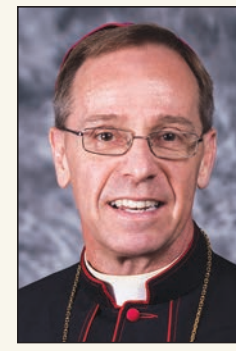


The

Criterion

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Christ the Cornerstone

Pope Leo XIV leaves his mark in distinctive first year, page 5.

CriterionOnline.com

May 8, 2026

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As daughter and mother respectively, Katie Huff and Kim Huff have lived the joy this school year of being co-teachers in the fourth grade at Holy Family School in New Albany. Their shared sense of fun shows in this photo from Katie's graduation from the University of Cincinnati in 2025. (Submitted photo)

'God moments' lead a mom and daughter to live a rare teaching experience together

By John Shaughnessy

Kim Huff gets emotional in the way that many mothers do when they see their child happy and living a dream. "You want so much for your kids," Kim says as tears of joy fill her eyes as she talks about her 22-year-old daughter, Katie Huff. Kim's reaction is not just one of happiness for Katie. She

feels that way for herself, too—because of the rare experience that this mother and daughter are sharing during this school year.

In her 34 years as a teacher at Holy Family School in New Albany, Kim has spent 33 of those years teaching fourth grade. And this year, Katie's first as a teacher, she has joined her mom in teaching at Holy Family, as the other fourth-grade teacher.

See **TEACHERS**, page 10

Pope Leo XIV's first-year themes of unity and community have Augustinian ties

CHICAGO (OSV News)—One of the first things Pope Leo XIV said from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican upon his election on May 8, 2025, was "I am a son of St. Augustine, an Augustinian."



Pope Leo XIV

The statement signaled to the world and its 1.4 billion Catholics that they were going to experience a papacy heavily influenced by a doctor of the Church, whose extensive writings from 1,600 years ago continue to shape the Church today.

Pope Leo's brothers in the Order of St. Augustine have said their patron's way has marked—and so far defined—the pope's leadership during his first year.

"While it is true that Augustine is an intellectual giant, particularly when we think of his theological and doctrinal contributions, I also see his pastoral contributions—which are grounded in the human experience and his understanding of the human experience," said Augustinian Father Kevin DePrinzio, who serves in Rome as assistant general for English-speaking provinces of the Order of St. Augustine.

In an e-mail to OSV News, Father Kevin pointed to St. Augustine's *Confessions* as one of the theologian's best-known works that remains popular to this day. The introspective spiritual autobiography is written in the form of a prayer in which Augustine traces his life of sin as a young adult, including having a concubine and fathering a son out of wedlock. He also recounts his willful rejection of his parents' counsel and his efforts to make a name for himself as a teacher of rhetoric. Through it all, Augustine's restless heart is led by grace to seek and ultimately find God in a powerful conversion.

See **POPE LEO**, page 14

St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities helps clients say 'we got this'

By Natalie Hoefler

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—As she strode confidently across the stage, 29-year-old Raija Oliver's face was alight with joy and a broad smile, her eight-month pregnancy adding to her glow.

But when she stood at the podium and tried to speak, emotion overcame her. Fighting back tears, Oliver bowed her head, struggling to regain composure.

Suddenly, the silence was broken as the crowd of more than 700 rallied to her aid, breaking into a round of applause to show their support and love.

It worked. The smile returned to Oliver's face as she nodded, saying, "Thank you. We got this, we got this."

Then she shared the story of how St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany helped turn a 15-year-old unwed mother into a young woman filled with courage and hope.

See **ST. ELIZABETH**, page 9

During a gala on April 16, Raija Oliver shares how St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany changed her life. The event to raise funds for the agency was held at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Ky. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Official Appointments

Effective July 1, 2026

Rev. Nicolas Ajpacajá Tzoc, sacramental ministry in Seymour Deanery, appointed parochial vicar of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus and St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour.

Rev. Anthony Armbruster, parochial vicar of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville, appointed parochial vicar of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

Rev. Eric Augenstein, pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis and Director of Seminarians for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, appointed vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and pastor of Church of the Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis and St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis, while remaining Director of Seminarians for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Rev. Jayaraju Bandari, H.G.N., parochial vicar of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, appointed parochial vicar of St. Louis Parish in Batesville and St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris.

Rev. Timothy DeCrane, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin, appointed pastor of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis and Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Indianapolis.

Rev. Jeffrey Dufresne, pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis, reappointed pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis (second term).

Rev. Cyprian Eranimus Fernandez, pastor of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, appointed pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis.

Very Rev. Stephen Giannini, pastor of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville and dean of the Indianapolis South Deanery, appointed pastor of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg.

Very Rev. Jeremy Gries, priest *in solidum* and moderator of St. Mary Parish in New Albany, pastor of Holy Family Parish in New Albany and dean of the New Albany Deanery, remaining pastor of Holy Family Parish in New Albany and dean of the New Albany Deanery.

Rev. Robert Hankee, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis and chaplain coordinator at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, granted a leave of absence.

Rev. Samuel Hansen, being ordained to the priesthood on June 6, 2026, appointed parochial vicar at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.

Very Rev. Anthony Hollowell, pastor of St. Paul Parish in Tell City and St. Mark Parish in Perry County, dean of the Tell City Deanery and Director of Continuing Education for the Archdiocesan Presbyterate, reappointed pastor of St. Paul Parish in Tell City and St. Mark Parish in Perry County (second term), while remaining dean of the Tell City Deanery and Director of Continuing Education for Archdiocesan Priests.

Rev. Douglas Hunter, pastor of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, appointed pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell.



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

May 9–16, 2026

May 9 – 2 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Bartholomew Parish, Columbus, and Prince of Peace Parish, Madison, at St. Bartholomew Church

May 12 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

May 12 – 2 p.m.
Virtual National Eucharistic Congress Board of Directors meeting

May 12 – 6:30 p.m.
CYO Volunteer Awards ceremony at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

May 13 – 11 a.m.
Visit to Mother Theodore Guérin Catholic High School, Noblesville, Ind.

May 13 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Anthony Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

May 14 – 8:15 a.m.
Virtual Judicatories meeting

May 14 – 10 a.m.
Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

May 14 – 3:30 p.m.
Catholic Community Foundation Advisory Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

May 14 – 7 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of St. Lawrence Parish, Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

May 16 – 11 a.m.
Chapel and altar dedication at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove

May 16 – 5:30 p.m.
Confirmation Mass for the youths of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish, Greenwood, and St. Martin of Tours Parish, Martinsville, at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Church

Rev. Timothy Khuishing, being ordained to the priesthood on June 6, 2026, appointed parochial vicar at St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg.

Rev. Varghese Maliakkal, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis, reappointed pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis (second term).

Rev. Peter Marshall, vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, pastor of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis and chaplain of the University of Indianapolis, remaining pastor of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis and chaplain at the University of Indianapolis.

Rev. Baudelaire Martial, C.S.C., parochial vicar at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, appointed parochial vicar of Church of the Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis and St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Glossary of some of the terms used in official appointments

Criterion staff report

In this week's issue of *The Criterion*, we offer readers an explanation of several of the terms used in the appointments made by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

—**Pastor:** This is a priest assigned to a parish to care for the spiritual needs of the parishioners and all within the territory of the parish. He also oversees the administration of the parish and its ministries. Pastors are appointed to a term of six years, which can be renewed once. Special circumstances (such as being within six years of retirement) can allow for a pastor to stay beyond his second term.

—**Administrator:** The same role and responsibilities as a pastor but without

a specified term length. This title is generally given to priests who have never been a pastor for their first year leading a parish; to diocesan priests who are not incardinated in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis but are serving here with permission of the bishop of their diocese, or to a priest remaining in full-time ministry after the age of 75.

—**Administrator Pro Tempore:** The same role and responsibilities of a pastor, except it is only for a defined period of time. That could be until someone is named the pastor or administrator at the parish or until the already-named pastor returns to the parish (i.e., from a sabbatical). This temporary title usually does not last for more than one year.

—**Parochial Vicar:** The canon law title for what has been previously known in the archdiocese as an associate pastor.

A parochial vicar serves in a parish to assist the pastor or administrator in his responsibilities to ensure the spiritual needs of the faithful are met.

—**Sacramental Assistant:** This indicates a priest who will assist the pastor or administrator with liturgies and sacraments, Masses, confessions, weddings, baptisms, anointings of the sick and funerals but not in the administration of the parish. Priests are also assigned as sacramental ministers of parishes that are led by a parish life coordinator.

—**Chaplain Coordinator:** This is an assignment given in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for our deanery high schools (Roncalli, Bishop Chatard, Cardinal Ritter, Father Thomas Scecina Memorial and Our Lady of Providence). All priests of the deanery are involved in ministry at these high schools, but the

chaplain coordinator is the first point of contact for the high school in caring for the sacraments and the spiritual needs of the students and staff. This priest helps coordinate the other deanery priests to minister in the high school when he is unavailable.

—**Chaplain:** This appointment is given to a priest or priests responsible for the sacramental and spiritual care of colleges, hospitals, prisons or non-deanery high schools (such as Seton Catholic and Father Michael Shawe Memorial). Sometimes priests volunteer to take on the spiritual care of other entities without being officially and formally assigned by Archbishop Thompson to do so and are called chaplains as well (i.e., police departments, fire departments, professional sports teams, Scouts, Knights of Columbus, etc.). †



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Saint Meinrad monk ordained and installed as bishop of Belleville, Ill.

Criterion staff report

Bishop Godfrey Mullen, previously a Benedictine monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, was ordained and installed as the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, Ill., on May 1 in the Cathedral of St. Peter in the southern Illinois city.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson ritually lays hands on Bishop-designate Godfrey Mullen on May 1 in the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill., during a Mass in which Bishop-designate Mullen was ordained and installed as the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Belleville. He was previously a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

At the end of the ordination liturgy, Bishop Mullen thanked many people—including family and friends, monks of Saint Meinrad and other religious and the clergy and lay faithful of the Belleville Diocese—and ultimately Pope Leo XIV, who appointed him.

“Today, I give thanks for vocation, for companions on the way and the love I have known from so many,” Bishop Mullen said. “God has always been so generous to me. And, with so many today, let us remember that God loves a cheerful giver. To each and every one of you, thank you. We have good work to do. I love you all and look forward to that good work.”

Bishop Mullen grew up in the Belleville Diocese, his family moving there when he was 9 months old. He began his formation for ordained ministry as a seminarian for the diocese at the former Saint Meinrad College in St. Meinrad, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history in 1988.

Bishop Mullen was received as a



During a May 1 Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill., Bishop-designate Godfrey Mullen, previously a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, displays a letter from Pope Leo XIV in which the pontiff appointed him to serve as the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Belleville. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey)

novice of Saint Meinrad Archabbey later that same year, professed temporary vows as a monk on Aug. 6, 1989, and solemn vows on Aug. 15, 1992. Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein ordained Bishop Mullen a priest on June 5, 1994, in the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln in St. Meinrad.

He is only the third monk in the 172-year history of Saint Meinrad to be appointed as a bishop. He follows Bishop Martin Marty, Saint Meinrad's first abbot who was appointed a bishop in 1879 and served in the then-Dakota Territory and later as bishop of Saint Cloud, Minn., until his death at 62 in 1896. The second was Archbishop Buechlein, who served as bishop of

Memphis, Tenn., from 1987-92, and as archbishop of Indianapolis from 1992-2011.

Bishop Mullen began ministry in the Diocese of Belleville in 2022, serving as the rector of its cathedral and as pastor of Blessed Sacrament and Queen of Peace parishes, all three in Belleville, as well as moderator of the curia and director of the diocese's office of worship.

In 2025, he was appointed as the diocese's vicar general shortly before its shepherd at the time, Bishop Michael G. McGovern, was appointed to lead the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb. Then-Father Godfrey was subsequently elected diocesan administrator by the diocese's college of consultors. †

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Rev. Jose Neri, priest *in solidum* at St. Mary Parish in New Albany, appointed administrator of St. Mary Parish in New Albany.

Very Rev. Joseph Newton, Vicar Judicial in the Metropolitan Tribunal and pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville and St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis, reappointed Vicar Judicial in the Metropolitan Tribunal (third term), while remaining pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Mooresville and St. Ann Parish in Indianapolis.

