



The

Criterion

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'A humble beginning'

Minneapolis pastor celebrates first parish Mass after church shooting, page 2.

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A girl holds out a drawing she made for Pope Leo XIV, hoping that he will accept it after his meeting with members of the media on May 12 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. The flag on the drawing says "peace" and the message at the bottom says, "Hurrah for Pope Leo XIV." Inspired by the pope, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has authored a pastoral reflection on peace and unity. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

In pastoral reflection, Archbishop Thompson calls Catholics to seek Christ-centered peace and unity

By Sean Gallagher

Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson has authored a pastoral reflection inspired by major themes that have thus far marked the ministry

of Pope Leo XIV, who was elected bishop of Rome on May 8.

"Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection" was issued on Aug. 28, the memorial on the Church's liturgical calendar of St. Augustine of Hippo, the patron saint of the Augustinian religious order of which Pope Leo was previously a member and led as its prior general.

Archbishop Thompson noted in his reflection how Pope Leo, on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica after being elected, "spoke of *peace* and *unity*, calling us to embrace both in Jesus Christ" (#2, emphasis in original).

The archbishop acknowledged that people around the world and of all religions seek peace and unity amid conflicts between nations and a broad array of challenges to justice in society.

Finding solutions to problems such as war, abortion, capital punishment, border security, terrorism, harm done to the environment, human trafficking and the many needs of the poor must start with self-examination.

"... Each of us must look within to discern whether true peace and unity

have taken root in one's own heart, mind and soul," Archbishop Thompson wrote (#3).

In an interview with *The Criterion*, Archbishop Thompson said that, after starting with such an examination of conscience, Catholics can find a sure guide to fostering peace and unity in the Church's social teaching.

"Catholic social teaching touches on all these issues," he said. "They're all linked. And it's my responsibility as a bishop not only to address all those issues, but to address them in the context of the larger understanding of our Catholic social teaching principles."

Although looking within is a necessary first step, Archbishop Thompson said the movement toward true peace and authentic unity cannot stop there. Catholics seeking peace and unity must go on to be rooted in Christ through prayer.

"What better way for us as Church, People of God, to overcome entrenched differences than through Christ-centered prayer, dialogue, trust, mutual respect and discernment of the Holy Spirit, all rooted in Scripture, Sacrament, Service and Tradition," he wrote in his pastoral

reflection. "If such witness does not come from us as Catholics, where can the world hope to experience authentic peace and unity to overcome wars, prejudice, genocide, and the many forms of injustices that are ravaging humanity?" (#9).

In his interview with *The Criterion*, Archbishop Thompson explained why he called the new document a pastoral reflection.

"This is just a reflection," he said. "There are no easy or quick solutions. I'm reflecting on what peace and unity are and how we arrive at it. We all want it and desire it. How do we get to it? And what are some of the pitfalls in that journey?"

(To read Archbishop Thompson's pastoral reflection in English and Spanish, go to archindy.org/pastoral2025. A link to a study guide to the reflection can be found on that web page.) †



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Read the pastoral reflection, pages 7-8.

Read in Spanish, pages 9-10.



On Aug. 30, a young woman walks past a memorial outside Annunciation Church in Minneapolis which is home to an elementary school and was the scene of a shooting. (OSV News photo/Tim Evans, Reuters)

Annunciation pastor calls first parish Mass after church shooting ‘a humble beginning’

(OSV News)—As he celebrated the first parish Mass after the horrific attack at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis that killed two children and injured 21 others, Father Dennis Zehren recalled the fear and the cries from students, parents and school staff to “get low, stay down, stay down, don’t get up” when bullets tore through an all-school Mass at the parish church on Aug. 27.

In his homily, the pastor of Annunciation also described the first parish Mass after the attack as ‘a humble beginning’ for the heartbroken, devastated community.

As the now-desecrated church remained closed, the auditorium in the parish school next door was filled with more than 400 people on Aug. 30, hugging, talking, crying and even smiling.

They were participating in the first weekend Mass since the attack that killed two students at the parish’s elementary school and wounded 21 others, as

Father Zehren was presiding. The two children killed, 8-year-old Fletcher Merkel and 10-year-old Harper Moyski, were identified by their families in statements shared on Aug. 28. The suspected shooter was found dead at the scene of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda concelebrated the Mass, and Deacon Kevin Conneely, who ministers at the parish and also was at the all-school Mass, assisted and read the Gospel. It drew people not only from the parish, but from other parts of the archdiocese, including Paul and Maggie Wratkowski and their three children of St. Cecilia Parish in St. Paul.

“We’re here to support the Catholic community, the people that are here,” Paul said. “God wants us to thrive in community and support and love one another.”

But at this Mass, members of the congregation were not in the pews to

which they had grown accustomed, Father Zehren said. They were in folding chairs, with an altar on the auditorium’s stage. And they were still wrestling with the tragedy that had unfolded.

“It’s clear to us all here at Annunciation that we will be sitting in a different pew for a long time to come because of what happened,” Father Zehren said in his homily, as the church remained closed and must be reconsecrated before it can be used again for worship.

The Scriptures for the day pointed



A girl holds a candle during a vigil at Lynnhurst Park in Minneapolis on Aug. 27 following a shooting earlier in the day at Annunciation Church. A shooter opened fire with a rifle through the windows of the church at a Mass during the first week of school, killing two children and wounding 21 people in an act of violence the police chief called “absolutely incomprehensible.” (OSV News photo/Tim Evans, Reuters)



Public Schedule of

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 8–16, 2025

September 8-10

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Administrative Committee meeting, Washington, D.C.

September 11 – 8:15 a.m.

Virtual Judicatories meeting

September 11 – 10 a.m.

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

September 12 – 2 p.m.

Virtual Bishop Advisory meeting with Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition

September 13 – 9 a.m.

Baptism at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Carmel, Ind.

September 13 – 5:30 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Joan of Arc Parish, Indianapolis, at St. Joan of Arc Church

September 14 – 5 p.m.

Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Ambrose Parish, Seymour, at St. Ambrose Church

September 15 – 5:30 p.m.

Red Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

September 16 – 9 a.m.

Mass with new parish ministry leaders at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

September 16 – 1 p.m.

Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

to humility, Father Zehren said. Jesus encouraged his listeners in the Gospel passage from Luke to avoid taking the seat of honor at a banquet feast. Rather, take the lowest place.

“My good people of Annunciation, my good people of Minneapolis and beyond, we are in a very low place,” the pastor said. “We are in a lower place than we could have ever imagined. We can look around and see that this is not our normal seat. This is not where we usually gather, not in our usual worship space.”

At the same time, they were seated in the school auditorium where Masses had been held for decades before the new church was built in 1961, Father Zehren said.

“Jesus speaks about humility, so we come back to our humble beginnings,” Father Zehren said. “That’s what this day represents. It’s a humble beginning. ... It’s a call to begin again. The tricky part about the virtue of humility is that we don’t always get to choose the seating, the chart.”

At times, people get the seat of honor, or a seat where they are comfortable, with “all sorts of nice cushions,” the priest said.

“But sometimes we have to sit in the dust,” he said. “It’s a very humbling seat. I know the best thing we can do is just sit there for a while. ... Jesus says, ‘Can you just sit with me here, in the dust?’ Because that’s where he is. It’s the same dust that Jesus fell in when he was carrying the cross. It’s the same dust that he bled in. Jesus said, ‘Can you just come sit with me and sit in this humble place?’

“That was the very first message we heard on Wednesday morning, when the first bullet came through the window, and the voices crying out, ‘Down, down. Get low, stay down, stay down, don’t get up,’” Father Zehren said, his voice breaking with

emotion.

“‘But when we were down there, in that low place, Jesus showed us something,’” he said. “He showed us, ‘I am the Lord even here. I am the one who descended into hell. I am the one who had taken on all the darkness and evil in this world, all the forces of darkness and death and evil.’ Jesus pointed and he said, ‘Can’t you see how weak it is? Can’t you see how desperate it is? Can’t you see that this can never last? Can’t you see that this is not why God created us?’

“Then he showed us. He began to show us a light. It’s a new light. The light of a new day is breaking,” Father Zehren said. “We watch for that light of a new day. ... That light of the world is Jesus Christ.

“It reminds us, when death and darkness have done their worst, that’s when God says, ‘Now see what I will do,’ ” Father Zehren said.

Annunciation parishioners Sean O’Brien, his wife Mallory and their four children were at the Aug. 30 Mass. Sean was at the all-school Mass as well, with their 2-year-old daughter, when the shooting occurred. Their fourth grader and first grader were in the pews. Their preschooler was in the church basement. None of them were injured.

“I think capturing how we all felt in such a strong way from the pulpit, it’s really meaningful to have a leader [like Father Zehren] who can speak to that emotion,” said O’Brien, a lifelong member of the parish, where his grandfather was a deacon.

“I came in here optimistic that this community would rebuild, and I now have never been more certain of anything in my life,” he said. “I can’t wait to see what the Lord will do now.” †

See archdiocesan statement, page 3.

See related reflection, page 4.



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Festival of Faiths to be held on Sept. 14 in downtown Indianapolis

By Sean Gallagher

Archdiocesan Catholics will represent the Church in central and southern Indiana at the Festival of Faiths, to be held from 1-5 p.m. on Sept. 14 at University Park, 307 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis.

Offered by the Indianapolis-based Center for Interfaith Cooperation, the Festival of Faiths is an annual free event for Hoosiers to learn about and celebrate the wide diversity of faith communities that have central Indiana as their home. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is one of three partnering sponsors of the event.

Among the faith traditions represented at the festival will be Christianity, Judaism, Islam and the Hindu, Sikh, Jain,


Buddhist and other faiths.

Music, dancing and food representing different faith traditions from around the world can be experienced at the festival, as well as interfaith dialogue and interactive booths.

Each year, the festival has a theme that often highlights commonalities among a variety of faiths. This year, the event's theme, "One source, many streams," emphasizes the place of water in faith traditions around the world.

Father Rick Ginther, director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs, spoke about the festival's importance.

"It is significant, given the predominance of Christianity here in the greater Indianapolis area," he said. "The event showcases each religion's use of particular symbols or realities and allows for direct interaction between those visiting the event and the practitioners of each religion at the booths."



'The event showcases each religion's use of particular symbols or realities and allows for direct interaction between those visiting the event and the practitioners of each religion at the booths.'

—Father Rick Ginther, director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs

Father Ginther encourages archdiocesan Catholics to take part in the event.

"Come out to spend an hour or two on this late summer afternoon to learn about other religions whose adherents are our neighbors," he said. "Come with an open mind and heart to take in the experience and rejoice in our religious freedom in the United States."

(For more information about this year's Festival of Faiths, visit www.indycic.org/2025-festival-of-faiths.) †



'Our top priority: the safety and well-being of the students and staff'

(The following statement was released on Aug. 28 by Brian Disney, archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic Schools, after the tragic school shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis.)

We were deeply saddened to learn of the shooting at Annunciation Catholic School and Church in Minneapolis, Minn. Our hearts are breaking for those impacted by this violence. Moments like this call on us to lift up the victims' families, students, faculty and staff in prayer.

In light of this tragedy, we want to reiterate our commitment and our top priority: the safety and well-being of the students and staff in our Catholic schools. The loss of young life, especially due to a school shooting, is tragic. Events like this cause us to pause and recommit to the safety and well-being of all.

Though no safety plan can guarantee absolute security, our schools continuously plan and adjust safety procedures with assistance of local law enforcement. Vigilance by school staff, students, parents and community members is essential. Notifying administration of potential threats, following security protocols to enter the school during the day, and keeping outside doors locked are key factors to keeping our schools safe. These security protocols also cover all school facilities and activities. The partnership of all stakeholders is important to maintaining a safe school environment.

In addition to the physical safety of our buildings, our Catholic schools are committed to the spiritual and emotional well-being of our students. Church teaching and Gospel values are infused throughout our schools and curriculum. Love of God and love of neighbor are


core values. All humans are treated with dignity, love and respect because we are all made in the image and likeness of God.

When someone is hurting, we, like the good Samaritan, treat their wounds and provide ongoing care. Our students participate in the sacraments and pray throughout each school day. We value everyone and continually promote spiritual and emotional health.

