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Criterion

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Catechesis Supplement

Read stories about how our faith reminds us of reasons for hope in Christ, pages 9-12.

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New program would 'change the whole paradigm' for those released from prison

By Natalie Hoefer

Scrolling through his phone, Jamarson Fitzgerald shares shots of a good life: smiling with his three daughters, posing while on the job, a photo of a newspaper clipping from



Deacon John Cord

years ago when he made the Indianapolis All-City Boys High School Basketball Team.

But life has not always been good for Fitzgerald. From the time he was a teenager until recently, he was in and out of

prison for selling guns and drugs.

"Coming home to the same environment, ... it's easy to get back in that life" that leads to incarceration, he says.

Other factors affect recidivism, too—as Fitzgerald knows.

"One time I was released early," he recalls. "I didn't have any other clothes or shoes, no ID or Social Security card or birth certificate," which made finding a job a challenge. He started selling guns and drugs again and was soon back in prison.

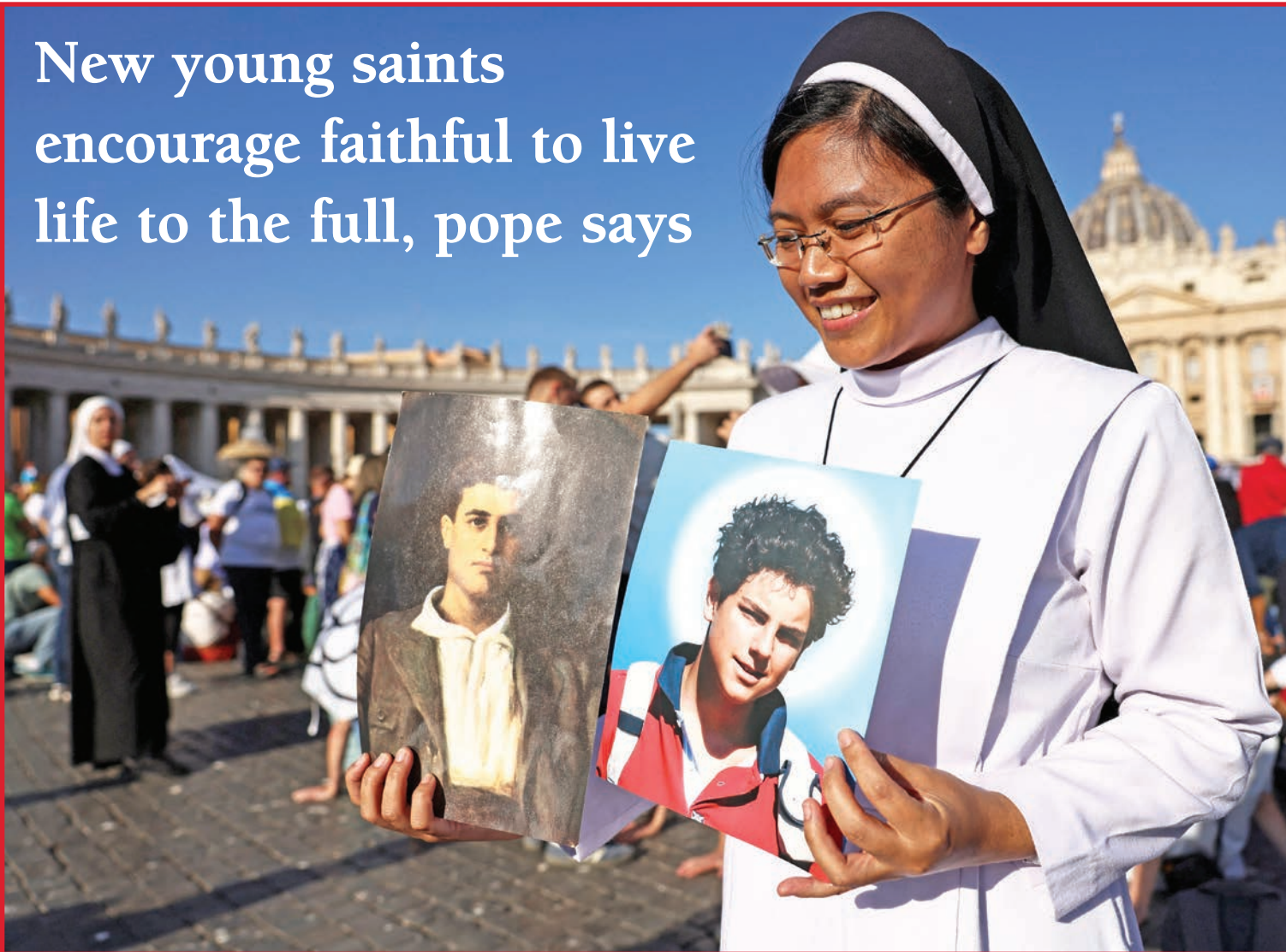
Another time, Fitzgerald received mental health counseling while incarcerated.

"It was helpful, but I didn't have any way to continue it after I got out, and my mindset changed," he says.

What if Fitzgerald had a mentor to meet with six months before release? Someone to help him start getting things in place for his re-entry—safe housing, re-instating a driver's license, counseling, employment

See RE-ENTRY, page 13

New young saints encourage faithful to live life to the full, pope says



A nun holds pictures of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis on Sept. 7, the day on which Pope Leo XIV declared them saints during a Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. (OSV News photo/Matteo Minnella, Reuters)

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The greatest risk in life is to waste it by not seeking to follow God's plan, Pope Leo XIV said, proclaiming two new saints—two young laymen of the 20th and 21st centuries.

"Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis are an invitation to all of us, especially young people, not to squander our lives, but to direct them upward and make them masterpieces," the pope said on Sept. 7.

"The simple but winning formula of their holiness," he said, is accessible to everyone at any time. "They encourage us with

their words: 'Not I, but God,' as Carlo used to say. And Pier Giorgio: 'If you have God at the center of all your actions, then you will reach the end.'"

Before canonizing the first saints of his pontificate, Pope Leo greeted the more than 80,000 faithful who had gathered early in St. Peter's Square because he wanted to share his joy with them before the start of the solemn ceremony.

"Brothers and sisters, today is a wonderful celebration for all

See NEW SAINTS, page 7

St. Carlo Acutis inspires love for the Eucharist in New Albany Deanery youth

By Sean Gallagher

SELLERSBURG—Leo Horine had such a love for St. Carlo Acutis that, when it was announced last fall that the Italian teenager who died in 2006 would be declared a saint this year, Leo, 6 at the time, asked his parents if he could attend the canonization ceremony.

"It was joyful," said Leo of learning that Acutis would be canonized on his birthday—April 27. "If I was there for him for his canonization, then he'd be there for me."

"I was out of town for work," recalled Leo's father Clint, who, along with his family, is a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. "He called me and said, 'Dad, Blessed Carlo is going to be a saint and we should go.' I said, 'Where's that going to happen at?' He said, 'Rome.' He had no concept of where Rome was at."

Seeing how much Leo loved Acutis and his Catholic faith, Clint and his wife Erin decided quickly to follow Leo's lead and make his wished-for trip a reality.

"For him to have his favorite future saint to be canonized on his birthday—you don't fight the Holy Spirit," recalled Erin. "I told Clint, 'I don't know what we have to do, but we have to make it happen for him.'"

See YOUTH, page 7

Leo Horine, 7, and his brother Isaac, 5, hold an image of St. Carlo Acutis and St. Pier Giorgio Frassati on Sept. 7 during a watch party held at St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg for the canonization of the Church's two newest saints. (Submitted photo)



Canonization watch party



About 100 youths and chaperones from All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright watch during the early hours of Sept. 7 on the campus of St. Teresa Parish the canonization of St. Carlo Acutis and St. Pier Giorgio Frassati. The youths spent the night at the parish, spending time in eucharistic adoration, catechesis, acting out skits and playing soccer. (Submitted photo)

Add your prayers to a spiritual bouquet for Pope Leo XIV’s 70th birthday celebration

(OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV turns 70 on Sept. 14, and OSV News is celebrating by gathering a host of prayers into a very special “spiritual birthday bouquet” for the Holy Father. The best part? Everyone can participate.



Pope Leo XIV

In partnership with Pray More Novenas, Relevant Radio, the Daughters of St. Paul, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Pontifical Mission Societies, Sing the Hours and more,

OSV News is encouraging an outpouring of prayer for Pope Leo and his intentions leading up to his milestone birthday—and his first birthday as pope.

Called “Pizza and Prayer,” the spiritual bouquet will be made up of a variety of prayer options from a full novena to a holy hour to a rosary. Each prayer effort will be noted, collated and sent to the pope. OSV News is also encouraging participants, when possible, to pray together and then grab a slice of pizza in honor of one of the Chicago native’s favorite foods. The name of every person and organization who participates in this

spiritual bouquet will be included on the card OSV News will send to the Vatican.

“One of the most important things that we can do as Catholics is pray for the pope and for his intentions,” said Gretchen R. Crowe, editor-in-chief of OSV News. “The modern Petrine ministry is one of the most challenging roles in the world. As Pope Leo XIV prepares to celebrate this special birthday, we want him to be surrounded by prayer, and we hope everyone will participate in this special effort.”

Partners around the United States and the world are participating.

“We are so happy to join the OSV News Spiritual Bouquet for Pope Leo’s birthday!” said Father Francis (Rocky) Hoffman of Relevant Radio. “... To Sunday, Sept.14, we will offer our Family Rosary Across America on Relevant Radio at 7 p.m. CT for the Holy Father, and we expect we will be sending him around 1 million rosaries.”

Happy birthday, Pope Leo. You are in our prayers.

(To add your prayers to the pope’s spiritual birthday bouquet, please note your prayer offering by visiting: bit.ly/PopeLeoPrayers.) †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 12–20, 2025

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. (Lafayette Diocese)

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

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

September 17 – 3 p.m.
Finance Council meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

September 18 – 5 p.m. CST
Archbishop’s annual dinner at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, St. Meinrad

September 20 – 10 a.m.
Installation of Permanent Diaconate Candidates as Lectors at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

September 20 – 4 p.m.
150th Anniversary Mass for Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Indianapolis, at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, followed by celebration dinner at Primo Banquet Hall, Indianapolis

40 Days for Life fall campaign is on Sept. 24-Nov. 2 in Indy, North Vernon

Criterion staff report

While Indiana and several other states have strengthened pro-life laws, there is still a great need for prayer to end all abortion and to change the hearts of those associated with the industry.

40 Days for Life is a campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful activism held in the spring and fall with the purpose of turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life and bringing an end to abortion.

The fall campaign runs from Sept. 24-Nov. 2. Two locations in the archdiocese are participating: Indianapolis and North Vernon.

Following is information on the two campaigns.

North Vernon: The campaign will take place outside of the city government office, 143 E. Walnut St.

To sign up for one or more hours, go to www.40daysforlife.com/en/northvernon. For more information, contact

Tim O’Donnell at 317-372-0040 or tidipsumsapere@att.net.

Indianapolis: The campaign will take place in front of the Planned Parenthood facility at 8590 Georgetown Road. Parking is available along Georgetown Road; do not park in the Women’s Care Center parking lot or at the industrial complex across from the Planned Parenthood facility.

To sign up for one or more hours during the Indianapolis campaign, go to www.40daysforlife.com/en/indianapolis.

The Knights of Columbus will hold an overnight prayer vigil at this location from 7 p.m. on Oct. 10 through 7 a.m. on Oct. 11. All are invited to join for any amount of time.

For additional information on the Indianapolis campaign, contact Robert Burton at 40daysforlife.indy@gmail.com.

To find other 40 Days for Life campaigns outside of the archdiocese, go to www.40daysforlife.com and select “Locations.” †



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Longtime kickball umpire loves the game and the children who play it

By John Shaughnessy

It's not every day that someone gets to make a touch of history in what may be the most beloved sport in the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO).

As Rachel Mitchum tells the story, she was a kickball player for Holy Angels School in Indianapolis in the 1960s when she did something that changed the rules of the popular game.

"When I started playing, we played on grass, in a park," she recalls. "We were able to throw the ball at the runner and get them out that way. If the runner fell, you fell on grass and you weren't getting scraped up and all that stuff. Then they started playing on parking lots, and they forgot to change the rules on throwing the ball at a runner.

"We did what we normally did. We threw the ball at their feet, but this time they fell on cement. There were skinned-up people. They changed the rules the next day. After that, you had to tag the runner out. I changed the rules."

While Mitchum claims that small touch of history, the now-76-year-old woman has left a far bigger impact by serving as an umpire for the sport for more than 40 years—and counting.

"She is always willing to do anything for CYO," says Kerry Lynch, the girls' athletic director of the organization. "She is kind, really tries to teach the younger grades the rules, and makes sure they are having fun."

That emphasis on fun is the priority for the once-competitive player who is now a mother of one, a grandmother of five, and a great-grandmother of two.

"I enjoy the kids, and I'm very humorous," she says with a smile. "The coaches like to see me because I don't make it as serious as some of the other umpires do. I make it fun. I talk to the girls. I teach them. I let them know I'm there for them. All that good stuff. And it's always been like that.

"I don't want issues with anybody. And I try to talk it out if we do have something going on."

It's a lesson she learned from her grade school coach, a lesson from a divisive time in American history—the 1960s.

Lessons in life on a diamond

"We had a really good coach. Miss Tinder. Never forget her," Mitchum says. "She just taught us a lot. There was a lot of stuff going on then, back in the '60s. We had some issues with race and that kind of stuff. But she taught us how to get around it. And she made sure we didn't have to experience things.

"Miss Tinder was a role model for us. We were able to listen and understand. She was caring. It's made a difference throughout my whole life. I have the same approach—being caring, and wanting to do everything correctly."

She strives to do "everything correctly" by calling a good, fair game. But her main focus is on caring.

"Let's say that Suzie is having a rough time," she says. "I'm not a coach, I'm an umpire, but I'm talking to her. I will stop the game and go up to her and ask, 'Are you OK?' Of course, she'll say, 'I'm OK.' But they're not. I say, 'Just settle down, baby. Let's go. Let's do this.' And they're ready to go again.

"Sometimes, it's just a matter of approaching them, saying a couple of words to them and just get them out of that funk they're in and get back to where they want to be. That's the way I approach young people."

She also has a habit of talking briefly with the losing team after a game.

"I tell them, 'Great job. The next time I see you, just improve your game. Just keep playing and have fun. The biggest thing is to have fun.'

"I don't look at anyone like they're a loser or they just don't have it. Everybody is a winner to me. I tell them that because kids feel bad about losing. They go home and say, 'I did a terrible job because we lost.' No, you didn't. You just lost. If you as an individual player did the best you could, that's all you need to do."

She smiles as she adds, "The kids love me. They see me coming, and they say, 'Oh, that's Miss Rachel!'"

