



The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Joyful Witness

Would you recognize Jesus if he returned to Earth today? Read Kimberly Pohovey's column on page 12.

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Forrest Tucker uses a sculpting knife to trim a clay bust of Venerable Augustus Tolton, the first recognized priest of African descent in the United States. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

The unlikely story of a humble sculptor and an American hero of tremendous faith

By John Shaughnessy

DANVILLE—The thrill couldn't get any better—or so Forrest Tucker thought.

As a longtime welder for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and as a talented sculptor, Tucker was honored to be asked to create a lasting tribute to the four race car drivers who have won the Indianapolis 500 four times.

So, beginning in 2019, Tucker has sculpted four bronze bricks in honor of A. J. Foyt, Al Unser Sr., Rick Mears and

Hélio Castroneves, with their names and the years they won the race on the bricks, which have been placed among the Speedway's original red bricks at the start-finish line.

"To do something in the racing world that is part of the history of the Speedway—and my part will be there long after I'm gone—it's the honor of a lifetime," says the now-retired, 65-year-old Tucker, a member of Mary, Queen of Peace Parish in Danville. "I got a chance to meet the drivers and had some good conversations with them. I got a really close look at who

See **SCULPTOR**, page 8

Vatican says abortion, surrogacy, war, poverty are attacks on human dignity

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Being a Christian means defending human dignity and that includes opposing abortion, the death penalty, gender transition surgery,

war, sexual abuse and human trafficking, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a new document.



Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández

"We cannot separate faith from the defense of human dignity, evangelization from the promotion of a dignified life and spirituality from

a commitment to the dignity of every human being," Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, wrote in the document's opening section.

The declaration, "*Dignitas Infinita*" ("Infinite Dignity"), was released at the Vatican on April 8.

In the opening section, Cardinal Fernández confirmed reports that a declaration on human dignity and bioethical issues—like abortion, euthanasia and surrogacy—was approved by members of the dicastery in mid-2023, but Pope Francis asked the dicastery to make additions to "highlight topics closely connected to the theme of dignity, such as poverty, the situation of migrants, violence against women, human trafficking, war and other themes."

In February the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery approved the updated draft of the document, and in late March Pope Francis gave his approval and ordered its publication, Cardinal Fernández said.

With its five years of preparation, he wrote, "the document before us reflects the gravity and centrality of the theme of dignity in Christian thought."

See **DOCUMENT**, page 10

Switch to Relevant Radio programming takes Catholic Radio Indy to 'next level'

By Natalie Hoefler

When Bob Teipen and his wife Sharon founded Catholic Radio Indy (CRI) 20 years ago, using Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) programming, the goal was "to bring souls to Jesus through a Catholic presence on local airwaves in central Indiana, and keep it there forever, if possible," he says.

An April 1 switch in programming from EWTN to

See **RADIO**, page 8

Jim Ganley, current board member for Catholic Radio Indy, poses on Sept. 21, 2021, prior to his retirement after 17 years as the station's general manager. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)



Eclipse-mania



Students watch a partial solar eclipse at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Glendale, Calif., on April 8. A partial eclipse was visible throughout all 48 contiguous U.S. states, while a total solar eclipse was visible along a narrow track stretching from Texas to Maine—including in parts of central and southern Indiana. (OSV News photo/Mario Anzuoni, Reuters)

National Eucharistic Congress will offer National Shroud of Turin Exhibit

Criterion staff report

As part of the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21, registered attendees will have the opportunity to see the National Shroud of Turin Exhibit called "Shroud of Turin: World's Greatest Mystery" in the Indiana Convention Center from noon-6:30 p.m. on July 18-20.

This high-tech educational experience will engage and enlighten visitors about the world's most studied and controversial artifact: a 14-foot-long linen burial shroud.

The "most studied" claim is due to its scientifically unexplainable image of a life-sized, crucified man showing all the unique wound marks associated with the biblical accounts of Jesus Christ's suffering and death.

The exhibit will include an introductory film to briefly explain what the Shroud is, its history and why it is the world's greatest mystery. The exhibit space will include a full-size Shroud replica, full-size black and white negative images of the front and back body image, replicas of the crown of thorns, flagrum, nails and spear.

Twenty-four display panels will explain various features of the Shroud, also "tying the Shroud to the Gospels to demonstrate how it is a 'mirror of the Gospels,'" says Nora Creech, Shroud Educator for the National Shroud of Turin Exhibit.

"We will have some extremely rare and precious items from the Orareo Collection on display as well," says Creech. For more than 50 years, Richard Orareo collected hundreds of Shroud-related artifacts, including artwork, books, manuscripts, photographs, engravings, embroideries, statues, oil paintings, stamps, coins and medals. "These are one of a kind items that are rarely on display."

There will also be a meditation area with a full-size banner of the Ricci Crucifix created from the Shroud image, and a life-size bronze sculpture of the man in the Shroud image.

Creech adds that a "team of a team of Shroud experts will be on hand to lead people through the exhibit and to give presentations on various topics for those interested in going more in depth on various topics."

To register for single, weekend or five-day passes, go to www.eucharisticcongress.org/register. Discounted five-day passes are available to members of the archdiocese by using the code Indy24 when registering. †



**NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
WEEKLY UPDATE**



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

April 12-22, 2024

April 12 – 1:30 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Revival Executive Team meeting

April 16 – 11 a.m.
College of Deans meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

April 17 – 10 a.m.
Department Heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

April 17 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation for youths of St. Roch and St. Matthew the Apostle parishes, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

April 18 – 5:30 p.m.
St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities Gala at The Galt House, Louisville

April 19 – 2 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Revival Bishops Advisory Group meeting

April 20 – 11 a.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. John the Baptist Parish, Osgood; St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County; St. Mary Parish, Greensburg; St. Maurice Parish, Napoleon; and Immaculate Conception Parish, Millhousen, at St. Mary Church, Greensburg

April 20 – 3 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of Holy Family Parish, Oldenburg, at Holy Family Church

April 21 – 2 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for youths of St. Charles Borromeo and St. John the Apostle parishes and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington; St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Bedford; St. Mary Parish, Mitchell; and St. Agnes Parish, Nashville, at St. John the Apostle Church, Bloomington

April 22 – 12:30 p.m.
High school senior visit at Roncalli High School, Indianapolis

Pope marks 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's stigmata

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The wounds of Christ's passion and death and the stigmata given to some Christians through the centuries are reminders of "the pain Jesus suffered in his flesh out of love for us and for our salvation," Pope Francis said.

But, the pope said, the stigmata also is a reminder that through baptism Christians participate in Christ's victory over suffering and death because "it is precisely through his wounds that the mercy of the Risen, Crucified One flows to us as through a channel."

With a visiting group of Italian Franciscan friars from La Verna and from Tuscany on April 5, Pope Francis joined celebrations of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi receiving "the gift of the stigmata" after he had withdrawn to the hills of La Verna to pray and do penance in 1224.

The friars also brought to Pope Francis a reliquary containing blood from the stigmata of St. Francis.

The stigmata, or sharing the wounds of Christ, Pope Francis told the friars, is a reminder that a Christian is part of "the body of Christ," not in name alone but in reality.

In the "communion of love," which is the Church, he said, "each of us rediscovers who he or she is: a beloved, blessed, reconciled son or daughter, sent to give witness to the wonders of his grace and to be artisans of fraternity."

Pope Francis said that is why "Christians are called to address themselves in a special way to the

'stigmatized' they encounter: to those who are 'marked' in life, who bear the scars of the sufferings and injustices they have endured or the mistakes they have made."

St. Francis of Assisi can be a "companion on the journey," the pope said, supporting Christians and helping them "not to be crushed by difficulties, fears and contradictions, ours and those of others."

The stigmata for St. Francis was a call to return to what is essential, he said, and the celebrations of the eighth centenary should be a similar call to Franciscans today: "To be forgiven bearers of forgiveness, healed bearers of healing, joyful and simple in fraternity; with the strength of the love that flows from the side of Christ and that is nourished in your personal encounter with him, to be renewed every day with a seraphic ardor that burns the heart."

Franciscans, he said, are called to bring to the Church and the world "a little of that immense love that drove Christ to die on the cross for us."

Pope Francis also offered a prayer to "St. Francis, man wounded by love" and "decorated with the holy stigmata."

"May our wounds be healed by the heart of Christ to become, like you, witnesses of his mercy, which continues to heal and renew the life of those who seek him with a sincere heart," the pope prayed. "O Francis, made to resemble the Crucified One, let your stigmata be for us and for the world resplendent signs of life and resurrection, to show new ways of peace and reconciliation." †



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Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in *The Criterion*?

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Indiana Supreme Court upholds preliminary injunction on abortion law for those with religious objections

Criterion staff report

On April 4, the Indiana Court of Appeals upheld a Marion County Superior Court judge's December 2022 preliminary injunction on the state's law protecting most unborn children.

The injunction only applies to a narrow group of people in an August 2022 class action lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana claiming that, based on Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), the law violates their right to abortions prohibited by the statute.

Even though the preliminary injunction was upheld, the Court of Appeals' ruling states that the injunction "is overly broad because it enjoins enforcement of the Abortion law in ways that do not violate RFRA. We therefore affirm but remand for entry of a narrower injunction."

The office of Indiana Attorney General Todd

Rokita issued a statement the same day in response, saying that, despite the decision, "life is still winning" in Indiana.

"Today's ruling on the injunction only affects the four individuals and the single organization named in the lawsuit," the statement read. "But the ACLU is right about one thing—this case is far from over, and Hoosiers know our office will always fight to protect the unborn."

The lawsuit was originally filed in August 2022 by the ACLU of Indiana on behalf of Hoosier Jews for Choice and four anonymous women who represent a variety of faiths.

In December 2022, a Marion County Superior Court judge granted a preliminary injunction against the law, applying only to the plaintiffs in the case.

The judge also granted class-action status to the suit, opening participation to others who claim their religious freedom is restricted by the law, which

limits abortion up to 10 weeks gestation in instances of rape or incest, up to 20 weeks gestation in cases of lethal fetal anomalies, or when the mother's life is in danger from specific medical issues.

Rokita sought to appeal the December 2022 preliminary injunction and class action decisions directly to the Indiana Supreme Court. The request was denied, sending the case through the state's Court of Appeals.

In upholding the lower court's class action designation of the suit, the Court of Appeals opinion declares the decision "not [to be] an abuse of discretion."