Let us remember to pray for all those who are hurting, especially those impacted by the shooting in Minneapolis. Let us ask God to end all hatred, division, and war so that his peace may rule in the world. Let us

experience God's mercy, grace and love so that we can more fully love God and neighbor. May our Catholic schools be the light on the hill showing forth the glory of God. †





'Let us remember to pray for all those who are hurting, especially those impacted by the shooting in Minneapolis. Let us ask God to end all hatred, division, and war so that his peace may rule in the world.'

—Brian Disney, archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic Schools

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Editorial

Look to towering figure of St. Augustine

Pope Leo XIV is an experienced pastor, foreign missionary and Vatican official. All of these diverse experiences, skills and talents inform his new responsibilities as the successor of St. Peter, the chief teacher and pastor of the universal Church. But Pope Leo was also formed as an Augustinian, and the influence of St. Augustine can be seen in everything our new pope says and does.

In an address to Catholic legislators from different regions of the world, Pope Leo invited lawmakers (and all of us) to look to St. Augustine for solutions to the challenges facing our world today.

As the pope said: “To find our footing in the present circumstances, I suggest that we might look to the past, to that towering figure of St. Augustine of Hippo. As a leading voice of the Church in the late Roman era, he witnessed immense upheavals and social disintegration. In response, he penned *The City of God*, a work that offers a vision of hope, a vision of meaning that can still speak to us today.”

St. Augustine’s most famous work, *Confessions*, describes the interior, spiritual journey that he undertook in his search for God. *The City of God*, on the other hand, describes how the Christian worldview, which is centered on God’s will, differs fundamentally from the secular worldview, whose exclusive focus is on human desires.

St. Augustine taught that within human history, two “cities” are intertwined: the City of Man and the City of God. “These signify spiritual realities—two orientations of the human heart and, therefore, of human civilization. The City of Man, built on pride and love of oneself, is marked by the pursuit of power, prestige and pleasure; the City of God, built on love of God unto selflessness, is characterized by justice, charity and humility.” This was the situation in Augustine’s time, toward the end of the great Western Roman empire. Is it not also our situation in the second decade of the third millennium after Christ?

Pope Leo urged Catholic lawmakers and politicians to see the essential similarities between St. Augustine’s day and our own: “Augustine encouraged Christians to infuse the earthly society with the values of God’s kingdom, thereby directing history toward its ultimate fulfillment in God, while also allowing for authentic human flourishing in this life. This theological vision can anchor us in the face of today’s changing currents: the emergence of new centers of gravity, the shifting of old alliances and the unprecedented influence of global corporations and technologies, not to mention numerous violent conflicts.”

Ours is a chaotic and dangerous time—illustrated by the horrific shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis, where two people died and 21 were injured. Pope Leo XIV sent his “heartfelt condolences and the assurance of spiritual closeness” to

all those affected by this “terrible tragedy.” Brian Disney, superintendent of archdiocesan schools, also spoke of the sadness that all Catholics in central and southern Indiana feel on behalf of all those who are impacted by this violence. “Moments like this call on us to lift up the victims’ families, students, faculty and staff in prayer,” Disney said.

At the time of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, the Holy Father expressed the hope that the world today—plagued by intense divisions and deadly violence here at home, in Ukraine, in the Holy Land, and in many other regions of the world—will replace its false sense of security “based on the threat of mutual destruction” with justice, open dialogue and trust in fraternity.

The world in St. Augustine’s time was not threatened by weapons of mass destruction, but the devastating effects of selfishness and sin, which transformed the Roman Empire into a culture of death, and were clearly evident to Augustine and to all who sought to live in a social order characterized by genuine justice, charity and peace.

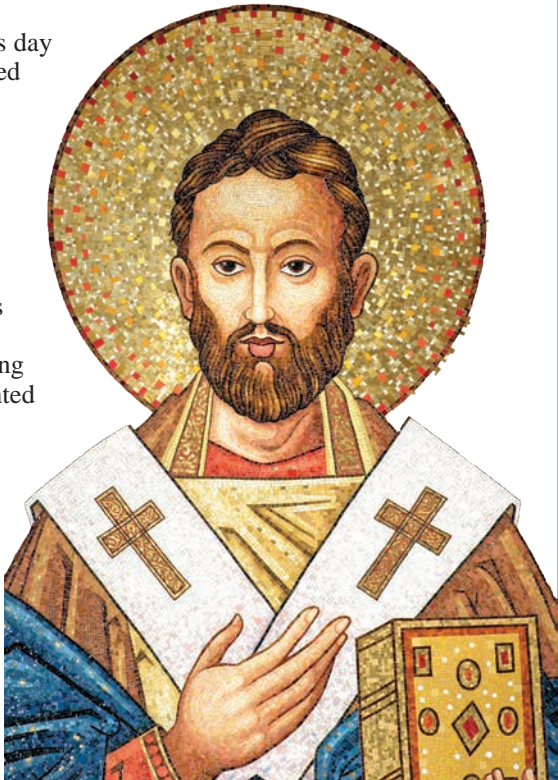
What kind of a world do we want to live in, the Holy Father asks? And what must we do to bring about the City of God here and now?

“The so-called ideal future presented to us is often one of technological convenience and consumer satisfaction. Yet we know that this is not enough,” he said. “We see this in affluent societies where many people struggle with loneliness, with despair and a sense of meaninglessness.”

As Pope Leo says, “The future of human flourishing depends on which ‘love’ we choose to organize our society around—a selfish love, the love of self, or the love of God and neighbor.”

—Daniel Conway

Image: Icon of St. Augustine at Christ the King Cathedral in Superior Wis. (OSV News illustration/Gene Plaisted, The Crosiers)



Reflection/Sean Gallagher

‘Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord’—a reflection on the tragedy in Minneapolis

Aug. 27 started off for me like many days during the school year. I attended morning Mass at 7:20 at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis with students from Lumen Christi Catholic School, located adjacent to the church, and other worshippers.

Included among them were my two youngest sons, Philip, a high school junior, and Colin, a sixth grader.

Colin sat with me at the Mass. (Philip prefers to sit with his high school peers.) My experience was much like many parents and grandparents across the archdiocese who attend school liturgies.

In the middle of the day, I, like many other people around the country, learned of the tragic shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis in which two students were killed and 21 other people were injured during a Mass attended by students from the parish’s school.

The news struck me much like that of other school shootings through the years, going back to the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in 1999. But what happened in Minneapolis, understandably, hit closer to home.

I had just attended a Mass that morning celebrated not long before the liturgy at Annunciation. It was filled with school students (including two of my sons) much like the Mass at Annunciation horrifically marred by the shooting.

What happened in Minneapolis naturally (or supernaturally) returned to my heart and mind as I took time for prayer at points during the rest of the day.

That evening, I prayed Night Prayer from the Church’s Liturgy of the Hours, something that I had done countless times in the past. Praying it that night, though, was different. I felt that I was praying it for and with the parents of the children killed, injured and traumatized in the day’s attack at Annunciation.

Psalm 130, which was included in Night Prayer that day, begins, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice! O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading” (Ps 130:1-2).

Those words, as evocative as they are, surely only begin to scratch the surface of what the parents of the Annunciation students may have experienced that day in their relationship with God.

And they may very well, and very

understandably, feel alone and separated from God in those dark depths.

In a time they might not yet be able to foresee, they might know the start of some kind of consolation in realizing that others are with them in that abyss—including Christ himself. He went there in his passion and death. We hear his cry from the depths when he said from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46).

Through his sacred humanity, Christ knows all of the full depths of misery into which anyone of us can be thrust. He remains one with us in the worst of our trials, even if we cannot, at least at first, experience this closeness.

Christ is at our side at every moment of our lives, especially when we feel separated from him in our darkest hardships. His love for us reaches out to us through and beyond the deepest depths of pain that we can ever experience in this broken world of ours.

It can do this because his love for us is infinite. No suffering in this world can separate us from his infinite love. We can find assurance of this in Christ’s resurrection. The world threw its worst at Christ in his passion and death. Yet, he overcame it through love. And now Christ yearns to have the power of his infinite love reach out to us when we cry to him from the depths of our own pain.

Later in Psalm 130, we pray, “My soul is longing for the Lord more than the watchman for daybreak. Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord” (Ps 130:6-7).

It may be hard for the parents of Annunciation School’s students in the midst of the darkness into which they were plunged on Aug. 27 to have faith that the Lord will bring them forth to daybreak.

Misguided snubbing of prayer for the dead and suffering by some political leaders and commentators in the wake of the tragedy in Minneapolis notwithstanding, I invite all parents and grandparents of students in Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana to join me in prayer for Annunciation’s students, their parents and their families.

In such prayer, God in his grace joins us together with them. And even if their faith has been challenged or even shattered by what happened on Aug. 27, may our faith lift them up until God in his mercy lets the light of the risen Christ in his eternal daybreak shine upon them.

(Sean Gallagher is a reporter for The Criterion.) †

Letter to the Editor

Prayer shows we stand together, as one Church, in humility, reader says

“Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault ... ”

There is a scene in the movie *Father Stu* where, attending his first Mass as a non-Catholic, Stu watches the man sitting next to him beat his breast, as our Catholic practice dictates, during the *Confiteor* prayer, the penitential rite near the beginning of Mass. “That’s a bit dramatic!” he exclaims, which gets laughs from the theater audience.

I suppose anyone attending a Mass for the first time might think along the same lines, or inwardly question the need for such gestures.

For me, they are changing life. Each of the three strikes of the breast is a humbling before our triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are no excuses, no justifications to hide behind as we face the totality of our nakedness before a holy God. Our flesh is subdued as we confess all that we have done or left undone. We stand together, as one Church, in humility.

This is why the beating of the breast is one of my favorite traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

Gayle Griffiths
Aurora

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Mother Teresa reminds us, without love we cannot serve others

The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

Today, Sept. 5, our Church invites us to remember St. Teresa of Calcutta, who ministered to the poorest of the poor on the streets of Calcutta (Kolkata), the capital of West Bengal, India. By the time of her death in 1997, she served the poor in 610 houses of the Missionaries of Charity located throughout the world.

Mother Teresa, as she was known to her Sisters, began her religious life as a Sister of Loretto who taught in a school for girls in India for 20 years.

On a train to Calcutta in 1946, she heard the voice of Christ saying to her, “I thirst.” Afterward, she received permission to establish a new religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, and she began her work among the gravely ill and dying poor in the most destitute region of Calcutta.

Mother Teresa was small in stature,

but she was oversized in her ability to serve others. Among her many admonitions to her Sisters (and all of us), she is quoted as saying: “Peace begins with a smile,” and “We can only do small things with great love because it’s not the magnitude of the action but the love put into it that truly matters.”

She also stressed that “the most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved” and that “love begins at home by caring for those closest to us.”

Mother Teresa once wrote to the members of her religious order, “I have asked but one grace for you, that you may understand the words of Jesus: Love one another as I have loved you.” Love is not something abstract or sentimental. It is a series of actions selflessly given “to Jesus, with Jesus, and for Jesus.”

“We cannot truly love and serve the poor,” Mother said, “unless we have that love of God in our hearts. We will only have that if we are empty of all selfishness and insincerity. This love must start at home. Ask Jesus to give you his heart to love with.” Unless and until this love is among us, Mother

Teresa believed, we can kill ourselves with work, but it will be only work, not love. “Work without love is slavery,” she said.

True love demands that we empty ourselves of selfishness and sin. It also requires that we seek to imitate the love of Jesus, who emptied himself of everything that would prevent him from doing the will of his Father.

As Mother Teresa wrote to her community (recorded in “The Writings of Mother Teresa of Calcutta”):

Jesus gave his life to love us and tells us that we also have to give whatever it takes to do good to one another. ... Jesus died on the cross because that is what it took for him to do good to us; to save us from our selfishness and sin. He gave up everything to do the Father’s will, to show us that we too must be willing to give up everything to do God’s ways, to love one another as he loves each one of us. That is why we too must give to each other until it hurts. It is not enough for us to say I love God, but I also have to love my neighbor.

For St. Teresa, “giving until it hurts” was not just a figure of speech. Her

letters and personal reflections reveal the depths of anguish and uncertainty she experienced even as her strong faith and determination kept her from being overwhelmed by the challenges she faced on a daily basis. Love is action, not emotion, and that is why it must be expressed in concrete forms of selfless service.

“Do not think that love in order to be genuine has to be extraordinary,” Mother Teresa said. “What we need is to love without getting tired. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.”

To love without getting tired, we need the grace of Christ freely given to us in the Eucharist. Every day, at the eucharistic banquet of our Lord, Mother Teresa found the strength she needed to minister to the desperately poor people she served.