Rev. Michael O'Mara, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, reappointed pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis (second term).

Rev. Matthew Perronie, Auditor in the Metropolitan Tribunal in Indianapolis, appointed parochial vicar at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, while remaining Auditor in the Metropolitan Tribunal in Indianapolis.

Rev. Jegan Peter, administrator of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell, appointed pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin.

Rev. Stanley Pondo, pastor of St. Louis Parish in Batesville and St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris, reappointed pastor of St. Louis Parish in Batesville and St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris (second term).

Rev. Robert Robeson, pastor of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove and chaplain coordinator at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis, appointed pastor of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville, while remaining chaplain coordinator at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis.

Rev. Isaac Siefker, parochial vicar at Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove, appointed parochial vicar at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Martinsville.

Rev. Thomas Smith, O.F.M. Conv., retreat director at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Las Cruces, N.M., appointed pastor at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville.

Rev. Benjamin Syberg, administrator *pro tem* of Church of the Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis and St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis and Advocate in the Metropolitan Tribunal, appointed pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish in Indianapolis.

Rev. Khaing Thu, being ordained to the priesthood on June 6, 2026, appointed parochial vicar at St. Michael Parish in Greenfield and St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fortville.

Rev. Juan José Valdés, pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis, appointed pastor of St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis.

Rev. Msgr. Anthony Volz, parochial vicar at Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, appointed pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis and chaplain coordinator at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis.

Rev. Shaun Whittington, pastor of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County and St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Milan, reappointed pastor of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County and St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Milan (second term).

Rev. Jack Wright, parochial vicar at St. Louis Parish in Batesville and St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Morris, appointed administrator of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove.

(These appointments are from the office of the Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis.) †



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Editorial



Pope Leo XIV waves as he arrives to lead his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 29. May 8 marks the first anniversary of his election as universal shepherd and bishop of Rome. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

Pope Leo's words in first year show a shepherd after the heart of Christ

Today—May 8—marks the first anniversary of Pope Leo XIV's election as our universal shepherd and bishop of Rome.

"*Habemus papam*" ("We have a pope") were words that thrilled those in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican and the millions watching on TV that day. And the pope's first words—"Peace be with all of you!"—demonstrated a simple yet heartfelt message that resonated with everyone who heard them.

Pope Leo's efforts to foster unity among the faithful has been a cornerstone of his first year of ministry as bishop of Rome. The priority he places on unity is expressed in his episcopal motto: "*In illo Uno unum*" ("In the One Christ, we are one").

Turning the clock back 12 months, we see a pope who, in our chaotic world, seeks that oneness.

"Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world," the pope said at the Mass for the inauguration of his petrine ministry on May 18, 2025.

We see a man of deep faith, like his predecessors, who spreads a message of peace, hope and love across the globe.

At his core, Pope Leo is a shepherd with a mission.

One example is his recent journey to Africa.

During his general audience at the Vatican on April 29, the pope said he wanted his trip to highlight the serious injustices continuing there and propose a message of peace to a world marred by conflict and violations of international law.

"At the same time, the apostolic journey gave people in Africa a chance to make their voices heard and to express the joy of being God's people," the Holy Father said of his 11-day trip to Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea.

According to OSV News, Pope Leo said during his audience that his time there "was meant to offer the world a message of peace at a moment marked by conflicts and frequent violations of international law.

"Along with the call for peace, I also denounced the grave injustices that exist in those countries that are so

rich in natural resources, urging the international community to overcome neo-colonial attitudes and engage in authentic collaboration," he said.

The journey to Africa also gave Pope Leo an opportunity to build bridges with other faith traditions, which popes in recent times have taken to heart.

In Algeria, a predominantly Muslim country, Pope Leo said he wanted to "show the world that it is possible to live together as brothers and sisters, even of different religions, when we recognize ourselves as children of the same merciful Father."

But the northern African country also had a strong spiritual connection for the Holy Father because it was the birthplace of his "spiritual father," St. Augustine, and by "revisiting the roots of my spiritual identity," it offered a way to highlight his legacy.

"[St. Augustine] is a master in the search for God and for truth," Pope Leo said, "a testimony that is more important than ever today for Christians and for every person."

We also see a universal shepherd who cares about the least among us.

"On the wounded faces of the poor, we see the suffering of the innocent and, therefore, the suffering of Christ himself," Pope Leo wrote in his first apostolic exhortation "*Dilexi Te*" ("I have loved you"), promulgated on Oct. 9, 2025.

The 15,000 teenagers and those in attendance at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis last November surely remember the words of wisdom the Holy Father shared about the sacrament of reconciliation in a digital encounter on Nov. 21, 2025: "When we honestly confess our sins and accept our penance, the priest gives absolution, and we know with certainty that we are forgiven. Do not focus only on your sins. Look to Jesus, trust his mercy and go to him with confidence; he will always welcome you home."

The words are simple, the messages profound. May we continue to pray for Pope Leo XIV, please God, that he may continue to shepherd after the heart of Christ.

—Mike Krokos

Be Our Guest/Leonard J. DeLorenzo

The Little Rose Shop delivers

I work with people who are exceptionally astute both theologically and pastorally—people who build programs, teach the teachers and form leaders in evangelization.



My colleagues speak and write and counsel and mentor with steep resources in the Catholic faith. They know quality. They know the importance of aesthetics. They know, often better than I do, the difference between what is excellent and what merely looks like it. These are the people who stole Raquel Rose's children's books right out of my hands.

I mean that almost literally. When I showed some of my colleagues these samples I have received, they immediately felt the quality of presentation and production. They recognized, with barely a pause, the depth of Catholic formation being communicated in works like *My First Examen* and the *Catholic Mass Quiet Book*.

It was kind of shocking to me, except it wasn't—because I felt and thought the same things pretty much right away. We all knew that something beautiful, brilliant and genuinely formative was in front of us.

My colleagues took these books for their own kids and for the children of friends, and then they ordered more. Something like a tiny revolution of joy turned through the McGrath Institute for Church Life when the Little Rose Shop's resources made their way into our halls. We all agreed without prolonged deliberation. This stuff is amazing.

So, who is Raquel Rose, and what is she actually doing?

The short version: Raquel is a former school counselor, a revert to the faith, a mother and the founder and creative director of The Little Rose Shop—a small, family-run Catholic business creating original children's books, quiet books, faith-formed gifts and home décor for Catholic families.

Her story, which I got to hear more fully in our recent "Church Life Today" podcast conversation, is not a brand origin story. It's a testimony. Raquel became pregnant at 21, chose life, finished school, built a family and eventually left a stable career to pursue what had started as a mother's practical solution: Something for small hands to do during Mass that would keep them prayerfully present rather than restlessly chaotic.

What began as a quiet book for her daughter has grown into a full collection of resources that are, in every sense of the

word, formative. And here's what I mean by that.

The word "formation" gets thrown around a lot in Catholic circles, sometimes to the point of losing meaning. What formation actually involves is the shaping of habits, imagination and affections—the long, patient work of ordering a person's interior life toward the true, the good and the beautiful. Raquel understands this, partly because her background in school counseling gave her a keen eye for what children actually need and how they actually develop, and partly because she's lived it herself.

Her *My First Examen* board book, for instance, isn't just a cute product. It's a gentle introduction to one of the most powerful prayer practices in the Christian tradition—the Ignatian *Examen*—translated into language and images that a toddler can hold and a parent can read aloud at bedtime.

The *Catholic Mass Quiet Book* gives children something to do with their hands during Mass that actually deepens their engagement with the liturgy rather than distracts them from it.

The *Peek-a-Boo Saints* series introduces children to specific saints—not generic "holy people"—with warmth and playfulness.

These books are not objects of pious decoration. They are tools for building up the domestic Church: the family as a genuine site of encounter with our living God.

What makes Raquel's work quietly remarkable is the combination of things it holds together: genuine theological fidelity, accessible beauty, professional quality, a deeply personal mission, the practical wisdom of a parent and the formation instincts of a counselor. It's harder than it sounds to hold all of those together, which is why so much Catholic children's material falls short on one dimension or another—too sentimental, too

didactic, too generic or simply not made to last.

The Little Rose Shop is made to last. It belongs in your home and in the homes of everyone you love with small children in them. Listen to the conversation with Raquel on "Church Life Today" and then explore her shop. You'll want to give these items away, I promise you that. And you'll probably want to keep some for yourself.

(Leonard J. DeLorenzo is a professor of the practice in the McGrath Institute for Church Life and concurrent professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame in northern Indiana. You can find his writing at leonardjdelorenzo.com.) †

The word "formation" gets thrown around a lot in Catholic circles, sometimes to the point of losing meaning. What formation actually involves is the shaping of habits, imagination and affections—the long, patient work of ordering a person's interior life toward the true, the good and the beautiful.

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible.

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Pope Leo XIV leaves his mark in distinctive first year

Christ's resurrection is the beginning of a new humanity; it is the entrance into the true promised land, where justice, freedom, and peace reign, where all recognize one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father who is Love, Life, and Light. (2026 Easter "Urbi et Orbi" message of Pope Leo XIV)

The publication date for this column is May 8, 2026, the one-year anniversary of the election of then-Cardinal Robert F. Prevost as the successor of St. Peter, Vicar of Christ and Bishop of Rome.

It has been a very full year, but it has passed quickly, and our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, has clearly established himself as someone who can speak to the challenges and opportunities of our time with both humility and boldness.

A year ago, many believed that someone born in the United States had no chance of being chosen by the College of Cardinals to serve as the head of the universal Church. The Holy Spirit proved them wrong.

Some hoped that the new pope would reverse many of the major policies of his predecessor. Pope Leo has done the opposite—affirming his commitment to the priorities set by Pope Francis while showing himself to be a pastor with his own distinctive leadership style.

During the past 12 months, Pope Leo has focused on bridging global divides, promoting peace and managing Vatican finances. He has established a tone of pastoral listening, met with world leaders and continued his predecessor's commitment to advocating for refugees and caring for the environment ("our common home"). Unity and peace are the themes that the pope—a member of the Augustinian order who humbly calls himself a "son of St. Augustine"—returns to regularly.

Some notable accomplishments from Pope Leo's first year include:

—International outreach: Pope Leo has held multiple meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, advocating for a ceasefire in a war that began when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. He undertook his first international trip to Turkey, where he visited Istanbul's Blue Mosque and marked the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and other Christian leaders, followed by a trip to Lebanon. And he has been outspoken in his efforts to secure a ceasefire in the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran, and Israel's conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

—Pastoral focus and leadership: Pope Leo has emphasized humility and listening in his management of Church

affairs, confirming senior Vatican Curia officials on a temporary basis before initiating reforms, and using his background as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops to engage with clergy and lay leaders.

—Environmental and political stance: The Holy Father maintains a strong focus on environmental issues and has been critical of programs lacking climate action. He has pointedly criticized immigration policies that demean human dignity and freedom. He speaks the mind of the Church with both compassion and boldness.

—Initial messages: Pope Leo XIV set an overarching theme for his papacy with his first message, "Peace be with you all." He has continued to be outspoken in his opposition to war and in his insistence on the nonviolent leadership style that is Jesus' gift to his followers.

After just one year, it is clear that Pope Leo is a hands-on, internationally focused leader whose primary concern is to proclaim the Gospel and thereby promote the unity and fraternity of all God's people.

What should we look for during the coming year and beyond? More importantly, what should we pray for? How can our prayers help our Holy Father carry out his unique mission?

We Catholics believe that the pope

exercises supreme pastoral, doctrinal and juridical authority over the Catholic Church worldwide, serving as the visible head and ultimate teacher and authority on matters of faith and morals. This is an awesome responsibility, and as recent popes have reminded us, the sheer weight of the papal office would be too much for any individual to carry without the help of God's grace.

We Catholics also believe that the pope's teaching on faith and morals—when exercised under specific conditions through the grace of his papal office—is infallible. But we also must acknowledge that the pope himself is only human. He does not possess superpowers.

Pope Francis regularly reminded us that he was a sinner. Certainly, Pope Leo as a son of St. Augustine, sees himself in a similar light. This means that he needs our prayerful support to overcome his human weaknesses and to freely accept the graces that only God can give him.