In an April 4 statement opposing the Court of Appeals' decision to uphold the preliminary injunction, Indiana Right to Life president Mike Fichter said the organization is "confident Indiana will prevail against any claims that abortion—the intentional ending of an innocent and helpless human life—is a religious freedom." †



Todd Rokita



Mike Fichter

Pope Francis meets with family members of hostages held by Hamas

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Eight people united in their anguish carried into the papal library posters bearing the faces of their loved ones who are held in captivity by Hamas.

The father, mother, aunt, uncle, cousin, brother or twin sister of various Israeli hostages met with Pope Francis for just under an hour on April 8, six months after the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas in which some 240 people were kidnapped and taken to Gaza.

Vatican News reported that among those who met with the pope was Bezalel Shnaider, the aunt of Shiri Bibas—an Israeli mother taken hostage

along with her two sons, 4-year-old Ariel and 9-month-old Kfir, the youngest hostage taken in the Oct. 7 attacks.

In an edited video of the meeting posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, by *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, Pope Francis touched his hand to a poster with images of the children to bless them.

The video also showed Amit Nimrodi giving Pope Francis a necklace bearing the image of a house with a heart inside, a symbol of

support for the hostages, and he told the pope that he began growing out his now-lengthy white beard when his son was taken hostage since he believes his son, an Israeli soldier, is also growing out his beard in captivity.

Gal Gilboa-Dalal, another member of the delegation, survived the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on a music festival in Re'im, Israel, but his brother, 22-year-old Guy, was taken prisoner by Hamas. Li-Yam Berger attended the audience in support of her twin sister, Agam, a 19-year-old Israeli

soldier, who was kidnapped during an attack on a military base in Nahal Oz, Israel, on Oct. 7.

The delegation was scheduled to travel through Italy, meeting with government representatives and members of the Italian Jewish community.

In November, Pope Francis had met at the Vatican with 12 relatives of 14 Israelis held hostage by Hamas and, separately, with 10 Palestinians whose family members were suffering under the Israeli siege of Gaza. The Vatican press office insisted the meetings were "of an exclusively humanitarian nature." †



Pope Francis

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Editorial

Despite success of 40 Days for Life campaign, fight protecting the unborn is far from over

There is a report of a woman on an operating table at the last minute deciding she didn't want to go through with an abortion. And of a mother who took an abortion pill, then 30 minutes later realized she wanted to give birth to her child and took abortion pill reversal medication. Thankfully, mother and baby in both those cases—and in several other instances reported in recent weeks—continued the pregnancies, and God willing, will be examples of how 40 Days for Life campaigns bear fruit.

For those needing a refresher, 40 Days for Life is an international, multi-faith effort that seeks to end abortion through peaceful prayer vigils outside abortion centers, and to raise community awareness of the consequences of abortion. Two campaigns occur each year—one in the spring, the other in the fall. In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, campaigns are held outside Planned Parenthood facilities in Bloomington and Indianapolis.

The 2024 international spring campaign, which began on Feb. 14 and ended on March 24, offered more proof that sidewalk counselors and prayer warriors outside abortion centers make a difference when it comes to protecting unborn children. We thank God for their presence. And we believe the prayers many of you offered during the campaign bore fruit as well.

As reported on the 40 Days for Life website, since Feb. 14, 266 lives were saved during the recent campaign. To take it a step further, since 40 Days for Life campaigns began in 2007, 24,242 children have been saved, 148 abortion centers have been closed, and 256 abortion workers have quit their jobs.

Those statistics offer proof that when it comes to the unborn, our prayers and public witness plant seeds of faith and *do* convert hardened and uninformed hearts.

Despite the success of pro-life initiatives, many in society are working to make abortion more accessible wherever possible.

As a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision overturning the court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision—which had legalized abortion on demand in the U.S.—abortion regulation was returned to each state. While the court in *Dobbs* emphasized that there is no federal constitutional right to abortion in the U.S., multiple states will have measures to expand access to abortion on their ballots in November.

The Florida Supreme Court on April 1 simultaneously ruled that the state's constitution does not protect abortion access and allowed a proposed amendment seeking to do so to qualify for the state's November ballot.

Kelsey Pritchard, state public affairs director for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, told OSV News that while her group celebrates that the Florida Supreme Court upheld abortion restrictions in that state, "at the same time, we recognize that



Florida is in real jeopardy of losing those protections through the ballot measure that they also upheld and said would be on the ballot in November."

As reported in OSV News, Maryland and New York also will have efforts to enshrine abortion protections in their state constitutions on the ballot, while efforts for similar amendments to qualify for the ballot are still underway in several states, including Arizona and Montana.

Sadly, Ohio voters last November approved a measure to codify abortion access in the state's constitution, legalizing abortion up to the point of fetal viability—the gestational point at which a baby may be capable of living outside the uterus—and beyond, if a physician decided an abortion was necessary for the sake of the mother's life or health. The Ohio result followed losses for the pro-life movement when voters in California, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Vermont and Kansas either rejected new limitations on abortion or expanded legal protections for it.

Given these trends in other states, this is no time for pro-life Hoosiers to rest on their laurels. Although most unborn children in Indiana are now legally protected, pro-life advocacy needs to continue in the state to keep the cause for abortion rights at bay and, ultimately, to make abortion unthinkable in our society.

Pritchard said that opponents of efforts to enshrine abortion protections in state constitutions need "to expose that the abortion industry is lying in their ads when they say that, if you don't pass this constitutional amendment women are going to die in your state.

"That's a complete lie, because it's just an obvious truth that every state has a life of the mother provision," she said.

When it comes to expectant mothers, the Church in the U.S.—including in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis—also has a Walking with Moms program. "... It is the call of every Catholic now more than ever to help women in crisis pregnancies choose life for their children, to assist moms in need and to support the ministries, organizations and agencies that provide services for these women." Its website is www.walkingwithmomsindy.org.

Although some in the secular media and in other circles won't share it, there are alternatives to abortion. And, please God, may more and more people use these resources that can be lifesaving—for unborn children, mothers and their families.

—Mike Krokos

Reflection/Sean Gallagher

'Sun and moon, bless the Lord, praise and exult him above all forever'

"Sun and moon, bless the Lord, praise and exult him above all forever" (Dn 3:62).



I prayed those words on the morning of April 8 as part of Morning Prayer of the Church's Liturgy of the Hours for the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

This feast, which celebrates the Blessed

Virgin Mary consenting to the invitation of God given through the Archangel Gabriel to become the mother of the Lord, is ordinarily observed on March 25—nine months to the day before Christmas.

This year, though, it was moved to April 8. Why? Because March 25 fell during Holy Week and the week after was the Octave of Easter. During those two holiest weeks of the liturgical year, the Church observes no other feasts.

The nearest day to March 25 on which it could be celebrated was on April 8—the day on which, for the first time in more than 800 years, a total solar eclipse occurred on the land that is now Indianapolis where my family and I live.

The Church's worship isn't just a way for us to give praise and thanks to God for the ways he has entered human history to save us and reconcile us with himself, although that's reason enough.

It is also a daily invitation to our hearts and minds to be open, not just to God's immense providence in general, but to dare to believe that his act of creation of the universe is an expression of his infinite love for each one of us and all of us together.

The canticle from the Book of Daniel that includes the verse above calls all creation to bless the Lord.

And, indeed, all creation does this at all times since the entire universe wondrously shows forth the work of his hands by its mere existence.

God, the ground of being of the entire universe, created us in his own image and likeness, blessing us out of all living creatures with minds and hearts able to take in with awe and gratitude this astonishing reality.

Our scientific knowledge of the wider created world can increase this amazement and thankfulness when we learn that the size of the sun, moon and Earth had to be at their particular size and at their precise relative position from each other over nearly 100 million miles, for such an eclipse to be possible.

The sheer weight of divine providence on magnificent display in a total solar eclipse is breathtaking.

My family and I viewed it together in the backyard of our home on the east side of Indianapolis, a tiny speck in the celestial dance of the sun, moon and Earth in the eclipse, but still precious in the eyes of the Lord.

As we took in the darkening of the world and the bright ring of the sun's light shining out from around the edge of the moon, I was moved to drop to my knees and pray, "Sun and moon, bless the Lord, praise and exult him above all forever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

As grateful as I was to view it, it was even more heartening to hear my 10-year-old son Colin say, "I'm so blessed. I'll remember this for the rest of my life." As great as the sun, moon and Earth are, some day they will cease to exist. But Colin's soul is immortal.

May God in his providence in the eclipse of 2024 move all of our hearts to bless him in

the countless small, but no less beautiful ways, he cares and shows his love for us every day of our lives.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.) †

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Letters Policy

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

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

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit letters from readers as necessary

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

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

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

In death, life is changed, not ended, thanks to God's love

"Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:46-47).

Generally speaking, there are three ways to imagine what happens when a human being dies.

The first is to imagine that when someone dies, he or she enters into a kind of non-being, a shadow realm that is no longer governed by the laws of nature or material existence. This is the Hades, or Sheol, of ancient mythology. It is the world that ghosts inhabit. Nothing there seems real or permanent.

The second way to imagine what happens in death is more prosaic and clinical. Human death, like the death of animals and plants, is seen as nothing more (or less) than the physical process of disintegration that comes as a natural part of the cycle of life.

When a human being dies, this particular person is no more. All that is left is what's in the memory of those who have survived, along with any historical writings or other artifacts that

preserve some record of the deceased's life and work.

The third way to imagine what happens to human beings after they die is to take the "shadow view" described above, turn it inside out, and make it more robust and consequential than life as we know it now.

In this radically transformed view, life after death is not a shadow but even more substantial than existence prior to death. This is what we Christians believe, namely that life after death is somehow "more real" than our present existence.

This third view of life after death is portrayed in the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Easter (Lk 24:35-48). Jesus appears to his cowardly disciples who are hiding behind locked doors. "Peace be with you," he says. But the disciples "were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost" (Lk 24:36-37). They knew that the Lord had risen from the dead, but they failed to understand what this meant in practical terms.

Jesus assures them of his identity and his reality. "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet,

that it is I. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have" (Lk 24:38-39). And as he said this, St. Luke tells us, "He showed them his hands and his feet" (Lk 24:40).

The disciples remained skeptical, only halfway convinced. The Gospel records that while "they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed" (Lk 24:41), Jesus asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" (Lk 24:41) St. Luke tells us that "they gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them" (Lk 24:43). Jesus did this not because he was hungry or because he wanted to prove to them that he was not a ghost, but a real human being whose life was changed, not ended.

We affirm this fundamental belief every time we celebrate someone's Mass of Christian burial. Life is changed, not ended, by death. Further, we proclaim boldly that we will all rise again on the last day, and that when we rise again our souls and our bodies will be reunited in a way that is radically transformed from our current earthly existence.