Coaches appreciate her, too.

"We love her," says Sarah Mattingly, the coach of a fifth- and sixth-grade team at St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis and the coordinator of the parish's kickball program. "She knows all the rules, and she's really good at teaching them to young kids, too. We just enjoy her. She's very sweet."

A love for the game and the children who play it

Mitchum's start as a kickball umpire began in the early 1980s after a conversation with the legendary Bernadette "Bernie" Price, the longtime girls' athletic director of CYO who died in 2024.

"I had started doing basketball games for CYO, and Bernie approached me and asked, 'Do you want to do some kickball?' I said, 'Why not?' I was in my early 30s."

More than 40 years later, the fun is still there for her. So is her love for the game and the children who play it.

"I just love kickball. I'm hoping I can do it for as long as I can. Being 76, it's going to be a little bit harder for me, especially with the heat. But I stay hydrated. My body is in good shape, thank God. And I'm going to go forward as long as I can."

She credits her joy for the game—and her joy for life—to her relationship with Christ.

"I've kept the purpose," she says. "I'm always going to believe in our Lord Jesus



For more than 40 years, Rachel Mitchum has been a kickball umpire in the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization, adding fun and sharing lessons in life with the girls who play the sport. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Christ. I keep the Word in my soul. I try not to stress myself. I put things in the Lord's hands. If he's going to fix it, he's going to fix it. He heard me. He knows what's going on. So, what I do is wait for it. Because he's going to take care of it. I believe that. I just completely believe that.

"When I listen to Scripture on TV—I do that quite a bit—that soothes my soul. And that makes me go out there and be the person I am. I feel positive when I approach those games. I have a good soul. When people see me coming, they smile."

Mitchum had the biggest smile earlier this year when the CYO recognized her for her outstanding contributions as an umpire through the years.

"I was so humbled when I got my

award. I had achieved so much for CYO. It was nice to know they appreciate me. Sometimes you don't get noticed when you do something so long and you do something so well. I was grinning from ear to ear. Even now when I think about it sometimes, I just smile. It meant so much to me."

So does being connected to the CYO.

"They've been in my life so long. The Catholic Youth Organization has always been a pillar to me, and I'm proud to be a part of it. It's a wonderful program for young people. As far as I'm concerned, it's the number one organization to be a part of. I want it to go on forever.

"I hope I can stay with it as long as I can." †

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Editorial

Church’s newest saints offer witness, formula for holiness

“In this setting, today we look to St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis: a young man from the early 20th century and a teenager from our own day, both in love with Jesus and ready to give everything for him.”

—Pope Leo XIV in his homily at the canonization Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican for St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis

We, like millions of other people of faith around the world, rejoice in thanksgiving for the canonization of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis on Sept. 7.

St. Pier Giorgio was born on April 6, 1901, in Turin, Italy, and died on July 4, 1925, of polio at the age of 24. St. Carlo was born to Italian parents on May 3, 1991, in London and died in Monza, Italy, on Oct. 12, 2006, of leukemia at the age of 15.

The Sept. 7 liturgy drew an estimated 80,000 faithful to Rome for this historic moment of two holy young people who, in their short lives, offered shining examples of faith for all generations. They were the first saints canonized during Pope Leo XIV’s pontificate.

St. Carlo Acutis, known as “God’s influencer,” used technology to share his love of the Catholic faith. He created a website documenting eucharistic miracles, and his life reminds all of us—especially today’s younger generation—that holiness is possible no matter what your age. He is also the Church’s first millennial saint.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who was called a “Man of the Beatitudes,” lived a life of joy, service and social action. He loved hiking, mountain climbing and assisting the poor.

Faith guided both Carlo and Pier Giorgio, and answering the call to Christian discipleship revolutionized how they lived their heroic lives of virtue.

Our newest saints offered themselves to God through their joys, sufferings and challenges. Both were disciples of charity who had a great devotion to the Eucharist. And in their lives—and death—they knew the cost of discipleship.

“Pier Giorgio encountered the Lord through school and Church groups—Catholic Action, the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, the FUCI [Italian Catholic University Federation], the Dominican Third Order—and he bore witness to God with his joy of living and of being a Christian in prayer, friendship and charity,” Pope Leo said in his homily at the canonization Mass. “Even today, Pier Giorgio’s life is a beacon for lay spirituality. For him, faith was not a private devotion, but it was driven by the power of the Gospel and his membership in ecclesial associations.”

St. Carlo’s life, too, was guided by his faith.

“Carlo, for his part, encountered Jesus in his family, thanks to his parents, Andrea and Antonia—who are here today with his two siblings, Francesca and Michele—and then at school, and above all in the sacraments celebrated



Pope Leo XIV smiles at the conclusion of a Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican for the canonizations of SS. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis on Sept. 7. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

in the parish community,” the pope continued. “He grew up naturally integrating prayer, sport, study and charity into his days as a child and young man.”

Both new saints “cultivated their love for God and for their brothers and sisters through simple acts, available to everyone: daily Mass, prayer, and especially eucharistic adoration,” Pope Leo continued. “Carlo used to say: ‘In front of the sun, you get a tan. In front of the Eucharist, you become a saint!’ ‘Sadness is looking at yourself; happiness is looking at God. Conversion is nothing more than shifting your gaze from below to above; a simple movement of the eyes is enough.’ ”

A devotion to the saints and to the Blessed Virgin Mary was also at the heart of their lives of faith, and both practiced charity generously, the Holy Father continued.

“Pier Giorgio said: ‘Around the poor and the sick, I see a light that we do not have.’ He called charity ‘the foundation of our religion’ and, like Carlo, he practiced it above all through small, concrete gestures, often hidden, living what Pope Francis called ‘a holiness found in our next-door neighbors.’ ”

Our Church’s newest saints offer “an invitation to all of us, especially young people,” Pope Leo said, “not to squander our lives, but to direct them upward and make them masterpieces.”

“Not I, but God,” St. Carlo said.

“If you have God at the center of all your actions, then you will reach the end,” St. Pier Giorgio said.

Pope Leo noted, “This is the simple but winning formula of their holiness. It is also the type of witness we are called to follow, in order to enjoy life to the full and meet the Lord in the feast of heaven.”

Praise God for Pier Giorgio and Carlo! Their examples remind us, we too, are called to be saints.

Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, pray for us.

—Mike Krokos

Sight Unseen/Brandon A. Evans

A waste of space

In the movie *Contact*, the main character, Ellie, recalls a memory of her father where she asks him whether or not he thinks there is life on other worlds.

“I don’t know,” he replies. “But I guess I’d say if it is just us ... seems like an awful waste of space.”

The line sets the groundwork for the rest of the movie, and it sticks with the viewer because the insight is so sharp.

How many look up at the wilderness of stars beyond our moon and shiver—at least a little bit—at the terrifying thought that there is no one else but us?

Conversely, how many aren’t at least a little excited that some distant planet circling a distant sun *could* be inhabited by lost brothers and sisters just beyond our reach?

Of all the wonders of the cosmos, intelligent life is the crown jewel. Each person is a new world onto themselves: infinite and vast; a treasure beyond compare or replication.

“We are a way for the universe to know itself,” astronomer and popular writer Carl Sagan once said.

Nature possesses an entirely new dimension of meaning because our consciousness is a part of it.

And what’s more, God made us to seek each other out; to form and live in a communion that will one day be perfected in heaven.

Why wouldn’t we want more of that?

And how could there be 100 billion stars in the Milky Way and a trillion galaxies beyond that without something to show for it?

To the modern mind, it’s a frigid and frightening thought that so many worlds unseen are as sterile and lonely

as the rings of Saturn. It does seem like such a waste. Or is it?

The rings of Saturn may be sterile but they are not a *waste*: they are a *wonder*.

Our ancestors looked at the sky and saw that same wonder. For them, the beauty of those pinpoint lights was enough. There didn’t need to be any other purpose to it than God’s glory and our delight.

Need we think so differently, just because we know how much bigger everything is? How much more complex and detailed and diverse it all is?

It’s one thing to believe in the likelihood that intelligent life exists somewhere else, but a whole other thing to say that the rest of the universe would be a *waste* if there isn’t.

Nothing is wasted with God, and his ways are not our ways.

All those galaxies are but the tiniest exercise of his creativity. They are a divine extravagance.

The universe could be twice as big—a *thousand* times as big—and it would be no matter to God. He easily holds the entirety of it in place—every atom and photon and speck of dust, all in balance and all accounted for.

We needn’t be scared if we are, in the end, “all there is.” The sky is a symphony of light—a painting 13 billion light years wide. Such beauty isn’t there to be a terror to us, but a solace.

The universe *requires* no meaning beyond that. God the Father is recklessly generous enough to have made all of it just as he would a bouquet of flowers.

If so, then what a wonderful waste of space.

(Sight Unseen is an occasional column that explores God and the world. Brandon A. Evans is the online editor and graphic designer of The Criterion and a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

Be Our Guest/Courtney Roach

St. Carlo Acutis and the call to evangelize in the digital age

I had the privilege of visiting Assisi, Italy, in June where I encountered the tomb of then-Blessed Carlo Acutis—and I was not prepared for the immediate and

profound impact he would have on my prayer life.

As I walked into the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, where now St. Carlo’s body currently rests, I remember thinking, “I can’t wait to see his iconic Nikes!” While

waiting in line to venerate his body, I was admittedly distracted by the summer heat and the religious brother repeatedly saying, “No photo!” over and over again. But then, I saw him.

Right there, in a city he loved deeply as a child, I encountered a young man who gave everything to God. And I began to weep.

Carlo died young. He is now the Church’s first millennial saint—not because he did something grandiose, but because he simply did what he loved, and did it authentically. He thought it would be cool to share the truth of eucharistic miracles online, so he did. And because he said yes to something he found fascinating as a child of God, the Church—and the world—has been transformed by his witness.

That day, I felt as though Carlo gently grabbed me by the shoulders. I felt him pursuing a heavenly friendship with me, offering his intercession not only for my heart, but also for the work I do in digital evangelization.

I serve as a digital marketing manager for

FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), alongside my incredible teammates. Together, we orchestrate the social media strategy behind one mission: to process Jesus through the algorithm.

I often say, even the most devout Catholic might miss daily Mass—but nearly everyone logs on to social media every day. Whether due to habit or addiction, scrolling has become one of the most consistent human behaviors of our time. And because of that, we have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to place Jesus directly into those moments of distraction, curiosity and searching.

What strikes me most is how social media has evolved. It’s no longer just a place to stay in touch with friends. It’s where decisions are made. We buy what we see on TikTok. We wear outfits inspired by influencers on Instagram. We furnish our homes with things we discover on Facebook. We learn from strangers on YouTube. These aren’t just fleeting interactions—they’re formational. They shape who we are becoming.

And as Catholics, we have a choice. We can become a light—like Carlo—and offer something greater than the trend of the week. We can show people beauty. We can show people truth. We can show people Jesus.

Carlo Acutis reminds us that sainthood isn’t out of reach. It’s found in doing ordinary things with extraordinary love, and using the tools of our time to point others toward heaven. May we follow his example—and may our yes echo his.

(Courtney Roach is the digital marketing manager for FOCUS.) †

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Look to Christ, the source of unity and peace in life

On Aug. 28, the memorial of St. Augustine, I published “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection.” The purpose of this letter addressed to all clergy, religious and lay faithful in the archdiocese is to call attention to the Church’s teaching on many of the important issues that we are dealing with today as a society and as the Church.

As Pope Leo XIV regularly reminds us, peace and unity are essential to human flourishing. “Authentic human flourishing stems from what the Church calls *integral human development*,” the pope says, referring to “the full development of a person in all dimensions: physical, social, cultural, moral and spiritual.”

Human flourishing happens “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.” The common good is achieved, Pope Leo says, when individuals and communities are free “to seek truth, to worship God and to raise families in peace.”

Since the beginning of human history, the reality of sin has fractured our unity and made true peace impossible to sustain. In “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” I point out that “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.”

Throughout history, the so-called solutions proposed by individuals and groups on both the far-right and the far-left have been proven to be equally ineffective.

Peace and unity are not achieved by ideologies. They require actions undertaken selflessly on behalf of the common good.

As my pastoral reflection states, “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.”

Authentic peace is not the same thing as capitulation or appeasement in the face of tyranny. Similarly, unity should not be confused with “uniformity.” The peace and unity that our Savior

brings are, first and foremost, spiritual realities—attitudes that arise in the human heart and that permeate our lives as individuals and as communities.

My pastoral reflection notes that we Catholics “ground our embrace of peace and unity in Sacred Scripture and Tradition [the Deposit of Faith].” We believe that “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.” That’s why we look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and the One in whom we are all one, to find genuine peace and unity.

In “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” I argue that 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 weapon of mass destruction, like those of many wars and violent conflicts, continue to impact individuals, families, communities and nations to this very day.

Concerning the threat of nuclear war,

Pope Leo XIV recently 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.” (An X post on Aug. 6.)

In his *Angelus* message on Aug. 10, 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.”

As we continue to observe this Jubilee Year of Hope, let’s look to Christ who is the source of all unity and peace in our hearts and in our world.

(To read Archbishop Thompson’s pastoral reflection in English and Spanish, go to archindy.org/pastoral2025.) †



Cristo, la piedra angular

Posemos la mirada en Cristo, fuente de unidad y paz en la vida

El 28 de agosto, memorial de san Agustín, publiqué “Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral.” El propósito de esta carta dirigida a todo el clero, religiosos y fieles laicos de la Arquidiócesis, es destacar las enseñanzas de la doctrina de la Iglesia con respecto a muchas de las cuestiones importantes de las que nos ocupamos hoy como sociedad y como Iglesia.

Tal como nos recuerda cada tanto el papa León XIV, la paz y la unidad son esenciales para la prosperidad humana. “El auténtico florecimiento humano proviene de lo que la Iglesia llama *desarrollo humano integral*,”—señala el Papa, haciendo referencia al—“pleno desarrollo de una persona en todas las dimensiones: física, social, cultural, moral y espiritual.”

La auténtica prosperidad humana se produce “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.” En palabras del Santo Padre, el bien común se alcanza cuando los individuos y las comunidades son libres para “buscar la verdad, de adorar a Dios y de crear una familia en paz.”

Desde el comienzo de la historia de la humanidad, la realidad del pecado ha fracturado nuestra unidad y ha hecho imposible mantener una paz verdadera. En “Paz y unidad: *Reflexión pastoral*,” señalo que “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 señala que lo demoníaco divide, pero lo que nos une es del Espíritu.”

A lo largo de la historia, las supuestas soluciones propuestas por individuos y grupos tanto de extrema derecha como de extrema izquierda han demostrado ser igualmente ineficaces.