As we continue this season of Easter joy and begin the second year of our Holy Father's ministry as pope, let's pray that God will continue to bless his servant Leo XIV with both the humility and the boldness he needs to unite and inspire us as faithful missionary disciples of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

El papa León XIV deja huella en un primer año distintivo

La resurrección de Cristo es el comienzo de la nueva humanidad, es la entrada a la verdadera tierra prometida, donde reinan la justicia, la libertad y la paz, donde todos se reconocen como hermanos y hermanas, hijos del mismo Padre que es Amor, Vida y Luz. (Mensaje "Urbi et Orbi" de Pascua 2026 del papa León XIV)

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el 8 de mayo de 2026, cuando se cumple un año de la elección del entonces cardenal Robert F. Prevost como sucesor de san Pedro, Vicario de Cristo y Obispo de Roma.

Ha sido un año muy intenso, pero ha pasado rápidamente, y nuestro nuevo Santo Padre, el papa León XIV, se ha consolidado claramente como alguien capaz de abordar los desafíos y oportunidades de nuestro tiempo con humildad y audacia.

Hace un año, muchos creían que una persona nacida en Estados Unidos no tenía ninguna posibilidad de ser elegida por el Colegio Cardenalicio como cabeza de la Iglesia universal. El Espíritu Santo demostró que estaban equivocados.

Algunos esperaban que el nuevo papa revirtiera muchas de las principales políticas de su predecesor. El papa León ha hecho todo lo contrario: ha reafirmado su compromiso con las prioridades establecidas por el papa Francisco, al tiempo que se ha revelado como un pastor con un estilo de liderazgo propio.

Durante los últimos 12 meses se ha dedicado a tender puentes ante las divisiones mundiales, promover la paz y gestionar las finanzas vaticanas. Ha establecido un tono de escucha pastoral, se ha reunido con líderes mundiales y ha continuado el compromiso de su predecesor de abogar por los refugiados y cuidar el medio ambiente ("nuestra casa común"). La unidad y la paz son los temas a los que el papa—miembro de la orden agustiniana que se autodenomina humildemente "hijo de san Agustín"—vuelve con regularidad.

Entre los logros más notables de su primer año se encuentran:

—Alcance internacional: El papa León ha mantenido múltiples reuniones con el presidente ucraniano Volodymyr Zelenskyy para abogar por un alto el fuego en una guerra que comenzó con la invasión rusa de Ucrania en 2022. Realizó su primer viaje internacional a Turquía, donde visitó la Mezquita Azul de Estambul y conmemoró el 1700.º aniversario del Concilio de Nicea con el patriarca ecuménico Bartolomé y otros líderes cristianos, seguido de un viaje al Líbano. Asimismo, se ha pronunciado abiertamente en sus esfuerzos por lograr un alto el fuego en el conflicto de Estados Unidos e Israel con Irán, así como en el conflicto de Israel con Hezbolá en el Líbano.

—Enfoque pastoral y liderazgo: El papa León ha hecho hincapié en la humildad y la escucha en la gestión de

los asuntos de la Iglesia, confirmando temporalmente a altos funcionarios de la Curia Vaticana antes de emprender reformas, y valiéndose de su experiencia como prefecto del Dicasteryo para los Obispos para relacionarse con el clero y los líderes laicos.

—Postura medioambiental y política: El Santo Padre mantiene una firme atención a las cuestiones medioambientales y se ha mostrado crítico con los programas que carecen de acción climática. Ha criticado con firmeza las políticas de inmigración que menoscaban la dignidad humana y la libertad. Expresa el pensamiento de la Iglesia con compasión y audacia.

—Mensajes iniciales: El papa León XIV marcó el tono general de su pontificado con su primer mensaje: "La paz sea con todos vosotros." Ha seguido manifestando abiertamente su oposición a la guerra y su insistencia en el estilo de liderazgo no violento que Jesús regaló a sus seguidores.

Después de tan solo un año, queda claro que el papa León es un líder práctico, con proyección internacional, cuya preocupación principal es proclamar el Evangelio y promover así la unidad y la fraternidad de todo el pueblo de Dios.

¿Qué cabe esperar del próximo año y de los siguientes? Y, lo que es más importante, ¿por qué debemos rezar? ¿Cómo pueden nuestras oraciones ayudar a nuestro Santo Padre a llevar a cabo su misión única?

Los católicos creemos que el papa ejerce la suprema autoridad pastoral, doctrinal y jurídica sobre la Iglesia católica en todo el mundo, como cabeza visible y maestro y autoridad última en cuestiones de fe y moral. Se trata de una enorme responsabilidad y, como nos han recordado los últimos papas, el peso del oficio papal sería demasiado para cualquier persona sin la ayuda de la gracia de Dios.

Los católicos también creemos que la enseñanza del papa sobre fe y moral—cuando se ejerce bajo condiciones específicas mediante la gracia de su oficio papal—es infalible. Pero también debemos reconocer que el propio papa es solo un ser humano. No posee superpoderes.

El papa Francisco nos recordaba a menudo que él era un pecador. Sin duda, el papa León, como hijo de san Agustín, se ve a sí mismo bajo una luz similar. Esto significa que necesita nuestro apoyo en la oración para superar sus debilidades humanas y aceptar libremente las gracias que solo Dios puede concederle.

Mientras continuamos este tiempo de alegría pascual y comenzamos el segundo año del ministerio de nuestro Santo Padre, recemos para que Dios siga bendiciendo a su siervo León XIV con la humildad y la audacia que necesita para unirnos e inspirarnos como fieles discípulos misioneros de nuestro Señor Resucitado, Jesucristo. †

Events Calendar

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

Every Wednesday:

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Corpus Christi Parish Hall, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Catholics in Recovery Support Group**, 7 p.m., meets every Wednesday, Catholic 12-step program serving those with addictions and unhealthy attachments. Information: 317-557-8888, jjdav887@gmail.com

May 15

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, IMMI chief executive officer Larry Gray and senior vice president of mission Jon Tice presenting "Your Work Matters to God," \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. May 12. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

May 16

St. Roch Parish, 3600 S. Pennsylvania St., Indianapolis. **Mayfest: A Taste of the Southside Festival**, 2-11 p.m., features Mexican, Irish, German, Italian and American cuisines, bounce houses, games, beer garden, food prices vary, free admission. Information: 317-784-1763, church@strochindy.org.

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 316 N. Sherwood Ave., Clarksville. **Living Rosary**, 2 p.m., rosary procession around the church (weather permitting), free. Information: 812-282-2290, stanthony-clarksville.org.

Sisters of St. Francis Motherhouse, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Step Inside 175 Years of History: Special Motherhouse Tour**, 2-4:30 p.m., free. Information: 812-934-2475.

May 18

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women's Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online monthly on

third Monday, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, all women welcome. Meeting: tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp. Information: iowhosomaddox@archindy.org, 317-261-3381.

May 22-24

Carmelite Monastery, 59 Allendale, Terre Haute. **Monastic Experience Weekend**, 3 p.m. Fri.-3 p.m. Sun., vocation discernment retreat for women ages 18-40, includes accommodations and meals, free. Information: 812-299-1410, ext. 214, vocations@heartssawake.org.

May 28-30

St. Simon the Apostle Parish, 8155 Oaklandon Road, Indianapolis. **St. Simon Festival**, Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 3 p.m.-midnight; food, beer garden, games, Vegas room, rides, \$20 per family. Information: 317-826-6000, chair@saintsimonfestival.com.

May 29-30

St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 6000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. **International Festival**, 5 p.m.-midnight, food, amusement rides, carnival games, \$5,000 raffle, live music, sponsor booths, evangelization station, free admission. Information: 317-291-7014, eesparza@stgabrielindy.org.

May 29-31

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. **Summerfest 2026**, Fri. 5-11 p.m., Sat. 3-11 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m., \$4,000 raffle, Bingo Fri. and Sat., Monte Carlo Fri., rides, silent auction, live entertainment, food, beer, wine, games for kids and adults, \$10 admission for \$10 in event coupons. Information: 317-357-8352 ext. 102, lfsummerfest@littleflowerparish.org.

May 28-30

St. Mark Parish Life Center,

535 E. Edgewood Ave., Indianapolis. **Rummage Sale**, 8-5 p.m. Thurs. and Fri., 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sat., early bird Wed. 5-8 p.m. with \$10 admission, enter through door #8. Information: 317-260-8034, annieberk@yahoo.com.

May 31

Marian University, Bishop Chartrand Chapel, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Mass honoring Oldenburg Franciscan Sisters who served in Archdiocese of Indianapolis**, 2 p.m., reception to follow Mass, RSVP for reception by May 13, free. Information, reception registration: 812-933-6495, grace.vanderbur@oldenburgfranciscans.org.

June 3

MCL Cafeteria, 5520 Castleton Corner Lane, Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles—separated, widowed or divorced—ages 50 and older, new members welcome, also call about regular Friday 1 p.m. lunch events. Information: 317-796-8605.

June 4-6

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Summer Festival**, Thurs 5-11 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 2 p.m.-midnight; rides, games, Monte Carlo, bingo, cake wheel, grand raffle, quilt raffle, children's games, live music, beer tent, fair food, free admission. Information: 317-888-2861, info@olgreenwood.org.

June 7

St. Paul Parish, 824 Jefferson St., Tell City. **Parish Picnic**, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. CT, pulled pork or BBQ chicken dinners \$12, live music and live raffle, free admission. Information: 812-547-7994, stpaulch@psci.net.

June 11-13

St. Anthony Parish, 337 N. Warman Ave., Indianapolis.

Crossroads of America Festival, 4-11 p.m., carnival rides, food, live entertainment, raffle, free admission. Information: 317-742-0103, sandra@saintanthonyindy.org.

June 12-13

St. Mary Parish, 2500 St. Mary Dr., Lanesville. **Festville on the Hill**, Fri. 5:30-9 p.m., Sat. 4-10 p.m., fried chicken dinner, raffles, games for all ages, beer and wine garden, live music from Smokin' Joe and Midnight Radio, fireworks, free admission and parking. Information: 812-952-2853,

ext. 24, makayla.mccarty@catholic-community.org.

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. **Italian Street Festival**, 5-11 p.m., Marian procession Sat. 6:45 p.m. prior to 7 p.m. Mass, Italian food, drinks, live entertainment, free admission and parking. Information: indyitalianfest.org, 317-636-4478, info@holyroaryindy.org.

June 13-19

Holy Angels School, 2822 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St., Indianapolis. **Obaro Village: Rooting and Rising Summer**

Youth Academy Session 1, for students entering grade fifth-ninth grade in the fall, STEAM education, faith formation, leadership development, career exploration, Black Catholic spirituality and community building, \$100 per camper with \$25 discount for each additional sibling, \$50 discount for students who also attend session two July 11-17, scholarships available, register by June 8. Information, registration: tinyurl.com/Obaro2026, blackcatholicministry@archindy.org, 317-261-3381. Volunteers needed: tinyurl.com/ObaroVolunteer26. †

Wedding Anniversaries

EDWARD AND CONSTANCE (ROELL) ORTMAN, members of St. Michael Parish in Brookville, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on April 21.

The couple was married in St. Michael Church in Brookville on April 21, 1956.

They have seven children: Paula Ingle, Susan Leffingwell, Jill Moorman, Kathleen Roth, Anthony, Richard and Robert Ortman.

The couple also has 22 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.



MELVIN AND MARCEDA (VOLK) PAUL, members of Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on April 21.

The couple was married in St. Louis Church in Batesville on April 21, 1956.

They have four children: Kathy Murray, Jeff, Rick and Tim Paul.

The couple also has 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.



DAVID AND ELVERA (WESSELER) MUCKERHEIDE, members of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on May 7.

The couple was married in St. Mary Church in Greensburg on May 7, 1966.

They have three children: Becky Gillenwater, Brian and Kevin Muckerheide.

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



JAMES AND ROBERTA (PAYNE) SPENCER, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on May 7.

The couple was married in St. Patrick Church in Terre Haute on May 7, 1966.

They have two children: Stephanie Higgins and Elizabeth Holleb.