This tenet of our Christian faith ("the

resurrection of the body") is scandalous to modern minds. Our contemporary culture asserts that death is the absolute end, and that after death we are no more than a distant memory or a footnote in the history of the world.

And yet, the Gospel tells us that those who have died in Christ will live with him. We will not be ghosts. Like him, we will be real human beings (body and soul) whose lives have changed, not ended.

In the meantime, the Gospel tells us that we have work to do. We are witnesses to the great miracle of Jesus' resurrection, and we have been commissioned by him to "preach in his name to all nations" (Lk 24:47) the good news that if we believe in him, and follow him, we can have life eternal.

As we continue our joy-filled celebration of the great mystery of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, let's not hesitate to proclaim with our words and our actions that Christ is risen. That God's love is stronger than death. And that we, too, will rise again one day—not as ghosts but as real human beings whose lives have been transformed, not ended. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Gracias al amor de Dios, la vida no termina con la muerte, solo cambia

"Así está escrito, y así era necesario, que el Cristo padeciera y resucitara de los muertos al tercer día, y que en su nombre se predicara el arrepentimiento y el perdón de pecados en todas las naciones, comenzando por Jerusalén" (Lc 24:46-47).

En términos generales, hay tres formas de imaginar lo que ocurre cuando un ser humano fallece.

La primera consiste en imaginar que cuando esto ocurre, la persona entra en una especie de estado de "no ser," un reino de sombras que ya no se rige por las leyes de la naturaleza ni por la existencia material. Este es el infierno donde habita Hades según la mitología antigua, el *seol* de los hebreos, el mundo donde habitan los fantasmas. Nada allí parece real o permanente.

La segunda forma de imaginar lo que ocurre con la muerte es más prosaica y clínica. La muerte humana, como la de los animales y las plantas, se considera nada más (o nada menos) que el proceso físico de desintegración que se produce como parte natural del ciclo de la vida.

Cuando un ser humano fallece, esa persona concreta deja de existir. Todo lo que queda de ella son los recuerdos en la memoria de los que le han sobrevivido, junto con cualquier

escrito histórico u otros artefactos que conserven algún registro de la vida y obra del difunto.

La tercera forma de imaginar lo que les sucede a los seres humanos después de morir consiste en tomar esa visión sombría descrita al principio, darle la vuelta y hacerla más sólida y consecuente que la vida tal y como la conocemos ahora.

En esta visión radicalmente transformada, la vida después de la muerte no es una sombra sino incluso más sustancial que la existencia anterior a la muerte. Esto es lo que creemos los cristianos, a saber, que la vida después de la muerte es de algún modo "más real" que nuestra existencia actual.

Esta tercera visión de la vida después de la muerte se retrata en la lectura del Evangelio del tercer domingo de Pascua (Lc 24:35-48). Jesús se aparece a sus discípulos que, acobardados, se esconden a puertas cerradas, y les dice: "¡La paz sea con ustedes!" Ellos "se espantaron y se atemorizaron, pues creían estar viendo un espíritu" (Lc 24:36-37). Sabían que el Señor había resucitado de entre los muertos, pero no entendían lo que esto significaba en términos prácticos.

Jesús les asegura su identidad y su realidad. "¿Por qué se asustan? ¿Por qué dan cabida a esos pensamientos en

su corazón? ¡Miren mis manos y mis pies! ¡Soy yo! Tóquenme y véanme: un espíritu no tiene carne ni huesos, como pueden ver que los tengo yo" (Lc 24:38-39). San Lucas nos dice que al decir esto, "les mostró las manos y los pies" (Lc 24:40).

Los discípulos permanecieron escépticos, convencidos únicamente a medias. El Evangelio indica que aunque "por el gozo y la sorpresa que tenían, no le creían" (Lc 24:41), Jesús les preguntó: "¿Tienen aquí algo de comer?" (Lc 24:41), a lo que san Lucas nos dice que "ellos le dieron parte de un pescado asado, y él lo tomó y se lo comió delante de ellos" (Lc 24:42-43). Jesús hizo esto no porque tuviera hambre o porque necesitara comida terrenal, sino porque quería demostrarles que no era un fantasma, sino un ser humano real cuya vida había cambiado, no terminado.

Afirmamos esta creencia fundamental cada vez que celebramos la misa de cristiana sepultura. La vida cambia, no termina con la muerte. Además, proclamamos con valentía que todos resucitaremos en el último día, y que cuando esto ocurra, nuestras almas y nuestros cuerpos se reunirán de una forma radicalmente distinta a nuestra actual existencia terrenal.

Este principio de nuestra fe cristiana ("la resurrección del cuerpo") resulta

escandaloso para las mentes modernas. Nuestra cultura contemporánea afirma que la muerte es el fin absoluto, y que después de la muerte no somos más que un recuerdo lejano o una nota a pie de página en la historia del mundo.

Y sin embargo, el Evangelio nos dice que los que han muerto en Cristo vivirán con él. No seremos fantasmas. Al igual que él, seremos seres humanos reales (en cuerpo y alma) cuyas vidas han cambiado, no han terminado.

Mientras tanto, el Evangelio nos dice que debemos ponernos manos a la obra. Somos testigos del gran milagro de la resurrección de Jesús, y él nos ha encargado "que en su nombre se predicara el arrepentimiento y el perdón de pecados en todas las naciones, comenzando por Jerusalén" (Lc 24:47), la Buena Nueva de que si creemos en él, y le seguimos, podemos tener vida eterna.

Mientras continuamos nuestra alegre celebración del gran misterio de la resurrección de Jesús de entre los muertos, no dudemos en proclamar con nuestras palabras y nuestros actos que Cristo ha resucitado, que el amor de Dios es más fuerte que la muerte, y que nosotros también resucitaremos un día, no como fantasmas, sino como seres humanos reales cuyas vidas han sido transformadas, no han terminado. †



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Our Lord is truly risen. We are not alone. Run to him!

Christòs anesti!—“Christ is risen; he is truly risen!” In this traditional proclamation of the Churches of the East, the word “truly” reminds us that our hope is not an illusion, but the truth! And that, in the wake of Easter, humanity’s journey, now marked by hope, advances all the more readily (Easter Message of Pope Francis, “*Urbi et Orbi*,” 2023).

We think of Easter as a time of rejoicing, and it surely is. The 40 days of Lent have passed, and we have once again celebrated the Paschal Triduum which recalls the Lord’s intense suffering and cruel death.

As Pope Francis reminded us in last year’s Easter message—“*Urbi et Orbi*” (“to the city and to the world”)—our joy is based on the conviction that our Lord is truly risen. We sing Alleluias during the Easter season because this truly is a time of great joy.

Another word for Easter is Pasch, a word that means “passage.” In Jesus, Pope Francis tells us, “The decisive passage of humanity has been made: the passage from death to life, from sin

to grace, from fear to confidence, from desolation to communion.”

We Christians believe that our life’s journey is now “marked by hope.” While there are many reasons to be anxious, fearful or lonely, none of these are decisive for us. “Our hope is not an illusion, but the truth!” the Holy Father insists.

Why, then, is there still so much suffering? So much poverty, disease, warfare and inhumanity? Sin and evil remain powerful forces, but we are confident that the Lord’s resurrection has had the last word over sin and death.

Easter is not simply a remembrance of a past event. It is an ongoing passage, an experience of redemption that must be kept alive and current despite the sin and evil that surround us today.

This is why Pope Francis exclaims: [May] Easter be for each of you, dear brothers and sisters, and in particular for the sick and the poor, the elderly and those experiencing moments of trial and weariness, a passage from affliction to consolation. We are not alone: Jesus, the Living One, is with us, forever. Let the Church and the world rejoice, for today

our hopes no longer come up against the wall of death, for the Lord has built us a bridge to life.

The effects of sin and death remain in our world, and each of us must face them in our daily lives. But we are not alone. And we are not stymied by the “wall of death.” Pope Francis tells us that Jesus “has built us a bridge to life.” What’s more, our Lord journeys with us—as do our Blessed Mother and all the saints—as we pass over the chasm of death and destruction into the better world that Christ’s resurrection has won for us.

At Easter, the Holy Father says, “the journey quickens and becomes a race, since humanity now sees the goal of its journey, the meaning of its destiny, Jesus Christ, and is called to make haste to meet him, who is the hope of the world.” Like the women who discovered the empty tomb on Easter morning, our hearts are racing as we rush to announce the good news of our salvation.

May we too make haste to progress on a journey of reciprocal trust: trust among individuals, peoples and nations. May we allow ourselves to experience amazement

at the joyful proclamation of Easter, at the light that illumines the darkness and the gloom in which, all too often, our world finds itself enveloped.

Along this journey, we encounter many stumbling blocks, the pope teaches, which make it more difficult and demanding to hasten toward the risen Lord. As a result, the Holy Father urges us to make this simple prayer: “Lord, help us to run to meet you! Help us to open our hearts!”

Christ is truly risen. Let us run to him—crossing over the bridge that is Christ himself and opening our minds and hearts to him. “May we rediscover the enjoyment of the journey, quicken the heartbeat of hope, and experience a foretaste of the beauty of heaven!”

The fact that we must encounter the effects of sin and death in our world, and in ourselves, should not discourage us. Christ is with us. He has overcome “the wall of death” and shown us the passageway from death to life. Alleluia!

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.) †

“Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”

—Pope Francis, “*Misericordiae Vultus*” (“The Face of Mercy”)

“Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios.”

—Papa Francisco, “*Misericordiae Vultus*” (“El rostro de la misericordia”)

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Nuestro Señor en verdad ha resucitado. No estamos solos. ¡Corramos hacia él!

“Cristo ha resucitado, verdaderamente ha resucitado,” como se proclama en las Iglesias de Oriente: *Christòs anesti!* Ese “verdaderamente” nos dice que la esperanza no es una ilusión, ¡es verdad! Y que, a partir de la Pascua, el camino de la humanidad, marcado por la esperanza, avanza veloz. (Mensaje de Pascua del Papa Francisco, *Urbi et Orbi*, 2023).

Pensamos en la Pascua como un tiempo de regocijo, y sin duda lo es. Han transcurrido los 40 días de la Cuaresma y hemos vuelto a celebrar el Triduo Pascual que recuerda el intenso sufrimiento y la cruel muerte del Señor.

Como nos hizo notar el Papa Francisco en el mensaje de Pascua del año pasado “*Urbi et Orbi*,” nuestra alegría se basa en la convicción de que nuestro Señor ha resucitado de verdad. Cantamos aleluyas durante el tiempo de Pascua porque este es verdaderamente un tiempo de gran alegría.