La paz y la unidad no se consiguen con ideologías. Requieren acciones emprendidas desinteresadamente en nombre del bien común.

En mi reflexión pastoral advierto que “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.”

La paz auténtica no equivale a la capitulación o el apaciguamiento ante la tiranía, así como tampoco se debe confundir la unidad con la “uniformidad.” La paz y la unidad que trae nuestro Salvador son, ante todo, realidades espirituales, actitudes

que surgen en el corazón humano y que impregnan nuestra vida como individuos y como comunidades.

En mi reflexión pastoral hago la observación de que para los católicos, el “llamado a acoger la paz y la unidad se basa en las Sagradas Escrituras y la Tradición [el Depósito de la Fe].” Creemos que “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.” Por eso posamos la mirada en Jesús, el Príncipe de la Paz, y Aquel en quien todos somos uno, para encontrar la paz y la unidad auténticas.

En “Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral,” argumento que 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 arma de destrucción masiva, como los de muchas guerras y conflictos violentos, 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, el papa León XIV

señaló recientemente:

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 duradera 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 10 de agosto, 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.”

Mientras seguimos observando este Año Jubilar de la Esperanza, posemos la mirada en Cristo, que es la fuente de toda unidad y paz en nuestros corazones y en nuestro mundo.

(Para leer la reflexión pastoral del arzobispo Thompson en inglés y español, visite archindy.org/pastoral2025.) †

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 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, all are welcome. Followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., former senator and U.S. 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.

St. Malachy Parish, 9833 E. County Rd. 750 N., Brownsburg. **Country Fair and Hog Roast**, Fri. 4-11 p.m., Sat. 3-11 p.m., midway, live entertainment, food, games, beer tent, sensory-friendly area available, free admission. Information: 317-852-3195, info@stmalachy.org.

St. Rita Parish, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis. **Free Health Fair**, Fri. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. lung cancer screening, no registration required; Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., flu, COVID and pneumonia shots,

blood drive, vendors, walk-ins welcome or pre-register for shots at bit.ly/FluShotClinic25 and for blood drive at 317-332-1020 or boradeelight@gmail.com. Sponsored by Franciscan Health and Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary, Council and Court #97.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Circle City Irish Festival**, Fri. 4-10 p.m., Sat. noon-10 p.m., Irish music, food trucks, Irish market, Wee Folk area, Kerry cows, Irish wolfhounds, \$15, ages 12 and younger free. Information: 317-627-0561, katemiller71@gmail.com.

September 20

St. Augustine Parish, 315 E. Chestnut St., Jeffersonville. **Octoberfest**, 4-10 p.m., music, authentic German food and drink, free admission. Information: 812-282-2677, communications@jeffersonvillecatholic.org.

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **MountFest: Art, Music and Food Festival**, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., 65 local artisan booths, live music, food trucks, regional wine and beer, free admission, \$5 suggested parking per

vehicle. Information: 812-923-8817.

Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, 7225 Southeastern Ave., Indianapolis. **Catholic Social Teaching Workshop**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., archdiocesan director of Catholic Charities-Social Concerns Theresa Chamblee presenting, lunch included, online registration with credit card \$17.85, or \$15 cash or check by contacting Laura Sheehan at lsheehan@archindy.org, register by Sept. 18. Information, registration: tinyurl.com/socialteaching25, 317-542-2492, lsheehan@archindy.org.

St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, 404 E. Vine St., Liberty. **Oktoberfest**, 4-10 p.m., German food, beer/wine garden, basket raffle, queen of hearts, gaming, cash raffles, country store, religious items booth, snack shack, children’s play area, German band, free admission. Information: 765-825-8578, secretary@stgabrielconnersville.org.

September 20-21

Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Pre-Cana**

Marriage Preparation Retreat, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. both days, includes light breakfast, box lunch, snacks, all books, materials, Mass, opportunity for confession, \$200. Information, registration: 317-236-7310, marriageandfamily.archindy.org/pre-cana-retreat.

St. Louis Parish, 13 E. St. Louis Pl., Batesville. **Parish Festival**, Sat.: 5-11 p.m., live music, pulled pork, pull tabs, cash raffle. Sun.: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., chicken and roast beef dinners, country store, basket booth, plant stand, Eureka band, free admission. Information: 812-934-3204, mwachsmann@st.louissschool.org.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish 150th Jubilee Celebration. Sat.: 4 p.m. Mass, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrant; 6 p.m. dinner at Primo Event Center, 2615 National Ave., Indianapolis, doors open 5:30 p.m., \$50 adult, \$100 couple, sponsorships available, order tickets at sacredheartindy.com or email springman0823@hotmail.com. Sun.: 9 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Franciscan Provincial Councilor Father Sam Nasada celebrant; 10:30 a.m. free luncheon in Sacred Heart Hall, 1125

S. Meridian St., Indianapolis, no RSVP required.

September 21

St. Meinrad Parish, 19570 N. 4th St., St. Meinrad. **Annual Fall Picnic**, 9:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m. CT, fried chicken dinners, live entertainment, family fun, St. Meinrad’s famous soup, German tenderloins, raffles, church tours, country store, free admission. Information: 812-357-5533, smcatholic.church/fall-picnic, info@myparishfamily.church.

St. Michael Parish, 101 St. Michaels Dr., Charlestown. **Septemberfest**, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., chicken dinner, authentic Mexican food, cash and quilt raffles, silent auction, games of chance, free admission. Information: 812-256-3200, stmichaelsecretary@northclarkcountycatholic.org.

September 23

St. Bartholomew Parish, 1306 27th St., Columbus. **“Who is My Neighbor?”** 6-8:30 p.m., reflection on migration, sponsored by Catholic Charities-Social Concerns, free, register by Sept. 21. Information, registration: lsheehan@archindy.org, 317-542-2492. †

Archabbey to offer Sunday rosary procession pilgrimages in October at Monte Cassino Shrine

In honor of October as the month of the rosary, Saint Meinrad Archabbey is offering a series of pilgrimages in the form of rosary processions at its Our Lady of Monte Cassino Shrine each Sunday in October at 2 p.m. Central Time. Monte Cassino Shrine is located at 13312 Monte Cassino Shrine Road, in St. Meinrad, one mile east Saint Meinrad Archabbey off State Highway 62.

Considered “pilgrimages” in the sense of traveling to a sacred place out of devotion and a desire to grow in holiness, each event will begin with an opening hymn and a short sermon, followed by a rosary procession. The services end with the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and a hymn. Homily presenters and topics for the pilgrimages are:

- Oct. 5: Benedictine Brother Isaac Levering, “Mary, Mother of the Church.”
- Oct. 12: Benedictine Brother

Zachary Wilberding, “Our Lady of Hope.”

- Oct. 19: Benedictine Brother Jean Fish, “Mary: A Model for Friendship.”
- Oct. 26: Benedictine Father Michael Reyes, “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord.”

Dedicated in 1870 and completed in 1873, the shrine’s design is based on a picture of an early shrine of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, the motherhouse of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. It was named Monte Cassino after the abbey in Italy where St. Benedict lived in the sixth century.

Rosary pilgrimages are offered at Monte Cassino Shrine in May and October, months dedicated to the Blessed Mother.

For more information on the rosary pilgrimages, contact Krista Hall, Saint Meinrad director of communications, at 812-357-6480 or via e-mail at khall@saintmeinrad.edu. †

Catholic Charities Terre Haute will host ‘Cheers for Charity!’ on Oct. 16

Catholic Charities Terre Haute will host its fifth annual “Cheers for Charity!” dinner and wine/bourbon-tasting fundraiser at the Vigo County History Center, 929 Wabash Ave., in Terre Haute, from 6-9 p.m. on Oct. 16

The evening features a progressive four-course dinner experience, curated by Edibles Catering & Foods to Go. Before dinner, guests will enjoy appetizers and paired drinks as they explore the museum exhibits. The evening will also include a silent auction, live music and raffles.

Proceeds benefit the ministries of Catholic Charities Terre Haute: a foodbank providing food to a network

of distribution centers for the hungry; Bethany House for single women, women with children, and married couples in need of shelter; Ryves Youth Center, providing after school activities, programs, tutoring and meals to children ages 3-17; and an annual free Christmas store for those with limited financial means.

This event is for those ages 21 and older. Tickets are \$125 plus a \$5 online processing fee.

To purchase tickets online, go to tinyurl.com/cheers4charity25.

For more information, contact Sarah Eddy at seddy@ccthin.org or 812-232-1447, option 3. †

Wedding Anniversaries

CLIFFORD AND MARTHA JANE (LUERMAN) DICKMAN, members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on Aug. 20.

The couple was married in St. Andrew Church (now a campus of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish) in Richmond on Aug. 20, 1955.

They have eight children: Debbie Hanneman, Linda Major, Cindy Mendenhall, Carolyn Stephens, Bob, Dan, Phil and Ted Dickman.

The couple also has 27 grandchildren and 48 great-grandchildren.



ROBERT AND FRAN (CORSARO) MOSS, members of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Sept. 5.

The couple was married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Indianapolis on Sept. 5, 1960.

They have four children: Cathy Arnold, Cheryl Tooley, Carol and Bobby Moss.

The couple also has seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



DANNY AND CORENE (SHULTZ) IHRIE, members of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on July 11.

The couple was married in Immaculate Conception Church in Kendallville, Ind. (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend), on July 11, 1970.

They have two children: Allison and Tyler Ihrie. The couple also has two grandchildren.



WILLIAM SCHWAB AND MARYSUE VEERKAMP-SCHWAB, members of St. Paul Catholic Center in Bloomington, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 8.

The couple was married in St. Francis de Sales Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Aug. 8, 1975.

They have four children: Laura Schwab-Fidler, Carle, Matthew and Michael Schwab.

The couple also has nine 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.

NEW SAINTS

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of Italy, for the whole Church, for the whole world,” he said before the Mass.

“While the celebration is very solemn, it is also a day of great joy, and I wanted to greet especially the many young people who have come for this holy Mass,” he said, also greeting the families of the soon-to-be saints and the associations and communities to which the young men had belonged.

Pope Leo asked that everyone “feel in our hearts the same thing that Pier Giorgio and Carlo experienced: this love for Jesus Christ, especially in the Eucharist, but also in the poor, in our brothers and sisters.

“All of you, all of us, are also called to be saints,” he said, before leaving to prepare for Mass and paying homage to a statue of Mary with baby Jesus and the reliquaries containing relics of the two young men.

In his homily, the pope underlined Jesus’ call in the day’s Gospel reading “to abandon ourselves without hesitation to the adventure that he offers us, with the intelligence and strength that comes from his Spirit, that we can receive to the extent that we empty ourselves of the things and ideas to which we are attached, in order to listen to his word.”

That is what the two new saints did and what every disciple of Christ is called to do, he said.

Many people, especially when they are young, he said, face a kind of “crossroads” in life when they reflect on what to do with their life.

The saints of the Church are often portrayed as “great figures, forgetting that for them it all began when, while still young, they said ‘yes’ to God and gave themselves to him completely, keeping nothing for themselves,” the pope said.

“Today we look to St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis: a young man from the early 20th century and a teenager from our own day, both in love with Jesus and ready to give everything for him,” he said.

Pope Leo then dedicated a large portion of his homily to sharing quotes from the two and details of their lives,

which is something Pope Francis had shifted away from in canonization liturgies, preferring to focus more on the day’s readings.

“Pier Giorgio’s life is a beacon for lay spirituality,” Pope Leo said.

“For him, faith was not a private devotion, but it was driven by the power of the Gospel and his membership in ecclesial associations,” he said. “He was also generously committed to society, contributed to political life and devoted himself ardently to the service of the poor.

“Carlo, for his part, encountered Jesus in his family, thanks to his parents, Andrea and Antonia—who are here today with his two siblings, Francesca and Michele,” he said, as the crowd applauded, and Antonia smiled shyly at the camera.

St. Carlo, who is the Church’s first millennial saint, also encountered Jesus at the Jesuit-run school he attended and “above all in the sacraments celebrated in the parish community,” he said. “He grew up naturally integrating prayer, sport, study and charity into his days as a child and young man.”

The pope said the new saints “cultivated their love for God and for their brothers and sisters through simple acts, available to everyone: daily Mass, prayer and especially eucharistic adoration.”

St. Pier Giorgio was born on April 6, 1901, in Turin and died there on July 4, 1925, of polio at the age of 24. St. Carlo was born to Italian parents on May 3, 1991, in London and died in Monza, Italy, on Oct. 12, 2006, of leukemia at the age of 15.

The pope said that “even when illness struck them and cut short their young lives, not even this stopped them nor prevented them from loving, offering themselves to God, blessing him and praying to him for themselves and for everyone.”

Several family members and people closely associated with the new saints attended the Mass, along with dignitaries, such as Italian President Sergio Mattarella.

St. Carlo’s parents and his twin siblings, who were born four years after their brother died, brought the pope the offertory gifts. His brother also proclaimed the first reading at the Mass in English.

Valeria Valverde, who read the first prayer of the faithful, is a young Costa Rican woman who suffered a severe head injury while living in Italy. It was her unexplained healing that provided the second miracle needed for St. Carlo’s canonization.



Reliquaries containing relics of St. Carlo Acutis and St. Pier Giorgio Frassati stand at the foot of a statue of Mary during the canonization Mass celebrated by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sept. 7. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

St. Pier Giorgio was active with Catholic Action, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Italian Catholic University Federation and the Dominican Third Order. Lorenzo Zardi, vice president of the youth group of Italy’s Catholic Action read the second reading at the Mass and Michele Tridente, the secretary general of the lay movement, also presented the pope with offertory gifts.

Before praying the *Angelus*, the pope once again thanked everyone for coming to celebrate the Church’s two new saints.

However, he also called for people’s “incessant prayer for peace, especially in the Holy Land, and in Ukraine and in every other land bloodied by war.”

“To governing leaders, I repeat, listen to the voice of conscience,” he said.

“The apparent victories won with weapons, sowing death and destruction, are really defeats and will never bring peace and security,” he said.

“God does not want war. God wants peace!” he exclaimed to applause. “God gives strength to those who work toward leaving behind the cycle of hatred and pursue the path of dialogue.” †

YOUTH

continued from page 1

And they did. No one in the family had ever traveled outside the United States. But, with faith in God, they stepped out of their comfort zones and made arrangements for Clint and Leo to be in Rome for Acutis’ canonization.

But the canonization was delayed because of the death of Pope Francis, whose funeral took place on April 27 in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican.

Clint and Leo were there in the square for the historic liturgy. Although he wasn’t able to be present for Acutis’ canonization on Sept. 7, Leo took it in stride.

“I really wasn’t disappointed because I thought that Pope Francis would be a saint some day,” he said.