As we continue to celebrate the 2025 Jubilee as Pilgrims of Hope, let’s pray for the courage to love selflessly as St. Teresa of Calcutta did. May her words of wisdom and hope guide us through the challenges of loving and serving others as Jesus taught us. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

La Madre Teresa nos recuerda que sin amor no podemos servir a los demás

La mayor enfermedad en Occidente hoy en día no es la tuberculosis o la lepra; es no ser deseado, no amado y abandonado. Podemos curar enfermedades físicas con medicamentos, pero la única cura para la soledad, la desesperación y la desesperanza es el amor. (Santa Teresa de Calcuta)

Hoy, 5 de septiembre, nuestra Iglesia nos invita a recordar a Santa Teresa de Calcuta, quien sirvió a los más pobres de los pobres en las calles de Calcuta, la capital de Bengala Occidental, India. En el momento de su muerte en 1997, servía a los pobres en 610 casas de las Misioneras de la Caridad ubicadas en todo el mundo.

La Madre Teresa, como la conocían sus hermanas, comenzó su vida religiosa como una hermana de Loreto que enseñó en una escuela para niñas en la India durante 20 años.

En un tren a Calcuta en 1946, escuchó la voz de Cristo que le decía: “Tengo sed.” Después, recibió permiso para establecer una nueva orden religiosa, las Misioneras de la Caridad, y comenzó su trabajo entre los enfermos graves y moribundos en la región más indigente de Calcuta.

La Madre Teresa era pequeña de

estatura, pero era demasiado grande en su capacidad para servir a los demás. Entre sus muchas advertencias a sus hermanas (y a todos nosotros), se le cita diciendo: “La paz comienza con una sonrisa” y “Solo podemos hacer cosas pequeñas con gran amor porque no es la magnitud de la acción, sino el amor puesto en ella lo que realmente importa.”

También destacó que “la pobreza más terrible es la soledad y el sentimiento de no ser amado” y que “el amor comienza en casa cuidando a los más cercanos a nosotros.”

La Madre Teresa escribió una vez a los miembros de su orden religiosa: “Solo he pedido una gracia para ustedes, para que comprendan las palabras de Jesús: Ámense los unos a los otros como yo los he amado.” El amor no es algo abstracto o sentimental. Es una serie de acciones entregadas desinteresadamente “a Jesús, con Jesús y para Jesús.”

“No podemos amar y servir verdaderamente a los pobres,” dijo la Madre, “a menos que tengamos ese amor de Dios en nuestros corazones. Solo lo tendremos si estamos vacíos de todo egoísmo e insinceridad. Este amor debe comenzar en casa. Pídele a Jesús que te dé su corazón para amar.”

A menos que y hasta que este amor esté entre nosotros, creía la Madre Teresa, podemos matarnos con el trabajo, pero será solo trabajo, no amor. “El trabajo sin amor es esclavitud,” dijo.

El verdadero amor exige que nos despojemos del egoísmo y del pecado. También requiere que busquemos imitar el amor de Jesús, que se despojó de todo lo que le impedía hacer la voluntad de su Padre.

Como la Madre Teresa escribió a su comunidad (registrado en “Los Escritos de la Madre Teresa de Calcuta”):

Jesús dio su vida para amarnos y nos dice que también nosotros tenemos que dar lo que sea necesario para hacernos el bien unos a otros. [...] Jesús murió en la cruz porque eso es lo que se necesitó para que nos hiciera el bien; para salvarnos de nuestro egoísmo y pecado. Lo dejó todo para hacer la voluntad del Padre, para mostrarnos que también nosotros debemos estar dispuestos a renunciar a todo para hacer los caminos de Dios, para amarnos unos a otros como Él nos ama a cada uno de nosotros. Por eso también nosotros debemos darnos unos a otros hasta que duela. No es suficiente que digamos que amo a Dios, sino que también tengo que amar a mi prójimo.

Para Santa Teresa, “dar hasta que

duela” no era solo una figura retórica. Sus cartas y reflexiones personales revelan las profundidades de la angustia y la incertidumbre que experimentó, incluso cuando su fuerte fe y determinación le impidieron sentirse abrumada por los desafíos que enfrentaba a diario. El amor es acción, no emoción, y por eso debe expresarse en formas concretas de servicio desinteresado.

“No pienses que el amor para ser genuino tiene que ser extraordinario,” dijo la Madre Teresa. “Lo que necesitamos es amar sin cansarnos. Sé fiel en las cosas pequeñas, porque en ellas reside tu fuerza.”

Para amar sin cansarnos, necesitamos la gracia de Cristo que se nos da gratuitamente en la Eucaristía. Todos los días, en el banquete eucarístico de nuestro Señor, la Madre Teresa encontró la fuerza que necesitaba para ayudar a las personas desesperadamente pobres a las que servía.

Mientras continuamos celebrando el Jubileo 2025 como Peregrinos de la Esperanza, oremos por el coraje de amar desinteresadamente como lo hizo Santa Teresa de Calcuta. Que sus palabras de sabiduría y esperanza nos guíen a través de los desafíos de amar y servir a los demás como Jesús nos enseñó. †

Events Calendar

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

September 9

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

September 12

Victory Field, 501 W. Maryland St., Indianapolis.

Indianapolis Indians vs. Iowa Cubs, fundraiser for Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, 7:05 p.m., gates open 6 p.m., post-game fireworks, tickets \$16. Information: 812-212-3463, contactus@covenantresources.org. Tickets: gofevo.com/event/Covenantresources22.

September 12-13

St. Thomas More Parish, 1200 N. Indiana St., Mooresville. **September-fest**, 5-10 p.m., live music, balloon rides, beer and wine garden, kids’ games, food, free admission. Information: 317-831-4142, pweber@stm-church.org.

September 13

St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children Prayer**

Service, 11 a.m., rosary, Divine Mercy chaplet and other prayers. Information: Kelley Snoddy, 812-350-2731.

St. Michael the Archangel Parish parking lot, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **St. Vincent de Paul Stuff-A-Truck**, 9-11 a.m., accepting clothing, household goods and linens (all in closed bags), furniture, bicycles, bicycle helmets and locks, backpacks. Information: bsjisk@sudpindy.org.

Touch of the Earth Natural Area (on Country Club Road 1/2 mile south of State Road 46), Columbus. **Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation**, 10-11:30 a.m., trail hike stopping at five stations reflecting on creation, free, limited parking so carpooling recommended, hosted by St. Bartholomew Parish Care for Our Common Home Ministry, registration required by Sept. 10. Information, registration: 812-379-9353, stbcareforourcommonhome@gmail.com.

SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood. **Celebrating 800 Years of St. Francis’ “Canticle of the Creature,”** 10 a.m.-4 p.m., retreat reflecting on St. Francis’ poem, speakers include former *Laudato Si’* Platform director John Mundell

and Deacon James Kitchens, lunch provided, free, register by Sept. 10. Information, registration: 317-658-2516, helenburke316@gmail.com.

September 13-14

Prince of Peace Schools, 305 W. State St., Madison. **Summer Festival**, 5p.m.-midnight, carnival rides, kids’ games, food, live music, free admission, \$5 parking. Information: 812-599-0291.

September 15

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **St. Thomas More Society Red Mass and Dinner**, 5:30 p.m. Mass for Catholic legal professionals followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., former U.S. senator and ambassador to the Holy See Joseph Donnelly speaking, Woman for All Seasons honoree Indianapolis Bar Association and Foundation executive director Julie Armstrong, \$50 individual, \$90 couple. Information, registration: 317-236-1482, sorrell@archindy.org, tinyurl.com/redmass25.

September 17

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

September 18

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

September 19

Northside Events and Social Club, 2100 E. 71st St.,

Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, Indiana State Rep. Bob Morris presenting “Respect for Life: A Catholic Response to Capital Punishment in Indiana,” rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Sept. 16. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

September 19-20

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., Indianapolis. **Fall Fest Weekend**, Fri.: 6-11 p.m., Adults’ Night Out, bingo tickets \$50, live music, beer garden. Sat.: 3-11 p.m. Family Fun Day, children’s game and activity area, free admission. Information: 317-259-4373, thartley@stluke.org. †

Wedding Anniversaries

EDGAR AND MARYANN (LENAHAN) CHESTERTON, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Aug. 20.

The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Aug. 20, 1960.

They have three children: Carla Knight, Joanne Soller and Dan Chesterton.

The couple also has six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

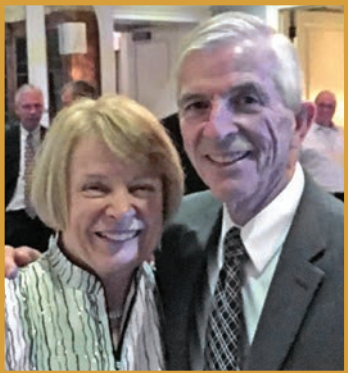


DENNIS AND KAREN (OCHS) O’TOOLE, members of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 7.

The couple was married in Holy Family Church in Davenport, Iowa, on Aug. 7, 1965.

They have four children: Stephanie Burda, Kim Gadaleta, Michele Stanley and Brian O’Toole.

The couple also has 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



PAUL AND SUZANNE (LASSUY) WHALEN, members of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on June 27.

The couple was married in St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on June 27, 1970.

They have four children: Teresa Harvey, Colleen Sicuso, Erin and Paul Whalen, Jr.

The couple also has nine grandchildren.



MARTY AND DEBBIE (DICKMAN) HANNEMAN, members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 16.

The couple was married in Holy Family Church in Richmond on Aug. 16, 1975.

They have five children: Allison Petrie, Michelle Tillett, Craig, Jared and Philip Hanneman.

The couple also has 15 grandchildren.



DONALD AND PATRICIA (ZINKAN) HOLTZ, members of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 5.

The couple was married in Christ the King Church in Indianapolis on April 5, 1975.

They have three children: Laura, Brian and Mark Holtz.

The couple also has six grandchildren.



JON AND KATHY (BAKER) TRAIN, members of St. Michael Parish in Bradford, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 2.

The couple was married in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Louisville, Ky., on Aug. 2, 1975.

They have two children: Sarah Gilmer and Matthew Train.

The couple also has four grandchildren.



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

Retreats and Programs

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

September 19-21

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Young Adult Retreat**, unstructured, directed by Benedictine Father Simon Herrmann, \$50 single, \$100 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **You Are Not Alone Retreat for Suicide Loss Survivors**, Fri. 6:30 p.m.-9

p.m., Sat. 8:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m., Sun. 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., licensed therapist Christine Turo-Shields, Father James Farrell and loss survivors Lisa Thibault and Shelly and Shea Wynn presenting, \$40, includes program, meals, snacks, private guest room to use during the days of program, overnight stay available for additional \$35. Registration: fjm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Wisdom and Beauty of Vatican II**, 5 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Deacon Edward Walker (Diocese of Evansville, Ind.) presenting, \$241 for single, \$302.90 double, \$368 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com. †

Workshop on Catholic social teaching will be offered on Sept. 20 in Indianapolis

A workshop on Catholic social teaching will be offered at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, 7225 Southeastern Ave., in Indianapolis, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Sept. 20.

Theresa Chamblee, archdiocesan director of Catholic Charities-Social Concerns, will provide an overview of Catholic social teaching, including its history, principles and themes; the theology of charity; and tools and resources to help live and evangelize Catholic social teaching concepts.

The cost is \$15, which includes lunch.

To register online via credit card, go to tinyurl.com/socialteaching25 (\$2.85 service fee added). To pay by cash or check the day of the workshop, contact Laura Sheehan at 317-542-2492 or lsheehan@archindy.org.

While registration by Sept. 18 is preferred for planning purposes, walk-ins are also welcome (pay by cash or check at the door; credit cards not accepted).

For more information, contact Laura Sheehan as noted above. †

St. Rita Parish will host a free health clinic on Sept. 19-20

A free health clinic will be held at St. Rita Parish, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., in Indianapolis, on Sept. 19-20.

Lung cancer screenings will be available from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Sept. 19.

Flu, COVID and pneumonia shots, a Red Cross blood drive and vendors will be available from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Sept. 20.

The event is sponsored by Franciscan Health and the Knights

of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary, Council and Court #97.

Walk-ins are welcome on both days, although advance registration is available.