Otra palabra para la Pascua es *pasch*, palabra que significa “paso.” El Papa Francisco nos dice que “en Jesús se realizó el paso decisivo de la humanidad: de la muerte a la vida, del pecado a la gracia, del miedo a la confianza, de la desolación a la comunión.”

Los cristianos creemos que el camino de nuestra vida está ahora “marcado por la esperanza” y aunque haya muchas razones para estar ansiosos, temerosos o sentirnos solos, ninguna de ellas es decisiva para nosotros. “[Nuestra] esperanza no es una ilusión, ¡es verdad!” insiste el Santo Padre.

¿Por qué, entonces, sigue habiendo tanto sufrimiento? ¿Tanta pobreza, enfermedad, guerra e inhumanidad? El pecado y el mal siguen siendo fuerzas poderosas, pero confiamos en que la resurrección del Señor haya tenido la última palabra sobre el pecado y la muerte.

La Pascua no es simplemente el recuerdo de un acontecimiento pasado, sino que es un pasaje continuo, una experiencia de redención que debe mantenerse viva y actual a pesar del pecado y el mal que nos rodean hoy en día.

Por eso el Papa Francisco exclama: Que sea para cada uno de ustedes, queridos hermanos y hermanas—en particular para los enfermos y los pobres, para los ancianos y los que están atravesando momentos de prueba y dificultad—un paso de la tribulación a la consolución. No estamos solos, Jesús, el Viviente, está con nosotros para siempre. Que la Iglesia y el mundo se alegren,

porque hoy nuestra esperanza ya no se estrella contra el muro de la muerte; el Señor nos ha abierto un puente hacia la vida.

Los efectos del pecado y de la muerte permanecen en nuestro mundo y cada uno de nosotros debe enfrentarse a ellos en su vida cotidiana, pero no estamos solos y el “muro de la muerte” no nos obstaculiza el paso. El Papa Francisco nos dice que Jesús “nos ha abierto un puente hacia la vida.” Es más, nuestro Señor recorre el camino junto con nosotros—al igual que nuestra Santísima Madre y todos los santos—mientras atravesamos el abismo de la muerte y la destrucción hacia el mundo mejor que Cristo conquistó mediante su resurrección.

El Santo Padre afirma que en la Pascua: “el andar se acelera y se vuelve una carrera, porque la humanidad ve la meta de su camino, el sentido de su destino, Jesucristo, y está llamada a ir de prisa hacia Él, esperanza del mundo.” Como las mujeres que descubrieron el sepulcro vacío en la mañana de Pascua, nuestros corazones se aceleran al apresurarnos a anunciar la buena nueva de nuestra salvación.

Que nosotros también nos apresuremos a avanzar en un viaje de confianza recíproca: confianza entre

individuos, pueblos y naciones. Que nos permitamos experimentar el asombro ante el alegre anuncio de la Pascua, ante la luz que ilumina la oscuridad y las tinieblas en las que, con demasiada frecuencia, se ve envuelto nuestro mundo.

El Sumo Pontífice señala que a lo largo de este recorrido encontramos muchos tropiezos que hacen más arduo y fatigoso apresurarse hacia el Señor resucitado. Por ello nos insta a hacer esta sencilla oración: “¡Ayúdanos a correr hacia Ti! ¡Ayúdanos a abrir nuestros corazones!”

Cristo verdaderamente ha resucitado. Corramos hacia él, cruzando el puente que es Cristo mismo y abrámosle nuestras mentes y corazones. “Hermanos, hermanas, encontremos también nosotros el gusto del camino, aceleremos el latido de la esperanza, saboreemos la belleza del cielo.”

El hecho de que debamos enfrentarnos a los efectos del pecado y de la muerte en nuestro mundo, y en nosotros mismos, no debe desanimarnos. Cristo está con nosotros; ha superado “el muro de la muerte” y nos ha mostrado el paso de la muerte a la vida. ¡Aleluia!

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

Bishops visit Alabama in ‘powerful encounter’ with legacy of racism

(OSV News)—A group of Catholic bishops recently traveled to Montgomery and Selma, Ala., in what trip organizers called a “powerful encounter” amid the nation’s long-running reckoning with racism.

Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre of Louisville, Ky., former chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, and current committee chair retired Auxiliary Bishop Joseph N. Perry of Chicago hosted a March 18-20 “Bishops’ Lenten Experience” in the two cities, which were the endpoints of a five-day, 54-mile nonviolent march led by civil rights leader and pastor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in support of voting rights for Black Americans. At its March 25, 1965, conclusion on the steps of the Capitol in Montgomery, Rev. King told the 25,000 participants, “There never was a moment in American history more honorable and more inspiring.”

The bishops’ visit to the sites, which was closed to media, had been coordinated by the committee on racism and the Washington-based Catholic Mobilizing Network, which works closely with the U.S. bishops to end the death penalty, promote restorative justice and advance racial equity.

Joining Archbishop Fabre and Bishop Perry for the three-day gathering were Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose, Calif., Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia and Bishop William M. Joensen of Des Moines, Iowa.

Among the stops on the itinerary were Montgomery’s three Legacy Sites—the Legacy Museum, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Freedom Monument Sculpture Park; the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, renamed in honor of King, who served as its 20th pastor from 1954-1960; and the City of St. Jude, founded by Passionist Father Harold Purcell as part of what he called “a long-cherished ambition” to work directly among southern Black communities. The parish complex’s now-closed hospital treated those injured during the March 7, 1965, “Bloody Sunday” clashes and tried to save the life of activist Viola Liuzzo, who was killed on the final day of the Selma to Montgomery march by Ku Klux Klan members.

The group also journeyed along the National Historic Selma to Montgomery Trail, and while in Selma silently crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where state and local law enforcement had attacked peaceful civil rights marchers—including future Congressman John Lewis (1940-2020)—who were attempting to transit on Bloody Sunday.

Following their time at the bridge, participants met for prayer and dinner with staff at the Edmundite Missions. Founded in 1937 by two Society of St. Edmund priests, the missions serve the area’s most impoverished communities by providing meals, education, youth and senior services.



A group of U.S. bishops and other participants pose outside the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration in Montgomery, Ala., during a recent pilgrimage to Montgomery and Selma. The museum displays the history of slavery and racism in America. This includes the enslavement of African Americans, racial lynchings, segregation and racial bias. (OSV News photo/Catholic Mobilizing Network)

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, told OSV News the tour focused on three lines of inquiry.

“What is the relationship between the nation’s past and modern-day systems of oppression, particularly related to the criminal legal system?” said Murphy. “What is required of the Church, its leadership and its faithful in order to be ministers of reconciliation? How can the Church play a more active role in truth-telling to move our ministries forward?”

“Locating ourselves within these pivotal places of the civil rights movement during this trip was an opportunity to engage in intentional and potentially challenging conversations about the legacy of racism—in our society and in our Church,” she said.

Bishop Perry told OSV News that he was particularly moved by his visit to the Legacy Museum, which “powerfully traced the slave trade through emancipation and the summary execution of Blacks—mostly Black men—in an effort to preserve distance between the white and Black communities on through the civil rights struggle.

“I don’t think anyone can journey through the exhibits without registering great emotion in the face of the human devastation involved in our American history,” he said.

“The meticulously prepared exhibits in the museum vividly portrayed the depth of oppression and the anguish of families torn apart by the cruel separation of slave children from their parents, husbands from wives,” wrote Archbishop Gudziak in a March 21 reflection posted to Facebook. “The beatings, rapes and fundamental

indignities endured are unimaginable. I found it not easy to fall asleep after this experience. It is imperative that every American become acquainted with this history; it is a history that every American needs to know.”

He added that “the journey along the path of the civil rights movement from Selma to Montgomery and the visit to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Ala., were both disturbing and inspiring.

“Slavery, racism and the marginalization of Native North American peoples and African Americans represent the original sin of our nation,” said Archbishop Gudziak.

Bishop Perry told OSV News that eradicating racism is a matter of “conversion of mind and heart,” admitting that “this whole issue of race differentiation is probably one of the slowest pieces of the human situation that we know of and experience from day to day. And it’s hard to get people to turn around attitudes or entrenched perceptions of one another.

“We continue to work on it to make sure that that conversion becomes a reality,” said Bishop Perry.

The upcoming feast of Pentecost presents an opportunity for the faithful to recommit themselves to “the value of diversity in the Christian experience from the beginning,” he said. “Can we allow others to voice and celebrate their cultures in our schools and churches and workplaces?”

Quoting the U.S. bishops’ 2018 pastoral letter on racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love,” Bishop Perry said, “Only by forging authentic relationships can we truly see each other as Christ sees us.” †

DOCUMENT

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The title of the document is taken from an *Angelus* address St. John Paul II gave in Germany in 1980 during a meeting with people with disabilities. He told them, “With Jesus Christ, God has shown us in an unsurpassed way how he loves each human being and thereby bestows upon him infinite dignity.”

The document is dated, “2 April 2024, the nineteenth anniversary of the death of Pope St. John Paul II.”

Cardinal Fernandez said initially the dicastery was going to call the document “Beyond all Circumstances,” which is an affirmation by Pope Francis of how human dignity is not lessened by one’s state of development or where he or she is born or the resources or talents one has or what one has done.

Instead, he said, they chose the comment St. John Paul had made.

The declaration noted that the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” also listed attacks on human dignity as ranging from abortion and euthanasia to “subhuman living conditions” and “degrading working conditions.”

Members of the doctrinal dicastery included the death penalty among violations of “the inalienable dignity of every person, regardless of the circumstances,” and called for the respect of the dignity of people who are incarcerated.

The declaration denounced discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and particularly situations in which people are “imprisoned, tortured and even

deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation.”

But it also condemned “gender theory” as “extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal.”

Gender theory, it said, tries “to deny the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference.”

The Catholic Church, the declaration said, teaches that “human life in all its dimensions, both physical and spiritual, is a gift from God. This gift is to be accepted with gratitude and placed at the service of the good.”

Quoting Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “*Amoris Laetitia*,” the declaration said gender ideology “envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.”

Dicastery members said it is true that there is a difference between biological sex and the roles and behaviors that a given society or culture assigns to a male or female, but the fact that some of those notions of what it means to be a woman or a man are culturally influenced does not mean there are no differences between biological males and biological females.

“Therefore,” they said, “all attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman are to be rejected.”

Again quoting Pope Francis’ exhortation, the declaration said, “We cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God’s work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and experiences, and where biological elements exist which are impossible to ignore.”