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



RANDY AND SUE (MURPHY) BRODERICK, members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on May 8.

The couple was married in Holy Family Church in Fairmount, N.Y., on May 8, 1971.

They have two children: Jason and Scott Broderick.

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



Retreats and Programs

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

May 22-24

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Healing Loneliness**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting,

\$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

May 27

Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Heart on Fire**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, \$75 single, \$150 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats. †

Sisters of Providence accepting Providence Associate applications through June 30

The Providence Associate program of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, is accepting applications for Providence Associates through June 30.

Providence Associates are people of diverse faith, ages 18 years and older, who share their own unique gifts and talents with others while walking with the Sisters of Providence.

Accepted applicants spend a year meeting one-on-one on a regular basis with a Sister of Providence or a Providence Associate companion.

During the meetings, the candidates and their companions learn and share about Providence spirituality.

Accepted candidates attend an orientation at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in November. Following the orientation, the candidate and companion usually meet once a month for the coming year in person, virtually or by phone.

For more information or to request an application, go to ProvidenceAssociates.org or contact Debbie Dillow at ddillow@spsmw.org or 317-250-3294. †

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.

Seniors will soon celebrate their Catholic high school graduations

By John Shaughnessy

As seniors prepare to graduate soon from Catholic high schools across the archdiocese, their emotions will be a blend of pride and relief, nostalgia and celebration.

They will draw even closer to their friends, remembering the times they've shared and promising to stay connected forever.

Many will thank the teachers and the coaches who have made a difference in their lives. They will also pose for photos in their caps and gowns with their parents, who will look at their children and wonder where the years have gone.

Amid all these rituals of graduation, there will also be an abundance of well-deserved congratulations to the more than 1,300 members of the Class of 2026, including one from Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese (see below).

Here is a listing of graduation-related information for the 13 Catholic high schools in the archdiocese.

Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 185 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the school.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 17 at 1:30 p.m. at the school.

The class valedictorian is **Spencer White**, son of Mathew and Molly White of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis.

The class salutatorian is **Lawrence Deypalubos**, son of Larry and Cecilia Deypalubos of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.

Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 203 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 17 at 10:30 a.m. at the school.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 17 at 3 p.m. at Clowes Memorial Hall on the campus of Butler University in Indianapolis.

Cardinal Ritter High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 113 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 28 at 7 p.m. at St. Monica Church in Indianapolis.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 29 at 7 p.m. at the school.

The class valedictorian is **Kara May**, daughter of Charlie and Katie May of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg.

The class salutatorian is **Jesus Garcia Velasco**, son of Antonio Garcia and Guillermina Velasco Martines of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Archbishop Thompson.

Cathedral High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 256 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 17 at 2:30 p.m. at the school.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 18 at 6 p.m. at the Fishers Event Center in Fishers, Ind.

The student commencement speaker will be **Nolan McCracken**, son of Neil and Rebecca McCracken of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Sarah Watson, assistant superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese.

Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School in Madison has a graduating class of 36 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 22 at 6 p.m. at Prince of Peace Church in Madison.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 24 at 1 p.m. at the school.

Numerous students are in contention for valedictorian and salutatorian honors as the school year draws to a close, according to school officials. The announcement of these honorees will be made close to graduation.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Christopher Walsh, chancellor of the archdiocese.

Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 108 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 21 at 7 p.m. at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 22 at 7 p.m. at the school.

The class valedictorian is **Lennon Klinck**, son of Brad and Amber Klinck.

The class salutatorian is **Bradley Hilbers**, son of Aaron and Kerri Hilbers.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools for the archdiocese.

Lumen Christi Catholic High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of six seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass and graduation ceremony will begin on May 21 at 5:45 p.m. at Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Indianapolis.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Christopher Walsh, chancellor of the archdiocese.

Marian University Preparatory School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of nine students.

The Baccalaureate Mass and graduation ceremony will begin on May 15 at noon in St. Joseph's Chapel on Marian's Indianapolis campus.

Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg has a graduating class of 28 seniors.

The graduation ceremony, including a Mass, will be on May 31 at 1 p.m. at the Chapel of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg.

The class valedictorian is **Ashley Hunter**, daughter of Jeff Hunter and Lisa Mattuci of St. Louis Parish in Batesville.

The two class salutatorians are:

Eleanor Eaglin, daughter of Michael and Nicole Eaglin of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora.

Lillian Vanderpohl, daughter of Irvin and Shawna Vanderpohl of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg.

The archdiocese will be represented by Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools for the archdiocese.

Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville has a graduating class of 96 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 15 at 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in New Albany.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 17 at 6 p.m. at the school.

The class valedictorian is **Liam Matta**, son of Gary and Julie Matta of Holy Family Parish in New Albany.

The class salutatorian is **Julie Hinton**, daughter of Chad and Amy Hinton of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Archbishop Thompson.

Providence Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 62 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 21 at 6 p.m. at the school.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 22 at 7 p.m. at the school.



As part of the graduation tradition at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis, a number of seniors place a rose at the foot of a statue of the Blessed Mother during the procession at the beginning of the commencement ceremony. J.D. Haines places his rose in honor of Mary during the school's 2025 graduation. (Submitted photo)

The class valedictorian is **Elijah Grimes**, son of Jessica Wilbur.

The class salutatorian is **Litzy Molina Pavon**, daughter of Andres Molina and Gabriela Pavon of St. Anthony Parish in Indianapolis.

The archdiocese will be represented by Msgr. William F. Stumpf, vicar general of the archdiocese.

Roncalli High School in Indianapolis has a graduating class of 263 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 22 at 6 p.m. at the school.

The graduation ceremony will be on May 23 at 9 a.m. at the school.

The class valedictorian is **Marygrace Rykowski**, daughter of John and Angela Rykowski of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis.

The class salutatorian is **Anna Cromer**, daughter of Jeremy and Christina Cromer of St. Barnabas Parish.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Msgr. William F. Stumpf, vicar general of the archdiocese.

Seton Catholic High School in Richmond has a graduating class of 16 seniors.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be on May 31 at 1:30 p.m. at St. Andrew Church in Richmond.

The graduation ceremony will follow on May 31 at 3 p.m. at St. Andrew Church.

The class valedictorian is **Elizabeth Daoud**, daughter of Dr. Jacques and Lina Daoud of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Richmond.

The class salutatorian is **Brayden Pipenger**, son of Andy and Maria Pipenger of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

The archdiocese will be represented at the graduation by Vince Aquila, assistant superintendent of Catholic schools for the archdiocese. †

A note of congratulations to high school seniors from the archdiocese's superintendent of Catholic schools

By Brian Disney

Superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese

The Office of Catholic Schools is excited to celebrate the more than 1,300 Catholic high school graduates in the Class of 2026 across the archdiocese. These graduates have excelled in their Christian formation that embraces the entire person: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical (Pope Leo XIV, "Drawing New Maps of Hope").

Through prayer, hard work, commitment and sacrifice, they have earned many accomplishments and much recognition.

Class of 2026: Remember that your Catholic education has been a collective endeavor of the school community. Thank your first teachers, your parents, for their sacrifices and lessons in the domestic Church.

Remember the witness of the priests, religious, teachers, coaches, administrators and support staff. Pray for the benefactors and community who make excellent Catholic education possible. Thank God for your many blessings today and always.

In his apostolic letter "Drawing New Maps of Hope," Pope Leo XIV

appealed to students and educators to be "choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty." Pope Leo invites us to transform the world by developing our inner lives and promoting peace. He also challenges us to use technology and AI judiciously, "placing the person before the algorithm."

Throughout your Catholic school education, you have been encouraged to encounter Jesus of the Gospels and to grow in your relationship with him. You have shared his light by celebrating in the sacraments, participating in community



Brian Disney

service projects and being Christ to one another.

Additionally, you have been developing your full human potential by excelling in academics, athletics, performing and visual arts and other activities. You have been discerning God's call in your lives and developing your talents. Your entire Catholic school education has been focused on your formation as a human person and your relationship with Christ.

We are proud of you for your accomplishments and are excited to see your continued impact in our Church, communities, nation and world.

God bless the Class of 2026! †

A story of ‘the love of birth parents, the adoptive family and the St. Elizabeth staff’

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—The annual Giving Hope-Changing Lives fundraising gala for St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities (SECC) in New Albany usually includes three witness talks, most often delivered in person.

But this year was different.

In his introductory comments at the event, held this year on April 16 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Ky., agency director Mark Casper thanked SECC’s staff, volunteers and board members past and present.

They “do the thousands of little things that allow St. Elizabeth to be the place it is,” he said. “It’s not always easy, and sometimes it’s heartbreaking. But they do it with passion and incredible dignity for our clients.”

This year’s witness talk about the agency’s Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana was a powerful example of Casper’s comments. So powerful it needed extra time to share via video the various angles of a particular adoption journey.

“This story needed to be recorded to allow it to be told in a way that it captures the love of the birth parents, the adoptive family and the St. Elizabeth staff,” said Casper.

The story is intricate. It tells of a mother’s dream, the agency staff’s faith-filled commitment, Mary Beth and Carl Clark’s generous love—and the 1-pound, 3-ounce baby boy who united them all.

‘A child and a sacred plan’

In the video, Mary Beth spoke on behalf of the couple. She began by sharing about their first adoption through Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana.

By 2020, she and Carl had experienced seven years of marriage, infertility and loss. But that year, they “finally had the opportunity to share our love and our lives with a child,” she said, a baby boy they named Wiatt.

The experience did more than fill their hearts. Staying in touch with Wiatt’s biological family through an open adoption, the couple learned that “just because someone cannot parent a child doesn’t mean that they can’t add value to a child’s life,” said Clark.

So positive was their experience, the couple decided to adopt again through the agency.

“Little did we know the journey that was waiting for us,” she said.

A new face appeared on the screen, and Stefanie Lowery, adoption director for Adoption Bridges at the

time Gabriel’s story began, took the narrative from there.

On Nov. 2, 2023, she received a call from a mother making the difficult and loving decision to place her unborn child for adoption.

It was a call Lowery would “never forget.”

The mother said she chose the agency “because we are a faith-based organization, because she was Catholic, and because she believed with a mother’s deepest hope that her son would be placed in a home filled with love, faith and unwavering support,” Lowery recalled.

She met with the mother the next day. Despite knowledge of the baby’s fragile health, “joy filled the room,” said Lowery. “For nearly two hours, we sat together, not as strangers, but as women connected by a child and a sacred plan.”

All involved were shocked when God set that sacred plan into action that very evening when the child was delivered by an emergency C-section at Norton’s Children’s Hospital in Louisville, Ky.

Born at 28 weeks and weighing just 1 pound, 3 ounces, her son was placed on life support and immediately taken to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

“Stefanie and I rushed to be by his side,” said another player in the story—Erin Goodlet, then-SECC’s director of social services. “At the time, we were all he had.”

The two women took shifts at his incubator “and spent time in prayer,” Goodlet recalled. “I prepared in my mind that him being healed in heaven may be more likely than through the medical interventions. Placing him with a



In this photo displayed during St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities’ annual Giving Hope-Changing Lives gala on April 16, Stefanie Lowery, right, then-adoption director for the New Albany-based agency’s Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana, poses with Mary Beth and Carl Clark and their two adopted sons—Gabriel held by Mary Beth and Wiatt held by Carl—in the neonatal intensive care unit of Norton’s Children’s Hospital in Louisville, Ky., in 2024. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

family seemed like a far dream. At this point, we were his family and determined that he would not be alone during the good or the bad.”

Lowery named him Gabriel, which means “God is my strength.”

The tiny, fighting infant proved his name true as he continued to have ups and downs, many procedures, and nights doctors feared he would not survive.

Still, after Christmas, agency staff decided it was time to find a loving family for Gabriel.

“Not knowing the extent of his health needs but knowing he was nowhere near leaving the hospital, ... we stood on the ground of hope and full trust in God,” said Goodlet.