To register for shots, go to bit.ly/FluShotClinic25. To register for the blood drive or for more information about the health fair, call 317-332-1020 or e-mail boradeelight@gmail.com. †

Peace & Unity

A PASTORAL REFLECTION



1. In his masterpiece, *City of God*, St. Augustine wrote: “The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquility of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place.” [Book XIX, Chapter 13]



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

2. When Pope Leo XIV first appeared on the *loggia* (balcony) of St. Peter’s Basilica on the evening of 8 May 2025, our newly elected Holy Father spoke of *peace* and *unity*, calling us to embrace both in Jesus Christ. During the homily of his inaugural Mass as the successor of Saint Peter, Pope Leo mentioned

the call to unity in the Church several times, strongly suggesting this would be a priority for his pontificate. The desire for peace and the call to unity are basic tenets of all religions. Yet, every religion is subject to manipulation by perpetrators of violence and injustice for purposes of doing evil. It is often noted that what is demonic is divisive but what unites us is of the Spirit.

3. Clearly, both those on the so-called “radical right” and those on the so-called “radical left” are capable of manipulating religion in ways that betray authentic faith. Their purposes are far more selfish and self-righteous (ideological) than as holy endeavors of divine will. Before effectively and efficaciously seeking means of peace and unity in far-off places—such as the conflict in the Middle East or Eastern Europe—or even trying to deal with the effects of polarization among so many in our own local communities, each of us must look within to discern whether true peace and unity have taken root in one’s own heart, mind, and soul. Unity, of course, is not to be confused with “uniformity.”

4. We must ask ourselves: On whose terms, do we embrace authentic peace and unity? What criteria do we allow or observe to guide or dictate the mind and will? For Catholics, we ground our embrace of peace and unity in Sacred Scripture and Tradition (the Deposit of Faith). Church teaching (in its fullness, not as parsed according to a particular narrative or convenience) and prayerful discernment of God’s will are most readily revealed in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God.

5. War rarely resolves conflict, and the resort to war always leaves a scourge on humanity. It is the poor, vulnerable, and innocent who suffer its consequences. The world recently commemorated the 80th Anniversary of the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. The effects of that devastation, like those of many wars and destruction, continue to impact individuals, families, communities and nations to this very day. Concerning the threat of nuclear war in our own time, Pope Leo XIV remarked: “In our time of mounting global tensions and conflicts, Hiroshima and Nagasaki stand as symbols of memory that urge us to reject the illusion of security founded on mutually assured destruction. Instead, we must forge a global ethic rooted in justice, fraternity and the common good. It is thus my prayer that this anniversary will serve as an invitation to the international community to renew its commitment to pursuing lasting peace for our whole human family, a peace that is unarmed and disarming.” (6 August 2025 X Post) In his *Angelus* message on Sunday, 10 August 2025, exhorting “a type of vigilance that Jesus asks of us,” the Holy Father implored: “Sisters and brothers, let us entrust to Mary this desire and responsibility: may she, the Morning Star, help us to be the ‘watchmen’ of mercy and peace in a world marked by many divisions.”

6. All Christians must understand the true nature of the Church and her Mission. The Church, instituted

by Jesus, is the People of God and the Body of Christ. Beyond any institution or building, the Church is the community of believers which is missionary by its very nature. The Church’s Mission, instituted by Jesus, is the proclamation of the Good News with a focus on making missionary disciples of people of all nations without exception. At the heart of both Church and Mission is Christ-centered evangelization and catechesis in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to bring about the Kingdom of God, which is the very essence of true peace and authentic unity. To that end, a personal encounter with Jesus is essential to the spiritual life of every baptized Christian. No tenet of Christian faith or Catholic belief will ever make sense apart from an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.

7. In recent years, there has been a great deal of focus in the Church on the concept of “synodality”—cultivating the art of dialogue, listening, understanding, accompaniment, discernment and mutual respect, with the Holy Spirit as the protagonist. Yet, each person can only bring to the table, conversation or process, what he/she has cultivated in his/her own being. Authentic peace involves more than the mere absence of war, and authentic unity must be given more than mere lip service. For there to be authentic peace and unity, we must rise above fear, suspicion, self-centeredness, intimidation, scapegoating, and pride to recognize one another as members of the human family—sisters and brothers to be embraced rather than avoided or excluded as strangers or enemies.

8. Migrants and refugees, for example, should not be mistrusted or feared but embraced and welcomed. It’s true that every nation has the right and responsibility to protect its people and secure its borders from perpetrators of violence, human-trafficking, gangs, illegal drugs, terrorism and other forms of criminal activity. But if we are to work toward true peace and authentic unity, we must rise above the ever-increasing poison and grandstanding of polarization and partisanship to find the proper balance between protecting the innocent while preventing criminals from doing harm. Thus, we must avoid oversimplification

of two extremes: On the one hand, the indiscriminate casting of a wide net on men, women, and children, regardless of their status or reasons for migrating from their countries of origin. On the other hand, we should not allow for open borders without proper oversight and resources. To ensure that we do not lose our awareness of the inherent dignity of persons and sacredness of life, whether dealing with migrants, refugees, law enforcement, or those living on the borders, we should keep in mind two key principles of Catholic social teaching. First, “solidarity,” which can be defined as an awareness of shared interests, objectives, standards, and sympathies, and second, justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy.

9. As the late Pope Francis pointed out more than once, we are most credible when we are most consistent. The purpose of synodality is to enable us to “co-responsibly” enhance our witness of credibility and consistency with a focus on community, mission, and participation. Pope Leo XIV has already signaled that the implementation phase of the synodal process will proceed as previously announced. What better way for us as Church, People of God, to overcome entrenched differences than through Christ-centered prayer, dialogue, trust, mutual respect, and discernment of the Holy Spirit, all rooted in Scripture, Sacrament, Service, and Tradition! If such witness does not come from us as Catholics, where can the world hope to experience authentic peace and unity to overcome wars, prejudice, genocide, and the many forms of injustice that are ravaging humanity? As reflected in the Church’s long-standing principles of Catholic social teaching, solidarity is essential to establishing true peace and maintaining lasting unity. For Catholics, this solidarity is rooted in our Christ-centered relationship with God and neighbor.

10. Pope Leo XIV has warned of the dangers associated with artificial intelligence (AI), especially regarding fake news, deception, manipulation, and other unethical intentions. How much might this contribute to the inability to authentically comprehend, consider and

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Lanterns are pictured along the Motoyasu River facing the gutted Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6 on the 80th anniversary of the United States dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. (OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard)

REFLECTION

continued from page 7

discuss matters in a basic human way? How might this impact our understanding of the issues related to effective care for creation, protection of the unborn and women, combating racism, eradicating causes of poverty, properly addressing the plight of migrants and refugees, upholding the dignity of marriage and family, and embracing the sacredness of all life? Polarization is an evil that must be overcome, if we are to realize true peace and unity as fellow human beings sharing the same home, namely, planet Earth.

11. Care for creation demands that we rise above self-centeredness and reject any semblance of a “throw away” culture. We must strive to embrace the environment and all creatures with a deep sense of appreciation, awe, respect and wonder. All life is sacred, as Pope Francis stated in his 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si’* (On Care for our Common Home): “Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.” [LS, 42] It should not be lost on any person of Jewish or Christian faith that the Torah and Bible begin with the story of creation, making clear how God entrusted humanity with the privilege and responsibility of its care.

12. Because all life is sacred, we must always respect human life and dignity. This is why we work for an end to the inhumane practices of abortion, euthanasia and every instance of what Pope Saint John Paul II called “the culture of death.” Even the death penalty, which was tolerated in the past as a deterrent against violent crime and as a means of protecting society at large, must be rejected. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.” (CCC #2267)

13. Attention must be given to the degrading effect of the death penalty on society. The taking of life, even by the state, perpetuates a culture of death, reaching into the very fabric of the human conscience. How can families of both victims and perpetrators of violence as well as those who are charged with carrying out acts of capital punishment not be impacted by this scourge of our penal system? Even on death row, the inherent dignity of a person remains. We need only consider Jesus’ words to the thief hanging next to him on the cross, who asked to be remembered: “This day, you will be with me in paradise.”

14. Any credible peace and stable unity—predicated on the principles of accompaniment, dialogue, dignity, encounter, respect, and solidarity—necessarily require that inherent rights be upheld and basic human needs be met. There are certain inalienable rights that must be honored, especially regarding the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. No person, family, or community can exist without access to clean water, nutritional food, proper housing, medical care, and dignified livelihood. These are not luxuries or negotiables, but essential needs of every human being. Such basics are necessary for all people, regardless of religion or ethnicity, in Gaza, Ukraine or any other region of the world, including local communities and neighborhoods. This is also true for those incarcerated and those being detained solely based on immigration or refugee status. Indiscriminate arrests, unjust



The Holy Spirit, traditionally depicted as a dove, is pictured in a stained-glass window at St. John Vianney Church in Lithia Springs, Ga., in this May 4, 2015, file photo. (CNS photo/Michael Alexander, Georgia Bulletin)

detainment, and inhumane treatment are morally unacceptable.

15. Special attention needs to be given to the very young and elderly as well as those who struggle with disability, mental illness, addiction, and/or abuse. Cultivating a culture of life, especially predicated on a consistent life ethic and preferential option for the poor, demands that we advocate for those who are unable to defend themselves. Every life has value and meaning. No human being is beyond the scope of divine mercy, God’s power to save and redeem.

16. The principles of Catholic social teaching also include the Church’s commitment to prayer, advocacy and defense of marriage and family as well as the right of workers and dignity of work. These principles must permeate all aspects of society if we are to enhance an understanding of community and appreciation for belonging as a human family. The home, where family provides the first school of learning, is the first place for love, dialogue, understanding, forgiveness, resolving conflict, and mutual respect.

17. In his address to participants in the 16th annual meeting of the International Catholic Legislators Network, Pope Leo XIV stated: “Authentic human flourishing stems from what the Church calls *integral human development*, or the full development of a person in all dimensions: physical, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual. This vision for the human person is rooted in natural law, the moral order that God has written on the human heart, whose deeper truths are illuminated by the Gospel of Christ. In this regard, authentic human flourishing is seen when individuals live virtuously, when they live in healthy communities, enjoying not only what they have, what they possess, but also who they are as children of God. It ensures the freedom to seek truth, to worship God and to raise families in peace. It also

includes a harmony with creation and a sense of solidarity across social classes and nations.” (The Holy See, 23 August 2025)

18. Dialogue and mutual respect are essential to establishing and maintaining lasting peace and unity. These necessarily require that egos, ideologies, and personal agendas be set aside. For Christians, this means that we be Christ-centered. Obviously, when it comes to politics, economics, and religion, one size does not fit all. Still, even in disagreement, the art of compromise enables individuals to listen and try to understand one another. Ultimately, we should not be striving to win at all costs but to more fully realize the sacred beauty, truth, and goodness within, among, and all around us. As the late Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, the task of Christian discipleship is not so much about possessing truth as allowing oneself to be possessed by truth. Truth, he reminded us, is a person. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

19. Above all is the necessity for prayer, both personal and communal. We must pray without ceasing, surrendering ourselves to God rather than egos, ideologies, or personal agendas. The attainment of authentic, lasting peace and unity rests in our ability and willingness to embrace and cultivate the virtue of humility. It is only by humbling ourselves, as St. Augustine of Hippo discovered and proclaimed, that our hearts find rest in communion with the One who created, saved, and redeemed us. We cannot save ourselves, but we can allow ourselves to be embraced by the saving grace of personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, our hope and salvation.

20. The day following his election, Pope Leo addressed the College of Cardinals. Just prior to his written remarks in Italian, he spoke extemporaneously, acknowledging that they had imposed upon him a cross and a blessing. In many ways, crosses and blessings go hand in hand. It is rather impossible to carry our crosses without the grace of blessings. Without crosses, we often fail to appreciate or count our blessings. Situating this reflection within the context of this Jubilee Year of Hope, let us consider the words of Pope Leo to the Knights of Columbus during a recent conference. In his address, emphasizing that the Church herself is a sign of hope, he exhorted all its members to be “tangible signs of hope.” In our baptismal call to holiness and mission, may we never shy away from our crosses nor take for granted our blessings in cultivating a lasting culture of peace and unity grounded in hope.

21. May the unity and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ sustain us always, and may the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, guide us on our journey as missionary disciples and pilgrims of hope.

Given at the Archdiocesan Catholic Center in Indianapolis on the Memorial of St. Augustine of Hippo, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, the 28th of August, 2025.