“Any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity

the person has received from the moment of conception,” it said. However, the declaration clarified that “this is not to exclude the possibility that a person with genital abnormalities that are already evident at birth or that develop later may choose to receive the assistance of health care professionals to resolve these abnormalities.”

Members of the dicastery also warned about the implications of changing language about human dignity, citing for example those who propose the expressions “personal dignity” or “the rights of the person” instead of “human dignity.”

In many cases, they said, the proposal understands “a ‘person’ to be only ‘one who is capable of reasoning.’ They then argue that dignity and rights are deduced from the individual’s capacity for knowledge and freedom, which not all humans possess. Thus, according to them, the unborn child would not have personal dignity, nor would the older person who is dependent upon others, nor would an individual with mental disabilities.”

The Catholic Church, on the contrary, “insists that the dignity of every human person, precisely because it is intrinsic, remains in all circumstances.”

The acceptance of abortion, it said, “is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense, which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, even when the fundamental right to life is at stake.

“Procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth,” it said.

The document also repeated Pope Francis’ call for a global ban on

surrogacy, which, he said, is “a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother’s material needs.”

Surrogacy, it said, transforms a couple’s legitimate desire to have a child into “a ‘right to a child’ that fails to respect the dignity of that child as the recipient of the gift of life.”

Extreme poverty, the marginalization of people with disabilities, violent online attacks and war also violate human dignity, the document said.

While recognizing the right of nations to defend themselves against an aggressor, the document insisted armed conflicts “will not solve problems but only increase them. This point is even more critical in our time when it has become commonplace for so many innocent civilians to perish beyond the confines of a battlefield.”

On the issue of migrants and refugees, the dicastery members said that while “no one will ever openly deny that they are human beings,” many migration policies and popular attitudes toward migrants “can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human.”

The promotion of euthanasia and assisted suicide, it said, “utilizes a mistaken understanding of human dignity to turn the concept of dignity against life itself.”

The declaration said, “Certainly, the dignity of those who are critically or terminally ill calls for all suitable and necessary efforts to alleviate their suffering through appropriate palliative care and by avoiding aggressive treatments or disproportionate medical procedures,” but it also insisted, “suffering does not cause the sick to lose their dignity, which is intrinsically and inalienably their own.” †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Church is considering if Dorothy Day might be a ‘saint for our time’

By Russell Shaw

(OSV News)—In one of his more snarky short stories about clerical life—it’s called “The Forks”—the American Catholic writer J.F. Powers capsulizes the fraught relationship between a stuffy, self-important pastor and his young curate in a single, prickly sentence: “He found Father Eudex reading *The Catholic Worker* one day and had not trusted him since.”

There was a time when many Catholics, not just stuffy pastors, held the same view of Dorothy Day and her group: dangerous. Some still may. But the Church is considering declaring her a saint.

Day was co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement and longtime editor of the penny-a-copy newspaper of the same name. From the mid-1930s until her death in 1980, she preached radical Christianity and no less radical social activism to a sometimes appreciative, sometimes puzzled, sometimes angry audience of Catholics in the U.S. The gospel according to Day was a heady mix of the inspiring and the infuriating.

Historian Charles Morris says she “transformed the social conscience of a whole generation of young clergy.” To which one might add: lay intellectuals, writers and journalists, too. The effort to have her canonized is moving, slowly but apparently steadily, ahead.

This ex-communist who had an abortion and several love affairs might not have entirely welcomed that. “Don’t call me a saint,” she once said. “I don’t want to be dismissed so easily.”

Dorothy Day was born on Nov. 8, 1897, in Brooklyn. Her parents had been married in an Episcopal ceremony but seldom went to church. Her father, a sportswriter, moved the family to San Francisco to take a job with a newspaper, but the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 wiped out the paper and the elder Day’s job, and the family shifted to Chicago.

There the young girl showed her first interest in religion and was baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal church. Around this time, too, she got what she later called her “first impulse toward Catholicism”—the sight of a Catholic friend’s mother kneeling in her bedroom at prayer.

“For many a night after that,” Day wrote in her 1952 autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, “I used to plague my sister with my long prayers. . . . So, we began to practice being saints; it was a game with us.”

At age 15, she started having doubts about religion. On the one hand, she saw churchgoers who were well off. On the other, she saw the poor. “I did not see anyone taking off his coat and giving it to the poor. I didn’t see anyone having a banquet and calling in the lame, the halt and the blind.”

At the University of Illinois, Day joined the Socialist party. Leaving the university after two years, she headed back to New York, where she wrote for Socialist publications, was active in radical causes that included



Sealed archival boxes containing documents related to Dorothy Day’s canonization cause are seen in the sanctuary following a Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City on Dec. 8, 2021, marking the conclusion of the Archdiocese of New York’s investigation of Day’s candidacy for sainthood. The documents, which detail Day’s holiness and heroic virtues, are being reviewed by the Vatican Congregation for Saints’ Causes. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

feminism and free love, and pursued a Bohemian lifestyle among artists and activists. In 1917, she was arrested for picketing for women’s suffrage at the White House and spent 15 days in jail.

Her friends at this time included playwright Eugene O’Neill and prominent communists, with one of whom she had an affair. After still another affair, around 1920 or 1921, she had an abortion. Thereafter, she married briefly, published a semi-autobiographical novel whose screen rights she sold to Hollywood for \$2,500, and bought herself a Staten Island beach cottage where she lived from 1925 to 1929 with a man named Forster Batterham.

In 1926, Day gave birth to a daughter whom she named Tamar. Now her old interest in Catholicism not only revived but intensified. She met a nun named Sister Aloysia, had her baby baptized and studied the faith. Forster didn’t like it, and the two split. On Dec. 28, 1927, Day was received into the Catholic Church with Sister Aloysia as her sponsor.

“God always gives us a chance to show our preference for him,” she later wrote. “With me it was to give up my . . . life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination—you are going against nature when you do them—but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God.”

Conforming to God’s will was now central to Day’s life, but that didn’t necessarily mean giving up old convictions and commitments. On the contrary—finding and living a practical synthesis between faith and radical social causes now was a growing concern for Day.

The turning point came early in the Great Depression. Working as a journalist, Day covered a jobs demonstration in Washington organized by communists, then later prayed in the crypt church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. There she offered “a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and anguish, that some way would open for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor.”

Returning to New York, she found waiting for her a slightly disheveled French peasant who was also a radical Catholic and a self-taught social thinker. His name was Peter Maurin, and he wanted to share his vision with Day. It wasn’t long before the Catholic Worker movement was born.

With Day as editor, the first issue of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper appeared on May 1, 1933. It sought to be an alternative to the communist *Daily Worker*. That first issue asked: “Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?” For the next half-century, Day worked hard at showing how that could be done.

She supported the labor movement, racial justice and the California farm workers led by Cesar Chavez in the 1960s and 1970s. She opposed the Nationalist side supported by most Catholics in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. She was an uncompromising pacifist.

“We love our country, and we love our president,”

Day wrote after the United States entered World War II. But even so: “We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount.” When the United States dropped the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Day’s voice was one of the few Catholic ones raised in public protest.

During the Cold War, Day often joined other pacifists in peace demonstrations. On one occasion, she served a month in jail. She praised Fidel Castro’s social revolution in Cuba while deploring its anti-religious policies. A few years later, she opposed the Vietnam War. While terming the Christmas season visits by New York’s Cardinal Francis J. Spellman to American troops overseas “brave,” she also wrote: “What are all those Americans doing all over the world so far from our own shores?”

Day was intensely loyal to Church doctrine, but didn’t hesitate to skewer Church leaders when she thought they were wrong. During a gravediggers’ strike at New York Catholic cemeteries in 1949, she criticized Cardinal Spellman for bringing in seminarians to fill in for striking workers. In 1951, the archdiocese told *The Catholic Worker* either to stop publishing or remove the word “Catholic” from its name. Day did neither, and the archdiocese dropped the matter.

Though never large in numbers, through the years the Catholic Worker movement expanded to include houses of hospitality in several cities along with a Catholic Worker farm. Day lived in a Catholic Worker house in New York. It was there that she died, of a heart attack, on Nov. 29, 1980.

The first steps toward her possible beatification and canonization were taken in 2000 by the late Cardinal John J. O’Connor of New York. Efforts have continued under Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan. At his urging, the U.S. bishops in November 2012 voted to endorse her cause. The cardinal called her “a saint for our time.”

While remaining a lifelong admirer of the idealistic communists who’d once been her friends, she criticized the evil means communism used to achieve its ends. Whether she was unacceptably naïve about communism is, and probably will remain, in dispute. Many also think she should have shown more concern about the harm inflicted by the self-indulgent hippie culture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Day’s principal lasting influence on Catholicism in America may have been to show a faith-based alternative to secularist progressivism. In 2023, Pope Francis wrote the foreword to a new edition of Day’s 1938 memoir about her conversion to Catholicism, *From Union Square to Rome*. Of Day, he wrote, “The Lord comforts restless hearts, not bourgeois souls who are content with things as they are.” At present, she has the title Servant of God.

(Russell Shaw, a veteran journalist and writer, is the author of more than 20 books, including three novels.) †



Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, is pictured in an undated photo. Although she was a polarizing figure among Catholics throughout the 20th century, her cause for sainthood is progressing. (OSV News photo/courtesy Milwaukee Journal)

Joyful Witness/Kimberly Pohovey

Would you recognize Jesus if he returned to Earth today?

On the heels of Jesus' glorious resurrection on Easter, I began to watch a Netflix series titled *Messiah*. I'm only a few episodes in so I am not endorsing the series, but



I have to admit it has me thinking. I wasn't really sure of the content before I started watching, but the title was enough to intrigue me.

Messiah is a work of fiction. Its central character is a CIA agent who begins to pay attention to an Arab figure who has peacefully led 2,000 Palestinians through the desert to the Israeli border, where they sit hoping for humanitarian aid.

This man is arrested by the Israeli government but vanishes from his jail cell only to appear on the steps of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where he performs a miracle. He again vanishes and turns up in a small Texas town ravished by a freak tornado. He appears as the tornado passes right in front of him, and seemingly, orchestrates the survival of a town church, the only building left standing, untouched.

The CIA agent believes him to be dangerous—

potentially a cult leader attempting to amass an army of believers, or a foreign operative wanting to start a war in the Holy Land.

Obviously, the viewer is meant to not only draw a comparison to Jesus, but question if this character really *is* Jesus. It's really got my brain churning. It's also got my heart hoping.

We hear the Gospels every time we go to Mass, and we know how the belief of Jesus as Messiah stirred in the hearts of the first Apostles. We take it as "gospel," so to speak, that the Apostles believed. But have you ever pondered what a gigantic leap of faith that must have been for them?

