the misfortune.

Jeremiah insisted that God had not delivered the people into peril. Instead, they had decided for themselves to pursue policies and to move along paths that inevitably led to their situation.

These policies were dangerous because they were sinful. They ignored and rejected God. Nothing good could come of them. Great trouble was inevitable.

Through all these acts of rebellion, God remained true to the covenant. The people broke it. God, forever merciful, forgiving and life-giving, promised a new, perfect covenant. If the people would be faithful to it and if they would sin no more, they would survive.

Being faithful to the new covenant and sinning no more meant more than verbal pledges, vague, imprecise good intentions. It meant living fully in accord with God's revealed law.

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

This reading looks ahead to the passion of Christ, the centerpiece of next Sunday's liturgy of Palm Sunday. The passion will surround the Church as it celebrates Holy Thursday. It will envelope the Church on Good Friday. Then, fully alert to all that the passion of Christ meant, the Church will rejoice at his victory over death in the Easter Vigil and at Easter.

Perfectly obedient to God, Jesus was the teacher of genuine obedience. Because of obedience, Jesus attained life

after death. He promises life after death to us, if we are obedient ourselves.

St. John's Gospel provides the last reading.

John's Gospel is a masterpiece of eloquence and instruction. This weekend's passage is no exception. Indeed, quoting Jesus, it is nothing less than jewels of literary and theological exposition.

Jesus is clear. His hour is approaching. It will be the hour of the passion. The cross meant intense suffering for Jesus. He was a human, as well as Son of God, subject to human suffering.

Yet, Jesus freely accepted the cross. He died, as all humans must die. But in glory, Jesus rose. He lives!

All believers must walk in the Lord's footprints. All must die physically, but also all must die to sin. Death in either case will be hard in coming. If confronted in the love of God, the resurrection will follow.

## Reflection

The Church directs us toward the last remaining two weeks of Lent. For four weeks, we have been living through this season. It may not have been easy. We may have been distracted. Our intentions may have weakened.

As inspiration and encouragement, the Church reassures us in these readings that if we are faithful to God, eternal life awaits.

Lent and our response to it reflect human life. Life can be dreary. It can be threatening, as the pandemic has showed us. Life can mean for any of us, often for many of us, a daily carrying of crosses to personal Calvaries.

The Church this weekend therefore speaks to us about life, as earthly life truly is. If we follow Jesus to Calvary by obediently consenting to God's will and by putting God first, the glory of eternal life awaits us.

Lent has been a time so far to focus ourselves on being faithful to God. The Church urges us today to re-commit ourselves to God and to measure the sincerity of our intentions. †



## Daily Readings

### Monday, March 22

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62  
or Daniel 13:41c-62  
Psalm 23:1-6  
John 8:1-11

### Tuesday, March 23

St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, bishop  
Numbers 21:4-9  
Psalm 102:2-3, 16-21  
John 8:21-30

### Wednesday, March 24

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95  
(Response) Daniel 3:52-56  
John 8:31-42

### Thursday, March 25

The Annunciation of the Lord  
Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10  
Psalm 40:7-11  
Hebrews 10:4-10  
Luke 1:26-38

### Friday, March 26

Jeremiah 20:10-13  
Psalm 18:2-7  
John 10:31-42

### Saturday, March 27

Ezekiel 37:21-28  
(Response) Jeremiah 31:10-13  
John 11:45-46

### Sunday, March 28

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord  
Mark 11:1-10  
or John 12:12-16 (procession)  
Isaiah 50:4-7  
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24  
Philippians 2:6-11  
Mark 14:1-15:47  
or Mark 15:1-39

## Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

### Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccine is morally acceptable to be received

**Q**I have read that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has a connection with aborted fetuses. Now that this vaccine has been authorized for use, does one have a moral obligation to request one of the other vaccines? Or is it morally acceptable to take whatever is available at a particular site? (New Jersey)



**A**In December 2020—two months prior to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's authorizing the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine—the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said that, when alternative vaccines are not available, it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines developed or tested using cell lines originating from aborted fetuses.

The Vatican went on to explain that the "moral duty to avoid such passive material cooperation is not obligatory if there is a grave danger, such as the otherwise uncontrollable spread of a serious pathological agent."

In a March 4 video, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine, said that the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine "can be used in good conscience."

He also issued a March 2 statement in conjunction with Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, that if a choice of vaccines is available, "the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should

be chosen."