+ *Charles C. Thompson*

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis



Pope Leo XIV shares a laugh with guests assisted by the Albano diocesan Caritas agency during a luncheon at the Borgo Laudato Si’ in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, on Aug. 17. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Paz y Unidad

REFLEXIÓN PASTORAL

1. En su obra maestra, *Ciudad de Dios*, san Agustín escribió: “La paz de la ciudad celeste es la sociedad perfectamente ordenada y perfectamente armoniosa en el gozar de Dios y en el mutuo gozo en Dios. La paz de todas las cosas es la tranquilidad del orden. Y el orden es la distribución de los seres iguales y diversos, asignándole a cada uno su lugar”. [Libro XIX, Capítulo 13]

2. Cuando el papa León XIV apareció por primera vez en la *loggia* (balcón) de la Basílica de San Pedro en la tarde del 8 de mayo de 2025, nuestro recién elegido Santo Padre habló de *paz* y *unidad* e hizo un llamado para que acogiéramos ambas en Jesucristo. Durante la homilía de su misa inaugural como sucesor de san Pedro, el papa León mencionó varias veces el llamado a la unidad de la Iglesia, un fuerte indicio de que esta sería una prioridad en su pontificado. La búsqueda de la paz y el llamamiento a la unidad son principios básicos de todas las religiones. No obstante, todas están sujetas a la tergiversación por parte de aquellos que cometen actos de violencia e injusticia con el fin de hacer el mal. A menudo se dice que lo demoníaco divide, pero lo que nos une es el Espíritu.

3. Está claro que tanto los de la llamada “derecha radical” como los de la llamada “izquierda radical” son capaces de manipular la religión de formas que traicionan la auténtica fe. Sus fines son bastante más egoístas y moralistas (ideológicos) que obras santas guiadas por la voluntad divina. Antes de buscar formas de alcanzar la paz y la unidad de una manera efectiva y eficaz en sitios lejanos, como el conflicto en el Medio Oriente o en Europa Occidental, o incluso antes de intentar lidiar con las repercusiones de la polarización que afecta a tantos miembros de nuestras propias comunidades locales, cada uno debe mirar hacia su interior para discernir si la paz y la unidad verdaderas se encuentran arraigadas en su propio corazón, mente y alma. Y por supuesto, no se debe confundir la unidad con la “uniformidad”.

4. Debemos preguntarnos: ¿Con qué condiciones acogemos la paz y la unidad auténticas? ¿Qué criterios permitimos o aplicamos para guiar o regir la mente y la voluntad? Para los católicos, nuestro llamado a acoger la paz y la unidad se basa en las Sagradas Escrituras y la Tradición (el Depósito de la Fe). Las enseñanzas de la Iglesia (en su totalidad, no fragmentada para adaptarla a una narrativa o conveniencia particular) y el discernimiento piadoso de la voluntad de Dios se revelan más fácilmente en Jesucristo, la Palabra de Dios encarnada.

5. La guerra rara vez resuelve los conflictos; recurrir a las armas siempre deja una cicatriz en la humanidad y son los pobres, los vulnerables y los inocentes quienes sufren las consecuencias. El mundo conmemoró recientemente el 80.º aniversario del bombardeo atómico de Hiroshima y Nagasaki en Japón. Los efectos de esa devastación, como los de muchas guerras y destrucciones, hasta el día de hoy siguen teniendo repercusiones en las personas, familias, comunidades y naciones enteras. En relación con la amenaza de una guerra nuclear en nuestros días, el papa León XIV señaló: “En nuestra época de crecientes tensiones y conflictos mundiales, Hiroshima y Nagasaki se erigen como símbolos de la memoria que nos instan a rechazar la ilusión de una seguridad basada en la destrucción mutua asegurada. En lugar de ello, debemos forjar una ética global basada en la justicia, la fraternidad y el bien común. Así pues, rezo para que este aniversario sirva de invitación a la comunidad internacional para renovar su compromiso de perseguir una paz verdadera para toda nuestra familia humana, una paz sin armas y desarmada” (6 de agosto de 2025, post en X). En su mensaje del Ángelus del domingo 10 de agosto de 2025, exhortando al tipo de “vigilancia que nos pide Jesús”, el Santo Padre imploró: “Hermanas y hermanos, confiemos a María este deseo y este compromiso. Que ella, la Estrella de la mañana, nos ayude a ser, en un mundo marcado por tantas divisiones, “centinelas” de la misericordia y de la paz”.

6. Todos los cristianos deben comprender la verdadera naturaleza de la Iglesia y su misión. La Iglesia, constituida por Jesús, es el Pueblo de Dios y el Cuerpo de Cristo. Más allá de toda institución o edificio, la Iglesia es la comunidad de creyentes que es misionera por su propia naturaleza. La misión de la Iglesia, instituida por Jesús, es la proclamación de la Buena Nueva con un enfoque en hacer discípulos misioneros a personas de todas las naciones, sin excepción. En el corazón tanto de la Iglesia como de la misión, están la evangelización y la catequesis centradas en Cristo, en cooperación con el Espíritu Santo, para hacer realidad el Reino de Dios, que es la esencia misma de la verdadera paz y de la auténtica unidad. Para ello, el encuentro personal con Jesús resulta esencial en la vida espiritual de todo cristiano bautizado. Ningún principio de la fe cristiana o de las creencias católicas tendrá sentido si no es a través del encuentro con la persona de Jesucristo.

7. En los últimos años, la Iglesia se ha centrado mucho en el concepto de “sinodalidad”: cultivar el arte del diálogo, la escucha, la comprensión, el acompañamiento, el discernimiento y el respeto mutuo, con el Espíritu Santo como protagonista. Sin embargo, cada persona solo puede contribuir a la mesa, conversación o proceso, lo que ha cultivado en su propio ser. La auténtica paz implica algo más que la mera ausencia de guerra, y la auténtica unidad debe ser algo más que simple palabrería. Para que haya paz y unidad genuinas, debemos superar el miedo, la desconfianza, el egocentrismo, la intimidación, la búsqueda de chivos expiatorios y el orgullo, y reconocernos unos a otros como miembros de la familia humana, como hermanas y hermanos a los que abrazar en lugar de evitar o excluir como extraños o enemigos.

8. Por ejemplo, no hay que desconfiar ni temer a los inmigrantes y refugiados, sino acogerlos y darles la bienvenida. Es cierto que toda nación tiene el derecho y la responsabilidad de proteger a su población y asegurar sus fronteras frente a aquellos que promueven la violencia, el tráfico de seres humanos, las bandas criminales, el narcotráfico, el terrorismo y otras formas de actividad delictiva. Pero para trabajar en favor de una paz verdadera y una unidad auténtica, debemos superar el veneno y la

grandilocuencia cada vez mayores de la polarización y el partidismo para encontrar el equilibrio adecuado entre proteger a los inocentes e impedir que los delincuentes hagan daño. Así pues, debemos evitar la simplificación excesiva de dos extremos: por un lado, echar en un mismo saco a hombres, mujeres y niños, independientemente de su estatus o de las razones por las que emigraron de sus países de origen. Por otro lado, no debemos permitir la apertura de las fronteras sin la supervisión y los recursos adecuados. Para asegurarnos de no perder la conciencia de la dignidad inherente de las personas y de lo sagrado de la vida, ya sea en el trato con los inmigrantes, refugiados, las autoridades o quienes viven en las fronteras, debemos tener presentes dos principios clave de la doctrina social católica. En primer lugar, la “solidaridad”, que puede definirse como la conciencia de los intereses, objetivos, normas y similitudes que compartimos, y en segundo lugar, la justicia templada con la dulzura de la misericordia.

9. Como señaló más de una vez el difunto papa Francisco, somos más creíbles cuando somos más coherentes. El propósito de la sinodalidad es ayudarnos a mejorar “corresponsablemente” nuestro testimonio de credibilidad y coherencia, centrándonos en la comunidad, la misión y la participación. El papa León XIV ya ha indicado que la fase de aplicación del proceso sinodal se desarrollará según lo previsto. ¡Qué mejor manera para nosotros como Iglesia, Pueblo de Dios, de superar esas diferencias anquilosadas que mediante la oración centrada en Cristo, el diálogo, la confianza, el respeto mutuo y el discernimiento del Espíritu Santo, todo ello afianzado en las Escrituras, los Sacramentos, el Servicio y la Tradición! Si ese testimonio no procede de nosotros, los católicos, ¿dónde puede esperar el mundo experimentar una paz y una unidad auténticas para superar las guerras, los prejuicios, los genocidios y las múltiples formas de injusticia que asolan a la humanidad? Como se refleja en los principios de la doctrina social católica de la Iglesia desde hace mucho tiempo, la solidaridad es esencial para establecer una paz verdadera y mantener una unidad duradera. Para los católicos, esta solidaridad está arraigada en nuestra relación con Dios y con el prójimo, centrada en Cristo.

Ver REFLEXIÓN, página 10



El Papa León XIV saluda al arzobispo mayor Sviatoslav Shevchuk de Kiev-Halych, jefe de la Iglesia Católica Griega Ucraniana, en la biblioteca del Palacio Apostólico en el Vaticano el 15 de mayo de 2025. (Foto CNS/Vatican Media)

REFLEXIÓN

continúa de la página 9

10. El papa León XIV ha advertido de los peligros asociados a la inteligencia artificial (IA), especialmente en relación con las noticias falsas, el engaño, la manipulación y otras intenciones poco éticas. ¿Hasta qué punto podría contribuir esto a la incapacidad de comprender, considerar y debatir auténticamente los asuntos de una forma humana básica? ¿De qué manera podría influir en nuestra interpretación de todo lo relacionado con el cuidado efectivo de la creación, la protección de los no nacidos y de las mujeres, la lucha contra el racismo, la erradicación de las causas de la pobreza, el tratamiento adecuado de la difícil situación de los migrantes y refugiados, la defensa de la dignidad del matrimonio y la familia, y la aceptación del carácter sagrado de toda vida? La polarización es un mal que debemos superar si queremos alcanzar la paz y la unidad verdaderas como seres humanos que compartimos el mismo hogar, el planeta Tierra.

11. El cuidado de la creación exige que superemos el egocentrismo y rechacemos todo atisbo de la cultura del “descarte”. Debemos esforzarnos por acoger el medio ambiente y todas las criaturas con un profundo sentido de aprecio, asombro, respeto y fascinación. Toda vida es sagrada, como afirmó el papa Francisco en su Encíclica de 2015, *Laudato Si’* (Sobre el cuidado de la casa común): “Porque todas las criaturas están conectadas, cada una debe ser valorada con afecto y admiración, y todos los seres nos necesitamos unos a otros” [LS, 42]. A ninguna persona que pertenezca a las tradiciones de fe judía o cristiana se le debería escapar que la Torá y la Biblia comienzan con la historia de la creación, dejando claro cómo Dios confió a la humanidad el privilegio y la responsabilidad de su cuidado.

12. Porque toda vida es sagrada, debemos respetar siempre la vida y la dignidad humanas. Por eso trabajamos para poner fin a las prácticas inhumanas del aborto, la eutanasia y todos los casos de lo que el papa san Juan Pablo II llamó “la cultura de la muerte”. Incluso la pena capital, tolerada en el pasado como medida disuasoria contra los delitos violentos y como medio de proteger a la sociedad en general, debe ser rechazada. De conformidad con las enseñanzas del *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, “la pena de muerte es inadmisibles, porque atenta contra la inviolabilidad y la dignidad de la persona”. (CIC n.º 2267).

13. Debe prestarse atención al efecto degradante de la pena de muerte en la sociedad. La privación de la vida, incluso por parte del Estado, perpetúa una cultura de la muerte que penetra en el tejido mismo de la conciencia humana. ¿Cómo no van a verse afectadas por esta mícula de nuestro sistema penal las familias, tanto de las víctimas como de los autores de la violencia, así como las de los encargados de ejecutar la pena capital? Incluso en el corredor de la muerte, la dignidad inherente de la persona permanece. Basta pensar en las palabras de Jesús al ladrón que colgaba junto a él en la cruz y que pedía ser recordado: “Te aseguro que hoy estarás conmigo en el Paraíso”.