I marvel that these simple men believed that God was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became a man who dwelled among them. I wonder that if Jesus returned to Earth in human form today, would I recognize him? Would I believe?

In Jesus' time, his actions were deemed radical and revolutionary. The *Messiah's* lead character, although peaceful and calm, is also misconstrued as radical. In a world of false prophets, cult leaders and everyday crackpots, how would I recognize the Lord?

When I've pondered this in the past, I've thought I would know him by his love. But having attended Holy Week liturgies, I am all too reminded that Jesus' love led to his crucifixion. I hope upon hope that in the presence of our Lord that my heart would burn as the disciples who recognized Jesus after their walk to Emmaus.

I read the following quote, written by Casey Cep for *The New Yorker*, in a review of the book, *Seeing Jesus: Visionary Encounters from the First Century to the Present*: "The visions of Jesus that Christians are explicitly told to look for are not supernatural or spectral but humble and human: we are commanded to look for Christ in the faces of one another."

I pray to have eyes that see Jesus in everyone I meet. I think that is how you recognize the Lord, today or at the second coming. You treat everyone as if Jesus dwells in them. In that case, you will never *not* recognize him.

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Gowns of grace, heaps of joy: rediscovering the beauty of Catholicism

Jenna Wright has come a long way from being an NFL cheerleader to a first Communion catechist. Now,



rather than sporting a skimpy outfit at the Super Bowl, she's selling white gowns to second-grade girls and their families—and making it a memorable part of their sacramental preparation. It's

the perfect fit for the mother of five who's rediscovered her faith.

Jenna was raised Catholic in Michigan. Again and again, the green-eyed blonde performed in the spotlight. As a teen, she trained in ballet and won a beauty pageant. In college, she studied broadcast journalism and became a professional cheerleader. She even cheered at a Super Bowl.

Meanwhile, her faith was crumbling. "I was quite thin, yet I had huge body issues and felt low in my self-worth," she said. "I was surrounded by worldly things."

At the end of her junior year of college, Jenna hit a breaking point. "I'm tired of this!" she felt. "Jesus was calling me back."

She took part in the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time in years. Grace began to flood in.

When the Arizona Cardinals invited Jenna back the following season, she declined. "I don't want to be dancing around in a bikini in front of hundreds of thousands of people," she thought. "I'm done with that."

The more she learned about her faith, the more her confidence surged.

Now 36, she and her husband Eric are raising five kids ages 1 to 10 on Daniel Island in Charleston, S.C., where they attend St. Clare of Assisi Parish.

Jenna delights in leading first Communion classes. "That age group is still so sweet and innocent, but they're asking good questions and can understand bigger concepts," she said. "And the sacraments! I get teary-eyed just thinking about it. Whenever you receive the Eucharist, it's like you have a cup, and God is filling up your cup with grace. Sometimes it gets so full that it's overflowing so you just have to share it with other people."

As she taught, Jenna couldn't help but notice a business opportunity. It started when her firstborn needed a first Communion dress. No local stores were selling them, and shopping online didn't feel the same.

Other families began asking Jenna where to find dresses. She didn't have an answer. One parent mentioned that they'd booked a trip to New York to shop at a boutique. The next year,

another parent said they were headed to Rhode Island to buy a first Communion dress.

"I saw a hole in the market," Jenna said.

Her thoughts quickly progressed. "There's a need, especially down South, where there aren't as many Catholics. But it's seasonal—you don't need a brick-and-mortar all year round. Someone's got to start a pop-up first Communion boutique. I guess that someone's me."

Last summer, Jenna officially launched Gowns of Grace. She sources all the dresses, culling from three designers, along with veils and suits for boys. Then she hosts a pop-up shop at a church. She packs everything up, carrying every size and style of dress. She makes it an experience for families to enjoy together, providing cookies and drinks, a religious craft, a photo booth and a keepsake gift.

The event functions as a fundraiser for the hosting church, which receives up to 25% of her sales. Jenna also sells her products online at gownsofgrace.com. Parishes that promote it are given a code that gives them 10% back.

Jenna's goal is to celebrate each child. "This is not just another dress you have to get," she said. "This is really special."

It works, creating a positive experience that underscores the



Jenna Wright launched Gowns of Grace last summer. (Submitted photo)

importance of the sacrament—faith-filled and fun. "Every single parent and grandparent who came thanked me and told me how lovely it was."

These days, beauty fills Jenna's life. She's come so far since college. "I felt like Jesus stepped in and said, 'Here's a fork in the road, go the other way,'" she said. "I haven't looked back."

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

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Embracing our powerful and timeless message to 'love thy neighbor'

In our city and neighborhoods, there lies a hidden crisis that can often go unnoticed amid the hustle and bustle of daily life. But its impact is profound and far-reaching.



Economic disparities and inadequate access to nutritious food are forcing families to face the gut-wrenching dilemma of choosing between rent and food. Children are going to bed with empty stomachs, and the elderly are deciding between medication and a meal.

According to Feeding America, one in eight of our children faces hunger, and one in nine Hoosiers faces hunger, and one in eight of our children faces hunger. This is where the mission of Catholic Charities stands as a representation of unwavering compassion and unity, a symbol of the enduring importance of community and reminding us of our shared humanity.

In the sanctuary of our Catholic Charities client service centers, the marginalized and the downtrodden find a glimmer of hope, a sign that they are not alone in their struggles.

Our food pantries, food banks and food services are lifelines for the most vulnerable members of our communities. They serve as a refuge for those facing economic hardships, food insecurity and the grim reality of not knowing where their next meal will come from.

We don't discriminate. We serve all faiths, creeds and backgrounds. We simply extend a hand of compassion to anyone seeking nourishment, warmth and solace. We are unwavering in our commitment to preserving the dignity of those needing our help.

Catholic Charities operates on the principle that no one should feel diminished or ashamed when seeking assistance. We offer a safe and welcoming environment where individuals and families can access nutritious food options without judgment.

We don't just nourish bodies; we nourish our community as well. Our efforts bring together people from diverse backgrounds and create a sense of unity and solidarity. Our dedicated volunteers and donors come together under the common banner of compassion. Their selfless efforts keep our pantry shelves stocked and the doors open. These individuals are the unsung heroes of our communities, working tirelessly to ensure that no one who comes to us for help goes to bed hungry.

Once basic needs are met, we go the extra mile, offering resources and support to help individuals regain self-sufficiency. Educational programs, life skills enhancements, and referrals to essential services empower individuals to break free from the cycle of poverty, making Catholic Charities a pivotal force in transforming lives.

Valuable partnerships with local businesses, schools and faith-based organizations further strengthen our

impact. Through joint efforts during disasters and crises, we demonstrate the remarkable feats achievable when a community unites to combat a problem. In the face of adversity, the human spirit shines brilliantly.

During this Easter season, I encourage you to reflect upon the importance of the work we are doing. Your support allows Catholic Charities to be a light in the darkness, to stand as a reminder that no matter our background or beliefs, we are all bound by our shared responsibility to care for one another.

It is through love and kindness that we can transform lives, nourishing not only bodies but also the hearts and souls of those less fortunate than us. In this sanctuary of hope, we find the true essence of what it means to be human.

We all have a role to play in creating a better community, be it through volunteering, donating or simply spreading awareness. Each of us can be a beacon of hope by showing that compassion knows no boundaries.

The powerful and timeless message of "love thy neighbor" speaks to the core of our shared values and the incredible impact that a handful of dedicated individuals can have on the lives of many.

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

Third Sunday of Easter/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 14, 2024

- Acts of the Apostles 3:13-15, 17-19
- 1 John 2:1-5a
- Luke 24:35-48

The Acts of the Apostles again furnishes the first reading for Mass this weekend. Almost every Sunday in the Easter season features a reading from this book of the New Testament.



In this reading, St. Peter preaches to a crowd in Jerusalem. Americans are accustomed to impassioned preaching. They

occasionally experience it in their churches. They hear it on the radio and on television. Impassioned preaching about salvation and God's mercy is common in our society, godless as it is becoming.

To preach is to assume a great responsibility. Preaching, after all, by definition is not simply lecturing others. It is speaking in the very name of God.

Those who preached, by ancient Jewish standards, were privileged people in this sense. None chose to be a preacher. Rather, God selected each preacher. Peter stood before this Jerusalem crowd after having been called to preach by Jesus in his place.

He preached the words of Jesus. This reading makes three points. First, it establishes the identity of Peter. He is an Apostle. Second, he is the chief of the Apostles. He speaks in the names of them all.

Finally, through Peter and the other Apostles, the salvation given by Jesus still reaches humanity. They continue the Lord's work.

The First Epistle of St. John provides the second reading. The epistles of John are alike in their eloquence and splendid language. They are alike in the depth of their theology and revelation.

This reading proclaims the majesty of Jesus the Savior. It cautions, however, that accepting Jesus as Lord is more than lip service, not just now and then. It is actually living the commandments, by and through which humans find perfection, love, order and peace in God.

St. Luke's Gospel provides the last reading.

It is another Resurrection narrative, looking back to the beautiful Emmaus story. In the story, as this pair of disciples was talking, Jesus stood in their midst, no longer bound by location or time.

He revealed to them the full meaning of the Scriptures, the testaments of God's power and love. They listened, but only later recognized Jesus in the "breaking of the bread," the early Church's name for the Eucharist (Lk 24:35).

Reflection

The Church continues to summon us to the joy of Easter celebration by presenting us with the Emmaus narrative, so cherished by Christians throughout history. The Church proclaims again that the Lord lives!

We should see ourselves in the roles of the disciples who walked with Jesus to Emmaus. We have heard of the Lord. The Church already has told us of the resurrection, of the Lord's sacrifice for us and of the identity of Jesus, Son of God and Redeemer, but human as are we.

The Church has called us before to realize that true life—on Earth or in the hereafter—is in Jesus. It has reminded us that each of us will die. It has reassured us that everlasting life is an option for us if we accept Jesus as our Savior.

This wonderful story of Emmaus instructs us that life can be difficult, and distractions many and forceful. Jesus alone knows the way.

As was the work of Peter recorded in Acts, repeated for us today, the precise words of Jesus are still spoken in the Church. His mercy still flows to us through the Church in its sacraments, charity and teachings.

Jesus comes to join us. He walks with us. He teaches us. He communicates with us. Do we walk with Jesus? Do we listen? Do we accept what Jesus says?