So, the answer to your question, it would seem, is that if you have a choice, you should opt for the Moderna or the Pfizer vaccine. But if the only one available to you is Johnson & Johnson, you may take that and there's no need to postpone vaccination until you have a choice.

**Q**My husband likes playing PlayStation video games. One of the games, called Summoner, is a violent role-playing game where you summon the devil and take part in other occult practices.

He had been playing for hours every day, but I insisted that he not play this game. (The Bible says to stay away from anything that deals with the occult.) He becomes more distant, angry and addicted when playing and I want these games out of my house.

He threw a chair across the room once when I tried to talk to him about the dangers of engaging in this kind of game. He has now stopped playing for a while, but he has not removed the games from our home. I am afraid that when he retires soon, he may return to them. Do you have any advice? (New Hampshire)

**A**For some decades now, several studies have suggested a strong link between media violence, including those in video games, and violent behavior.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for World Communications Day in 2007, said that "any trend to produce programs and products—including animated films and video games—which in the name of entertainment exalt violence and portray anti-social behavior or the trivialization of human sexuality is a perversion, all the more repulsive when these programs are directed at children and adolescents."

So, I agree with your concern over your husband's fascination with violent video games; whether it actually produces violent behavior or not, it baffles me that any Christian could find entertainment in the suffering or death of others—whether real or simulated. (Throwing a chair is certainly not homicide, but it bothers me that your husband did that!)

It is also concerning that one of the games he plays involves occult practices. This is a threat to his life of faith, in addition to his relationship with you and others.

Is there any way you might persuade him to go with you to speak to a counselor or priest about your concern?

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at [askfatherdoyle@gmail.com](mailto:askfatherdoyle@gmail.com) and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.) †

## My Journey to God

### On This Day, O Beloved Spouse

By Natalie Hoefler

O beloved, cherished spouse!  
I sing a song of thanks to God  
For so loving, so devoted a husband,  
For so godly a man to help me raise  
The very Son of God.

Each day you rose early in the morning  
From a night of divinely dreaming.  
You gave to God the first fruits  
Of your breath and your time  
In prayer and with the Word.  
Each day you meekly made manifest  
The goodness of God-made man.  
You glorified the Creator  
With your own carpenter-creations—  
And provided for our little, holy family.  
You modeled the sturdy fabric made  
When faith is woven into life's every moment.

And each moment of your life as  
foster father  
You fulfilled your given role—  
Fostering in the Christ-child  
All He would need  
To one day fulfill His own role.

O beloved, cherished spouse!  
I sing a song of thanks to God  
For this day when you—  
So dutiful, so devoted, so humble,  
So sacrificing, godly and God-centered—  
Are singled from your place of support  
And honored for all that you are:  
A model for husbands,  
A model for fathers,  
A model for all of mankind.



(Natalie Hoefler is a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and is a reporter for The Criterion. Photo: This stained-glass window at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Greenlawn, N.Y., depicts Joseph instructing Jesus. The feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is celebrated annually on March 19.)

(CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

# 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.

**BUITING, William M.**, 88, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 19. Husband of Zita Buiting. Father of Zita Moor, Christopher and Michael Buiting. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of eight.

**BRAKE, Ellen (Barton)**, 103, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Feb. 15. Mother of Meg Kerber, Mary Ann Plagge, Cathy Trotta, Nora, Dennis and Patrick Brake. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of 26. Great-great-grandmother of two.

**BRUNO, Jr., Thomas M.**, 64, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 16. Father of Michael Bruno. Grandfather of one.

**BUTTERFIELD, Sharon K. (Kieser)**, 90, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 17. Mother of Kathy LaGrange and Warren Roeling, II. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of seven.

**CAMPBELL, Mary Jo**, 86, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Feb. 4. Mother of Michelle, Bobby, David and Patrick Fontanella. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of 13.

**CUMMINGS, Nora Jean**, 86, SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis, Feb. 23. Aunt of several.

**DIETZ, Shizu**, 90, All Saints, Dearborn County, Feb. 7. Mother of Candace Hochstrasser, Vickie Mahoney and Geno Dietz. Grandmother of 13.

**DILGER, Agnes (Beier)**, St. Boniface, Fulda, 100, Feb. 19. Mother of Mary Bugala, Carol Haake and Bonnie Mullins. Sister of Eleanor Schaeffer, Lorine Vogler and Richard Beier.

Grandmother of four. great-grandmother of seven.