14. Una paz creíble y una unidad estable —basadas en los principios de acompañamiento, diálogo, dignidad, encuentro, respeto y solidaridad— exigen necesariamente la defensa de los derechos intrínsecos y la satisfacción de las necesidades humanas básicas. Hay ciertos derechos inalienables que deben respetarse, especialmente en lo que respecta a los pobres, los vulnerables y los marginados. Ninguna persona, familia o comunidad puede existir sin acceso a agua potable, alimentos nutritivos, vivienda adecuada, atención



Un atleta de Taekwondo de Corea libera una paloma después de actuar para el Papa Francisco durante su audiencia general en la Plaza de San Pedro en el Vaticano el 30 de mayo. (CNS/Max Rossi, Reuters)

médica y medios de vida dignos. No se trata de lujos ni de bienes negociables, sino de las necesidades esenciales de todo ser humano. Estos elementos básicos son imprescindibles para todas las personas, independientemente de su religión o etnia, ya sea en Gaza, Ucrania o cualquier otra región del mundo, incluidas las comunidades locales y los vecindarios. Lo mismo ocurre con los presos y los que han sido detenidos únicamente por su condición de inmigrantes o refugiados. Las detenciones indiscriminadas, la reclusión injusta y el trato inhumano son moralmente inaceptables.

15. Hay que prestar especial atención a los más jóvenes y a los ancianos, así como a quienes sufren discapacidades, enfermedades mentales, adicciones o abusos. Promover una cultura de la vida, fundamentada especialmente en una ética de vida coherente que da preferencia a los pobres, exige que defendamos a quienes no pueden defenderse por sí mismos. Toda vida tiene valor y sentido y ningún ser humano está fuera del alcance de la misericordia divina, del poder de Dios para salvar y redimir.

16. Los principios de la doctrina social católica también incluyen el compromiso de la Iglesia con la oración, la representación y la defensa del matrimonio y la familia, así como el derecho de los trabajadores y la dignidad del trabajo. Estos principios deben permear a todas las capas de la sociedad para poder mejorar la noción de la comunidad y el aprecio por pertenecer a una familia humana. El hogar, donde la familia constituye la primera escuela de aprendizaje, es el punto inicial de encuentro para el amor, el diálogo, la comprensión, el perdón, la resolución de conflictos y el respeto mutuo.

17. En su discurso a los participantes a la XVI reunión anual de la Red Internacional de Legisladores Católicos, el papa León XIV declaró: “El auténtico florecimiento humano proviene de lo que la Iglesia llama *desarrollo humano integral*, o el pleno desarrollo de una persona en todas las dimensiones: física, social, cultural, moral y espiritual. Esta visión de la persona humana está arraigada en la ley natural, el orden moral que Dios ha inscrito en el corazón humano, cuyas verdades más profundas son iluminadas por el Evangelio de Cristo. En este sentido, la auténtica prosperidad humana se manifiesta cuando las personas viven virtuosamente, cuando viven en comunidades saludables, beneficiándose no solo de lo que tienen, de lo que poseen, sino también de lo que son como hijos de Dios. Garantiza la libertad de buscar la verdad, de adorar a Dios y de crear una familia en paz. También incluye una armonía con la creación y un sentido de solidaridad a través de

las clases sociales y las naciones” (La Santa Sede, 23 de agosto de 2025).

18. El diálogo y el respeto mutuo son esenciales para establecer y mantener una paz y una unidad duraderas. Para ello es necesario dejar de lado egos, ideologías y agendas personales. Para los cristianos, esto significa que debemos centrarnos en Cristo. Obviamente, cuando se trata de política, economía y religión, no existe una fórmula única que sirva para todos. Sin embargo, incluso cuando existen desacuerdos, el arte de transigir permite que nos escuchemos y tratemos de entendernos. En última instancia, no deberíamos esforzarnos por ganar a toda costa, sino por comprender mejor la belleza, la verdad y la bondad sagradas que hay en nosotros, entre nosotros y a nuestro alrededor. Como señaló el difunto papa Benedicto XVI, la tarea del discipulado cristiano no consiste tanto en poseer la verdad como en dejarse poseer por ella. Asimismo, nos recordó que la verdad es una persona: Jesucristo es el camino, la verdad y la vida.

19. Por encima de todo está la necesidad de la oración, tanto personal como en comunidad. Debemos rezar sin cesar, entregándonos a Dios antes que a egos, ideologías o agendas personales. La consecución de una paz y una unidad auténticas y duraderas depende de nuestra capacidad y voluntad de abrazar y cultivar la virtud de la humildad. Solo al hacernos humildes —como descubrió y proclamó san Agustín de Hipona—, nuestro corazón encuentra descanso en la comunión con Aquel que nos creó, nos salvó y nos redimió. No podemos salvarnos a nosotros mismos, pero podemos dejarnos abrazar por la gracia salvadora del encuentro personal con la persona de Jesucristo, nuestra esperanza y salvación.

20. Al día siguiente de su elección, el papa León se dirigió al Colegio Cardenalicio. Justo antes de su intervención escrita en italiano, habló extemporáneamente, reconociendo que le habían impuesto una cruz y una bendición. En muchos sentidos, las cruces y las bendiciones van de la mano. Es prácticamente imposible cargar con cruces sin la gracia de las bendiciones. Sin cruces, a menudo no apreciamos ni contamos nuestras bendiciones. Situando esta reflexión en el contexto de este Año Jubilar de la Esperanza, consideremos las palabras del papa León a los Caballeros de Colón durante una conferencia reciente. En su discurso, subrayando que la Iglesia misma es signo de esperanza, exhortó a todos sus miembros a ser “signos tangibles de esperanza”. Que en nuestro llamado bautismal a la santidad y a la misión, nunca reneguemos de nuestras cruces ni demos por sentadas nuestras bendiciones para promover una cultura duradera de paz y unidad basada en la esperanza.

21. Que la unidad y la paz de nuestro Señor Jesucristo nos sostengan siempre, y que la intercesión de la Santísima Virgen María, Reina de la Paz, nos guíe en nuestro camino como discípulos misioneros y peregrinos de esperanza.

Dado en el Centro Católico de la Arquidiócesis de Indianápolis en el Memorial de San Agustín de Hipona, obispo y doctor de la iglesia, el 28 de agosto de 2025.

+ Charles C. Thompson

Reverendísimo Charles C. Thompson
Arzobispo de Indianápolis



Después de una Misa en Memoria de la Paz en la Catedral de Urakami en Nagasaki, Japón, el 9 de agosto, una hermana religiosa y otras personas encienden antorchas durante una marcha por la paz al Parque Hipocentro en conmemoración del 80º aniversario del bombardeo atómico estadounidense de Nagasaki. (OSV News photo/Issei Kato, Reuters)

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Pier Giorgio Frassati shows holiness can be achieved in ordinary life

By David Dry

(OSV News)—Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati died almost 100 years ago, but he would have fit in perfectly today with many Catholics’ groups of friends.

He was born in Turin, Italy, in 1901, among the political upheavals, war and social strife of the opening years of the 20th century. Against this challenging backdrop, Pier Giorgio exemplified a life of devout faith, strong friendships, social activism and rugged adventure.

Frassati was a bro. He climbed mountains, threw parties, experienced heartbreak and punched fascists.

Frassati was also holy. He had a deep interior life of prayer, an intense devotion to the Eucharist and a selfless heart for serving the poor in Turin. He is scheduled to be canonized on Sept. 7, alongside a fellow young Italian, Blessed Carlo Acutis.

Too often, we see the different aspects of Pier Giorgio’s life as incompatible. Sometimes, we might think it’s impossible to have an exciting life of adventure with friends if we want to be prayerful and serve the poor. Other times, we compartmentalize these activities, living one life on Saturday night and an entirely different one on Sunday morning.

Pier Giorgio Frassati’s life challenges us to think differently. His ability to weave his faith into every aspect of his life, from the peaks he climbed with friends to the gutters he descended to in service to the poor, illustrates a seamless integration of faith and ordinary life.

At Pier Giorgio’s beatification in 1990, St. John Paul II said, “The secret of his apostolic zeal and holiness is to be sought in the ascetical and spiritual journey which he traveled; in prayer, in persevering adoration, even at night, of the Blessed Sacrament, in his thirst for the Word of God, which he sought in biblical texts; in the peaceful acceptance of life’s difficulties, in family life as well; in chastity lived as a cheerful, uncompromising discipline; in his daily love of silence and life’s ‘ordinariness.’ ”

The most iconic photos of Pier Giorgio are of him smoking a pipe on top of a mountain. He felt fully alive in such settings, often leading groups of friends on climbing expeditions through the Alps, viewing these adventures as pilgrimages in addition to physical challenges.

Before leaving for one of these adventures, Pier Giorgio would spend the early hours of the morning in eucharistic adoration. Then, as they ascended a mountain, he would lead his friends in praying the rosary, transforming the mountain paths into spiritual avenues leading to the heavens. His motto “*Verso l’alto*” (“To the heights”) became synonymous with his approach to life. It encapsulated Pier Giorgio’s desire to strive for spiritual peaks as he conquered physical ones.

He was also known for his immense generosity. He would often give his bus money away to someone in need, opting instead to run home across the city to make it back in time for family dinner. One winter, in an act of profound selflessness, he gave his shoes to a homeless man, walking home barefoot through the cold streets of Turin.

His acts of kindness extended beyond mere charity. They were expressions of his profound faith, as he viewed service to the less fortunate in his community as both a duty and a privilege. He often refused to join his family on vacation, remarking, “If everybody leaves Turin, who will take care of the poor?”

In a time of growing political turmoil and the rise of fascism and anti-Catholic persecution in Italy,

Pier Giorgio’s faith was his moral compass. He was deeply involved in Catholic youth groups and anti-fascist movements, such as the Catholic Student Foundation and Catholic Action. These groups not only fostered his spiritual growth, but also became platforms for his anti-fascist activism. He did not shy away from confrontations when it came to defending his beliefs.

Pier Giorgio’s participation in pro-Catholic and anti-fascist protests sometimes led to physical altercations and even his arrest, underscoring his commitment to his faith and his courage in the face of oppression.

In a letter to the Catholic youth of Pollone, Italy, Pier Giorgio expressed his unwavering faith and encouraged perseverance when surrounded by adversity: “The times which we are going through are difficult, because persecution against the Church rages as cruelly as ever. But you fearless and good young people, do not be afraid because of this small problem. Bear in mind the fact that the Church is a divine institution that cannot end and will endure until the end of the world, and ‘the gates of hell will not prevail against her.’ ”

Pier Giorgio’s life is a testament to the fact that we can live an “ordinary” Catholic life yet have a profound impact. His integration of faith, charity and activism offers a powerful blueprint for our lives. He shows us that living a holy life requires a steadfast dedication to the principles of the Gospel and a willingness to act on behalf of those principles, even in the face of significant personal risk.

Today, as we navigate our complex world, Pier Giorgio’s life invites us to reflect on how we, too, can embody such courage and generosity. Whether through small acts of kindness within our community or broader activism for social justice, we are called to carry forward the torch of faith and service that Pier Giorgio held so high.

Pier Giorgio’s devotion to the Eucharist was the central aspect of his spiritual life, deeply influencing his actions and approach to service. He understood the Eucharist as the vital source of spiritual strength and communion with Christ.

His days began with Mass, where he drew the courage and fortitude to face the challenges of his active life devoted to social justice and charity. Attending daily Mass was, for him, a wellspring of divine grace, reinforcing his resolve to live out the Gospel’s call to love and serve his community.

In a letter to fellow young Catholics, he wrote: “I urge you with all the strength of my soul to approach the eucharistic table as often as possible. Feed on this bread of the angels from which you will draw the strength to fight inner struggles, the struggles against passions and against all adversities, because Jesus Christ has promised to those who feed themselves with the most holy Eucharist, eternal life and the necessary graces to obtain it.”

Pier Giorgio’s eucharistic devotion extended beyond the Mass. He spent countless hours, often entire nights, in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Such deep, sustained periods of prayer are more commonly associated with the cloistered lives of monks and nuns, but



Italian Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a struggling student who excelled in mountain climbing, is seen in an undated photo. He had complete faith in God and persevered through college, dedicating himself to helping the poor and supporting Church social teaching. He died at age 24 and was beatified by St. John Paul II in 1990. The Vatican announced on June 13 that the canonization ceremony for Blessed Frassati would take place on Sept. 7 and include Blessed Carlo Acutis. (CNS file photo)

Pier Giorgio shows us how to seamlessly integrate this spiritual practice into the ordinary life of a lay person.

His devotion to daily Mass and frequent adoration highlights how profound and personal receiving and adoring Christ in the Eucharist was for him. Pier Giorgio’s life shows us that intense spiritual devotion and a vibrant secular life are not mutually exclusive.