When we are open to the Lord and rely on him, we find Jesus in the "breaking of the bread," the Eucharist. †

Daily Readings

Monday, April 15

Acts 6:8-15
Psalm 119:23-24, 26-27, 29-30
John 6:22-29

Tuesday, April 16

Acts 7:51-8:1a
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6ab, 7b, 8a, 17, 21ab
John 6:30-35

Wednesday, April 17

Acts 8:1b-8
Psalm 66:1-3a, 4-7a
John 6:35-40

Thursday, April 18

Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 66:8-9, 16-17, 20
John 6:44-51

Friday, April 19

Acts 9:1-20
Psalm 117:1-2
John 6:52-59

Saturday, April 20

Acts 9:31-42
Psalm 116:12-17
John 6:60-69

Sunday, April 21

Fourth Sunday of Easter
Acts 4:8-12
Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 28-29
1 John 3:1-2
John 10:11-18

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Bees on paschal candle refer to their being mentioned in the "Exsultet"

QIn my parish, we have an antique candle holder for the paschal candle. The design on the candle stand looks



like it has some sort of insect, and so my 6-year-old asked me why there were "bugs on the paschal candle." Any thoughts? (New York)

AMy guess is that the "bugs on the paschal candle" were probably meant to be bees.

The liturgy for the Mass of the Easter Vigil contains a number of striking elements, such as the blessing of the Easter fire and the lighting of the new paschal candle. One of the most notable prayers unique to the Easter Vigil is an ancient hymn called the "Exsultet."

It is ordinarily chanted by a deacon. In the absence of a deacon, a priest or, if necessary, a lay cantor can also chant it.

On the surface, the *Exsultet* is a song of thanksgiving and praise for the newly lit paschal candle. But this prayer goes much deeper, as the joy found in the paschal candle is actually a sign of the

joy we find in the resurrected Christ, who brings light out of darkness.

In our current version of the prayer, there are two lines which reference the bees that produced the wax for the candle:

"On this, your night of grace, O holy Father, accept this candle, a solemn offering, the work of bees and of your servants' hands, an evening sacrifice of praise, this gift from your most holy Church."

And:
"But now we know the praises of this pillar, which glowing fire

ignites for God's honor, a fire into many flames divided, yet never dimmed by sharing of its light, for it is fed by melting wax, drawn out by mother bees to build a torch so precious."

Prior to the new translation of the Mass in 2012, the bees were left out of the English-language translation of the *Exsultet*, which is why they might not be an obvious Easter motif for those of us Catholics who grew up after the liturgical changes of the Second Vatican Council but prior to the new translation.

However, there seems to have been a more lively popular appreciation for "mother bee" prior to Vatican II. So, it makes sense that a paschal candle stand from that era would be decorated with a bee design.

Because of their mention in our liturgy, I personally think that bees are a beautiful symbol of Easter. And my own hope is that bees on Easter decorations make more of a comeback!

QWhen I was a kid, I thought Lent ended on Palm Sunday. Later in life, I was told Lent ended on Good Friday. A priest recently said in a homily though, that Lent actually and officially ends on Holy Thursday. Could you clarify? (Indiana)

AYour priest is correct. Lent ends with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper on the night of Holy Thursday begins the Easter "Triduum," a word which roughly translated means "three days." The Triduum is essentially its own mini-liturgical season, being neither Lent nor the Easter season, but a time when we as the Church are laser-focused on the events of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

The Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, and continues through the liturgical services of Good Friday, the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday and morning Mass on Easter Sunday. The Triduum officially concludes with Evening Prayer (Vespers) for Easter Sunday in the Liturgy of the Hours.

There are a number of "clues" in the Triduum liturgies that tell us we are no longer in Lent. For example, at Mass on Holy Thursday evening, the priest wears white vestments instead of the Lenten purple; and the Mass of the Lord's Supper includes the singing of the "Gloria," and otherwise takes on a joyful tone rather than a penitential one.

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

My Journey to God

Follow Me

By Sandy Bierly

Two simple words,
An invitation to come and see,
Called by name,
The apostles came,
And they became fishers of men.

These words still call,
Into the depths of my heart,
To follow Jesus,
Wherever he leads,
To share his love with all I meet.

(Sandy Bierly is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Photo: Footsteps follow along the seashore in Costa Rica in this undated photo.)
(Photo courtesy of Genevieve Dallaire on unsplash.com)

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.

AMYX, Charmagne A., 90, St. Gabriel, Connersville, March 7. Wife of William Amyx. Mother of Mary Ann Davis and William Amyx. Sister of David Wilkinson. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of 15.

CORDYA, Bruce S., 76, St. Mary, Greensburg, March 21. Husband of Kathleen Corya.

COULON, Dolores C., 86, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, March 15. Mother of Carol Gabbert, Chris Hill, Barbara Martin, Anna and Kevin Waggoner and Todd Coulon. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of 14.

DUGAN, Isabella (McGuire), 87, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, March 20. Mother of Karen Guntner, Patricia Sutton, Kathy Teachout and James Dugan. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of five.

ECKSTEIN, Martin, 77, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bright, March 28. Husband of Ursula Eckstein.

Father of Christina Wilson and Randy Eckstein. Brother of Denny, Jerry, John, Ralph, Richard, Robert and Ron Eckstein. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of two.

HENDRIX, Susan L., 59, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, April 1. Mother of Tiffany Ma. Sister of Dean and Jim Hendrix. Grandmother of two.

MERRILL, Michael K., 84, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, March 18. Grandfather of eight. Great-grandfather of eight.

NOE, Ruth Anne, 89, Good Shepherd, Indianapolis, March 22. Mother of Karen Jones, Cathy, Sandy and Bob Noe. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 13.

SIMEONE, Anita, 96, Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Indianapolis, March 21. Mother of Teresa Faust, Lily Rumschlag, John and Tony Simeone. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of seven.

STAHL, Noriko (Kato), 50, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, March 11. Mother of Dillon and Sean Stahl. Sister of Kenichi Kato.

VELIKAN, James A., 84, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, March 9. Father of Jennifer Velikan.

WILHELM, John, 81, St. Gabriel, Connersville, March 23. Father of Kristy McCauley, Heather Morford and Bradley Wilhelm. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of 10. †



Mourning a fallen hero

Police officers watch a hearse as it passes following the funeral service of New York City police officer Jonathan Diller at St. Rose of Lima Church in Massapequa Park, N.Y., on March 30. Diller, 31, a three-year veteran of the NYPD on the specialized Community Response Team, was shot and killed on March 25 during a traffic stop. He leaves behind his wife, Stephenie, 29, and son Ryan, age 1. (OSV News photo/Eduardo Munoz, Reuters)

Economist: Addressing freefalling global fertility rates requires changing hearts

(OSV News)—For plummeting worldwide fertility rates to change course, people must find courage to “do the hard thing” of raising large families, and that courage comes from faith, said Catherine Ruth Pakaluk, an economist at The Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington.

“We live in a society that it’s just so easy not to have children,” said Pakaluk, the director of social research and associate professor at CUA’s Busch School of Business and the author of *Hannah’s Children: The Women Quietly Defying the Birth Dearth*, published on March 19 by Regnery Gateway. Her research—based on open conversations with college-educated women who have five or more children—indicates that religious faith is a major motivator for having children. She said this shows an importance to change people’s hearts about the value of children—something Christians have historically done as they converted pagan cultures.

Pakaluk’s book coincides with a recently published report by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington in Seattle

showing nearly all countries worldwide will fall below replacement fertility levels within the next 75 years.

By 2100, the fertility rate in 97% of countries is forecasted at below replacement levels, with more 155 of 204 countries and territories (76%) projected to hit that mark by 2050. Fertility rates in the United States have generally been below replacement level since about 1971.

The total fertility rate—a population’s average number of children born to a woman over a lifetime—has fallen globally from 4.84 in 1950 to 2.23 in 2021. About 54% of countries are already below 2.1, the generally accepted replacement level, with no projected rebound, according to the IHME report.

The Lancet, a science journal that published the IHME report on March 20, said the data “warn that national governments must plan for emerging threats to economies, food security, health, the environment, and geopolitical security brought on by these demographic changes that are set to transform the way we live.”

The IHME report was based on data from the institute’s Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries and Risk Factors Study 2021, which is described as “the single largest and most detailed scientific effort ever conducted to quantify levels and trends in health” with thousands of collaborating researchers worldwide. The research was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

It confirms previously identified trends but with greater precision, based on “innovative, more accurate forecasting methods grounded in real-world evidence,” according to the IHME. The United Nations Population Fund, for example, titled its 2023 report “The Problem With ‘Too Few,’” noting that populations continue to rise in all regions of the world with the exception of Europe. However, populations in Central, South and Southeast Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; and North America are projected to reach their “peak sizes” by 2100.

Economists warn that falling fertility rates are expected to weaken national economies and innovation, push people to stay in the workforce longer, foster fierce competition for immigration and thin family networks, resulting in widespread isolation and loneliness.

The United States currently has a total fertility rate around 1.64. It is projected to decrease to 1.52 by 2050 and 1.45 in 2100. In 1950, the U.S. rate was 3.08.

By 2050, South Korea, Puerto Rico and Taiwan are projected to have the world’s lowest fertility rates, all under 1%.

Meanwhile, the total fertility rates in “low-income regions” such as sub-Saharan Africa are expected to continue to fall, with many dipping below replacement rate, but still remain higher than the global average. By 2100, the share of the world’s births are predicted to double in low-income regions from 18% in 2021 to 35%.

Forecasts for 2100 see half of the world’s children being born in sub-Saharan Africa.

“We are facing staggering social change through the 21st century,” said the IHME’s Stein Emil Vollset, the report’s senior author, in a media statement. “The world will be simultaneously tackling a ‘baby boom’ in some countries and a ‘baby bust’ in the others. As most of the world contends with the serious challenges to the economic growth of a shrinking workforce and how to care for and pay for aging populations, many of the most resource-limited countries in sub-Saharan Africa will be grappling with how to support the youngest, fastest-growing population on the planet in some of the most politically and economically unstable, heat-stressed, and health system-strained places on earth.”

A 2023 story in the *Economist* said the fertility rate’s trajectory may lead to the first time the world’s population (currently around 8.1 billion) has declined since the Black Death, the 14th-century plague pandemic that killed 30% to 50% of Europe’s population in a three-year span.

While some positive trends may be associated with lowering birth rates, such as an increase in women’s education or lower impact on human land use, “overall the effects will be very challenging to deal with,” said economist Lyman Stone, a research fellow at the Virginia-based Institute for Family Studies and chief information officer of the population research firm Demographic Intelligence.

Data show public policy changes alone are unlikely to reverse the direction of what has been termed a looming fertility “collapse,” but they may help couples who want to have several children achieve it, Stone said. In the United States, studies indicate a growing gap between the at least two children most women say they want, and the fewer than two children they actually have, he said.