**GROTE, Matthew**, 20, St. Mary (Immaculate Conception), Rushville, Feb. 7. Son of Jason and Amy Grote. Brother of Ben Grote. Grandson of Carl and Pamela Green and Gerald and Linda Grote.

**HERMESCH, Donald C.**, 86, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 7. Father of Donna Hay, Shari Scheidler and Gerald Hermesch. Brother of Ralph, Robert, Jr., and Walter Hermesch. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of eight.

**KOCHELL, Howard E.**, 63, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Feb. 7. Husband of Ruth Kochell. Father of Jaclyn Edwards, Sara Inman, Drew and Michael Kochell. Stepfather of Cydney and Jake Bass. Son of Joseph Kochell and Peggy Lovejoy. Stepson of Donna Kochell. Brother of Gail Brickler, Doug, Kelly and Steve Kochell.

**KOOPMAN, Lawrence J.**, 87, St. John the Baptist, Starlight, Feb. 19. Father of Becky Adams, Kathy Hash, Mary Kraha, Peter and Ron Koopman. Brother of Charles, Norbert and Raymond Koopman. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 18.

**KRAUS, Paul**, 74, All Saints, Dearborn County, Feb. 9. Husband of Millie Kraus. Father of Melissa Hoffman, Teresa Reksell, Heather Walter, Krista Wilber, Michael and Patrick Ferry. Brother of Maryjane Henning, Sandra Wagner, Carole Weldishofer, Albert, Denny, Jim, Leon, Mark, Tim and Wally Kraus. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of one.

**LIVINGSTON, Margaret A.**, 76, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Feb. 23. Mother of Amy McDaniels and Daniel Livingston. Sister of Patricia and Timothy Doyle. Grandmother of eight.

**MAIO, Ernestina A.**, 91, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Feb. 6. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

**MALICOAT, Delbert**, 82, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Feb. 16. Father of Lisa Fitzwater, Pamela Lamott, Cynthia Manning, Brenda Musselman, Angela Ozbun and Debbie Wilson. Brother of Vadis Hill and Dewey Malicoat. Grandfather of 13. Great-grandfather of several.

**MERK, Jackie P.**, 85, St. Joseph Corydon, Feb. 22. Father of Malia Glotzbach, Joy Polk and Brendon Merk. Grandfather of five.

**NOBBE-VOLZ, Mary T.**, 89, Holy Family, Oldenburg, Feb. 17. Mother of Belinda Brown, Bill, Cliff, Doug, Ken and Tom Nobbe. Stepmother of Janet Andrews and Tim Volz. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 18. Great-great-grandmother of one.

**OSWALD, Richard J.**, 95, St. Louis, Batesville, Feb. 12. Father of Elizabeth Cox. Brother of Carol Dupuis, Virginia Lowry and Joan Stockman. Grandfather of one. Great-grandfather of two.

**PRICKEL, Naomi J.**, 91, St. Louis Batesville, Feb. 20. Sister of Shirley Giesting. Aunt of several.

**ROGIER, Catherine**, 89, St. Barnabas, Indianapolis, Feb. 7. Mother of Karen Arnett, Kimberly McCormick, Keith, Kenny and Kevin Rogier. Sister of Alice Nord. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 14.

**ROOSA, Ronald**, 66, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Feb. 18. Husband of Vicky Roosa. Father of Brindy, Braum and Brandon Roosa. Brother of Rhonda Abner and Mike Roosa. Grandfather of nine. Great-grandfather of one.

**SAHM, Loretta (Staab)**, 80, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Feb. 6. Mother of Mary Mills, Joanne Sauter and Raymond Sahn. Sister of Delores Bostic, Barbara Fortner and John Staab. Grandmother of three.

**SCHLAGETER, Janet A.**, 91, Holy Family, New Albany, Feb. 19. Mother of Ann Bridges and Jon Schlageter. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of five.

**SCHNEIDER, Abraham J.**, infant, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 10. Son of Kurt and Emily Schneider. Brother of Ruthie Schneider. Grandson of Dave and Debbie Schneider and Bruce and Mary Bergman.

**SHEEHAN, Mary Ellen**, 76, St. Barnabas, Feb. 8. Mother of Mary Kathleen and John Sheehan. Sister of Richard and William Farley.

**SLAUGHTER, Teresa F.**, 78, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Feb. 17. Sister of Pat Allison and Linda Matthews. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

## ERLANDSON

continued from page 12

Initiation of Adults.