It’s easy to be intimidated by the lives of great saints of our tradition. The profound intellect of St. Thomas Aquinas, the deep humility of St. Francis of Assisi, and the radical selflessness of St. Teresa of Calcutta can make us question our own capacity for sainthood. It seems a relief to discover a man who was both wholly ordinary and remarkably holy. He seemed to say to us, “If I can be a saint, why not you?”

Pier Giorgio’s example shows us that sanctity doesn’t require extraordinary circumstances. Most of us navigate the demands of 9-to-5 jobs and daily chores. Yet these routines are not barriers to holiness but the very pathway to it. Pier Giorgio found divine joy and holiness in the ordinariness of life, climbing mountains, spending time with friends and serving those in need.

As we examine our own lives, it’s important to remember that being an “ordinary” Catholic does not mean settling for mediocrity. Each one of us is called to be a saint! Pier Giorgio seamlessly wove his joy for life with deep faith and a dedicated prayer life, leading by example that to be holy is to be fully alive! His life is a beacon for our own journeys, demonstrating that integrating our spiritual life with ordinary life is not only possible but necessary.

Inspired by Pier Giorgio Frassati’s upcoming canonization, let us cultivate a friendship with him and ask for his intercession to help us boldly answer the call to holiness in our everyday lives.

Together, let’s raise a glass and toast to Pier Giorgio Frassati, our soon-to-be patron saint of ordinary Catholics.

(David Dry, a Los Angeles native living in Rome, converted to Catholicism in 2016.) †



Jerry Byrd, left, and Benjamin Syberg, then archdiocesan seminarians (now priests), kneel in prayer on July 15, 2008, before the remains of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a patron saint of young adults, at St. Mary Cathedral in Sydney during World Youth Day held that year in the Australian city. (Submitted photo by Katie Berger)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Grandma’s memories of music, like mercy, streaming down the river

It began as a low hum on the horizon, barely perceptible. Then a pulsing rhythm rose from the river—the brass and beat of a live band drifting through the humid summer air. The Capitol was coming.



The steamboat curved along the Mississippi like a grand dame entering a ballroom—confident, luminous, utterly composed. Lights blinked along her decks. A calliope sang out, bold and cheerful, steam puffing into twilight. She rounded the bend at Pickerel Lake and made her way to downtown St. Paul, Minn., her paddle wheel churning a white froth behind her.

She was a showpiece of her time—multi-tiered, whitewashed, trimmed with gingerbread woodwork and glowing lanterns. At 280 feet long, she was the largest sternwheel passenger steamer on the mighty Mississippi—a floating ballroom where couples danced and romanced.

Fate Marable led his band through lively two-steps and bluesy waltzes. Songs like “Frankie and Johnny” and “When the Saints Go Marching In” filled the air. A young trumpeter named Louis Armstrong blasted his horn toward the river.

Up on the bluffs, porches stirred to life. Screen doors creaked open. Neighbors leaned against railings, drawn to the music that swelled and swung—jazzy, syncopated, alive. Trombone. Saxophone. Clarinet. The sound carried, echoing off the limestone and lilacs. It wasn’t just background. It was invitation.

You could feel the music in your chest. It stirred the river. It stirred something else, too.

Those who heard it from above would never forget it—the surprise of music rising from the water, unexpected and unearned. The Capitol began its circuit in the 1920s and continued into the 1930s, the height of the Great Depression, reminding riverside residents that some gifts are free, how the simplest pleasures are often the sweetest.

One of those residents was Mary Ellen Flynn, a redheaded girl in St. Paul—my grandma. The Great Depression had forced her family to relocate, shuttering their general store and leaving behind their beloved small-town community in Beardsley, Minn., to move into her grandparents’ house in St. Paul. It was a time of loss, uncertainty and role reversals. Mary Ellen’s mom found a job before her dad did. Grandma remembers being home with him, doing the dishes side by side before their evening rosary.

There, on the bluffs of the Mississippi, Mary Ellen

heard The Capitol and felt God’s nearness—music, like mercy, streaming down the river. She didn’t know then that music would soothe and sustain her for many decades to come.

Soon she would land on a piano and discover an ability to play songs by ear. The skill would serve her the rest of her life—as a kindergarten teacher, as a mother of six, as a Girl Scout troop leader, as a widow fending off loneliness, as a volunteer, as a neighbor, as a 95-year-old great-grandmother today.

Her upright Kohler & Campbell piano anchors our extended family, one point in the living-room triangle it forms with the fireplace and picture window. We gather around it for holidays and birthdays, Grandma perched on the piano bench, plucking out spirited marches and patriotic hymns, Christmas carols and “Peter Cottontail.”

Like her Catholic faith, music has always been a balm. “Throughout my long life,” Grandma said, “I have been guided and protected by an amazing God, who has loved and understood and forgiven me every step of my journey.”

God reached her wherever she was, however he could—in the classroom, in the kitchen, even on the river, curving around the bend and pulsing in her heart.

(Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.) †

Amid the Fray/Greg Erlandson

Catholic social teaching and a teachable moment to address social wrongs

In 1965, Catholic priests and nuns joined the historic march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., seeking voting rights for African Americans in the face of violent local hostility.



Catholics risked prison and physical harm for their actions, but it was a time of moral leadership. More than that, it was a teachable moment that impacted a generation of future Church leaders and became a catalyst for a broader awareness of Catholic social teaching.

In 2025, many believe we are facing a similar moral challenge. Immigrant communities and the rural

and urban poor are suffering from deportation raids and critical budget cuts. Church leaders are speaking out more forcefully and taking public action that is attracting significant media attention.

In Los Angeles, an epicenter of anti-immigrant actions, Archbishop José H. Gomez is not simply expressing his concern for the large immigrant communities in his archdiocese. He is marshalling business leaders to create a fund to help families that have gone into hiding to avoid seizure or who have already lost a family wage-earner in immigration raids and are afraid even to go to the grocery store.

“This program will provide direct support to families who are suffering financial hardships because of the current climate of uncertainty and fear,” Archbishop Gomez said.

In Detroit, Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger garnered media attention by joining Catholic laity and religious leaders from a variety of denominations on a procession to Detroit’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Field Office.

The group attempted “to deliver a letter asking the agency to review immigration enforcement policies and practices that have created fear in the immigrant community,” the *Detroit Catholic* reported.

Perhaps most striking was Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski with members

of his motorcycle posse, Knights for Christ. The bikers prayed the rosary outside Florida’s so-called Alligator Alcatraz where detainees are being kept under onerous conditions. At the time, the archbishop said no Catholic priest had been given access to say Mass for those Catholics inside.

I ended a recent column with a statement by Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso. Talking about the growing effort by bishops to critique both deportation and budget decisions by the administration, he said that “it’s a real challenge to reach even Catholics” about why they are opposed. “We as a Church unfortunately don’t have the kind of megaphone that the administration does.”

Taking public steps to address social wrongs is one way to seize the megaphone. Following two immigration raids on Church property, Bishop Alberto Rojas of San Bernardino, Calif., declared that parishioners in his diocese who feared deportation were dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. His action attracted international news coverage.

The continuing challenge, however, is how to educate adult Catholics about Catholic social teaching and its applicability to the present crisis. A bishop’s witness in the public square is a start. But the challenge Bishop Seitz and his peers face is not just getting the attention of Catholics with a headline, but explaining what the Church is saying about care for the migrant and the refugee, the poor and the homeless. For the examples to resonate, for the seeds to take root, the soil must be prepared. The Church’s great treasure, its social teaching, needs to be proclaimed.

The bishops, our teachers, have a teachable moment right now, just as there was in 1965. What they need is a megaphone that reaches the pews, explaining, inspiring, evangelizing. It will take not just bold public witness, but a focused effort by homilists, catechists and communications staff. Call it a Good Samaritan Strategy, teaching us to see Christ in the faces of those most in need of our help.

(Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.) †

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Guest Column/Richard Etienne

Are you a contemplative? Reflecting on our individual call to discipleship

Are you a contemplative? Do you find peace in quiet or in soft instrumental music? Does silent prayer time renew you? Have you put any effort into studying the art of mindfulness?



If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you may be a contemplative. Let’s take those questions one at a time.

Do you find peace in being still or does silence actually create terrible anxiety in you? For those of us who are able to get glimpses of it, there is often a wonderful peace that comes with finding a moment of stillness in an otherwise busy existence.

I find myself breathing slower and enjoying almost any calm or quiet period when it becomes available.

Does silent prayer renew you or have you always been deterred by the many distractions all around whenever you attempt to create stillness? Prayer doesn’t always have to include an endless—almost “stream of consciousness”—procession of words. Prayer can be quite renewing when it

involves just sitting and “being” with God.

Listening. I use the image of being up on a mountain with Jesus in a quiet clearing when he has left the vast crowds and gone to be alone (except for me with him.) I see us sitting against a boulder and just breathing.

Next, have you put any effort into studying the art of mindfulness or are you happier when there is some radio or television turned on just for background noise in your daily routine?

I have found that it takes practice to be “still” and have no other agenda but to breath in and out. For me, it is like hitting the re-set on an electrical outlet or circuit breaker that has been temporarily tripped.

I have found that it takes practice to be “still” and have no other agenda but to breath in and out. For me, it is like hitting the re-set on an electrical outlet or circuit breaker that has been temporarily tripped.

My heart rate and breathing slow. I can sometimes tap into a veritable reservoir of calm. And I have found that a person must work at finding silence in the ever-moving modern world.

There are so many bells and whistles that are constantly calling us to tune in, download or engage in a necessary, urgent or amazing activity.

Is it any wonder that even in first-century Palestine Jesus had to take time to remove himself from the crowds to refocus on the next step in his mission, which often required a short journey to some remote location to achieve?

Can any person today expect to approach prayer—and life—any differently?

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

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 7, 2025

- Wisdom 9:13-18b
- Philemon 9-10, 12-17
- Luke 14:25-33

The Book of Wisdom provides this weekend’s Mass with its first reading.

According to scholars, this book was written in Alexandria, Egypt, by a Jew who had emigrated from the Holy Land, or whose ancestors had come from the Holy Land. It was originally composed in Greek. Since it was written outside the Holy Land and

not in Hebrew, orthodox Jews have never accepted it as authentic Scripture. The Church, however, long has revered it as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

As is much of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament—and indeed so much of the Book of Wisdom itself—this weekend’s reading is a series of admonitions and comments. It insists that the deepest and best human logic, or wisdom, reflects what God spoke through Moses and the prophets.

The reading simply states the obvious. Much of life cannot be predicted beforehand nor fully understood. Humans are limited. God is all-wise. The wonder is that God has guided us by speaking to us through representatives such as Moses and the prophets.

For its second reading, the Church gives us a passage from St. Paul’s Epistle to Philemon. Only rarely is this epistle the source of a reading in the liturgy. A possible reason for this is that Philemon is so short. In fact, it is the shortest volume in the New Testament, with only one chapter made up of only 25 verses.

The story is dramatic. Paul writes to Philemon, whose slave, Onesimus, escaped from Philemon’s custody and went to be with Paul. Now, in this letter, Paul announces that he is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, but Paul counsels Philemon to receive this runaway slave as a brother in Christ.

Paul tells Philemon that surely no punishment should await Onesimus. (Running away from slavery was a very serious crime in Roman law at the time.)

Beyond the particulars, several lessons strongly appear. Paul urges Philemon to

treat Onesimus as a brother based on the Christian belief that all humans are equal in dignity, since they are all created by God in his image and likeness and are redeemed by Christ.

As a consequence, every disciple must live according to this principle of loving all others.

St. Luke’s Gospel supplies the last reading. The Gospel already has made clear that true discipleship builds upon a deeply personal choice to follow the Lord. However, enabling a disciple to express this choice and to abide by it requires not just determination but God’s strength and insight.

The Gospel bluntly notes that many obstacles may stand between a disciple’s initial intention to follow Christ and living as a disciple.

When the Gospel of Luke was written, Christianity, an infant and frankly an insignificant religion in the Roman Empire, was struggling to survive in a world of cultural opposition to Christian values and even under harsh persecution dictated by law.

A tradition, and hardly farfetched when considering the situation, is that Christians had to face much pressure from their friends and loved ones to forsake the Gospel. Thus, the Evangelist here recalls that Jesus said a true disciple should turn away even from father and mother, brother or sister, if these close relatives urged abandoning Christ.