“This isn’t a product of a long-span expansion in human freedom,” he said. “The reality is that in almost every country around the world, people continue to say that they want two or more children. So, if we’re headed to a society, a world where everybody’s having 1.6 [children] on average, which is what they forecast for the long run, that’s a society where globally a huge share of people are not having families they want to have.”

Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed concern about declining fertility rates, including at an annual conference in May 2023 addressing Italy’s declining birth rate, in which he connected low rates with lack of hope.

“The birth of children, in fact, is the main indicator for measuring the hope of a people,” Pope Francis said. “If few are born it means there is little hope. And this not only has repercussions from an economic and social point of view but also undermines confidence in the future.”

“A change in mentality is needed; the family is not part of the problem, but part of its solution,” the pope added. †



Catherine Ruth Pakaluk

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In new book, Pope Francis says Benedict ‘always defended me’

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—For the nearly 10 years that Pope Francis and retired Pope Benedict XVI lived on opposite sides of St. Peter’s Basilica, the two popes’ relationship was marked by a deep mutual respect and profound sense of solidarity, Pope Francis said.

The retired pope, he said, would even defend Pope Francis before his critics.

In a book-length interview, *El Sucesor* (*The Successor*), released in Spain on April 3, Pope Francis recalled the support he received from his predecessor in specific incidents and throughout his pontificate.

Speaking with Spanish journalist Javier Martínez-Brocal, the pope pointed to the time he spoke favorably about French civil union laws during an airborne press conference returning to Rome from Slovakia. A group of cardinals went to the Vatican monastery where Pope Benedict lived and, he said, “practically put me on trial, and in front of him they accused me of promoting homosexual marriage.

“Benedict was not shaken, because he knew perfectly well what I think,” Pope Francis said. “He listened to them, one by one, calmed them down and explained everything.”

Pope Francis said the situation made him realize that people around him were silently waiting for opportunities to attack him, but Pope Benedict “always defended me.”

In three separate interview sessions with Martínez-Brocal for the book, Pope Francis repeated several times that Pope Benedict never said he disagreed with him, but that the retired pope would sometimes encourage him to seek out more information or consider other points of view.

“He never took his support away from me. Maybe there was something I did that he did not agree with, but he never said so,” Pope Francis recalled.

The pope traced Pope Benedict’s support for him back to when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. He said that as he was approaching 75—the age at which all Catholic bishops must offer their resignation to the pope—a group of Vatican officials in the Dicastery for Bishops “had assembled a story so that the pope would accept my resignation as archbishop of Buenos Aires” and already had a replacement for him lined up.

“I don’t know why Cardinal Bergoglio has so many enemies here,” Pope Francis recalled his predecessor saying in a conversation with Cardinal Marc Ouellet, then-prefect of the dicastery, before deciding to postpone his resignation for

two years. Cardinal Bergoglio was elected pope less than 15 months after his 75th birthday.

“I experienced that decision as a demonstration of confidence in me that I was very grateful for,” he said.

However, Pope Francis did not shy away from discussing tensions with Pope Benedict’s aides. Praising Pope Benedict’s meekness—which he insisted was not a weakness—Pope Francis said some people close to Pope Benedict took advantage of his kind nature, “limited his actions” and gradually “fenced him off.”

He said he asked Pope Benedict’s secretary, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, to take a voluntary leave following controversy surrounding the 2020 publication of a book supposedly co-authored by the retired pope and Cardinal Robert Sarah, then-prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

The book, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, argued against changing the discipline of celibacy for Latin-rite Catholic priests and was published as Pope Francis prepared his apostolic exhortation on the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon. Bishops at the synod had discussed the possibility of ordaining some married men, a suggestion Pope Francis did not accept. But the book—displaying side-by-side portraits of Pope Benedict and Cardinal Sarah on its cover—was widely interpreted as a rare public interjection from the retired pope to exert pressure on Pope Francis.

Archbishop Gänswein later said Pope Benedict willingly contributed to the book, but did not approve being credited as a co-author, chalking up the incident to a “misunderstanding.”

“Maybe I made a mistake in naming [Cardinal Sarah] prefect of the now-Dicastery for Divine Worship,” Pope Francis said reflecting on the incident. “From there he was manipulated by separatist groups, but he is a good man,” he said, hypothesizing that working in the Curia made him “bitter.”

The pope also said he was “pained” by the publication of Archbishop Gänswein’s book about his experiences with Pope Benedict on the day of the late pope’s funeral. The timing of the publication showed a “lack of nobility and humanity.”

Pope Francis called the supposed tensions between his supporters and supporters of Pope Benedict “nonsense,” adding that some people in the Church use Pope Benedict to attack him only when they don’t have real arguments to make against him, and that such people



Pope Francis chats with retired Pope Benedict XVI at the retired pope’s home in the Mater Ecclesiae monastery at the Vatican on June 30, 2015. (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano)

even “attribute things to Benedict that are not true.

“If there was a man that went forward, that was progressive, it was him,” the pope said, referring to his predecessor, noting how then-Father Joseph Ratzinger was “viewed with skepticism” during the Second Vatican Council for his advanced views. “Also, the decision to resign was very forward-thinking, very progressive.”

While he noted that all popes are in some way misunderstood, Pope Francis said that “in the case of Benedict, [people] did not understand that interior freedom that he had.

“His resignation was an act of integrity. He was a man that was not at all attached to power,” Pope Francis said.

After being elected to succeed Pope Benedict in 2013, he said he never felt pressure from the retired pope, although they sometimes discussed issues together. The German Synodal Path was of concern to Pope Benedict, he said, and they discussed the letter Pope Francis sent to German Catholics in 2019. However,

he said, they did not discuss Pope Francis’ 2021 apostolic letter “*Traditionis Custodes*” (“Guardians of the Tradition”) restricting the celebration of the pre-Vatican II Mass which Pope Benedict had expanded.

Pope Benedict died on Dec. 31, 2022. Pope Francis said that while he was not involved in planning Pope Benedict’s funeral, he said he has already made changes to simplify the papal funeral rites to bury popes “like any son of the Church.” Among the changes, he said, popes will have a single wake during which the body will already be in a casket rather than lying on a catafalque for public viewing.

While Pope Francis said Pope Benedict fits the bill for being proclaimed a doctor of the Church—a saint whose writings have had a particularly notable influence on Catholic theology or spirituality—he said the naming of new doctors of the Church is on hold since so many religious congregations request that their founders receive the title. †

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Amid war, Cardinal Dolan to make pastoral visit to Israel, Palestine

(OSV News)—Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York has announced he will travel to Israel and Palestine amid a war now in its seventh month.



Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan

The cardinal will undertake a pastoral visit on April 12-18 in his role as chairman of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA).

Founded by Pope Pius XI in 1926, CNEWA supports the Catholic Church in the Middle East,

Northeast Africa, India and Eastern Europe.

During his trip, Cardinal Dolan plans to meet with local Christian, Jewish and Islamic religious leaders; Israeli and Palestinian representatives; and various social service and humanitarian efforts.

The visit will mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, established by Pope Pius XII in 1949 and placed since its inception under the administration of CNEWA.

The mission functions as CNEWA's operating agency in the Middle East, working through the local Church to provide emergency aid, health care, educational support, post-traumatic counseling and catechesis to all, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. Through the years, the mission's mandate has been extended to meeting the needs of all vulnerable persons throughout the Middle East. The archbishop of New York serves as ex-officio chair of the mission's board of trustees.

Accompanying Cardinal Dolan will be Msgr. Peter I. Vaccari, who serves as president of both CNEWA and the

Pontifical Mission to Palestine.

For security reasons, the full itinerary of the trip—which does not include travel to Gaza—has not been released, CNEWA communications director Michael La Civita told OSV News.

However, La Civita said that Cardinal Dolan will reprise previous visits to Ephpheta Paul VI Institute (Effetà Betlemme), a school for hearing-impaired children in the Palestinian Territories; the House of Grace, which supports prisoners, at-risk youths, families in need and Holocaust survivors; and the Notre Dame des Douleurs (Our Lady of Sorrows) Home, which serves disadvantaged seniors.

La Civita told OSV News the cardinal's visit had been planned prior to Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, ambush—coinciding with a Sabbath and Jewish holiday—on some 22 locations in Israel.

Hamas members gunned down civilians and took 253 hostages, according to Israel, including infants, the elderly and people with disabilities. Following several releases and rescues, some 130 hostages are believed to remain in captivity, with at least 34 believed dead, according to the Israeli Defence Forces.

A *New York Times* investigation found at least seven locations along the Hamas attack front where Israeli women and girls had been sexually assaulted and mutilated on Oct. 7. Returned female hostages have reported sexual abuse while being held by Hamas.

Israel formally declared war on Hamas on Oct. 8, placing the Palestinian region of Gaza under siege and pounding the region with airstrikes as Hamas returned fire. To date, more than 1,200 in Israel, including at least 30 U.S. citizens and more than 32,900 in Gaza have been killed, according to Israeli and Palestinian officials, respectively. The ensuing



A Catholic Relief Services worker distributes shelter material to a woman in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on March 21, displaced by the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York will travel to Israel and Palestine on April 12-18. (OSV News photo/Mohammad Al Hout for CRS)

humanitarian crisis has left the Middle East “on the verge of the abyss,” said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

La Civita told OSV News that CNEWA's one full-time staff person in Gaza remains safe, although “he has lost his parents and his infant niece” in the attacks, and “unfortunately, extended members of our family have [also] lost their lives.”

Traveling in his CNEWA roles, Cardinal Dolan “will commemorate the [75th] anniversary of the work [and] presence of the Church [through the Pontifical Mission for Palestine] ... showing her solidarity with the vulnerable throughout the Middle East, particularly in Israel and Palestine,” said La Civita.

“The cardinal will do that by remembering at two liturgies the founding of the Pontifical Mission [for Palestine] by

Pope Pius XII and the work of the Church in that part of the world through CNEWA,” said La Civita. “The cardinal will [also] do that by meeting with families of those who have been taken hostage.

“The Church always has to keep open the windows to dialogue,” he continued. “The cardinal is going there as the chair to be that instrument, that symbol of showing another way ... so that we hopefully have a just peace.”

Although seven aid workers were killed on April 1 by a strike Israel called a “grave mistake,” La Civita told OSV News there are “no plans to stop” Cardinal Dolan's visit.

“This is where you have to have faith that we will be protected by the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Mother,” he said, adding that “Msgr. Vaccari always implores and asks for her intercession to keep us safe.” †

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