Many parishes livestreamed Masses during the pandemic closures. It was a blessing then, but it may have a downside now. One priest told me that if people have grown used to sitting in their bathrobes and drinking coffee while watching Mass livestreamed, they might ask, "Why go back?" If the homilies are better on TV and the timing is flexible, it could be easy to justify.

Worse still, in the privacy of one's home, it might be easy to skip one week, and then two, and then more.

But all should not be doom and gloom. The Church has had two opportunities to break the mold with this pandemic. The first was the opportunity to respond creatively to the shutdown itself. Drive-by confessions, parking lot Masses, outreach to families in need, the quick reopening of schools—all are examples of parishes responding to challenging situations.

The anecdotes suggest such efforts varied from parish to parish, but I'm willing to bet that the parishes that

made an effort to respond creatively will be rewarded by a better than average return of parishioners.

The second opportunity is coming up. We have all been starved for community and fellowship in this lost pandemic year. Our Catholic parishes can now respond to this hunger, but only if they make an effort.

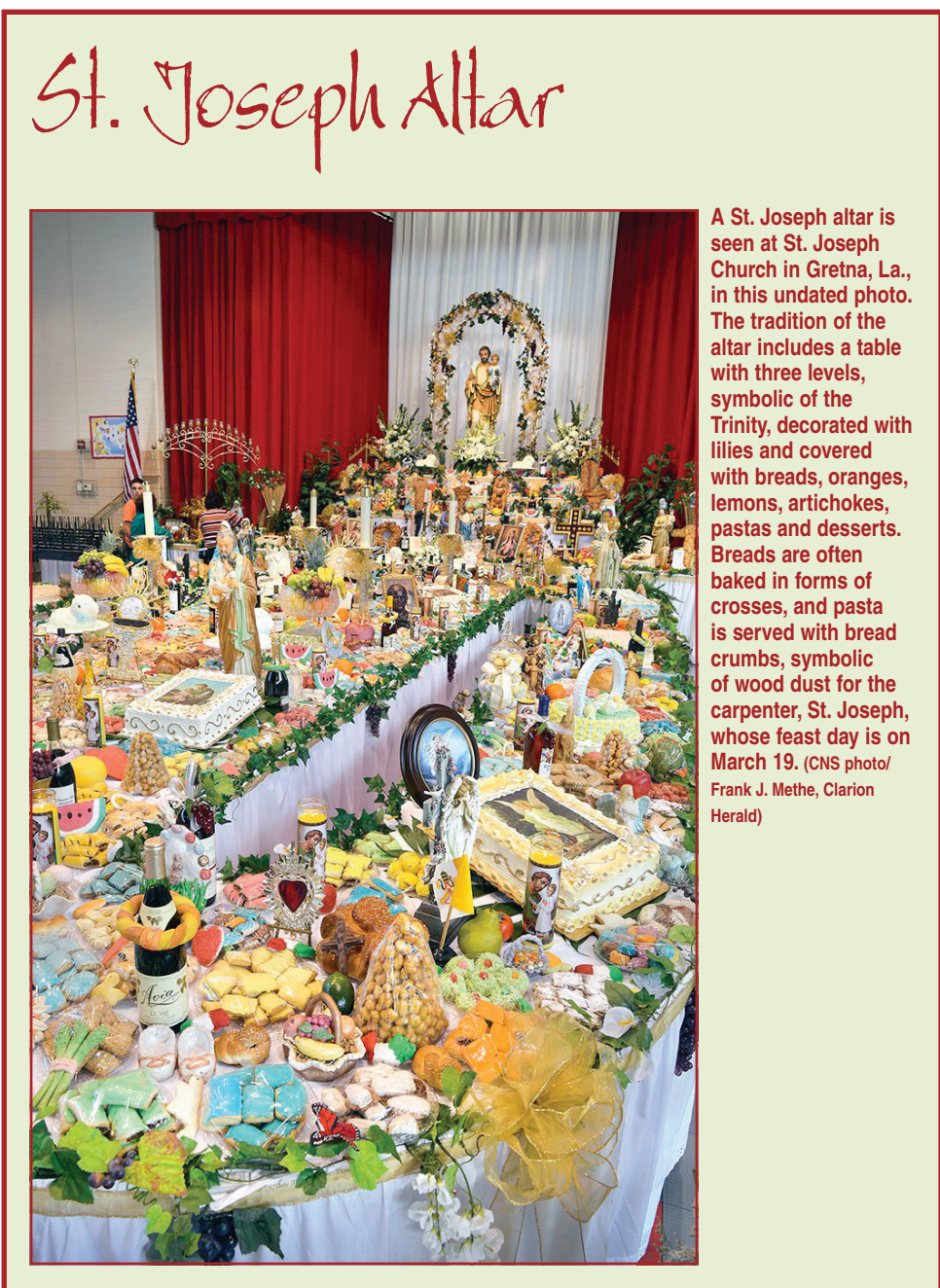
The moment is arriving when parish and diocesan staff must use all the tools available to them to create a welcoming community, giving people a reason to come back as soon as they feel safe to do so.