“It was a blessing for both of us,” said Clint. “It was also a life lesson for Leo that our best-laid plans are not necessarily God’s plans. It was very formative for him to get to see so many people from so many backgrounds and different

languages, all celebrating the life of Pope Francis.”

Clint, Erin, Leo and their two younger sons, Isaac and Luke, had a similar experience the previous July when they attended the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis with some 50,000 Catholics from across the country.

“It gave me goose bumps,” said Erin.

“We got to the congress and saw literally thousands of young families, just like us,” recalled Clint. “We knew we were in the right spot.”

“It was nice to pray with Jesus,” said Leo. “They were carrying a monstrance. It was huge, bigger than our monstrance at our parish.”

In the days leading up to the congress and during the five-day event, Leo got to venerate a relic of Acutis and learned more about him.

“He liked the Eucharist,” said Leo, now a second-grader at St. John Paul II School in Sellersburg. “He liked Pokémon. He liked soccer. And he liked Spiderman. He was just a normal kid that was kind and liked the Eucharist.”

The congress helped Leo and his family grow in their own love of the Eucharist. After it was over, the Horines began spending an hour in their parish’s eucharistic adoration chapel on Sunday evenings.

“Leo will ask, even if it’s not on a Sunday, if we can go to the chapel,” said Clint. “It’s a reminder to me that that needs to be my true north as well. It comes naturally to him.”

When Acutis’ canonization got re-scheduled for Sept. 7, Leo was determined to watch the liturgy with as many other people as he could gather.

So, with the permission of Father Thomas Clegg, pastor at St. John Paul II, the Horine’s organized a pancake breakfast and watch party at the New Albany Deanery faith community. Leo said he wanted to watch the canonization liturgy with others “so a lot more people could see how important the Eucharist is.”

Because of the time difference between southern Indiana and Rome, the event started at 3:30 a.m. on Sept. 7. Nonetheless, 82 people from St. John Paul II and other parishes in the deanery attended the gathering.

Leo made sure that Nutella was available to be put on the pancakes “because Carlo Acutis liked it on his pancakes.”

In thanking all the people who came to watch the canonization with him, Leo told them, “We’re here for the saints today, like the saints are with us every day.”

Two days before the canonization, Leo, Clint and Erin spoke with *The Criterion* about the watch party.

“My goal is to bring people closer to the Eucharist,” said Leo, “and for them to see how close Carlo Acutis got to it in his very short life.”

As great of a love for the Eucharist that Leo has, he still hasn’t received it. He expects to experience his first Communion on April 25, 2026, with other second graders at St. John Paul II.

“I’ve been waiting for this my whole life,” Leo said. “I want to experience the Eucharist. The thing that I’m excited for about the Eucharist is to experience it with my classmates. I know Carlo Acutis will be there. I’m going to invite every



Leo Horine kneels in prayer on July 19, 2024, before a relic of St. Carlo Acutis at the National Eucharistic Congress in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo)

priest that I know. Everybody can come.”

Learning about St. Carlo and his great love for the Eucharist has made Leo desire his first Communion even more.

“My heart hungers for the Eucharist,” he said.

Although Clint and Erin have done much to form the faith of their three young sons, they acknowledge the faith of Leo has been a blessing for them.

“I aspire to be as good a Catholic as Leo and my other sons are,” said Clint. “They have an unyielding faith that is so very strong.”

“We’re supposed to have faith like a child,” added Erin. “I get to see that in Leo and him bring that to so many people. It’s a little hard for adults to have that childlike faith. I’m grateful that God is bringing that out in Leo.”

For Leo, developing a love of St. Carlo Acutis relates to the ultimate goal of his life.

“I want to be a saint like him,” Leo said. “I really want to get to heaven to meet him.” †



Leo Horine, left, speaks to the people who attended an early morning watch party on Sept. 7 at St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg for the canonization of St. Carlo Acutis and St. Pier Giorgio Frassati. Standing beside him is Father Thomas Clegg, St. John Paul II's pastor. (Submitted photo)

DOE to issue guidance on protecting prayer in public schools, Trump says

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The Department of Education (DOE) will issue new guidance “protecting the right to prayer” in public schools, President Donald J. Trump said on Sept. 8 during remarks at the Museum of the Bible for the Department of Justice’s Religious Liberty Commission.

The Trump administration previously reduced the workforce at the DOE and stated its intent to scale the department back.

In a statement shared with OSV News, Savannah Newhouse, press secretary for the DOE, said, “Free exercise of religion is a founding principle and a constitutionally protected right afforded to all citizens of our great nation. The Department of Education looks forward to supporting President Trump’s vision to promote religious liberty in our schools across the country.”

Neither Trump nor the DOE offered details about what that guidance may include.

Trump in May signed an executive order creating a religious liberty commission, which includes Cardinal

Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn. The commissioners gathered at the Museum of the Bible in Washington to examine what recommendations they should make

to the president about promoting and protecting religious freedom in a report next spring. Their second hearing focused on religious freedom in public schools.

for the victims of the deadly Aug. 27 mass shooting at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis during a liturgy marking the start of the school year.

“Two weeks ago in Minneapolis, a demonic killer shot 21 people and murdered two precious children at a Catholic school,” Trump said. “Can you believe that? Hard to believe.”

Trump said there have been “too many” school shootings, and “our hearts are shattered for the families of those beautiful children.

“And I’ve made clear, Attorney General Pam Bondi is working really hard, we must get answers about the causes of these repeated attacks, and we’re working very, very hard on them,” he said.

Some of the Trump administration's policy positions have been criticized by faith leaders, perhaps most notably on immigration. In January, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement that executive orders signed by Trump upon returning to office on issues including migration, the environment and the death penalty were "deeply troubling," but praised other actions such as one on gender policy.

Trump touted his administration's actions on gender at the hearing, criticizing a position he called "transgender for everybody."

“On Day One of my administration, I signed an executive order to slash federal funding for any school that pushes transgender insanity,” Trump said.

The same day as the commission hearing, Trump wrote, “Happy Birthday Mary, Queen of Peace!” on his website Truth Social, in an apparent reference to the Nativity of Mary. Sept. 8 is celebrated as the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and is a significant Marian

feast in the Catholic Church, although Trump is not Catholic.

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, the commission's chairman, said during opening remarks that one of the other goals of the committee is to "make sure America knows their rights."

In opening remarks, Cardinal Dolan said that while he was in Rome for the conclave that led to the election of Pope



**Cardinal Timothy
M. Dolan**

Leo XIV, his fellow cardinals from other countries where religious freedom is under threat expressed their concern.

“My brother
cardinals from all
over the world,”
Cardinal Dolan said,
“came up to me, and
I presume other of
the other American

cardinals, to thank us for our strong defense of religious liberty.

“I was fascinated by that, and asked them why, and they said, ‘Well, because you in the United States serve as a beacon for the rest of us,’ ” he said.

“Doesn’t this give us an added sense of responsibility?” he continued. “We’re not doing this in a self-serving way ... [but in a] benevolent way to help others, because they look to us for the protection of religious liberty.”

Witnesses at the hearing included Lana Roman, a mom and petitioner in the Supreme Court case *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, where the high court ruled in favor of an interfaith group of Maryland parents who sought to opt their children out of classroom instruction pertaining to books containing LGBTQ+ themes to which they object on religious grounds.

Roman said, “As Christians, we teach our son that every person is loved by God

and should be treated with dignity and respect.

“We also teach him that sex is a gift from God and a natural, unchanging part of who we are. Many of these books introduced sexual concepts to children at an inappropriately young age, putting children in the untenable position of having to question who to trust: their teachers, or their parents,” she said.

Sameerah Munshi, a member of the commission's advisory board and a Muslim community advocate in Mahmoud case, acknowledged a diversity of views in her faith tradition, but urged the commission to make clear recommendations to protect religious minorities.

“Opt-out protections must be made clear, accessible and enforceable,” she said. “Oftentimes, these policies are in place on paper, but can be difficult to actualize.”

Munshi further argued that “laws on religious liberty must be implemented with transparency and consistency.”

“Public institutions need guidance and accountability to ensure that they’re not silencing only a particular viewpoint or voices on one particular issue,” she said.

Ryan Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington and one of the commissioners, argued in response to witnesses' testimony that "it seems that there's a certain type of public school administrator who thinks that functional, practical atheism is neutrality.

“The founders’ vision was that Jewish students could be authentically Jewish, Muslim students could be authentically Muslim, Protestant students could be authentically Protestant, Catholics to be authentically Catholic, it would be pluralistic,” he said, adding, “I think that’s a huge problem here is that we’ve allowed ourselves to think that secularism is somehow neutral, and it’s not.” †



**Bishop Robert
E. Barron**

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Catechesis Supplement

Family of Faith program builds community, helps parents catechize

By Natalie Hoefer

When Kim Getman was hired as director of religious education for St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell in 2022, the parishes' pastor Father Jegan Peter gave her a mission.

"He wanted me to create a program that would do two things," she says. "One—that brought all of our different family groups together, including public school, home school and St. Vincent de Paul School families. And two—that provided the tools, knowledge and confidence for parents to catechize their family."



Kim Getman

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, Getman says, she discovered Sophia Institute's "A Family of Faith" catechetical program that summer and implemented it that fall.

The four-year program centers on a different pillar of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* each year. Families of the two faith communities meet twice a month. The first meeting focuses on age-specific catechesis, and the second involves a topic-related group activity.

"The books and material have lessons for parents to do with their children at home on the off weeks," says Getman. "The program is really geared toward catechizing the parents and making sure they're comfortable catechizing their children."

Before each meeting, all parishioners—whether participating in the program or not—are invited to a pitch-in meal for fellowship.

Getman says she and Father Peter "both feel very pleased that we see the two directives being met."

"There's really good fellowship and relationships being formed between parishes and among all of the family groups. And we also have parents who feel more comfortable catechizing their children at home, feeling more confident about their ability to share their faith with their family."



Fr. Jegan Peter

'Everyone has a place to go'

Father Peter says his desire for such a program stemmed from his observations when he became pastor of the two Lawrence County parishes in 2020.

"In a religious and social context, [Lawrence County] is mainly dominated by many non-Catholic and Pentecostal churches," he says. "Hence, our presence here is vital to evangelize Christ and bring our Catholic faith and identity."

"It is a growing community where many spiritual



Father Jegan Peter, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell, poses in St. Vincent de Paul's school gym with some of the children involved in the two faith communities' Family of Faith catechetical program. (Submitted photo)

warfare and social challenges exist and come into play in our ministry as a united faith community and in [St. Vincent de Paul's] school. I could sense a great need for faith formation to define and distinguish our identity in this county."

Plus, with the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he realized the need to strengthen the bonds within and between the two parishes that form the Catholic Community of Lawrence County.

The task of creating such a program was daunting, Getman says.

When she attended the 2022 St. John Bosco Conference on catechesis in Steubenville, Ohio, shortly after being hired, she turned the mission over to the Holy Spirit.

"Very quickly," she says, she met a representative at the conference from Sophia Institute who shared about its "A Family of Faith" program. It perfectly met Father Peter's vision.

The program's two monthly meetings focus on a given catechetical topic of that year's theme.

The first meeting is focused primarily on catechesis. With catechists in six breakout groups providing age-specific instruction, participants "show up as a whole family, and everyone has a place to go," says Getman.

The second monthly meeting involves a group activity related to the month's catechetical lesson.

"Sometimes it's a service project, like going to a park and talking about care for creation, then picking up trash and hiking," Getman explains. "Or it could be a family prayer service. Or sometimes the large group session might involve a craft project where each child or family will make a craft to take home that affirms the lesson."

Parents use the program's books and material between meetings to continue catechizing their children on the month's topic at home.

"I've been pleasantly surprised to see how eager the parents are to do the lessons and say, 'Yes, I need help explaining this teaching to my child,'" says Getman. "This is a wonderful way for them to grow in

See FAITH, page 12

Catechesis reminds Catholics of the reasons for their hope in Christ

Beginnings are naturally times of hope, and the beginning of a new faith formation year around Catechetical

Sunday is no different. As disciples of Christ, leaning into hope is indeed a trademark for us.

The theme for Catechetical Sunday on Sept. 21 in this Jubilee Year of Hope picks this up by telling us: "Always be ready to give an explanation ... for a reason for your hope" (1 Pt 3:15).

When we use the word "catechesis," we very often mean religious education. But catechesis is not just teaching facts and doctrine. It is meant to help us who have encountered Christ and have chosen to follow him to get to know better this person, this God, whom we are following so that we can firmly hope in what he promised us.

Therefore, catechesis needs to do

two things. First, it needs to tell us what Christ promised us, to remind us why we made a good decision to follow him and why God is trustworthy. Second, it needs to get us ready to tell others who are not yet following Christ (or have just started) what our hope is and the reason why we keep following the Lord.

It is noteworthy that 1 Peter 3:15 is a quote from a passage on Christian suffering. We all know that the problem of pain and suffering is one of the greatest hurdles on our faith journey. For some, it is so big that they never really get started on their way.

Unfortunately, after the fall of Adam and Eve, pain and suffering are just a fact of life that we cannot avoid completely. And yet, as followers of Christ we have hope. We believe in Christ's promise that we are not stuck in suffering, that our suffering has meaning and our lives still have purpose. He helps us to get through the hard times and assures us that the pain will not win because, by his suffering,

he conquered sin and death and opened the door to heaven where there will be no more tears.

If we believe that, it is because Christ already showed up for us. If we are already disciples, then we have made at some point a decision to believe and to follow Christ because we perceived him to be truly present in our lives. Maybe something happened that could only have been divine intervention. Maybe we read a Scripture passage and felt like God was speaking directly to us. Maybe another person made us seen, known and loved in a way that convinced us that God himself sees, knows and loves us.

And if we have been disciples for a while, there is most likely more than one of these moments. They do not have to be big and dramatic; many are little but powerful reminders of God's goodness and presence. Because of these reminders we remain firmly rooted in our hope, even during suffering. What is your story?

We are all called by our baptism

to go and make disciples. Pope St. Paul VI wrote: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." You become a witness by sharing your stories. Help our catechists serving in parishes across central and southern Indiana to make disciples by sharing your stories freely!

If you want to share your story with me, please e-mail me at ueble@archindy.org. And if you really feel like you have no story to share, may I suggest contacting your parish and joining a faith formation program or small discipleship group? Sometimes we just need to be reminded of the reason for our hope.

Thank you to all our catechists in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for your service and for your hope.

(Ute Eble is the director of catechesis in the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. She can be reached at ueble@archindy.org.) †



Church’s ancient creed still shapes the lives of Catholics today

By Sean Gallagher

At each Saturday vigil and Sunday Mass and in every solemnity in the Church’s liturgical year, the faithful profess the creed.

These core Christian beliefs flow from Scripture and the Church’s sacred tradition dating back to the time of the Apostles.