Their faith was well-placed, for God was already working on the family piece of his sacred plan.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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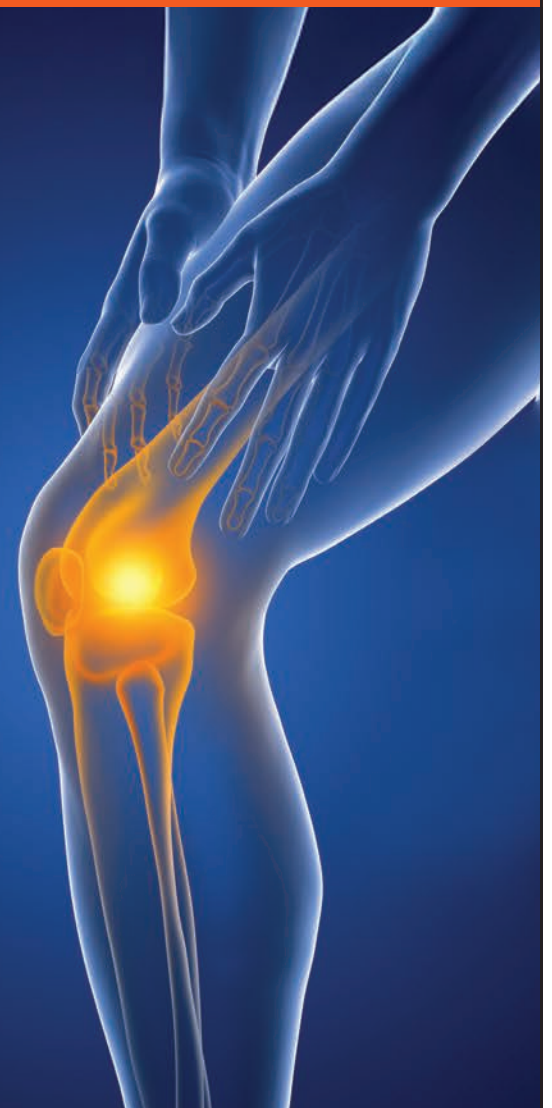


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ST. ELIZABETH

continued from page 1

The scene unfolded in a ballroom at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Ky., on April 16 during St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities' (SECC) Giving Hope-Changing Lives Gala.

The annual event serves several purposes. It is the agency's largest fundraiser to ensure the continued support and growth of its eight life-changing services: four housing programs for pregnant and parenting moms, Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana, Marie's Blessings distribution center, school counseling and supported living assistance to help those with intellectual and developmental disabilities lead more independent lives.

The event is also an opportunity to bestow the Spirit of Hope Award. Given for outstanding, selfless service to the agency, this year's recipients were Leaha McCrite and Ken Johnson. (*Read more about them in The Criterion's March 13 issue or at tinyurl.com/McCriteJohnson.*)

But the most moving part of the event each year are the witness stories shared by those whose lives were made better by SECC and its compassionate cadre of volunteers, donors and staff.

Together they help those the agency assists say, like Oliver, "We got this."

A place 'where girls go to be rebuilt'

Bolstered by the encouraging applause of the crowd—at 714, it was a record attendance for the gala—Oliver shared the story of a young girl faced with hardships almost from birth.

That girl never knew her father, "and he never knew she existed," said Oliver.

At just 18 months, the child's mother had abandoned her too, making bad choices landing her in and out of jail, and a great aunt became the girl's guardian and homeschool teacher.

At just 13, she was given the heavy responsibility of being one of the caregivers for her bedridden great-grandmother.

"While most girls were worried about friends, clothes or what was happening on social media, she was learning how to change the feeding tube, how to empty a catheter, ... how to gently roll a fragile 91-year-old woman to prevent sores, how to clean, sanitize and comfort someone at the end of their life," Oliver said.

The elderly woman's death was devastating for the teen, "causing her to experience loss at 13 in ways many adults never do," she said. "Something shifted in her after that."

A little more than a year later, the child gave birth to her own child, a boy she named Nolan. Loving him "enough to do and to want more for him," she placed her son for adoption.

Two years later, she gave birth to another son and named him Josiah.

"Now, at 15 years old with two children—one placed for adoption, one in her arms—people had opinions," said Oliver. "Labels came quickly, judgment came faster."

"But what people didn't see was this: she wasn't careless—she was trying to hold on to something that felt like purpose."

Driven by that purpose, the teen sought help. St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities' maternity home provided that help—and so much more.

"They didn't glorify her situation," but they also "didn't shame her," said Oliver.

They provided her with a room, a bed and a nursery for Josiah. But they also gave her "something far more powerful," Oliver added.

"They structured her, they gave her responsibility, accountability, expectations. They gave her foundation" with "chores, schedules, rules, and she went to school every day. The maternity home did not lower the bar for her—they raised it."

The teen earned points to choose from new, unused mom-and-baby items in the "points room," a benefit Oliver called an "investment" rather than "charity."

"That's because maternity homes are not places where girls go to be rescued," she said. "They are places where girls go to be rebuilt, where discipline replaces instability, where guidance replaces chaos, where accountability replaces shame."

Through its maternity home, SECC "did not just provide shelter," said Oliver. "It provided dignity. It gave a 15-year-old mother the chance to grow without being discarded."

That teenage mother went on to finish school, she said. "She grew and learned how to stand on her own. ... That girl is proof that when you invest in the right places, lives change."

"And the girl I've been talking about tonight is me."

For the second time that evening, Oliver was given a round of applause, one she met with a broad, joyful smile.

She shared the happy news that she and her partner are expecting their child to be born on Mother's Day—a girl this time.

"I'm so thankful for St. Elizabeth being what I needed at the time," said Oliver. "If a structured home could redirect my life at 15, imagine what continued support could do for the next girl who walks through those doors."

Serving 'with passion,' providing 'incredible dignity'

The annual event usually includes three witness talks, most often delivered in person. But this year was different.

In his introductory comments, agency director Mark Casper thanked SECC's staff, volunteers and board members past and present.

They "do the thousands of little things that allow St. Elizabeth to be the place it is," he said. "It's not always easy, and sometimes it's heartbreaking. But they do it with passion and incredible dignity for our clients."

This year's witness talk about the agency's Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana was a powerful example of Casper's comments. So powerful it needed extra time to share via video the various angles of a particular adoption journey.

"This story needed to be recorded to allow it to be told in a way that it captures the love of the birth parents, the adoptive family and the St. Elizabeth staff," said Casper.

The story is intricate. It tells of a mother's dream, the agency staff's faith-filled commitment, a couple's generous



Mark Casper, agency director of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in New Albany, admires the Shepherd of Hope Award presented to him by the agency's development director Leah Alexander during a gala to raise funds for the agency at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Ky., on April 16. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

love—and the 1-pound, 3-ounce baby boy who united them all. To read this inspiring story, turn to page 8.

The witnesses that night were powerful examples of SECC's mission to give hope and change lives.

Figures from the last fiscal year also show the agency's impact. For example, the four residential programs helped 154 women and children, and 15 adoptions were finalized through Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana and its assistance to other agencies.

Counselors provided services to more than 1,500 students in six schools. Marie's Blessings distribution center assisted more than 1,000 families—a quarter of which were first-time visitors—and the Supported Living Program provided more than 8,000 hours assisting 16 adults with intellectual and developmental difficulties.

Funds raised by the gala will help SECC continue to offer its eight programs. Through an advance online auction, live bidding at the gala and donations made that evening, the event raised more than \$440,000, with more pledges expected.

There is one other figure to mention: 18. That's the number of years Casper has served as SECC's agency director.

A mission 'present, vital and just'

This year's gala marked his last as director as he prepares to retire this summer.

"Certainly 18 years have flown by," Casper told the crowd. "This happens when you love your job, you admire the staff you work with, you love helping people with needs and are blessed to be supported by the most caring and generous community."

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson attended the gala. Before blessing the food at the beginning of the event, he remarked on Casper's upcoming retirement.

"Mark Casper has certainly been one who's focused on mission," he said. "I want to thank Mark for his many, many years of service ... and the great witness

he's given to that mission, his enthusiasm, his spirit."

As the evening came to a close, SECC's development director Leah Alexander spoke about Casper's legacy.

"For nearly two decades, he has led with compassion, dedication and an unwavering commitment to our mission," she said. "His leadership has helped shape countless lives, strengthened our programs and guided St. Elizabeth with steady faith and hope."

In recognition of his years of "selfless service," Alexander said, members of the agency's advisory council created a new honor called the Shepherd of Hope Award.

"It's a name that truly reflects the care, vision and heart that Mark has brought to this ministry for so many years," she added before presenting Casper the award and a heartfelt hug.

Earlier in the evening, Casper expressed his own admiration for the women the agency serves.

"St. Elizabeth provides for many parenting moms in various parts of their journey," he said. "It is often those very first steps, those baby steps, that are most difficult. And those are the ones that change her life and give opportunity to her children that are often inconceivable in her darkest days."

"I applaud all of our courageous moms meeting their struggles one day at a time, one foot in front of the other. As I often say, St. Elizabeth has always and continues today to offer opportunities for hope of a better tomorrow."

And it will continue to do so with a new person at the helm.

"Time moves forward, employees come and go, properties and buildings are renovated and programs change," Casper said. "Yet the mission of St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities is still present, vital and just, and will continue to be so in the future."

(To learn more about the programs offered by St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities or to donate, go to stcharities.org.) †

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

'We found a piece of our hearts'

The Clarks were at an Adoption Awareness Month walk in November 2023 when they learned about a baby Adoption Bridges "was expecting to be born at the end of January who may have some medical issues," Clark shared on the video.

It was a moment she vividly remembers.

"The second I heard about this case, I truly felt God whisper in my ear that this baby was going to be a part of our family in some way," she said. "We didn't know it at the time, but our second son was born that same day."

Gabriel's critical condition prevented the Clarks from visiting him in the hospital, but Lowery recalled the couple staying in constant contact, asking for updates and "holding him in their hearts long before they could hold him in their arms."

Finally, on Jan. 29, 2024, Mary Beth and Carl met their second son.

"When we entered his hospital room, the ventilator was humming, alarms were dinging, IV pumps were beeping," she said as the video continued. "But we found a piece of our hearts that we didn't know was missing. From that moment on, we wanted to love Gabriel and provide what comfort we could to his life for as long as he had."

And they did. From that day forward, said Lowery, Mary Beth and/or Carl "were at the hospital every single day, sitting beside him, talking to him, loving him, willing him to keep fighting, already living as his parents in every way that matters."

They baby, whom the Clarks named Liam Gabriel, was still in the NICU on the day he was legally adopted.

"There were several occasions when his journey appeared to be coming to an end, but our purpose remained the same—to love and comfort Gabriel as a part of our family," said Clark.

The couple finally took him home on Feb. 4, 2025.

Gabriel's journey has still "been wrought with health challenges" and returns to the hospital, said Clark, including a 37-minute cardiac arrest in May 2025.

"But he's lived and gotten to know a home, to know the love of a family, and to know the joys of life outside of the hospital."

Joys that include laughing with Wiatt, trips to the zoo and state parks, boat rides and even learning to drink from a cup.

"Our little fighter has changed our lives and our hearts forever," said Clark.

"Adoption has shattered what we knew about life and rebuilt it in a more valuable way, like the Japanese art of *kintsugi*—mending broken pottery pieces with gold in the cracks, making the rebuilt pottery much more valuable than the original."

(For more information on Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana, go to stcharities.org/adoption-bridges.) †

TEACHERS

continued from page 1

“I wish everybody had the opportunity to get to see their child do what the good Lord has called her to do,” Kim says. “And the fact that I get to do that every day with Katie has just been so remarkable.”

Katie shares that feeling.

“I’ve always known I wanted to come back to Holy Family because it’s so special to me,” she says about the school where she, her two older sisters and her mom attended in their childhoods. “God just knew I really wanted to teach here and teach with my mom. And God was happy to give that to me. It’s ended up working out really well.”

Mother and daughter not only share that bond as co-teachers, they embrace what they consider as the most important part of their teaching.

“Sharing my faith with my students is the best part of my job,” Katie says. “It is hard for me to put into words how much this means to me. I always knew that I would teach in a Catholic school because I knew I wanted to share my love of Jesus with my students. I love to share my ‘God moments’ with them.”

So does her mom, including what Kim believes are two of the miracles that have touched her family’s life.

‘We knew God was looking out for her’

Stressing the power of prayer to her students, Kim shares the story of an accident that her brother had when he was a freshman in high school.