It is also likely that people will want to retain parts of the pandemic lockdown that appealed to them: more time with family, more quiet and prayer time.

The Church can speak to that need too. From the pulpit and in its media, at the door of the church and in encounters with parish ministries, the Church has a rare moment for a reset.

We need to embrace a new normal, one in which parishes don't just talk about community but live it.

(Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at [gerlandson@catholicnews.com](mailto:gerlandson@catholicnews.com).) †



A St. Joseph altar is seen at St. Joseph Church in Gretna, La., in this undated photo. The tradition of the altar includes a table with three levels, symbolic of the Trinity, decorated with lilies and covered with breads, oranges, lemons, artichokes, pastas and desserts. Breads are often baked in forms of crosses, and pasta is served with bread crumbs, symbolic of wood dust for the carpenter, St. Joseph, whose feast day is on March 19. (CNS photo/Frank J. Methe, Clarion Herald)

**SMITH, Elizabeth J.**, 88, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, Feb. 7. Mother of Catherine Laughlin, Karen, Daniel, Robert, Stephen and Thomas Smith. Grandmother of four.

**STOCKS, Gwen**, 77, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 15. Mother of Wendy Cookerly and William Stocks. Sister of Natalie Kraft, Anthony and Peter Pugliese. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of one.

**TENDER, Lynn E.**, 74, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Feb. 21. Husband of Doris Tender. Father of Lillian Penn and Lynette Wooden. Brother of Elsa Calderon, Mynelle Gardner, Lysa Tender-Taylor,

Alyce Meadors and Lory and Robert Tender. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of one.

**TRINDEITMAR, Catherine M.**, 81, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Feb. 14. Sister of Mary Ann Cosgrove, Dorothy Hunt and Thelma Rudolph. Aunt of several.

**WEBER, Mary E.**, 91, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Feb. 11. Mother of Mary Beth Bryant, Kathleen Hatfield, Eileen Shumway, Christine Sigler, Jeanine, James, Joseph and William Weber. Sister of Daniel, James and Thomas Waddick. Grandmother of 18. Great-grandmother of 23.

**WESSELER, Francis**, 76, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 7. Husband of Angela Wesseler. Father of Jeni Niese, Jill Wilmer, Eric, Scott and Mark Wesseler. Stepfather of Annette Harling and Bobby Brinkman. Brother of Elvera Muckerheide, Barbara Retzner, Bernard, Cletus and Donald Wesseler. Grandfather of 23. Great-grandfather of five.

**YESH, Roger C.**, 90, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Feb. 18. Husband of Rosalie Yesh. Father of Alyssa and Jeffrey Yesh. Brother of Shirley Rowland. Grandfather of two. †

**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:

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**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](http://www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com) or 888-393-6810

**2** Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Victim Assistance Coordinator  
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410  
**317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548**  
[carlahill@archindy.org](mailto:carlahill@archindy.org)

## FANUCCI

continued from page 12

held infinite worth from the moment he sparked to life inside me.

As our family turns to ritual to mark this milestone, I remember those who grieve even as I rejoice. This is part of what it means to be Catholic: that my concerns are forever united to the body of Christ and my life is never

mine alone.

May we as people and as parishes ask how we can remember our dead and those who grieve for them.

Rituals help us celebrate and mourn—and faith calls us to do both.

(Laura Kelly Fanucci is a writer, speaker and author of several books, including *Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting*. Her work can be found at [laurakellyfanucci.com](http://laurakellyfanucci.com).) †

# Scouts Honored

The Archdiocesan Catholic Scouting Awards ceremony was held on Feb. 7 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson presiding.