This year, Christian leaders around the world are celebrating the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, held in what is now Turkey in 325. It was the first of a series of Church councils that defined dogmas found in the creed related to the Trinity and Christ’s incarnation. The creed professed at Mass, commonly called the Nicene Creed, is named after that council.

Father Daniel Mahan recently spoke with *The Criterion* about the creed and how it has shaped the life of faith of Catholics around the world and throughout its history up to the present day. He noted especially how the Church’s ancient creed is explained well for believers today in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Father Mahan is an archdiocesan priest who serves as director of the Institute on the Catechism of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and is author of the award-winning 2024 book, *A Journey through the Catechism*.

The creed in the catechism

In his interview, Father Mahan, citing an image used by St. John Paul II, described the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a “symphony of faith.”

“In the first movement of a symphony, you hear the themes that are going to play out in the remaining three movements,” Father Mahan said. “Such is the same with the first part of the catechism that follows the outline of the creed. You hear those themes that are going to be echoed and built upon in the remaining part of the catechism.”

To illustrate this concept, Father Mahan focused on how the creed explains the incarnation of Christ, how he, as the Son of God, became fully human, including having a human body.

The second part of the catechism, Father Mahan noted, lays out how the body of Christ is related to the Church’s worship, especially the Eucharist, which he said is “the re-presentation of the perfect sacrifice of his body on the cross that is made present in every offering of the holy Mass, albeit in an unbloody manner.”

The third part of the catechism, focusing on the Church’s moral teachings, applies what the creed says about the body of Christ to how Catholics live out their faith today.

“Our faith in the triune God is not just an intellectual exercise,” Father Mahan said. “Our faith is in the God who becomes flesh, makes his dwelling among us and who teaches us through his physical passion, death and resurrection that our faith in him must be lived out in a multitude of practical ways.”

This teaching, Father Mahan said, helps Catholics to follow the saying of St. Augustine of Hippo, “ ‘to become him whom we receive’ [in Communion] and be able to live out our faith and be Christ’s presence in the world.”

The fourth and final part of the catechism, focusing on prayer, explains in depth the Lord’s Prayer, which is prayed at Mass just before Communion.



Father Daniel Mahan preaches a homily during an April 27, 2023, Mass at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church in Aurora. He currently serves as director of the Institute on the Catechism of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Father Mahan noted that the part of that prayer that asks God for “our daily bread” is rendered in its original Greek as “*epiousion*,” which is translated literally as “super-essential.”

He said that, in this part of the prayer, believers are asking God to “give us not just bread for our table, not just what we need to survive in this life, but give us that super-substantial bread. Give us the bread of life. Give us the body of Christ in the holy Eucharist. That’s what we’re praying for as we prepare for holy Communion.”

The creed in history and today

Father Mahan spoke about the danger Christians faced in the early history of the Church in professing their faith in Christ, a faith that eventually developed into the creed professed today.

The earliest form of the creed, he said, was the Christian claim, in Greek, that Christ was “*kyrios*” (“Lord”).

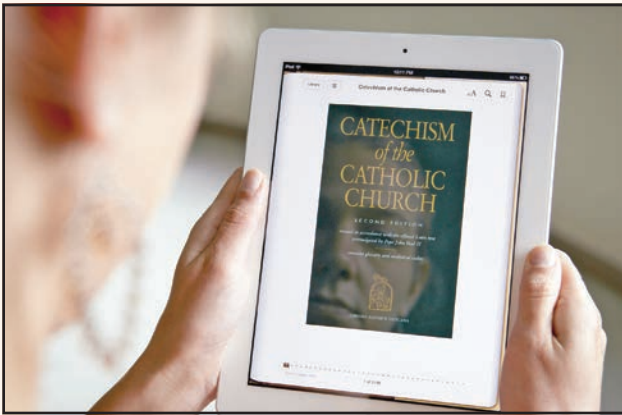
“That phrase directly contradicted the claim of Caesar,” Father Mahan said. “*Kyrios* was the title for Caesar. Caesar is *kyrios*. But early Christians said that Jesus is *kyrios*. That was sufficient to land them in jail and have them thrown to the lions. It was very subversive.”

Today, he continued, Christians face pressure of various degrees in professing their faith.

“Being a follower of Jesus is met with the rolling of eyes, at the least, among many,” Father Mahan said. “For some of our brothers and sisters in the Lord in other parts of the world, it means persecution and painful death.”

What Catholics profess in the creed is tied, Father Mahan said, to how they live from day to day.

“We see the connection between faith and life and the



A woman displays the e-book version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on an iPad. The catechism shows how the Church’s ancient creed is related to all aspects of the faith, explains Father Daniel Mahan. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

importance of keeping our faith, living our faith come what may,” he said. “It’s the blood of the martyrs that has been the seed of the Church and, in many ways, has contributed to the solidity, the rock-solid foundation of our faith.”

Despite the challenges today to living the faith fully and consistently, Father Mahan said that Catholics can find hope in the same Holy Spirit that led the Church 1,700 years ago to begin to set forth its creed.

“There is always hope with the Holy Spirit being the breath of God to this day, just as the Holy Spirit was the driving wind on the day of Pentecost,” he said. “The Holy Spirit continues to be the breath of God that animates the life of the Church and gives us reason for hope in these troubled times of ours ... ” †



A wall fresco depicting the First Council of Nicaea can be seen in this photo taken in the Sistine hall of the Vatican Library. The council was held in 325, and its 1,700th anniversary coincides with the Holy Year 2025. (CNS photo/Carol Glatz)

Vote of confidence leads a woman to share her love for God—and to a special award

By John Shaughnessy

To tell the story of Pam Fleming, let’s start with this truth about life:

Never underestimate the power of someone giving a vote of confidence to another person.

When Fleming was a college student living at home, she was intrigued when she saw there was an opening for a fifth-grade teacher in Sunday morning religious education at her parish, St. Michael in Greenfield.

“Something just touched me,” she recalls. “I was only 19. I called, and they said sure. That made a difference. It planted the seed of really wanting to share my faith with others. I got involved with the confirmation program there, too. I worked two or three years as a volunteer, helping the people who were leading it.”

What happened next still fills the now-60-year-old Fleming with joy.

“Father Steve Banet was the pastor at the time, and he asked me if I ever thought about being a youth minister. It was an instance where a priest saw something in me that I hadn’t seen before. I did it part-time. That confidence and that encouragement from Father Steve was phenomenal at that time. I was still in college. I know that made a huge difference in my life, to have that kind of encouragement.”

Forty years after that surprising vote of confidence, Fleming is still sharing her love and her joy for the Catholic faith with people of all ages, now as the director of faith formation and coordinator of youth ministry at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

That vote of confidence has also led to her recently being named the recipient of this year’s Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award—the highest honor the archdiocese bestows upon a faith formation leader—in honor of the late Indianapolis archbishop.

“Pam very much deserves the award because she not only loves teaching and is outstanding at it, but most of all because she shares the Gospel through her work and as a person of faith,” says Ute Eble, director of catechesis for the archdiocese.

The honor touches Fleming.

“I’m overwhelmed that someone notices your faith is shining through from you,” she says. “It warms my heart to know that maybe I am living the way Jesus wants us to live. And hopefully I can continue to do that.”

Going the extra mile for God

To continue the story of Fleming, let’s add this truth about life:

Never underestimate the power of a person’s excitement about their faith to draw other people to a relationship with God.

“When I talk about Jesus and the saints, I have an excitement in my voice,” Fleming says. “I want them to hear my excitement.”

“Obviously, I want to draw people to the Catholic faith, and I want people to be excited about their faith, but more importantly I want them to be excited about Jesus. I want them to have a relationship with Jesus. That part is always important. Sometimes I’m planting seeds. Sometimes I’m watering the seeds.”

Fleming has lived that truth in many ways. A few weeks before she graduated from college, she



Pam Fleming, left, guides Ben Tasker in preparing for his first reconciliation as his mom, Dr. Nicole Tasker, helps. (Submitted photo)



Pam Fleming’s dedication to leading people of all ages to a deeper relationship with Christ has led to her recently being named the recipient of this year’s Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award—the highest honor the archdiocese bestows upon a faith formation leader—in honor of the late Indianapolis archbishop. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

was sitting in church one day when the thought entered her mind that she needed to do missionary work. The thought also struck her that she didn’t need to go overseas to do it. That led her to teach for a year in a Catholic school in the then-poor, shrimping community of Bayou La Batre, Ala., which was featured in *Forrest Gump*, the 1994 film that won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

More recently, she was the director of religious education at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis for seven years, followed by teaching religion at Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison for four years. She is now in her fourth year at St. Matthew.

“She is so devoted, giving and creative,” says Msgr. William F. Stumpf, pastor of St. Matthew and vicar general for the archdiocese. “That comes out because of who she is, her relationship with God and her Catholic faith.”

“After she started here, she said, ‘This is my dream job. I’m getting to do everything I feel called to do—in terms of sharing my faith in a special way and still being a teacher.’ All that she does is an outpouring of her faith.”

Fleming says her life is focused on keeping “my eyes and my heart open to where God wants to lead me.”

“That’s always been a prayer of mine—to really be present to where God needs me,” she says. “And God always takes care of me wherever I go.”

She is also always willing to go the extra mile for God.

Instead of the traditional Vacation Bible School program that was offered this summer, Fleming “wanted to do something to make it even more Catholic, truly Catholic.” So, she developed her own program, “Mama Mary, Holy and Blessed,” a program that drew the young children into the life of the Blessed Mother and her appearances to children at Fatima and Lourdes.

“One day, the kids were given holy water,” she recalls. “The next day, a mom said her small child came to her and said, ‘Mom, would you bless me with this holy water?’ There was story after story like that. Another time, we

took a statue of Mary, put it on the floor, and they were able to crown her with flowers. The kids really took it in. The parents and volunteers were blown away by how the children were touched by it. Mama Mary really came through.”

Paying it forward

For Fleming—who has also helped to develop a faith program for adults with physical and developmental disabilities—everything flows back to this truth:

Never underestimate the power of making God the heart of your life, and never underestimate the Holy Spirit as a source of strength and guidance.

“I know I can turn to God at any time and for any reason,” she says. “I’ve also learned to appreciate the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. I think that made a big difference, too. I feel more strongly with the Holy Spirit in me. Learning to embrace the third person in the Trinity keeps me going even more.”

She pauses before adding, “I’ve had an awesome life. But to say you have an awesome life doesn’t mean it hasn’t come with struggles here and there. Yet through the ups and downs, it just helps to know that God is always there. It’s such a comfort to feel God’s compassion, to feel God’s mercy.”

One of the major “ups” in her life recently came when she was married for the first time two years ago.

“I get to share things with my husband about what goes on at work, and we both get excited,” she says about David. “Being able to share my faith with him, and how he shares with me, one helps the other.”

She uses a similar approach in faith formation, inviting and including parents in their children’s journeys to receiving their first Communion and the sacrament of confirmation.

“I want to help parents be there for their children, to let them know the Holy Spirit is with them and that they’re not on their own. Anytime I’m preparing the teens or children for a sacrament, I always have the parents there at the meetings. I want them to really see what’s being taught. For some of them, it’s a great refresher. For some of them, they’re hearing it for the first time, or it comes to them in a different light now. Hopefully I’m a role model to them that the Holy Spirit really is with us.”

She sees her life and all her efforts in faith formation as a way of “paying it forward” for that vote of confidence that Father Banet gave her 40 years ago.

“That is what I’m doing,” she says. “I want them to get to a point, children or adults, to take their faith forward. Even to have a conversation with others. Having Jesus as part of the conversation doesn’t mean you’re coming across preaching. You’re sharing—to be happy in your faith, this Catholic faith, this gift that Christ gave us.

“I do feel like I’m passing that on. I’ve had a life of being able to share this gift with others.” †

Workshop helps teachers, youth ministers, coaches nurture hope in teens

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—As youths across central and southern Indiana began another year of school, youth ministry programming and athletic competition, adults who minister to them gathered on Aug. 9 at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood to be encouraged and grow deeper in their service.

The archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry sponsored its “Into the Heart” workshop that day to help staff members of Catholic schools, those involved in youth ministry and Catholic Youth Organization teams grow in their knowledge of the faith and how to help youths grow in their own relationship with Christ and the Church.

This year’s workshop focused on the theological virtue of hope, which is at the heart of the Church’s ongoing Jubilee Year of Hope.

Christ is ‘the ultimate Good Samaritan’

Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director and pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County, spoke at the workshop about how Christ is the foundation of a very specific hope of all believers.

Hope for Catholics, Father Keucher said, “is not just thinking better thoughts or being optimistic. It’s knowing that Jesus Christ is in charge and that Jesus Christ is love.”

Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37), Father Keucher said, is a dramatic and touching illustration of how Christ gives believers hope.

He described Christ as “the ultimate Good Samaritan” and said that every person is, in one way or another, like the man left half-dead in a ditch.

“He comes along this road and in great love, in humility, kneels down and says, ‘I am not going to leave you here.’ In love, he binds up our wounds,” Father Keucher said.

The oil that the Samaritan pours into the wounds of the man is symbolic of the sacraments, while the inn where the Samaritan took the wounded man is symbolic of the Church, Father Keucher explained.

Seeing Gospel passages like the parable of the Good Samaritan in this way can lead youths and those who minister to them into a deeper relationship with Christ.

“We are invited to this relationship with him that is personal, beautiful and wonderful,” Father Keucher said. “When we are best friends with Jesus, then we know that we will always have hope, because he is all that is good. He is love. He is beauty. He is safety. He is all these things. He is going to take us home one day, ultimately, to heaven.”

A key to foster a hope-filled relationship with Christ in youths, Father Keucher advised, is to take them to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

“If we take our kids in our youth groups, our teams, our classes to Jesus in the tabernacle, if we take our kids literally in front of Jesus, he will do the rest,” Father Keucher said. “He does incredible things. He

will speak to their hearts. I know him because he has spoken to my heart in dark moments in my life.

“When we take our kids to Jesus, he will do the rest. He’ll restore hope.”

‘Count on hope’ to transform us

Later in the workshop, Jake Teitgen, director of communications and advancement at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, reflected on how hope can transform the lives of youths and how teachers, youth ministers and coaches can be channels of such transforming hope.

He reminded his listeners of the “incredible privilege” they have in being a part of the lives of the young people they serve and simply observing their lives.

“Sometimes we can lose sight of just how much of a privilege that is,” Teitgen said. “Really, at the end of the day, having the opportunity to even notice young people and affirm the things that are going well in their life, to be a companion when things are not going well, is a tremendous opportunity.”

But while Teitgen encouraged those at the workshop to step back and be grateful for the blessing of observing the ever-changing lives of the youths whom they serve, he said they should also be mindful that they themselves are being watched, too.