“He was rappelling off a cliff and the rope broke,” she recalls. “He fell several hundred feet, hitting trees before ending up in a ravine. Miraculously, he lived through it and broke no bones, but he was unconscious for several days due to swelling on his brain. Once that went down, he was able to regain consciousness and eventually made a full recovery. There were so many people praying for him, even people we didn’t know. Those prayers got my family through one of the scariest times of our lives.”

She also shares a story about her mom.

“She had been having some health issues and couldn’t find a doctor who could diagnose her correctly,” Kim begins. “It was only after I had learned about mini-strokes in a college course I was taking that I was able to insist that my mom go to the doctor because I thought the numbness she was experiencing in her arm was related to a mini-stroke.”

A doctor confirmed that Kim was right. At the same time, the exam revealed a deeper threat to her mom.

“The doctor discovered that my mom actually had a tumor inside her heart,” Kim says. “He was able to figure this out because he had seen a similar case during his residency. This was a rare thing and usually only discovered during an autopsy. We knew God was looking out for her. Eventually, you realize these things that seem like coincidences are actually ‘God moments.’”

Katie has her own treasury of stories that have brought her closer to God and the people in her life.

“We were talking about forgiveness in religion class, and I was asking them to share a time when they forgave someone, or someone forgave them,” she recalls. “They seemed to be giving silly answers, so I gave them a personal example of one of my mentors during my college student-teaching experiences. I told them that we did not get along very well, and that I went to confession about it. The priest told me that I needed to pray to forgive her every morning.

“So, each morning, I would pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet for her. Eventually, our relationship changed, and I was able to forgive her. I told my students that all

throughout our lives, we go through struggles with people, and sometimes we hold grudges. If we let these grudges stay without forgiving the person, they become settled in our hearts and keep building over the years.

“I told them that as I started to pray more, God showed me all of the people that I had been holding grudges with, growing up. I shared with them that they need to start practicing forgiveness now so that they don’t become like me, 22 years old and having to forgive people from way back when I was in fourth grade myself!”

‘It makes me feel important and loved’

While they share the depth of their faith with their students, there is also a light-hearted approach to their teaching.

That quality showed early in the school year when they combined to create a fun video for an English/language arts unit about “first person.”

Mom and daughter sang and danced together in their video version of the song “I Wanna Talk about Me” by country singer Toby Keith, a song which includes the lyrics, “Wanna talk about I, Wanna talk about number one, Oh my, me, my.”

“That was fun,” Katie says. “It’s easier to be myself with her. It definitely allows us to have more fun and the kids to have more fun.”

The mother and daughter connection has been a hit with the fourth-grade students.

“I love their support when they talk to me,” Avery Miller says. “It makes me feel important and loved.”

Caroline Crofford notes, “My favorite part of having a mother and daughter duo is how they make us laugh.”

And Maja Luat adds, “It’s been confusing with the Mrs. and Ms., but it’s always full of love.”

The ringing endorsements continue from Amy Huber, Holy Family’s principal. She taught with Kim in the fourth grade for 23 years and was Katie’s fourth-grade teacher.

“The joy they have with each other is fun to watch,” Huber says. “They help ground each other and provide each other with support. They once walked these halls as students, and they are now guiding the next generation. Adding to this remarkable story, the legacy extends even further. Katie’s grandmother—Kim’s mother—was a secretary at Holy Family for many years.”

The irony of “this remarkable story” is that Kim was initially set against Katie becoming a teacher.

‘Oh, wow! That’s so cool!’

“We sometimes watch home videos now,” Kim says. “There’s one where I’m holding Katie as a baby, and my husband will say, ‘Did you ever think 20- something years later, you would be teaching partners?’ There was no way that ever crossed my mind.

“I love teaching, but every year it becomes more challenging. Honestly, I just wasn’t sure if I wanted any of my girls to go down the same path. Not that it’s not a very rewarding job—because it is—but I also know how



The daughter-and-mother teaching duo of Katie Huff, left, and Kim Huff, pose for a photo by a sign for Holy Family School in New Albany where they co-teach the fourth grade. (Submitted photo)

hard it is. And I was just hesitant on that. So when Katie came to me and told me she wanted to go into education, I said, ‘Oh, Katie!’”

Katie made that declaration shortly before she left to attend college at the University of Cincinnati, where she originally signed up to major in advanced medical imaging technology. But the more she thought about that path, the more her thoughts turned to her memories at Holy Family—staying after school while her mom prepared her class for the next day, roaming the empty halls in her socks, remembering how all the teachers always made school feel like home for her.

During breaks from college, Katie returned to Holy Family as a substitute teacher, a time of education for Kim, too, as she saw the gifts that her youngest daughter had as an educator.

And all through college, Katie hoped there would be a teaching position open at Holy Family when she graduated. When one did in the fourth grade, Huber invited Katie in for a meeting.

“I went into her office, and she told me she wanted to offer me this job,” Katie says, the excitement of that moment still alive in her voice. “I signed [the contract] right there, and then I went into my mom’s classroom. I said, ‘Guess what?! She offered me the job!’ We were both laughing and crying and we hugged.

“You don’t hear about a mom and a daughter teaching on the same team together. People have been [like], ‘Oh, wow! That’s so cool!’”

Mother and daughter also feel thrilled to be part of a larger education team that includes Holy Family’s pastor, Father Jeremy Gries.

“Father Gries will end many of his homilies by reminding us of our mission here at Holy Family,” Katie says. “He will ask, ‘What do we do here at Holy Family?’ Students respond, ‘Help form saints.’ Then he asks, ‘Why do we help form saints?’ Students say, ‘To lead the Church and community to Christ.’

“I love this because I am reminded each time of the importance of my job—to get all these souls to heaven.”

Mom and daughter joyfully share that goal, a mission they will continue again as co-teachers for the next school year.

It’s all part of a journey together that Kim considers as another God moment.

“God has a plan for all of us.” †

A photograph and a memory capture the love between a mother and her child

(In anticipation of Mother’s Day on May 10, The Criterion has invited readers to share favorite stories about their moms. Here is one of our readers’ stories.)

By John Shaughnessy

The photographs of a mother and child often become more precious through the years, and even more so

for the children whose mothers have passed from this life.

There’s something in such photos that make people wish they could see their mother’s smile again in real time, hear her laugh and feel her embrace.

That closeness shows up in a photo that Janine Schorsch shares, one that captures

her and her mother Vivian Wedig.

There is also one special conversation that remains vivid in her memories.

“So many times, I heard from my mother, ‘I do everything for God.’ For 90 years, that was a part of literally every conversation,” recalls Schorsch, a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. “In her 91st year, it changed to, ‘I just want to be with God.’ Apparently, she was ready, but God wasn’t.

“After months of stating that she was ready to ‘go to heaven,’ she began to blame her children for still being here, saying, ‘I would be gone if you weren’t all praying for me to stay.’ This became a standard statement with every visit.”

Schorsch tried to convince her mom that all she wanted was what was best for her.

“Finally, one day, in frustration, I told her, ‘Mom, I am not praying for you to stay!’ Taking her hand, I prayed out loud, ‘Lord, if you want my mom now, please

come and take her,’ followed a moment later with, ‘Well, Mom, you’re still here. I guess God’s not ready for you yet.’”

Everything changed months later when Schorsch’s mother entered into hospice care.

“It was time,” Schorsch shares. “As her six children sat with her each day, we naturally shared numerous stories from our years with Mom. A lot of laughs and tears filled those days. Finally, Mom was granted her heartfelt desire to go home to God.”

As Schorsch looks back on her life with her mom, the photographs they shared, the conversations they had and the memories they made together blend into a prayer of thanksgiving and hope.

“My prayer is to follow the example of my mother—to give everything to God and to go to him at the end of life. I pray that the stories shared by my children reflect a life of service and love. I pray that in their moments of frustration with me, the love we share triumphs.” †



Janine Schorsch, left, knows she has been blessed by the life of her late mother Vivian Wedig. (Submitted photo)

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Election of Chicago pope spotlights Church in ‘The Heavenly City’

By Robert Mixa

(OSV News)—As a South Sider, it still feels strange to say it out loud: The pope is from the South Side of Chicago and a diehard White Sox fan. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine this would happen in my lifetime.

In the 20th century, Chicago was to American Catholicism what New York was to finance or Hollywood to film—central, influential and formational. Yet, it is currently undergoing some hard times.

Take St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Dolton, Ill., the church Pope Leo XIV attended in his childhood, which stands vacant and dilapidated. Now there is talk of its restoration, and it is my hope that with the election of Pope Leo, there will be a renewal of the faith throughout Chicago, especially on the South Side.

There are many places to pray for such renewal. The National Shrine of St. Jude is located in South Chicago, in a working-class neighborhood that has gone through rough times. The shrine became a haven during the Great Depression for the thousands of workers who lost their jobs when local steel mills closed. The local priest encouraged devotion to this patron of impossible causes.

Further west is another shrine dedicated to a patron saint of impossible causes, a saint familiar to our Augustinian pope, St. Rita of Cascia, who died as an Augustinian nun in 1457. Adjacent to the shrine is an all-boys Catholic high school under her name, where Pope Leo used to teach math and physics during his studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Hyde Park. The high school and shrine are currently located in what used to be Quigley South, an archdiocesan minor seminary.

Chicago Catholic schools, especially the high schools on the South Side, were often the heart of their neighborhood’s identity. Pope Leo’s brother John is a retired principal of St. Gabriel Catholic School in the Canaryville neighborhood of Chicago.

Where earlier generations might have identified most strongly with their parish and its school, today many South Side Catholics identify with their Catholic high school. Rivalries—especially in sports—run deep, but so do the loyalties they forge. Even those who’ve long since left the neighborhood still carry its spirit. These schools were not just places of learning, they were training grounds in camaraderie and grit, hallmarks of the South Side.

Chicago is a city shaped by waves of immigration, and many parishes founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were built as ethnic enclaves. Germans, Irish, Czechs, Italians and Poles each established their own parishes—places where national identity was maintained.

This began to change under Cardinal George W. Mundelein, the legendary archbishop of Chicago from 1915 to 1939, who sought to move beyond what he saw as immigrant parochialism by promoting the

“post-immigrant” parish model.

But the relics of this past still remain. When driving along the city’s expressways, you can’t miss the monumental churches that rise from the city blocks—testaments to the faith of those early communities and one reason that Chicago, despite its political drama and violence, earned the nickname “The Heavenly City.”

For me, it was the dome of the Byzantine-Romanesque church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help that always stirred a sense of awe. As a child, I’d spot it from the Stevenson Expressway on our way to a Sox game in Bridgeport. It’s one of the “Polish cathedrals” that still grace the skyline—cathedrals not by designation, but by scale and grandeur.

There’s an old saying about Chicago immigrant foundations: the Germans built the businesses, the Irish the pubs and the Poles the churches. Like most such adages, it’s exaggerated—but it also has a degree of truth.

Chicago’s most iconic “Polish cathedrals” are clustered northwest of the Loop, tracing the arc of the Kennedy Expressway through neighborhoods once filled with Polish immigrants. At the heart of what’s known as the Polish Triangle stands St. Stanislaus Kostka, the “mother church” of Polish Chicago. Today it’s also the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy, famous for its perpetual eucharistic adoration and iconic 9-foot-tall monstrance, a wooden carving of Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant with the Eucharist displayed in the center.

Just a short way down Milwaukee Avenue is St. John Cantius, another spiritual attraction known for its rich liturgical life and celebration of the traditional Latin Mass. It’s also now the home of the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius, a budding religious order founded in 1998.

Further north, past Goose Island, is St. Mary of the Angels, the largest church in Illinois, loosely modeled on St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. With its massive dome and Renaissance interior, it’s easy to mistake it for an actual cathedral—but Chicago’s cathedral is located further downtown, near the Magnificent Mile, the city’s primary shopping district along Michigan Avenue. Holy Name Cathedral often finds its way onto Mafia-themed tours, with guides pointing out the bullet marks that still scar its stone façade—remnants of the 1926 assassination of mob boss Hymie Weiss, when Al Capone’s men opened fire as part of their bloody bid to control Chicago’s underworld. These faint pockmarks, however, pale in comparison to the damage caused by a devastating fire in 2009, which destroyed much of the cathedral’s roof and prompted a major restoration.