Scouts from throughout the archdiocese were honored for earning age-specific Catholic Scouting awards. A total of 67 Scouts earned awards. Boy Scouts of America Scouts usually earn the *Ad Altare Dei* emblem in middle school and then the Pope Pius XII Award in high school. The Marian Award is one of the emblems for middle school- to high school-age Girl Scouts.

Two Scouts, Matthew Schelonka and Edward (Teddy) Isakson, both of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, were recognized with the Pillars of Faith Award for earning all four religious emblems. Karen Harbeson of St. Michael Parish in Bradford received the adult St. George Award.

More information about Catholic Scouting awards can be found at the Indianapolis Catholic Committee on Scouting at [www.ccsindy.net](http://www.ccsindy.net). †



Taylor Abell of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville earned the Girl Scout Marian Award. She is pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. (Submitted photo)

Pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson is Karen Harbeson of St. Michael Parish in Bradford. She received the adult St. George emblem for her dedication to helping Catholic youths grow in their spiritual development in Scouting. (Submitted photo)



Anna, left, and Sophia Sandoval, both of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, are pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. Both earned the Family of God Girl Scout emblem. (Submitted photo)



Lucas, left, and Ethan Jost, both of St. Christopher in Indianapolis, are shown with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. They both earned the *Ad Altare Dei* Emblem. (Submitted photo)



Pictured with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson are: John Fenchak, left, Matthew Schelonka, and Edward "Teddy" Isakson, who earned the Pope Pius XII Award. All three are members of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis. Matthew and Teddy both also received the Pillars of Faith Award for completing all four Catholic Boy Scout awards. (Submitted photo)

## Employment

### Youth and Young Adult Ministry Specialist

This position will coordinate, implement, and evaluate comprehensive youth ministry programs for grades 6-8 and 9-12. This program is to include aspects of the components of: catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service aspects, leadership development, pastoral care and prayer and worship opportunities associated with middle school and high school students. In addition, the minister is responsible for initiating opportunities for young adults and young families within the parish for the sake of community and evangelization. Lastly, the minister will work alongside the Athletic Director to be a positive presence at Seton athletic events throughout the school year.

#### Some Basic Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

- Recruit, train, motivate, and evaluate all peer and adult volunteers
- Work alongside the Sacramental Preparation specialist as needed including the Confirmation retreat.
- Work in collaboration with other parish staff in scheduling, visioning, planning
- Attend Diocesan and deanery ministry meetings as necessary.
- Facilitate and help build a community of young adults and young families.

#### DESIRED MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Education/Experience: Bachelor's degree required with course work in youth ministry, religious education, and/or theology preferred. Minimum of three years of experience working with youth. Demonstrated knowledge of the Catholic Faith and Church Doctrine.
- Skills: Strong organization and communication skills, ability to manage more than one project/event at one time is essential.
- Other Requirements: Computer proficient, Microsoft Office programs, internet savvy, familiar with Realm data base preferred but not required.
- Participate fully in the practice of the Roman Catholic Faith. Maintain confidentiality in all parish matters.

Interested Candidates should email resume to:

[apply@setoncarmel.org](mailto:apply@setoncarmel.org)

Kevin Sweeney  
St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church  
10655 Haverstick Road  
Carmel IN, 46033



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## Employment

### RONCALLI HIGH SCHOOL - VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE

Roncalli High School, Indianapolis, Indiana, is accepting applications for the position of Vice President for Finance.

The Vice President of Finance is a full-time, salaried position reporting to the President and is an integral part of the school's leadership team. The responsibilities for the person in this position include but are not limited to the following:

- Insures that the finance plan of the school supports our Catholic identity and the mission of the school
- Establishes financial procedures in consultation with the President
- Prepares reports according to generally accepted accounting principles for the administration, Board and appropriate committees
- Maintains long range financial planning for the school including strategic planning initiatives and fund raising projects
- Generates an annual budget in consultation with the President
- Supervises, controls, and reports all income and expense activity in accordance with the budget, and generally acceptable accounting procedures
- Manages and enforces the tuition collection policy
- Coordinates the financial aid process
- Oversees the payroll system
- Supervises all business office staff
- Supervises the business procedures of the cafeteria, spirit store and textbook rental system
- Collaborates with the President to facilitate the school daycare center

Qualified, interested candidates are invited to email a current resume and cover letter to Chuck Weisenbach at [cweisenbach@roncalli.org](mailto:cweisenbach@roncalli.org). Please include at least three references as a part of the resume.