“Christ is the one who gazes upon us,” said Teitgen. “And when we are gazed upon by Christ, we are transformed, and we see with a new perspective.”

Christ gazing upon adults gives them transforming hope that they can then pass it on to the youths that they serve.

“When we say that hope transforms, hope doesn’t transform God,” Teitgen said. “Hope doesn’t really even transform the very real problems of the world. The only thing we can really count on hope to transform is us. That the way we see things, the perspective we have, is transformed by hope.”

Teitgen also reminded his listeners that the work they do with youths in nurturing transforming hope in their lives might take a very long time to come to full flower.

To illustrate this reality, Teitgen told the story of Antonio Gaudi, the Spanish architect who designed the famous La Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona and who died in 1926, during the early days of the church’s construction.



Father Michael Keucher gives a presentation on hope to people who serve archdiocesan youths. The talk was part of the Into the Heart workshop, sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry, held at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood on Aug. 9. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Teitgen told his listeners that Gaudi, whose cause for beatification and canonization is being considered by the Vatican, knew well that he would never see the completion of the great vision he had for the basilica.

“The reason he felt like he could do that is because he said that the patron of this project [God] was not in a hurry,” Teitgen said. “He had that vision of God gazing upon us and knowing it’s OK for us to play the long game and not see how this all plays out.”

Teitgen then encouraged his listeners to take the same approach with the youths they serve.

“Do we look at our young people as precious gifts in whom we hope and are willing to take our time?” he asked those at the workshop. “Do we believe that they can someday inspire awe at a glimpse of the divine? Do we believe that they are all masterpieces, still under work? Are we willing to start on that work that we will never see come to fruition? God has that kind of hope in us. Can we offer that kind of hope to others?”

Juanita Bruggeman is the office manager at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington. When she saw that “hope” was the topic of the Into the Heart workshop, she knew that she wanted to attend.

“This is what we do every day,” said Bruggeman. “As Catholics, everything that we do, we do in faith, love and hope. So, hope is a very important part of our lives. If you don’t have hope, then you can’t expect a better future.”

She also acknowledged the importance for herself and her colleagues of nurturing hope in the students at St. Charles, knowing that they’ll leave the school after the eighth grade and will experience many changes in their lives afterward.

“They are still a work in progress, an unfinished masterpiece,” Bruggeman said. “That’s why we have to nurture hope in them. We might never see the end-result in our lifetime. You just hope that whatever seeds you plant in them will be enough.” †

FAITH

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knowledge of the faith, but also how to share it with their children.”

‘Families model the faith for each other’

Community- and relationship-building are a core part of Family of Faith, not just in the group activities but also in the pitch-in meal before each meeting.

The meal was initially intended for the program’s participants. But it “has just grown and blossomed and taken on a life of its own, which is beautiful and what you want to have happen,” says Getman.

That growth began when two older women “heard about the program, and it touched their hearts,” she says.

“They said, ‘Oh, these working parents don’t have time to prepare a meal. Send us the sign-up sheet!’ And they got many volunteers from people not involved in the program—retired people, grandparents—to start making meals.”

When they noticed other groups met at St. Vincent de Paul at the same time as the Family of Faith, the two women invited the groups to share in the dinner.

“We’re now feeding between 90 to 95 people at every meal,” says Getman. “The older parishioners really enjoy helping in this way. It’s really neat to see the different generations get involved.”

She calls the fellowship time during the meal “just essential” for several reasons, one being the strengthening of community.

When Krisana Martine and her mother Joan Martine enrolled in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) at St. Vincent de Paul in the fall of 2023, they appreciated eating with the Family of Faith participants before going to OCIA classes.

“A lot of the Family of Faith members were encouraging and helped with all the information we were taking in,” says Krisana.

Joan agreed, noting that they got to know their OCIA instructor better during the meals.

“He and several other people we met at the dinners are friends now,” she says.

Now as Catholics, the duo is teaming up to coordinate the nursery room for the Family of Faith program this fall.

That room will soon include Anthony and Jackie Baratta’s weeks-old newborn—their sixth child.

As catechists for a similar parish in Ohio, the couple was familiar with Family of Faith.

“So, when we moved to the area here, it felt natural to join [Family of Faith] and meet new people” through the meals and classes, says Anthony.

“It’s hard to get to know parishioners in the few minutes after Mass. So, we’re grateful for this opportunity not only for our kids to get to know other kids at St. Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Community of Lawrence County, but also for us to get to know the parents. We’ve made many friends from Family of Faith.”

He believes one of the program’s “most important benefits is kids seeing other Catholics practice their faith and feeling comfortable speaking about their faith.”

Getman says the meal and program activities are valuable in that sense.

“Our end-of-year surveys show the value of children interacting with other families and seeing those parents model the faith for them,” she says.

Offering catechesis classes where “parents drop off their children” are beneficial, too, Getman notes.

“But there’s value in children coming together and seeing, ‘These are my friends, and these are their families,

and this is important to them.’ The families model the faith for each other, and the fellowship component is vital for that.”

‘Knitted together in Christ’

Father Peter says the two faith communities “have been blessed” as the they begin the fourth year of the program.

“Many young families have shown great interest and made a significant impact on the life of the parishes,” he says. “We can see the fruits of this program through the knowledge of our kids and the participation of parents in adult catechism classes.

“And many of our parishioners have expressed their joyful moments of being in this community experience and knitted together in Christ as the Catholic family in Lawrence County.”

Getman attributes the program’s success to the Holy Spirit.

“When Father first told me about his idea, I told him I didn’t think I could make it happen until the next year,” she says.

“But then I met the Sophia Institute representative at the conference. And the Holy Spirit said, ‘The time is now, and here’s how we’re going to make it happen.’

“And it all came together.” †

RE-ENTRY

continued from page 1

and connecting him with a church community?

And what if that mentor stayed by his side? Picked him up the day he was released, continued working with him on resolving challenges and providing advice and encouragement?

“That would have been a blessing,” Fitzgerald admits. “If you can see success ... that can give you hope.”

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is launching a revolutionary program—Catholic Charities-Prison Re-entry—to provide such help and hope.

“The best we can tell, this is the first time [a program like] this has been done in the United States,” says Deacon John Cord, archdiocesan coordinator of Catholic Charities-Corrections Ministries.

The new re-entry program “is rooted in the principles of Catholic social teaching, especially the dignity of the human person and solidarity,” says Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. “Just as Jesus turned to the so-called Good Thief on the cross and assured him of paradise, so we must never lose sight of the inherent dignity of every human being.”

‘On a path to recovery’

That inherent dignity has been the focus of the archdiocesan Corrections Ministries—formerly part of the Department of Pastoral Ministries—since it was established under then-Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin in 2016.

He envisioned three areas in the ministry, says Deacon Cord: social justice (promoting legislative action and education), in-prison ministry and re-entry.

The first two areas have seen progress, he says. But re-entry “had never been touched” when he became coordinator of Corrections Ministries in January 2023.

Deacon Cord recalls the clear directive Archbishop Thompson gave him.

“He said, ‘Look, we have to do all three [areas]. We can’t do just what we’re doing.’ And he said, ‘Go for it.’”

First on the to-do list was identifying issues and challenges often faced by those re-entering society.

The person might need help overcoming drug or alcohol addiction. There might be problems with physical or mental health, financial issues or legal matters to address.

For instance, when Chris Stimac was released from incarceration, “I was fighting a really uphill battle to stay connected to my children,” he recalls. “... I got deeply involved in family courts, and that had huge financial consequences.”

Even having assistance reinstating a driver’s license would be helpful, says Derek Rehwinkel, who is currently in Tippecanoe Community Corrections in Lafayette, Ind.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, principal celebrant of a Mass at the Plainfield Correctional Facility in Plainfield on March 26, 2023, offers a blessing to a man who was soon to be released from the facility. Deacon Martin “Neil” May smiles at left. (File photo by Natalie Hoefler)

“Then you don’t have to worry about driving without a license,” he says. “And a lot of companies want people to have a driver’s license so they can rely on them to get to work. Or construction jobs—you have to have a license to drive to different sites.”

As Fitzgerald noted, finding safe housing and a job that pays enough for independent living are other major re-entry issues.

Finally, says Deacon Cord, those re-entering society often “don’t have any good life direction. So, mentoring and connecting them with a church family and social families outside of the little circle that they have” is important.

For two years, Deacon Cord and his team researched Catholic and non-Catholic re-entry programs throughout the country that worked to resolve these issues.

“We determined that we would like to do a very comprehensive re-entry program,” he says.

The team then worked with the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC) and other agencies to learn what was currently in place in central and southern Indiana to address re-entry needs.

“Outside of PACE [Public Advocates in Community re-Entry] in Marion County, there’s no one organization or group of organizations that do the holistic piece,” he says.

Four counties—Bartholomew, Hendricks, Jackson and Shelby—were selected to initially launch the Catholic Charities-Prison Re-entry program on a small scale.

Each county “already had some of the services in place, so we weren’t reinventing the wheel,” says Deacon Cord.

The team met with each of those organizations to discuss their needs “so we can fill in the gaps,” he explains. “How can we make it so that a person coming out of prison only has one place they have to reach out to, and boom, they have everything they need and it’s done, and these folks are put on a path to recovery?”

‘In a safe place’

The process will begin with trained mentors meeting with a person six months prior to their release, with help from IDOC in vetting for those “who are very focused on making a better life for themselves,” Deacon Cord explains.

The IDOC doesn’t normally allow organizations to work with a person prior to re-entry, says David Liebel, the department’s director of religious services and community engagement.

“But knowing the preparation that’s gone into this [new re-entry program],” he says, “we’re comfortable to make that accommodation in this case.”

“Trust is a difficult thing to build. So, allowing volunteers with the ministry to make contact and begin work prior to release and then follow through with them post-release I think is going to be crucial.”

The mentor will pick up the person the day of their release and drive them to transitional housing.

“The very first night, they’re in a safe place,” says Deacon Cord. “They don’t have to worry about where they’re going to stay, what they’re going to eat, what they’re going to wear. And we’ll give them a few days to just settle in.”

Next comes addressing health, addictions, counseling, legal, financial and other needs. In each county, a team of experts in those areas will be created for the mentors to approach for help in handling the person’s various issues.

“And then we’ll work to find them a good job with a salary they can live on,” says Deacon Cord.



Jamarson Fitzgerald, left, poses with his daughters and his aunt in Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo)

Once the person is stabilized, he adds, “we’ll find them permanent housing—good, stable, safe housing—that they can afford.

“And then the mentors will stay with them if they want ... just to kind of be there as a friend and sounding board.”

It ‘would change the whole paradigm’

Such a program would be “monumental ... if nothing else from the emotional point of view that someone cares,” says Stimac, who now works as



Chris Stimac

vice president of research and impact for John Boner Neighborhood Centers in Indianapolis.

“A lot of folks come from broken families, so there’s no support,” he explains. “Many are left to just figure it out, and that leads to recidivism.”

Stimac notes a misconception that “the minute the [prison] gate closes behind them, there’s relief. “But it’s the opposite. For many, that’s the worst moment because there’s no safety net. Many prefer to go back in.”

The archdiocese’s re-entry program “would change the whole paradigm. Knowing you’ve got someone to walk with you, to know that mentor is invested in you even before you walk out the door will relieve the amount of anxiety.”

Deacon Cord says the current plan is to hire a director for the Catholic Charities-Prison Re-entry program soon, then start working with the IDOC by the end of the year to select people who will be released from certain facilities in the four trial counties.

“Once selected, we will enroll those folks in education classes and life skills classes,” he says. “We estimate our first clients will begin to be released next spring.

“From there, we will ramp up services as more people are released.” Eventually, the program will expand into all 39 counties that comprise the archdiocese. Deacon Cord and his team also created vision plans for other services the program could include “five, 10, 20 years from now.”

Given the increase in resources the new re-entry program will require, Corrections Ministries is now an outreach of the archdiocese’s Catholic Charities secretariat.

“Corrections ministry is a vital expression of our mission: to extend compassion, dignity and spiritual support to those impacted by incarceration ... and walk with them toward restoration and renewal,” says archdiocesan Catholic Charities executive director David Bethuram.

He is especially excited for the opportunity to “reach deeper into the lives of those affected by incarceration—men and women who have often endured profound trauma.”

‘Justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy’

After years in and out of prison, Jamarson has found stability. He now enjoys being a father and raising his daughters. He is proud of his job as a computer numerical control operator for Allison Transmission in Indianapolis and takes advantage of the counseling services the company offers its employees.

Jamarson is dedicated to never needing something like the archdiocese’s Prison Re-entry program. But he considers how it might have helped a buddy of his.

“I know he had anxiety” about being released from prison, says Jamarson. “He felt like people had written him off. He got reincarcerated in a few months.

“I truly think that if he had somebody who he could talk to,” someone who could work with him on reentry challenges and continue to provide emotional support, “he could’ve gotten out and been successful. He could change some of the narratives he had.”

Archbishop Thompson is clear that “no excuse can justify violence toward another person.

“But the Church has long advocated for the administration of justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy,” he adds. “It is our hope and confidence that the new re-entry ministry will prove beneficial to those individuals who are seeking to start afresh, as well as [to] their families and society itself. ...

“Jesus reminds us that what we do to the least of his brothers or sisters, we do to him.”

(The operational costs of Catholic Charities-Corrections Ministry are supported by the United Catholic Appeal. However, this new Prison Re-entry program goes far beyond what the Appeal can sustain. Special support will be needed to ensure its success. If you feel called to help restore hope and dignity to those re-entering society, please consider supporting this vital mission by donating at bit.ly/ArchReEntry or using the QR code. For information about Catholic Charities-Corrections Ministries and/or the new Catholic Charities-Prison Reentry program, contact Deacon John Cord at 317-432-6604 or by e-mail at jcord@archindy.org.) †



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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

God comes to humanity through creation so that humanity can go to God

By Leonard J. DeLorenzo

(OSV News)—There is a moment right after you’ve passed outside of our galaxy when, all of a sudden, the darkness of space fills with uncountable new points of light. What you see looks like a very full night sky on Earth, with every star shining. But these aren’t stars that you see—at least not singular stars.

The planetarium’s narrator reveals, “Each dot you see now is a galaxy made up of many billions of stars.” Thousands of dots, each containing billions of stars. This leap in the order of magnitude is nearly impossible to fathom. Your imagination trembles. This is the moment when the immensity of your smallness causes you to audibly gasp.

I have witnessed that gasp for about 20 years. It happens in the middle of the 50-minute planetarium presentation called “All Creation Gives Praise” that I co-created with my astronomer colleague Phil Sakimoto in the Digital Visualization Theater at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana.