It was hard advice, but still relevant. Christians today should anticipate opposition and prepare themselves for it.

Reflection

The Gospel sets the stage. Living the Christian life is difficult. Christians must withstand much if they are committed.

While pressures may come from the outside, disciples within themselves are also tempted to supplant God’s teaching with their own human judgments.

By standing firmly against all pressures, a disciple stays the course. It requires determination and the help of God’s grace. A disciple first must admit personal inadequacy and humbly ask for strength and wisdom from God. Blessedly, if earnestly sought, this gift of strength and wisdom will come. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 8

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Micah 5:1-4a
or *Romans 8:28-30*
Psalm 13:6abc
Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23
or *Matthew 1:18-23*

Psalm 150:1b-6
Luke 6:27-38

Friday, September 12

The Most Holy Name of Mary
1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14
Psalm 16:1b-2a, 5, 7-8, 11
Luke 6:39-42

Saturday, September 13

St. John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 Timothy 1:15-17
Psalm 113:1b-7
Luke 6:43-49

Sunday, September 14

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Numbers 21:4b-9
Psalm 78:1b-2, 34-38
Philippians 2:6-11
John 3:13-17

Tuesday, September 9

St. Peter Claver, priest
Colossians 2:6-15
Psalm 145:1b-2, 8-11
Luke 6:12-19

Wednesday, September 10

Colossians 3:1-11
Psalm 145:2-3, 10-13b
Luke 6:20-26

Thursday, September 11

Colossians 3:12-17

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Parishes charging fee to livestream a funeral Mass is not the sin of simony

Q I’m retired and I volunteer with my parish to do the technical stuff to livestream some of the parish’s Masses



online. Sometimes I livestream funerals for people who have family members who can’t be there in person, and I’m happy to help people out that way. Recently, I heard that the parish wants to start charging a fee for having a funeral livestreamed. Isn’t that simony?

A The short answer is that—while we could perhaps have a different discussion on the pastoral appropriateness of charging for a funeral livestream in a given local parish context—no, this is not technically simony.

For reference, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines “simony” as “the buying or selling of spiritual things” (#2121). Paragraph 2118 of the catechism explicitly identifies simony as a sin against the First Commandment.

Simony gets its name from an incident recounted in the Acts of the Apostles 8:9-25. We read that there

was a man named Simon who “used to practice magic” (i.e., the dark arts of the occult) and who thus “astounded the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great” (Acts 8:9). But after encountering the preaching and witness of the Apostles “even Simon himself believed and, after being baptized [...] when he saw the signs and mighty deeds that were occurring, he was astounded” (Acts 8:13).

Although Simon had seemingly embraced the Gospel, he did not experience a full conversion of heart and

was still in his old mindset regarding the supernatural. Thinking that spiritual things still worked as a quid pro quo system: “When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands, he offered them money. ‘Give me this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay my hands may receive the holy Spirit’ ” (Acts 8:18-19).

Simon was promptly put in his place by St. Peter, who rebuked him: “May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money” (Acts 8:20).

On a concrete level today, “simony” as a canonical crime can cover several different things. For instance, canon 1380 of the *Code of Canon Law* refers to buying or selling sacraments, telling us that “a person who through simony celebrates or receives a sacrament is to be punished with an interdict [a prohibition on receiving the sacraments, similar to excommunication] or suspension [essentially, a cleric being forbidden from serving in that capacity]” among other possible penalties.

Simony can also include the buying or selling of an ecclesiastical office or particular “job” in the Church. A hypothetical example might be a priest trying to pay his bishop to appoint him to a bigger or more prestigious parish. But even if the bishop was swayed by the offer of cash, canon 149, 3 tells us that “the provision of an office made as a result of simony, is invalid by virtue of the law itself.”

Still, the Church does have material needs that arise in the course of her spiritual mission. And so, it is not simony to accept or request donations on the occasion of the celebration of the sacraments, as long as it is understood that such a donation is truly a freewill offering and not a condition for the sacrament’s administration.

It is also not simony to ask a person to cover the non-spiritual costs associated with a sacramental occasion, such as asking a bride and groom to pay the organist’s stipend if they want music at their wedding Mass.

In the scenario you mention, livestreaming is not an essential part of the funeral Mass, so it would not be simony to charge a fee for this. However, if the parish is not incurring notable costs for the use of the technology, and if you are willing to freely volunteer your time, I think it can make sense to offer this service as a free gift for grieving families.

(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

Come hold me,
for your arms
keep me free from all harm.

Come play with me,
for these legs of mine
need to unwind.

Come read to me,
for my mind is ready to take the plunge
to absorb the world like a sponge.

Come watch me,
not from afar
for you are my shining star.

Come teach me,
in the school of your love
that comes from above.

Come comfort me,
for I thought you were too young to get old
and too bold to fold.

Come pray with me,
though we are a world apart
you’ll forever be in my heart.

To My Nana & Papa

By Deacon James O’Connell



(Deacon James O’Connell serves at Our Lady of the Springs Parish in French Lick and Our Lord Jesus Christ the King Parish in Paoli. Photo: Delegates with Ireland’s Catholic Grandparents Association take part in the opening ceremony of the 50th International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin on June 10, 2012. In the United States, Grandparents’ Day is celebrated this year on Sept. 7.) (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

94-year-old calls 25 years serving in Senior Companion Program ‘a blessing’

By Natalie Hoefer

Alice Whitney began volunteering with the Senior Companion Program (SCP) after she retired, and she enjoyed helping and visiting with her assigned seniors. But after several years, she was still searching for a calling in her retired life.

“I wondered what I was supposed to do,” she says. “I kept looking and trying to figure it out.

“My kids kept telling me, ‘Mom, what you’re doing now [with SCP], that’s what you’re supposed to do. This is your call.’

“I prayed about it and thought about it. And then it came to me: I realized helping these people is what I really was supposed to do.”

Whitney, who will be 95 in November, was honored for 25 years of devotedly living out that call during a gathering for SCP volunteers at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Aug. 6.

She was joined by 14 family members at the gathering. Among them were her three children, as well as grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other extended family members.

Their love and pride for Whitney showed as a breakdown of her service was shared during the celebration: 300 months, 1,304 weeks, 9,130 days and nearly 27,000 hours serving 11 seniors (12 by Whitney’s count).

Those figures represent a quarter century of volunteering. But, as she shared with *The Criterion* in an interview, Whitney enjoyed helping others long before her time with SCP.

‘I have learned so much’

“When I think back over my life, yes, I have always been helping people,” says Whitney. “Even as a youngster, I was always trying to help somebody, doing something for somebody.”

After retiring as a supervisor in the transportation department of the former Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, “I didn’t have anything to do, and I was just bored,” she says.

A friend told Whitney of another friend who volunteered with the Senior Companion Program.

SCP, offered through the AmeriCorps Seniors branch of the AmeriCorps federal agency, is a peer-to-peer program for older adults. It links volunteers 55 and older with seniors who would benefit from a friendly visitor in order to remain in their homes. In Marion County, the program is sponsored by Catholic Charities Indianapolis.

“We just kind of help them, remind them to take their medicine, take them to the grocery,” says Whitney. “We talk to them, read to them, and we just be a companion for them, really.

“Some of my clients, we’d talk about the problems they had. Some of them, we sang and prayed and read the Bible.”

At the twice-monthly meetings, volunteers learn about issues and medical conditions seniors can encounter and how to address them.

“I have learned so much. They have offered us all the information that we really need to help our clients,” says Whitney, noting the information has been useful in her own life as she’s aged.

“And then we have fellowship together, and laugh and talk and eat, and just enjoy each other’s company.”

‘We were both on the floor laughing!’

Of all the SCP visits she’s had in the last 25 years, one stands out vividly in her memory.

The client was “a little old lady” who was wheelchair-bound, paralyzed from the waist down. Usually, her son cleaned and dressed her in the morning. But this day, he saved the light bathing for the nurse or doctor who were scheduled for separate visits by early afternoon.

Neither came.

“We’re not supposed to lift people,” says Whitney. “But she was all wet, just an awful mess. I felt so sorry for her and wanted to help her.”

The two decided Whitney would lift the woman to the edge of her bed, settle her in, and then clean her and change her into dry clothes.

It almost worked, she says—“if only I had just put her about two inches further on the bed.”

The paralyzed woman began to slide down. Whitney had no choice but to go with her, slowly guiding their descent until both women were on the floor.

“Then she started laughing,” Whitney says, becoming more animated. “Then I started laughing! And we were both on the floor laughing!”

After a call was made to alert one of the woman’s children of the need for someone to put the woman in her bed, “I washed her up right there on the floor,” says Whitney. “She was so happy to be clean and comfortable.



At a Senior Companion Program (SCP) volunteer gathering at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on Aug. 6, Joyce Beaven, senior services director for Catholic Charities Indianapolis, right, offers words of gratitude to Alice Whitney, left, 94, for her 25 years volunteering with SCP. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

assistance she gave kept her physically active, and the interactions fed her own social needs.

“I don’t know what I would have done without them,” says Whitney. “They inspired me. They helped me as much as I helped them, only in a different way—spiritually, mentally and physically.”

Still, there’s no question that Whitney had an impact on those she served, as well as on her fellow volunteers.

“She’s really good at forming close personal relationships,” says former local SCP program director Courtney Schmidt. “She has touched so many people’s lives, even fellow senior companions. They know they can go to her for advice or just if things are kind of getting hard.

“Miss Alice is really great at supporting others and listening, and she is full of empathy.”

Part of that empathy might come from Whitney’s own experience of aging.

“I’m becoming in need of having a companion myself,” the widow says with a chuckle. “Things that I needed to help my clients with, I’m beginning to need now.

“So, I really see how much it helps them, to do these little things for them. It really does.”

Her time as a senior companion might be drawing to a close. But in what seems to be typical Whitney fashion, she still wants to help others.

“I don’t want to just sit at home,” she says. “I’d like to still do something.”

In the meantime, Whitney is thankful for her experience with the Senior Companion Program.

“I really have enjoyed doing this, I’ve really had fun,” she says. “What a blessing it’s been to be a part of this.”

(For more information on becoming a Senior Companion Program volunteer or to receive help through the program, go to helpcreatehope.org/senior-companion-program or contact Joyce Beaven, Senior Services Director, at 317-236-1552 or jbeaven@archindy.org.) †



‘I don’t know what I would have done without them. They inspired me. They helped me as much as I helped them, only in a different way—spiritually, mentally and physically.’

—Alice Whitney reflecting on her time volunteering for the Senior Companion Program

Benedictine novice professes temporary vows at Saint Meinrad

Benedictine Novice Owen Meredith professed temporary vows of obedience, fidelity to the monastic way of life and stability as a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad on Aug. 6 during a Vespers liturgy in the monastery’s Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einseideln.

New Benedictine novice welcomed at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

In a brief ceremony on Aug. 5 at the entrance of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Keegan Porter was clothed as a Benedictine novice in the monastic community, beginning a year of formation including the study of *The Rule of St. Benedict* and monastic history.

Novice Keegan, 35, is a native of San Diego where he was a member of St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish. In 2014, he earned a bachelor’s degree

in social work at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Before joining the monastery, Novice Keegan worked in a variety of positions in the field of senior living and care home facilities.

As a novice, he will take a year off from formal studies and trades. The novitiate at Saint Meinrad is a time of prayer and learning intended to help the novice and the monastic community discern his possible vocation as a monk.

At the end of the novitiate year, a novice may be permitted to profess temporary vows of obedience, fidelity to the monastic way of life and stability in the community at Saint Meinrad. †

As is the custom at Saint Meinrad during the profession of temporary vows, Novice Owen took on a religious name. He is now Brother George.

Brother George, 35, is a native of Forest City, Ill., and was previously a member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Manito, Ill.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in 2014 in theater technology at Blackburn College in Carlinville, Ill., where he also minored in music and religious studies.

Prior to joining the monastery,

Brother George served as a handyman for the Hermits of St. Mary of Carmel in Houston, Minn. He was also previously a seminarian for the Diocese of Springfield, Ill., receiving priestly formation at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis.

Temporary vows at Saint Meinrad are ordinarily professed for a three-year period in which the monk and the monastic community continue to discern whether or not he is truly called to monastic life as a monk of Saint Meinrad. †



Br. George Meredith, O.S.B.

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*Comparison based on a study published by the Oxford Academic in June 2023 stating that the average primary care exam was approximately 21 minutes. Times vary based on services performed.

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