# Myanmar bloodshed condemned; cardinal criticizes ‘brutality, violence’

YANGON, Myanmar (CNS)—The United Nations and human right groups have strongly condemned the worsening bloodshed in Myanmar as at least 38 people were killed in the military’s crackdown on protesters on March 14.

The same day, the military rulers declared martial law in parts of Yangon, the nation’s largest city. March 14 was the Global Day of Prayer for Myanmar.



Cardinal Charles Bo

Christine Schraner Burgener, the U.N. special envoy on Myanmar, strongly condemned the bloodshed as the military defied international calls, including from the

U.N. Security Council, for restraint, dialogue and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

“The ongoing brutality, including against medical personnel and destruction of public infrastructure, severely undermines any prospects for peace and stability,” she said in a statement on March 14. “The international community, including regional actors, must come together in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and their democratic aspirations.”

She said she had heard from contacts in Myanmar heartbreaking accounts of killings, mistreatment of demonstrators and torture of prisoners over the weekend. Mobile data was cut off nationwide at 1 a.m. on March 15.

Four days earlier, Thomas Andrews, U.N. special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said: “As of this moment, credible reports indicate that Myanmar security forces had murdered at least 70 people.” By March 15, that number had climbed past 125, according to Yangon-based rights group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

In a video message to an online prayer service on March 14, Yangon Cardinal Charles Bo said the Feb. 1 military coup and the ensuing crackdown plunged Myanmar into “yet another chapter of darkness, bloodshed and repression.” A “decade of reform and opening” has been replaced by a return to “the nightmare of

military repression, brutality, violence and dictatorship.”

[Ucanews.com](http://Ucanews.com) reported Cardinal Bo praised “the amazing courage, commitment and creativity of our people, demonstrating throughout the country in their thousands for many days.”

“They have shown their determination not to allow their hard-won democracy and freedoms, their hopes of peace, to be stolen from them. It was a beautiful sight to see and a great inspiration,” he said. “The sense of unity and solidarity in diversity—with people of different ethnicities and religions coming together for the same cause—was remarkable. But that was met with bullets, beatings, bloodshed and grief. So many have been killed or wounded in our streets, and so many thousands have been arrested and disappeared.”

“We will pray and work for a new Myanmar to be born out of this current tragedy, a Myanmar where truly every human being has an equal stake in the country and equal rights to basic freedoms, a Myanmar where ethnic and religious diversity is celebrated and where we enjoy real peace, a Myanmar where the soldiers put down their guns, step back from power and do what an army is meant to do: defend rather than attack the people,” Cardinal Bo continued. “A Myanmar that rises again from the ashes. How do we get there? By faith, prayer, love, dialogue and courage. By speaking out for truth, justice, freedom, peace and democracy.”

The Chinese Embassy in Myanmar said several Chinese-funded factories were set ablaze in Yangon’s industrial zone and Chinese citizens were injured. [Ucanews.com](http://Ucanews.com)



People hold candles as they take part in an anti-coup protest in Yangon, Myanmar, on March 14. (CNS photo/Reuters)

reported that the embassy urged Myanmar to take further action to stop all acts of violence, punish the perpetrators and ensure the safety of life and property of Chinese companies and personnel in Myanmar. [Ucanews.com](http://Ucanews.com) reported it was in response that the military began imposing martial law in townships.

Protesters have been suspicious of China’s role behind the military coup, with frequent demonstrations targeting the Chinese embassy in Yangon. Activists have launched a campaign to boycott Chinese-made products and foods.

Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab examined more than 50 videos of protests and was able to confirm that security forces appear to be implementing planned, systematic strategies including the ramped-up use of lethal force.

“Footage clearly shows that Myanmar military troops—also known as the Tatmadaw—are increasingly armed with weapons that are only appropriate for the battlefield, not for policing actions,” Amnesty International said on Thursday. “Officers are frequently seen

engaging in reckless behavior, including the indiscriminate spraying of live ammunition in urban areas.”

The 55 clips analyzed by Amnesty International were filmed by the media and members of the public during demonstrations across Myanmar from Feb. 28 to March 8.

In a video from March 3 in Yangon’s North Okkalapa township, a man appears to be in the custody of security forces when an officer beside him suddenly shoots him. He immediately drops to the ground and is left on the road, before officers walk back and drag him away.