But Holy Name is no stranger to renovation. In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the cathedral underwent a dramatic interior transformation in response to the call of the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” for “noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display” (#124). Out went many of the statues, stained-glass windows and devotional aspects—elements that a rising Catholic cultural elite viewed as distractions from the centrality of the actions that happened at the altar.

The post-Vatican II changes to Holy Name Cathedral may have been controversial, but they were the fruit of a transformation that had been building for decades in Chicago and beyond. The roots of what became known as the Liturgical Movement go back to northern Europe, where the rebirth of Benedictine monasticism after the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars gave rise to a renewed focus on the liturgy at the heart of the Christian life.

In the United States, the movement found a powerful ally in Cardinal Mundelein, who appointed one of its foremost advocates, Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand, as rector of the archdiocesan seminary, Saint Mary of the Lake. Located far north of the city, the seminary campus opened in 1926.

That same year, Chicago hosted the 28th International Eucharistic Congress, a landmark event in the history



Holy Name Cathedral sits in the midst of downtown Chicago. The Church’s historic presence in the country’s third-largest city is marked by beautiful church buildings that often displayed the deep faith of Catholics of various ethnicities who settled in Chicago. (Photo by Karen Calloway/Chicago Catholic)

of the Church in America. The Mass at Soldier Field, lakefront home of the Chicago Bears, was one of the largest religious gatherings in the U.S. at the time—a bold, public declaration that Catholicism in America had come of age. The Congress concluded with a pontifical Mass and Benediction held on the grounds of the brand-new seminary. A temporary railway line was even built to bring pilgrims to the event.

Cardinal Mundelein famously called the seminary the “Vatican of the West,” and the architecture speaks to that ambition. The buildings combine neo-Georgian and Colonial American exteriors with Roman-inspired interiors, centered on a chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception—a structure that curiously resembles the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Conn., a classic New England Protestant meeting house.

The cardinal’s message to the sons of immigrants was unmistakable: Be loyal to Rome, but also to America. That is now embodied in Pope Leo XIV, the first American pope.

While Chicago might not boast the sheer volume of cultural institutions found in New York, what it does have is world-class—and much of it sits along one of the most scenic urban waterfronts in the world. In Hyde Park, the Museum of Science and Industry still stands as a relic of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, a landmark in Chicago history.

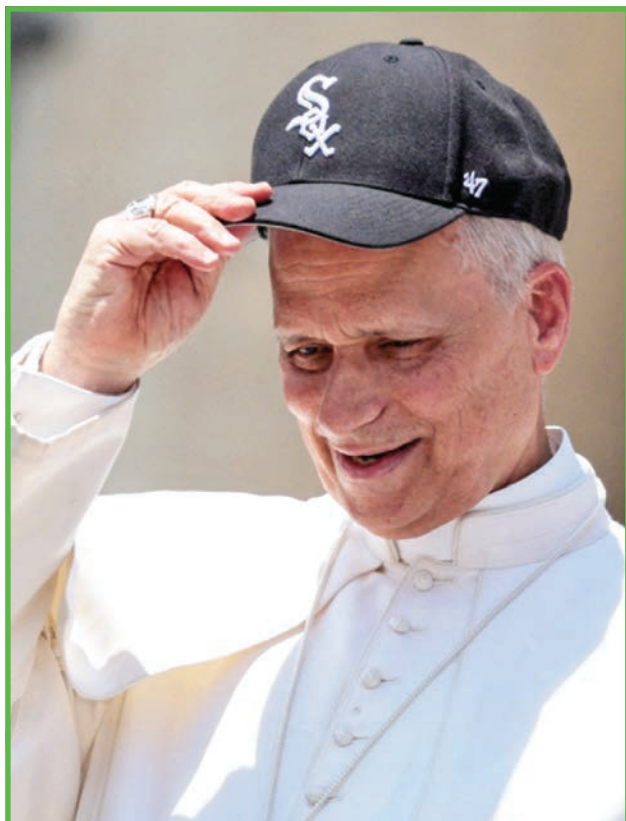
If you want to further explore, drive up Lake Shore Drive to the Museum Campus along Burnham Harbor, where you’ll find the Field Museum of Natural History, the Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium. Further on is the Art Institute of Chicago, nestled beside Grant Park with its magnificent Buckingham Fountain. Walk north along Michigan Avenue to the riverwalk and you will be treated to one of the best views of Chicago’s iconic architecture.

But for a truly breathtaking panorama, take the elevator up to the 94th floor of the former John Hancock Tower. From the lounge, you can see the entire city laid out before you—Lake Michigan to the east, skyscrapers to the west, Wrigley Field to the north and to the south, what I will always call Comiskey Park (now Rate Field), where the White Sox play.

Pope Leo XIV is a White Sox fan, which means he knows what it means to suffer—a fitting trait for a pope. I take Pope Leo as a sign of that same promise for the Church in Chicago: a reminder that out of decline can come renewal, that deep roots still matter and that hope, even on the South Side, is never out of reach. Chicago is now the home of the first American pope.

And somehow, that feels exactly right.

(Robert Mixa is the founder of the online *Spe Salvi Institute* and a history teacher in Kraków, Poland.) †



Pope Leo XIV wears a Chicago White Sox baseball cap during his weekly general audience on June 11, 2025, in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. Born in a suburb on Chicago’s south side, the pontiff’s election put a spotlight on the Church in the city. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, via Reuters)

Faith in History/Sean Gallagher

St. Junipero Serra helped establish the Catholic Church in California

Last month, this column began a series about the 10 holy men and women from America who have been declared saints. The story of St. Kateri Tekakwitha was shared in the first column in this series.



This column focuses on St. Junipero Serra. Born in Spain in 1713, he joined the Franciscans in 1730 and was ordained a priest in 1738.

Soon established as a respected philosophy professor, Father Junipero's heart was nonetheless far from university life in Spain. His eyes were set on serving as a missionary in faraway "New Spain," which were Spanish colonial holdings in the Americas.

He and a group of fellow Franciscans landed in Veracruz, Mexico, in 1749. Starting at the coast, Father Junipero walked the 250-mile journey to Mexico City, which is some 7,500 feet above sea level. During the trek, the priest injured his left foot, leaving him with a significant limp that stayed with him the rest of his life.

After several years of successful ministry in the Sierra Gorda region of central Mexico, the Spanish government had Father Junipero and other Franciscans lead

missionary work on the Baja Peninsula in what is now the northwestern corner of Mexico.

Later, when Russian explorers moved south along the Pacific coast out of Alaska, the Spanish crown wanted its colonies more firmly established in California. Father Junipero led a group of Franciscans missionaries there, arriving in 1768 in what is now San Diego.

Over the next 15 years, he tirelessly worked up and down the California coast founding nine missions, many of which would later become major cities, including San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Santa Clara.

At these missions, Father Junipero and his fellow Franciscans proclaimed the Gospel to the native peoples of the land. They also helped these people improve their material lives by teaching them well-established agricultural techniques, a practice that had met with success in Sierra Gorda.

Wherever he did his missionary work in the Americas, Father Junipero was a man of deep prayer amidst his bustle of activity. He was also a noted advocate, defending both the freedom of the Church against the interference of the Spanish government and the rights of the natives in the face of many colonists who sought to manipulate them for their own ends.

During the course of his missionary efforts in the

Americas, Father Junipero baptized more than 6,000 people and confirmed more than 5,000.

Exhausted from his missionary work and suffering from poor health through much of his life in New Spain, Father Junipero died on Aug. 28, 1784, at Mission San Carlos, which is south of San Francisco.

A statue of St. Junipero Serra stands in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, which features statues representing many states across the nation. St. Junipero understandably represents California.

In 1935, a Catholic organization bearing Father Junipero's name was founded to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Today, Serra International has more than 12,000 members in more than 500 clubs throughout more than 30 countries. The Indianapolis Serra Club was founded in 1951. Serra International will hold its 83rd international convention from July 9-12 in Indianapolis.

Father Junipero's beatification and canonization cause was launched in 1949. St. John Paul II declared him blessed in 1988. Pope Francis declared St. Junipero Serra a saint on Sept. 25, 2015, during a Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The Church celebrates his feast on July 1.

St. Junipero Serra, pray for us. †

Our Works of Charity/David Bethuram

Counseling can be an essential component for those dealing with grief

Dawn's life changed forever after a tragic drowning accident—an experience no mother should ever have to face.

"Zoey was a chubby little girl with bright blonde hair and bright blue eyes, just like her daddy," Dawn shares.



The death of a child is among the most profound and life-altering losses a person can experience. Trauma and grief counseling provide parents with professional support to help them navigate the intense emotional pain, shock and ongoing changes that follow the death of a child.

Counseling does *not* ask parents to forget their child or to "move on."

Instead, it offers compassionate guidance for learning how to live *with* the loss while protecting emotional, physical and relational well-being.

Research consistently shows that most bereaved individuals—including parents—do not access formal grief counseling, even when they are struggling significantly. Studies indicate that the majority of people who could benefit from professional support never receive it, often due to barriers such as limited access, stigma, cost or the belief that they should grieve on their own.

A 2023 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report found that grief and bereavement services remain underutilized nationwide, even among individuals experiencing prolonged or traumatic grief symptoms. While grief is a natural response to loss, approximately 7–10% of bereaved adults develop prolonged or complicated grief, which can significantly impair daily functioning and mental health if left untreated.

For parents who have lost a child—a group at elevated risk for traumatic grief—

these gaps in care are especially concerning.

As Dawn recalls her 14-month-old daughter Zoey's vibrant personality and the joy she brought to their family, she also reflects on the harrowing accident and its aftermath. The support of her husband and the guidance of her pastor helped her through the earliest stages of grief. Yet her journey toward healing called for a different kind of support—one she found through Catholic Charities.

Dawn connected with a therapist at Catholic Charities, and their first phone call marked the beginning of a therapeutic journey focused on healing and growth.

"When I stepped into the offices of Catholic Charities, I felt very warm. I felt very welcome. I felt very secure in being able to share my trauma and how I had been grieving," Dawn reflects.

One aspect of counseling that stood out to Dawn was the emphasis on setting goals. "Setting goals was incredibly helpful. In a season of grief, it's very easy to become stagnant and just sit in it," she explains. "My counselor always encouraged me to set goals. We talked through what I specifically needed to work on and what I could take home and work on as a family while we were healing."

Reflecting on her experience, Dawn emphasizes the importance of seeking professional support during times of trauma and loss.

"Everybody is going to have a cross to carry at some point in their life," she shares. "Catholic Charities provides opportunities for people to grow, heal, process, learn and set goals so they can get through the trauma, the struggles, and the cross they are carrying."

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

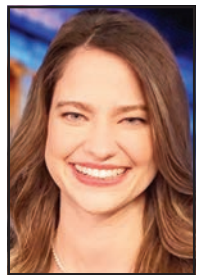
Counseling does not ask parents to forget their child or to "move on." Instead, it offers compassionate guidance for learning how to live with the loss while protecting emotional, physical and relational well-being.

Life and Hope/Katie Yoder

Two smiles offer differing perspectives on preciousness of human life

I'll never forget the first time I saw him: the notorious abortionist Kermit Gosnell. He was on trial for murdering babies born alive during abortions, and

I was covering it. As court officials and a few reporters gathered in a Philadelphia courtroom in 2013, Gosnell's eyes met mine. Then, he smiled.



Until that moment, I felt like I knew him—or at least his case. I had read the scathing grand jury report condemning his bloodstained clinic littered with cat feces. I knew about the baby remains stored in milk

jugs and orange juice cartons. I saw the tiny, severed feet collected in jars. I learned about his practice of "snipping" the spinal cords of moving, breathing babies. I heard how their bodies clogged the toilets. I read about their heads suctioned out and skulls crushed.

I expected to hear about all of this. I didn't expect the man at the center of it would smile.

The news of Gosnell's death in prison broke in late March—more than a decade after he was convicted of first-degree murder in the deaths of three babies born alive, involuntary manslaughter in one woman's death and 21 illegal late-term abortions, among other crimes. His case blurred the distinction between the unborn and the newborn. It posed the question: What is the

difference between ending a baby's life inside the womb and murdering a baby outside of it?