This partnership started when I first glimpsed the expanse of our observable universe under Phil’s guidance within this dome-shaped theater. I gasped when we made the jump from seeing stars to seeing galaxies that looked like stars. I also gasped when I saw the microwave radiation from the Big Bang, originating some 13.8 billion light years away. I gasped again when we returned to our own planet after seeing the tremendous distances between everything else.

Since that experience, we have been working to help people understand what they are able to see from this planetarium space, while also offering them the opportunity to praise the God who creates and governs it all—the God who fills our gasps of wonder with his love.

Wonder is hard to come by these days. Our media producers and content creators have become so proficient at grabbing our attention that we find it harder and harder to stay focused on one thing for very long.

Wonder takes time; it is more than surprise and interruption. Wonder is a relationship of intimacy, where you find yourself in awe at something that is beyond you, which becomes more fascinating the longer you dwell with it.

In his great 2017 book about the necessity of detachment and solitude for true human life, Cardinal Robert Sarah in *The Power of Silence* does not mince words when he diagnoses our modern media ecology: “Images are drugs that we can no longer do without because they are present everywhere and at every moment. Our eyes are sick, intoxicated, they can no longer close. It is necessary to stop one’s ears, too, because there are sonic images that assault and violate our sense of hearing, our intellect and our imagination.”

Cardinal Sarah is not advocating for entering into sensory deprivation chambers where we try (in vain) to shut off all observing, thinking and reflecting. Rather, he is naming what many people instinctively feel: There is no time or space today in which we can truly focus, ponder and contemplate—everything is coming at us so quickly. We are incessantly bombarded with stimuli.

The vast majority of us are far from the regular life experience of someone like the 18th-century Congregationalist preacher Jonathan Edwards, who wrote in his *Spiritual Exercises* that “I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year, often walking in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy and prayer, and converse with God. ... Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent.”

Edwards lauds the communicative capacity of nature while Cardinal Sarah laments the suffocating effect of too many artificial images. We feel the difference between the two if we find ourselves on a mountain’s peak, or deep in a forest or surrounded on all sides by rolling prairies.

It is not that the Wind River Range of Wyoming is intrinsically “better” nature than that of Lower Manhattan; rather, it is that Lower Manhattan has become a setting suffused with busyness, electronic communication and artificial images, while the backcountry of Wyoming is outside the reach of technological, commercial and industrial ways. You are more likely to be overwhelmed with man-made images in Manhattan and overcome by natural ones in Wyoming.

The “Creator of heaven and Earth” is not absent from Lower Manhattan—far from it. Instead, those who have grown accustomed to such places are more likely to become desensitized to the traces and signs of God when saturated by all the busyness. This may be just as true today in one’s own living room where screens and notifications vie for attention in every passing moment.

Long before the industrial or digital revolutions, St. Bonaventure spoke to the perils of constant distractedness

and the need to be awakened again to the Word of God, who is the principle of all life. He wrote: “Whoever, therefore, is not enlightened by such splendor of created things is blind; whoever is not awakened by such outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; whoever does not discover the First Principle from such clear signs is a fool. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God” (from *The Journey of the Soul into God*).

The paradox Bonaventure notices is that our senses must be opened to recognize God in created things. It would seem that our senses are quite open when perpetually attending to all the many images, sounds and parcels of communication that surround us today. But the truth is that our senses are dulled by such things, so that true sensing is obstructed and ultimately snuffed out by these forms of sensory overload, the same way too much cotton candy ruins an otherwise healthy appetite.

This is what Edmund Pevensie infamously learned in C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* when he had eaten too much enchanted Turkish Delight candy: “There’s nothing that spoils the taste of good ordinary food half so much as the memory of bad magic food.” Artificial images employed to steal our attention are the bad magic food; natural images are the good ordinary food.

Weeks spent “off the grid” in a natural environment without artificial stimulation can restore the appetite and open the senses again. So can a disciplined pilgrimage, such as on the *Camino de Santiago* in northern Spain, or even a monastic immersion experience. We can retreat to the desert, retreat to the woods, or retreat to the sea. But we couldn’t possibly retreat to outer space, could we?

While the boundaries of physics prevent us from moving our bodies beyond, at most, our planet’s immediate neighborhood, by using technology well we can now place our attention on those places and things to which we cannot move otherwise.

Were we to do that with an array of artificial images and fabricated experiences, however, we would be doing nothing other than exchanging one trick of media saturation for another. But if we were able to observe the real imagery that our technological means brought to us, we would instead be doing something akin to reading a map in three-dimensional space. Only in that way could the far reaches of the cosmos become a setting for a retreat into nature like the other retreat destinations.

The premise on which “All Creation Gives Praise” relies is just this: to only present real astronomical observations so as to provide an immersive natural environment for rekindling wonder. The technology employed extends the power of our eye through satellite imagery; it then orders and organizes what has been observed and gives the participants the experience of moving through these cosmological realities sequentially and proportionally in a domed theater, a planetarium.

What participants experience are “views of what you would see if you really could travel through space.” The possibility of encountering something truly new and literally breathtaking is, as the astronomical narration announces, “not science fiction, but science fact.”

Seeing is not believing, but belief does need sight. We move toward belief in what we cannot or have not yet seen on the basis of that which we have seen. True, the Lord said to St. Thomas that “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (Jn 20:29). But immediately afterward, St. John the Evangelist writes that these signs “are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” (Jn 20:31).

In other words, St. Thomas saw the glorified risen body of his Lord, while all other disciples after him must rely on the signs recorded in the Gospel so as to make the act of belief in that same Lord. We see signs and then, on the basis of the signs we have seen, are invited to believe in the one to whom the signs point.

The way in which science and religion are related to one another in “All Creation Gives Praise” is analogous to the relationship between signs of the incarnate Word and belief in him. What we explore is what astronomers have called “the observable universe”—meaning all that



The “Cosmic Cliffs” of the Carina Nebula are seen in an image released on July 12, 2022, by NASA. The “cliffs” are divided horizontally by an undulating line between a cloudscape forming a nebula along the bottom portion and a comparatively clear upper portion. The image is from data provided by NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope, a revolutionary apparatus designed to peer through the cosmos to the dawn of the universe. Speckled across both portions is a starfield, showing innumerable stars of many sizes. (OSV News photo/NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI, Webb ERO Production Team, Handout via Reuters)

has been observed through astronomical means. The sky is too vast and the distances too enormous to observe everything, so by international concord astronomers have agreed to scan and map the sky in certain directions, accounting for everything they can detect and analyze. By scientific reasoning, astronomers seek to identify and understand that which is perceptible. “All Creation Gives Praise” makes use of these observations, the things we can perceive. The aim of the astronomical part of the presentation is to help participants grow in knowledge and understanding of what we human beings have observed in space. The role of theological reflection, then, is first to marvel at that which we see through the words of Scripture and tradition and then to prompt us toward the possibility of greater belief. What we see are signs of the Word of God, by whom and through whom all things are made. Once we begin to understand what we are seeing, the grammar and longing of the language of faith open a path that leads from astonishment to prayer.

The entire presentation is a living experience of the dialogue of science and religion, faith and reason, astronomy and theology. We strive to see and understand better, so as to pray and praise more deeply, honestly and boldly. Science remains science and religion remains religion—yet by speaking together in a mutually hospitable manner, something new emerges: a union of faith and reason.

The effect of moving with our attention to the most distant reaches of the observable universe is returning to our given place, in our particular time, to discover ourselves: small, seemingly insignificant, a speck of dust in a breath of time thrown amidst the vastness of creation. Seeing this truth upends our illusions about ourselves and our delusions about God.

We are not the center of the universe: by this journey, we can see that clearly. Everything we have ever known is contained within an indescribably small bubble of cosmic space, with potentially infinitely more space on every side. Cosmically speaking, we just don’t matter.

But we matter to God. To us, the Father has sent his Son. To become one with us, the Word became flesh. For us, God gives himself. Were we to be able to see everything there ever was and ever will be, it would all be for nothing if we did not move from seeing the magnificent “sign” of creation itself to believing that the meaning of heaven and Earth was once contained in the little space of Mary’s womb.

The fullness and intensity of the Lord of the cosmos—through whom, with whom and in whom all that is exists—is made present to us under the appearance of simple bread and wine. Everything that exists serves as the backdrop for that which is most wonderful and surprising of all: God comes to us.

God comes to us so we may go to him. That is the meaning of all existence. The incarnation is the descending movement, the ascension the movement that opens way for our own ascent. A journey through the cosmos shows us that, no matter how far we go on our own, we will never reach fulfillment and peace unless we accept the mercy of a God who comes to us.

(Leonard J. DeLorenzo, Ph.D., is the director of undergraduate studies at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana.) †

Joyful Witness/
Kimberly Pohovey

Saints’ lives remind us small acts with great love glorify God

When I was young, I fancied myself as growing up to do big things. I wasn’t necessarily consumed with fame, but I wanted to do or be something important and affect the lives of many.



As I matured, I came to understand that I wouldn’t be famous or important. And as I age, I realize that my contributions to the world are small—but heartfelt.

I’ve made my peace with small. I realize that God has equipped me with the talents to make small contributions that do affect many. We have no idea how one small gesture to another can

create a ripple effect.

“Maybe God has a bigger plan for us than we have for ourselves.” This is a line from a sappy Nicholas Sparks movie titled *A Walk to Remember* that I watched eons ago, and it stuck with me. Only, I’ve learned that the

bigger plan God has in store for me is in small acts and ordinary days.

Years ago, I watched a Hallmark movie titled *The Magic of Ordinary Days*. While the female lead in the movie dreams of making a scientific breakthrough, she learns that it is in the mundane, everyday life that we actually make our mark.

We have lots of examples of saints who show us a simple way to glorify God.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, also known as the “Little Flower,” lived a simple yet deeply spiritual life, offering her small daily sacrifices to God. She taught that holiness could be achieved through ordinary acts of love and trust in God’s mercy.

St. Teresa of Calcutta famously said, “We can do no great things, only small acts with great love.” In this quote, she wasn’t downplaying the things that we could achieve, but perhaps she was suggesting the size of our achievements are great in the context of God and the

powers of a being greater than ourselves.

How can we perform such small acts of kindness? A smile, a compliment or simply living your life with a joyful spirit is anything but simple. When carried out with the love God commands of us, these seemingly small gestures become a sacred way of life.

As I write this, I am looking out at the ocean at the Outer Banks in North Carolina. It occurs to me that I normally equate the ocean with the mighty waves. But it’s the millions of tiny grains of sand that form the foundation of the ocean.

When you look back at your life, will it be the grand gestures you remember? Or the thousands of small and steady kindnesses that people have shown you?

(Kimberly Pohovey is a member of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis. She is the director of major and planned gifts for the archdiocese.) †

Our Works of Charity/
David Bethuram

Catholic Charities works to address hunger in all its dimensions

Feeding those in need is a daily mission for Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Hunger is a universal concept—but for families living on the edge, it’s a relentless cycle of impossible choices: heat or food, medicine or groceries. September marks National Hunger Awareness Month, a time to reflect on the complexity of hunger and the many faces it wears.



According to Feeding America’s 2025 report, more than 1,033,890 Hoosiers are facing food insecurity—including 292,720 children. That’s one in seven people, and one in five children across Indiana.

The consequences of childhood hunger are profound and far-reaching:

—Children facing hunger are more likely to repeat a grade, score lower on standardized tests, and struggle with behavioral and emotional regulation.

—Chronic malnutrition can lead to stunted growth, weakened immune systems, and long-term cognitive delays.

But the impact doesn’t stop with the child—it ripples through every aspect of family life:

—Mental health: Hunger fuels stress, anxiety and depression. Parents often carry guilt and shame, while children internalize fear and insecurity.

—Physical health: Malnutrition contributes to chronic illness, fatigue and developmental delays.

—Education: Hungry children are more likely to fall behind academically and face behavioral challenges.

—Employment: Adults in food-insecure households may miss work due to illness or caregiving responsibilities, deepening the cycle of poverty.

—Family dynamics: Hunger strains relationships. Parents skip meals to feed their children, while kids shoulder emotional burdens far beyond their years.

One of those faces belongs to Destiny, a mother of three navigating a reality that’s often invisible to the outside world.

Destiny didn’t experience hunger the way most of us imagine. Her stomach growled,

but she couldn’t feel it. She called it “starvation mode.” Her body had adapted to scarcity, but her spirit was stretched thin. With her children entering their teenage years, she was determined to provide—but life kept throwing obstacles in her path.

She had distanced herself from her family, hoping for a fresh start. But that fresh start felt farther away each day. Her boyfriend had left, her benefits were dwindling, and the occasional housecleaning jobs barely covered the basics. She’d stare into her cupboards, praying there was enough soup or beans to make it through another lunch.

As food became scarcer, Destiny began skipping meals. The toll was swift and severe. She was constantly exhausted but couldn’t sleep. Hunger made her nauseous. Her thoughts scattered. Her body weakened. She walked through her home with one hand on the furniture, steadying herself against the dizziness caused by an undiagnosed iron deficiency.

But her greatest concern wasn’t her own health—it was her children’s. They noticed. They asked questions. “Why are you dizzy?” “Why do you take those pills?” One day, Destiny came home to find a glass of milk waiting for her. Her son had poured it and insisted she drink it, watching to make sure she finished every drop.

That moment broke her heart. Her children shouldn’t have to worry about her. She feared not just the physical effects of hunger. She also realized the emotional scars it might leave on her kids.

Destiny’s story is not unique.

The consequences of childhood hunger are deep and enduring—affecting physical development, mental health and future opportunities.

Catholic Charities is committed to addressing hunger in all its dimensions: physical, emotional and spiritual. We walk alongside families like Destiny’s, offering support, dignity and hope. Our mission goes beyond meals: We help families

pursue education, employment and healing.

Because no child should have to pour a glass of milk out of fear for their parent’s well-being.

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

The consequences of childhood hunger are deep and enduring—affecting physical development, mental health and future opportunities. Catholic Charities is committed to addressing hunger in all its dimensions: physical, emotional and spiritual.

Called to Holiness/
Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

The search for the true cross is a search for the Savior and for salvation

Pope Leo’s birthday is on Sept. 14; it coincides with a liturgical feast dedicated to an event—the Exaltation of the Holy Cross—rather than to a saint.



This year, the date falls on a Sunday. While most feasts would be overshadowed, this one is among the few considered worthy to replace the regular Sunday Mass.

If you think that’s a bit unusual, you’re right. But there’s no getting around the fact that when your calendar has been developing for 2,000 years, the elaborate rules that govern it—and the exceptions to those rules—are likely to be complicated.

The story behind the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is a fascinating mix of history and legend. In 326, 80-year-old St. Helen travels to the Holy Land with a grand and enduring purpose: To find the true cross, the one on which Jesus had been crucified.