“These are not the actions of overwhelmed, individual officers making poor decisions,” said Joanne Mariner, director of crisis response at Amnesty International. “These are unrepentant commanders already implicated in crimes against humanity, deploying their troops and murderous methods in the open.”

Amnesty International said state-run media quoted military authorities on March 5 as denying any role in fatalities, claiming that “unscrupulous persons [might be] behind these cases.” †

# Bishops: Relief will help many; lack of Hyde protections ‘unconscionable’

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law on March 11 by President Joe Biden, will provide relief to Americans in need amid the pandemic, but it lacks “protections for the unborn,” the U.S. bishops said.



Archbishop Jose H. Gomez

Their March 10 statement quickly followed U.S. House passage of the measure in a 220-211 vote. After the Senate passed its version of the bill on March 6, it was sent back to the House where members reconciled its changes with the version they approved on Feb. 27. It then went to Biden for his signature.

In a joint statement, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops (USCCB), and the chairmen of six bishops’ committees praised “positive provisions” that “will save people from extremely desperate situations and will likely save lives.”

But they called it “unconscionable” that Congress passed the bill “without critical protections needed to ensure that billions of taxpayer dollars are used for life-affirming health care and not for abortion.”

Unlike all of the previous pandemic relief bills, Hyde Amendment language was not included in this measure. Hyde outlaws federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

In addition to Archbishop Gomez, the committee chairmen who signed the statement are: Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., Committee on Pro-Life Activities; Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, Okla., Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Ill., Committee on International Justice and Peace; Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, Calif., Committee on Catholic Education;

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, La., Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism; and Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington, Committee on Migration.

“As the American Rescue Plan Act was being written, Catholic bishops reached out to every House and Senate office to express our support for providing additional relief to help poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk of harm from this pandemic, and our strong conviction that this relief should also protect the unborn and their right to life,” the bishops said.

“We are grateful this legislation addresses many positive provisions, including unemployment assistance, child and earned income tax credit enhancements, nutrition funding, vaccine distribution funding, health care funding, housing assistance, international assistance to regions stricken by COVID, conflict and hunger,” they said.

But “unlike previous COVID relief bills,” the bishops said, “sponsors of the American Rescue Plan Act refused to include the long-standing, bipartisan consensus policy to prohibit taxpayer dollars from funding abortions domestically and internationally.”

Hyde Amendment language “was needed because this bill includes many general references to health care that, absent the express exclusion of abortion, have consistently been interpreted by federal courts not only to allow, but to compel, the provision of abortion without meaningful limit,” the bishops said.

“The many important, life-saving provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act have been undermined because it facilitates and funds the destruction of life, which is antithetical to its aim of protecting the most vulnerable Americans in a time of crisis,” they added.

In remarks after its passage, Biden said the American Rescue Plan Act “represents a historic, historic victory for the American people. ...

“Everything in the American Rescue Plan addresses a real need—including investments to fund our entire vaccination effort. More vaccines, more vaccinators and

more vaccination sites,” he said.

No Republican in the House or Senate voted for the bill. Two House Democrats joined their Republican counterparts to vote against it on Feb. 27; in the final House vote, one Democrat rejected it.

The measure includes \$17 billion for vaccine-related activities and programs and \$110 billion for other efforts to contain the pandemic; \$130 billion for public schools; and \$143 billion to expand child tax credit, child care tax credit and earned income tax credit mostly for one year.

Other provisions include \$45 billion to temporarily expand Affordable Care Act subsidies for two years and subsidize 2020 and 2021 coverage; \$25 billion for grants to restaurants and bars; \$7 billion to allow more loans under the Paycheck Protection Program; \$6 billion to increase nutrition assistance; and \$350 billion for states and localities.

The bill also provides for checks of \$1,400 to go to individuals who earn up to \$75,000 a year and heads of households earning up to \$112,500; married couples earning up to \$150,000 will get \$2,800. Eligible dependents, including adult dependents, also would each get \$1,400.

It expressly provides \$50 million for family planning, but as the bishops noted in their statement, and other national pro-life leaders have said, funding allocated in other provisions can be used for abortion.

It directs billions to state and local governments, \$219 billion and \$130 billion, respectively, “to mitigate the fiscal effects stemming from” COVID-19.

Because the Hyde Amendment is not applied to these funds, state and local governments could use the money to pay for abortion and abortion providers in the name of “responding to or mitigating the public health emergency,” said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, said the “sheer size” of the measure gives it “the potential to be the largest expansion of abortion funding since Obamacare.” †