In Jerusalem, the location of the cross is revealed to her by a mystical sign. And after destroying the pagan temple to Venus that had been built there, Helen promptly finds three crosses—and a few other relics of Christ’s Passion—buried beneath its rubble.

Enlisting the help of the local bishop, Macarius, Helen takes all three crosses to the bedside of a dying woman. The true cross reveals itself when she is miraculously cured. Her mission complete, Helen leaves part of the

cross in Jerusalem and takes the rest of it with her to Rome. By order of her son, the Emperor Constantine, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is built over the sites she confirmed as Mt. Calvary and the empty tomb.

Stories like this are often easy to dismiss. But piecemeal accounts of Helen’s quest were recorded by reputable sources, and the earliest of them dates to within a few decades of the events they describe. According to Eusebius (who died in 339), the site of the Holy Sepulchre had indeed been covered by a temple to Venus.

Not long afterward, St. Cyril of Jerusalem noted that the true cross had been discovered during the reign of Constantine. In his *Fourth Catechesis*, written around 350, Cyril uses it as evidence of the events recorded in the Gospels. “[Christ] was truly crucified for our sins. For if you would deny it, the place refutes you visibly, this blessed Golgotha, in which we are now assembled for the sake of Him who was here crucified; and the whole world has since been filled with pieces of the wood of the Cross.”

Forty years later, a more complete version of the relic’s discovery had emerged. The essentials of the event we still commemorate liturgically have remained remarkably consistent ever since.

What does a 1,700-year-old expedition have to do with us? In a real sense, St. Helen’s pilgrimage is the quest of every disciple. Our vocational journeys are essentially a search for the true cross.

If we find it challenging to consider marriage, priesthood or consecrated life for ourselves, perhaps it’s

because the crosses others carry always appear lighter and easier to bear than our own.

As Christians, we know where the life of faith will lead us. Jesus did not mince words when he said, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24). The footsteps of Christ are found on the way of the cross. The call to follow him is the call to self-sacrifice.

Every vocation demands that we lay down our lives and offer ourselves as gift. And every vocation generously provides the daily altars on which we can choose (or not choose) to surrender ourselves to God’s will and his love. What we experience as “crosses” are the engines of grace, a countless array of opportunities to become holy.

Ultimately, the search for the true cross is a search for the Savior and for the salvation that only he can bring. Only Jesus can save us from our worst selves, only he can free us from all that binds us. Every Catholic is called to be “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20), to “fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col 1:24), and to embrace the cross.

St. Helen’s quest teaches us that the true cross can be found. Although it may be buried beneath the rubble of sin and selfishness, if we dig deep enough, its power will be revealed in our lives.

(Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.) †

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, September 14, 2025

- Numbers 21:4b-9
- Philippians 2:6-11
- John 3:13-17

This weekend, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It supplants the observance of the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time because it is a feast of the Lord.

The Book of Numbers provides the first reading for Mass on the feast. Numbers is the fourth book in sequence of the Bible. Attributed

originally to Moses, this book is one of the five books of the Pentateuch. These five books also are called the Torah. Together, they form the basis of the Jewish religion.

In this reading, recalling the flight of the Hebrew people across the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt toward the land God had promised them, conditions had reached such a bad point that the people grumbled and doubted God.

God had spared the people many things. This time, as punishment for their sins, the people lost God’s protection. The desert then was filled with poisonous snakes and insects, as indeed it is filled today. Unprotected because they rejected God, the people were prey to these venomous animals. Many died.

Moses called them back to God. At God’s direction, Moses lifted a bronze serpent on a pole and held the pole aloft. He promised that snakebite victims who looked upon the staff would be healed.

Once more, God provided salvation. By God’s power alone, the people avoided death, even those bitten by dangerous serpents.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians provides the second reading. Scholars say that the text of this section of Philippians was drawn from an early hymn perhaps used in early Christian worship.

Even apart from a musical setting, the text is magnificent in the depth of its praise of Jesus the Lord.

St. John’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. This reading refers to the section of the Book of Numbers proclaimed on this feast for the first

reading. It identifies Jesus with the saving act of God, given through Moses, as described in Numbers.

It is an obvious reference to the crucified Jesus. In reading this section, recollecting a time in the life of Jesus long before Calvary, it is important to note that the Gospels are not diaries of Jesus, not day-by-day reports of the ministry of his ministry as it unfolded each day.

Rather, they are the memories of Jesus composed years after the Lord’s ascension by those who knew him or by those who knew people close to Jesus. In other words, when this Gospel was written, including this section, the Christians knew about the Crucifixion. They could easily connect the event in Numbers with the event of the Lord’s death.

Each event was an expression of God’s saving power, displayed in love.

Reflection

From New Testament times, Christians have realized that they have salvation in Jesus alone.

Paul proudly declared that he preached Christ, and that indeed he preached Christ crucified.

The cross for Christians is a symbol of the profound love God has for humanity. First, God sent Jesus, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, as Redeemer. Jesus brought to humanity the way to peace.

His advice is simple. With the help of grace, love God above all, despite the costs, and love every person, fully and without qualification, with a love that flows from the love of God that comes first.

The Crucifixion occurred in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land.

Today, news from the Holy Land is constant and disheartening. Killings and horror in Gaza trouble the heart of any decent person.

As Pope Leo XIV urges, take note of the suffering of the people in Gaza. Feel for them. Pray for them. Most of all, remember, the fearful events in Gaza need not occur.

Love God. Love each other, truly, fully, actively and without reservation. †

Daily Readings

Monday, September 15

Our Lady of Sorrows
1 Timothy 2:1-8
Psalm 28:2, 7-9
John 19:25-27
or Luke 2:33-35

Psalms 111:7-10
Luke 7:36-50

Friday, September 19

St. Januarius, bishop and martyr
1 Timothy 6:2c-12
Psalm 49:6-10, 17-20
Luke 8:1-3

Saturday, September 20

St. Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn, priest, and St. Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, and companions, martyrs
1 Timothy 6:13-16
Psalm 100:1b-5
Luke 8:4-15

Sunday, September 21

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Amos 8:4-7
Psalm 113:1-2, 4-8
1 Timothy 2:1-8
Luke 16:1-13
or Luke 16:10-13

Tuesday, September 16

St. Cornelius, pope and martyr
St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr
1 Timothy 3:1-13
Psalm 101:1b-3b, 5-6
Luke 7:11-17

Wednesday, September 17

St. Robert Bellarmine, bishop and doctor of the Church
St. Hildegard of Bingen, virgin and doctor of the Church
1 Timothy 3:14-16
Psalm 111:1-6
Luke 7:31-35

Thursday, September 18

1 Timothy 4:12-16

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Church teaches that a valid marriage has permanence and cannot be dissolved

Does the Church ever use the word “divorce,” or in every case is it always an “annulment?” Didn’t Jesus



allow for a spouse, in the case of a cheating spouse, to be granted a divorce, even calling it “a divorce?” (Indiana)

The Church does use the term “divorce” in some contexts, such

as when referring to the purely secular, legal consequences of a civil divorce, e.g. child support arrangements or the division of assets. However, the Church sees divorce as being essentially a legal fiction and not something that is truly possible on a spiritual, theological level.

Jesus teaches this clearly in Chapter 5 of St. Matthew’s Gospel. Here, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states: “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife [unless the marriage is unlawful] causes her to commit adultery, and whoever

marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt 5:31-32). Jesus goes on to make similar statements in Matthew 19.

So, in other words, God created human marriage to be an absolutely permanent union—to the extent that even if the spouses decide to divorce, this does not change the fact that they are ultimately still married to each other in reality.

Sometimes people have the mistaken idea that “annulments” are some kind of Catholic-approved divorce, but this is not at all accurate. The Church’s nullity process is based on Jesus’ caveat of “unless the marriage is unlawful.” That is, the Church acknowledges the possibility, directly foreseen by Jesus, that there may have been some problem with one or both of the spouses, or with the union itself, at the time of the wedding,

which was serious enough to prevent a true marriage from having taken place.

To give some common-sense examples, it would be “unlawful” for close relatives to marry, or to force a person to marry under threat of violence. Similarly, a person who, for whatever reason, lacks the mental capacity to consent to marriage is unable to fulfill the legal standard for marrying.

The Church’s nullity process aims to discern whether one of these “unlawful” elements was actually present and operative in a particular union. So, when a declaration of nullity is granted, this is simply a formal acknowledgement that no true marriage occurred in the first place. This is different from the concept of “divorce,” which supposes that a valid marriage could be ended.

In fact, this is why the Church does not officially use the term “annulment,” which suggests actively rendering a valid union null; but rather “declaration of nullity,” which is simply announcing what is already independently the case.

Yet even though the Church does not believe in the true possibility of divorce, Catholics are permitted to separate in serious cases. As we read in canon 1153, 1 of the *Code of Canon Law*: “A spouse who occasions grave danger of soul or body to the other or to the children, or otherwise makes the common life unduly difficult, provides the other spouse with a reason to leave.”

Canon law also allows spouses to separate in the case of adultery. Although at the same time, canon law encourages the betrayed spouse to be “motivated by Christian charity and solicitude for the good of the family” and thus to forgive the offender (canon 1152, 1).

Even in cases of what the canon law would call “separation with the [marriage] bond remaining,” the Church can condone a merely secular civil divorce as a sort of “last resort” for the sake of ensuring practical protections for those who might be vulnerable. As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense” (#2383).

(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

O Gracious Morning

By Linda Abner

O gracious, gracious morning
Misty, murmuring sweet with
rainfall
Blessing
Of cool serenity.
Pooling drops baptize from leafy
limbs
That rise and fall, rise and fall
With every gentle breath of winsome
Wandering wind.
Breathe on us, God, how thankful
Are we, how blessed
Are we
That You make Your rain to fall
And sun to shine
On good and bad
Alike

(Linda Abner is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. Photo: Raindrops bead upon the leaves of a tree branch on April 26, 2020, on a trail near Bladensburg, Md.) (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)



Recognizing its heritage

In the photo on the top right, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson blesses an inscription reading “Sankt Marienkirche,” which translated means St. Mary Church in German. The signage recognizing the German heritage of the founders of St. Mary Parish in downtown Indianapolis was dedicated after a bilingual Mass celebrated in English and German on Aug. 23. The St. Mary parish community has long been known for its diversity since it was established in 1858. Also pictured are St. Mary parishioner Norbert Krapf proclaiming the second reading of the Aug. 23 liturgy in German, and the Liederkrantz Choir performing outside the church during the dedication ceremony. Members of the Indiana German Heritage Society were among those who attended the Mass and dedication. (Submitted photo by William Selm and photos by Mike Krokos)



Light of the World presents the youngest Apostle’s experience of Gospel story

By Ann Margaret Lewis

Through the years, animators have used different artistic methods to tell the Gospel story to children. In April of this year, Angel Studios released *King of Kings*, a computer-animated retelling of the life of Christ through the eyes of Charles Dickens and his youngest son. Earlier, in 1999, a stop-motion animated feature titled *The Miracle Maker* was released featuring the vocal talent of Ralph Fiennes.

For Labor Day weekend and beyond, a hand-drawn animated feature is being offered in theaters by the Evangelical production group called The Salvation Poem Project. The film, *Light of the World*, focuses on the experiences of St. John the Evangelist, who is portrayed in this film as an adolescent between 13-14 years old.

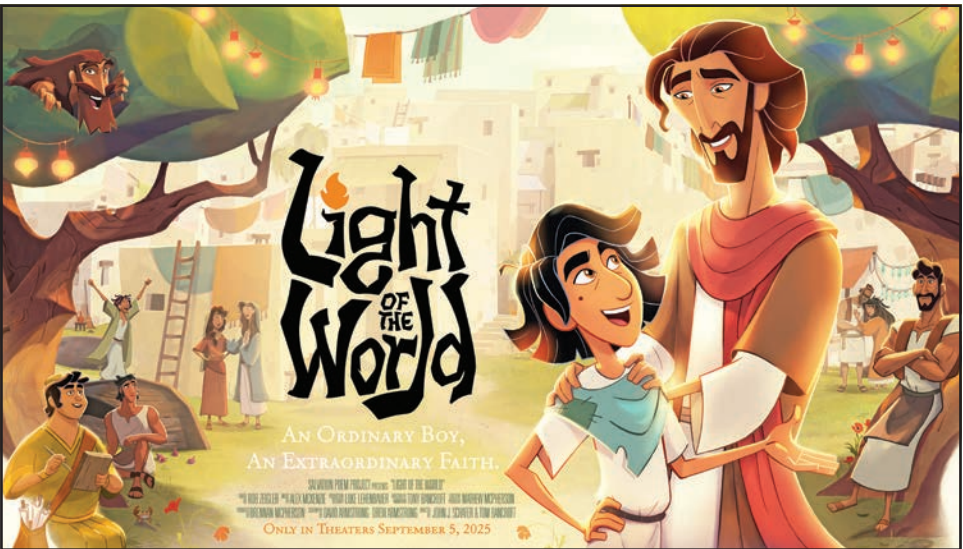
Artistically the film is well done. I didn’t realize how much I missed hand-drawn animation until seeing it again. The animation director and fill-in artists deserve a lot of credit for their work. The animators also included what I would call an “Easter egg” (or a nod to

fans) by having one or two of the Apostles resemble actors from “The Chosen” TV drama.

The script, however, lacked in some areas. How the Apostles were introduced was contrived, but in a short film meant for children that can be forgiven. The writers also borrowed a plot point from *The Chosen*, inventing tax problems for the fishermen of the group. Lastly, the dialogue is at times anachronistic, but that’s a common feature among children’s animation of late.

The choice of making John an immature teen, however, was unique among Gospel productions. Through tradition, it is believed that John was the youngest of the Apostles, often shown in great works of art as being the lone Apostle lacking a beard. In this sense, the film delivers a unique, historical protagonist whom children will find relatable.

Catholic viewers of this Evangelical production will find little to object to. However, I noticed that during Christ’s crucifixion, the Lord’s words to John about his mother were not included. It seemed strange to omit such an



important line that was directed to the main character, as it could signal the boy’s coming of age in responsibility and spiritual growth. It’s possible the directors and writers didn’t want to touch it, considering its meaning creates conflicts among Christian faiths about Mary’s role as Mother of the Church.

Nevertheless, *Light of the World* is

fine for kids, though parents should be aware that there is a call to faith from an Evangelical perspective that follows the film.

Light of the World opened nationwide on Sept. 5, including in theaters across central and southern Indiana. For more information, locations and to purchase tickets, go to lightoftheworld.com. †

Classified Directory

For advertising rates call (317) 236-1585.

Employment

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- The ability to evaluate and repair existing equipment.
- The ability to work with contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.
- An ability to work with the Archdiocesan staff.
- Basic computer skills.
- Good organizational and communication skills.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume to: bburkert@archindy.org.

Employment

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