As news of Gosnell's death spread, two major reports documented a continued increase in U.S. abortions since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court case that legalized abortion nationwide. One showed an increase in the number of abortions by Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, in 2024.

Another, a report from the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive research institution that supports abortion, estimated that U.S. clinicians performed an estimated 1,126,000 abortions in 2025. That's the highest number of abortions since 2009.

For the pro-life movement, even one abortion—the intentional destruction of an innocent human person in the womb—is too many. To visualize 1 million abortions is to visualize 1 million deaths. A million people means roughly twice the population of cities like Miami or Minneapolis. A million people is more than the number of those who die annually from heart disease, the leading listed cause of death in the United States.

At the same time, there's another, life-saving increase happening. Pregnancy centers that offer life-affirming care to pregnant and parenting women in need served more than 1 million new clients in 2024, according to a 2025 report from the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research arm of the national pro-life group Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America.

Around 2,775 centers provided more than \$452 million in medical care, support and education services and material goods. The report found that the number of new clients served and services provided has been increasing since 2017.

There's hope, and every person is called to be a part of it. Just as one person has the ability to end life, one person has the extraordinary potential to save life.

A recent news report tells the story of an unborn baby in Michigan diagnosed with a life-threatening birth defect. When local doctors told the mother and father that their baby would not survive, the parents traveled to California to seek alternative care. There, they met with Dr. Hanmin Lee, surgeon-in-chief at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital. He agreed to perform a complex, two-part surgery in the womb.

Today, the baby Dr. Lee once operated on is a thriving teenager named Mason Ellinger who is preparing to graduate from high school. He recently returned to California to thank the doctor who saved his life before he was even born.

"We talked in the womb," Mason told the local ABC affiliate during a video interview. Dr. Lee agreed: "It's true. I said, 'You get better.'"

They both smiled. And, this time, I could too.

(Katie Yoder writes for OSV News from Maryland.) †

Sixth Sunday of Easter/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, May 10, 2026

- Acts 8:5-8, 14-17
- 1 Peter 3:15-18
- John 14:15-21



The Acts of the Apostles once again furnishes the first reading for Mass this weekend during the season of Easter. In the readings of the weekends earlier in this season, the identity of the Apostles clearly was established.

In a critically important way, the Apostles exercised the authority of Jesus himself in naming a

new member of their group, Matthias, to succeed the dead Judas. Peter healed the sick with power that originated in Jesus. And on behalf of all the Apostles, Peter spoke as Jesus had spoken.

The Apostles clearly discharged the divine power that belonged to Jesus, and they continued Jesus' mission as the Redeemer. They had been the Lord's specially selected students and companions, but in Acts they possessed a unique role themselves.

Through them, the Lord continued the mission of salvation. They bore within themselves the Holy Spirit, and they gave the Holy Spirit to others.

While Acts already has established that Peter was the leader of the Apostles, the character of Apostle belonged not just to him. It was also with the others.

Thus, in this reading, the central figures are St. Philip and St. John. They performed miracles, as Jesus had performed miracles, having been sent by the other Apostles to Samaria. Their destination reveals much. They looked to the salvation of all people, even of Samaritans, whom Jews so despised. No one was beyond the scope of salvation in Jesus.

The second reading is from the First Epistle of St. Peter. It is a strong, joyful and enthusiastic proclamation of Jesus as Lord, calling believers to hear and follow him. The Lord should be in their hearts and minds.

St. John's Gospel is the source of the last reading. Not a Resurrection narrative, it nonetheless serves the Church's

purpose as it teaches us this weekend. After celebrating the Resurrection for these weeks since Easter, the Church gently is summoning us to examine our lives in our own times, with circumstances particular to us.

This reading is our blueprint for life. Our task as disciples is to love others as Jesus loved all. It is clear. In God's love, given to us in the Lord, is our salvation. Indeed, the very act of giving us a blueprint for living is a vitally important gift given in love to us by God.

Reflection

The next major liturgical event for us will be the celebration of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Soon after this feast, we will celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. The end of the Easter season is in sight.

For weeks, the Church enthusiastically has proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus, gloriously occurring after the dreadful events of Good Friday. It has shared with us its joy, which echoes the joy of the first Christians. It has told us repeatedly of the risen Lord's appearances and admonitions.

The message is strongly catechetical. Contact with Jesus was not lost with the ascension, when Jesus returned to the Father. Contact with the Lord remains very clearly in the Church. It offers us the pastoral leadership of the current successors of Peter and the other Apostles. Christ lives!

Through them, we still hear the words of Christ. In the sacraments they celebrate, we still experience and are given the power of Christ's eternal life. We are brought into union with Jesus.

Finally, in the reading from John's Gospel, the Church tells us how to live. We must love others, pure and simple.

Gently, gradually, definitely, the Church has entered, and is pursuing, the process of leading us to ask what the Lord's plan for salvation after his ascension means for each of us individually.

For us, this is the obvious question. Are we willing to live with this plan? †

Daily Readings

Monday, May 11
Acts 16:11-15
Psalm 149:1b-6a, 9b
John 15:26-16:4a

Tuesday, May 12
St. Nereus, martyr
St. Achilleus, martyr
St. Pancras, martyr
Acts 16:22-34
Psalm 138:1-3, 7c-8
John 16:5-11

Wednesday, May 13
Our Lady of Fatima
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1
Psalm 148:1-2, 11-14
John 16:12-15

Thursday, May 14
St. Matthias, Apostle
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

Psalm 113:1-8
John 15:9-17

Friday, May 15
St. Isidore
Acts 18:9-18
Psalm 47:2-7
John 16:20-23

Saturday, May 16
Acts 18:23-28
Psalm 47:2-3, 8-10
John 16:23b-28

Sunday, May 17
The Ascension of the Lord
Acts 1:1-11
Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9
Ephesians 1:17-23
Matthew 28:16-20

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Validity of absolution in sacrament of penance not tied to completion of penance

Q I recently went to confession on Saturday afternoon before my parish's vigil Mass. The priest told me to pray a rosary for my penance. But since I was the last one in line, Mass was starting right away, and I didn't have time to do my penance.



Then I'm embarrassed to admit I wound up forgetting about it, and I

didn't actually pray the rosary like I was supposed to until a few days later. Now it occurs to me that since I didn't do my penance right away, my confession might have been invalid and I shouldn't have received Communion at Mass. Is this a new sin I need to confess?

A The short answer is no, you didn't do anything wrong by receiving holy Communion before completing your penance.

First of all, keep in mind that it's only mortal sins (serious sins we commit with full knowledge and freedom) that should prevent a Catholic from receiving holy

Communion. As you may know, if a Catholic receives Communion with an unconfessed mortal sin on their conscience, they have thereby committed the additional grave sin of sacrilege. Sometimes as shorthand, we call this "receiving Communion unworthily."

Of course, for the sake of a healthy spiritual life it's good to approach the sacrament of reconciliation regularly even if just to confess venial sins. Yet the Church does not strictly require us to confess venial sins before receiving Communion—and in fact, a devout reception of holy Communion by itself can forgive our venial sins (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1394).

But even if we suppose for the sake of argument that you had confessed a mortal sin, it still would have been fine to receive holy Communion before completing your penance. Sacramental forgiveness of sins takes place as soon as the priest prays the words of absolution. The validity of the sacrament is not dependent on the penitent completing his or her assigned penance.

This is not to say that doing our penance after confession is optional. Canon 981 of the *Code of Canon Law* explains the confessor's obligation to impose penances that are proportionate to the severity of the sins confessed and truly appropriate for the penitent's life circumstances. It goes on to state that "the penitent is bound personally to fulfill these penances." Yet even here, the law does not propose the completion of penances as a condition of absolution "working."

Canon 981 also doesn't mention a timeframe in which penances are to be completed. Practically speaking, it makes sense to try to complete a penance as soon as reasonably possible, but a straightforward reading of the law would suggest you could legitimately complete a penance even days later.

If the completion of one's penance is not necessary for the sacrament to be effective, then why have penances in the first place? As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The confessor proposes the performance of certain acts of 'satisfaction' or 'penance' to be performed by the penitent in order to repair the harm caused by sin and to re-establish habits befitting a disciple of Christ" (#1494).

In other words, penances are given in order to further our own spiritual growth, and possibly also to ease the negative effects our sins have caused.

The one theoretical situation I can think of where a failure to complete an assigned penance might impact the validity of a Catholic's sacramental confession is a scenario where a refusal to do penance was one aspect of a broader lack of true contrition, or the penitent not actually regretting the sins he or she had confessed. As the *Code of Canon Law* also tells us in Canon 959, valid absolution can only be received by those who "are sorry for those sins and have a firm purpose of amendment," with "firm purpose of amendment" meaning a real intention to turn away from sin and grow in holiness.

(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

In the Garden

By Sandy Bierly

In the garden where it all began,
Adam and Eve lost their perfect life
When they chose to sin.
They hid from God
to hide their guilt and shame,
Because they were afraid
To ask forgiveness from Him,
They passed the blame
When God confronted them.

How often it is that we do the same,
Run and hide and try to cover
Our guilt and shame,
Until our conscience
Turns us back to God,
And we seek Him in
The sacrament of confession,
Through the priest who,
In persona Christi,
Absolves us from our sin.

God sent Jesus to redeem us
From our sin.
It began in a garden
Just like where sin first began.
Jesus was arrested, suffered,



And died for our sin.
On the third day He arose
And opened Heaven.
Now through His great love
We have new life in Him.

(Sandy Bierly is a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Photo: Ancient olive trees still grow in the Garden of Gethsemane just outside of old Jerusalem in Israel.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

POPE LEO

continued from page 1

Father Kevin said the book highlights St. Augustine as “one of the first [theologians] to begin to articulate a Christian understanding of friendship” and “that somehow in and through relationship, God is found.”

“This, I believe, contributes to Leo’s pastoral approach. We hear Leo often speaking about being ‘together,’ and the importance of not going at it alone,” said the former vice president of mission and ministry at the Augustinian-founded Villanova University, Pope Leo’s own alma mater in suburban Philadelphia.

“That the human person is meant to be in relationship, to live in the potential of encountering the other as a friend, to search for home and belonging—this drives Leo’s call to engage in dialogue, to reach out and to walk together,” he continued.

An example of that call was evident in Pope Leo’s first video message to young people on June 14, 2025, which aired at Chicago’s Rate Field during the Archdiocese of Chicago’s Mass of thanksgiving and celebration of the first American pope’s election. He described the Trinity as a community of love and told young people to “continue to build up community, friendship as brothers and sisters, in your daily lives, in your parishes, in the archdiocese and throughout our world.”

Augustinian Father Allan Fitzgerald, an Augustine scholar and former director of Villanova’s Augustinian Institution, said Pope Leo is teaching that “faith doesn’t just touch the head. It also touches the heart.”

“Augustine learned to be a person of heart,” he explained. He said the saint’s mother, St. Monica, was “a person of heart” and his father was an “irascible” businessman. Yet St. Augustine saw his parents eventually come to be “on the same page.”

“So, the pulling together of head and heart was a crucial piece of his own growing and his own development,” Father Allan said. “And I think that’s what is, in fact, happening in the life of Pope Leo at this point.”

Father Allan, 85, has edited the St. Augustine Bible, teaches at Villanova and regularly holds international retreats on St. Augustine for fellow Augustinians. He told OSV News this relationship between the head and heart is apparent in St. Augustine’s definition of friendship, especially that he had “all sorts of dimensions to what it means to be a good friend.”

“I think in some ways, friendship is the thing that underlies that whole head and heart combination. It’s hard to be a really good friend if you’re not in some way pulling your own self together,” he said.

His fellow Augustinians have observed the way Pope Leo has maintained the strong sense of Augustinian community throughout his pastoral journey, which included years as a missionary in Peru, leadership roles within the order and now as the vicar of Christ leading his flock throughout the world.

Augustinian Father Tom McCarthy, the incoming Midwest Augustinians’ provincial superior, told OSV News that Pope Leo continues to sustain relationships in person with Augustinians in Rome and via text and e-mail with others worldwide.

“We have to support him and say, ‘Keep it going. Good job,’” said Father Tom, who is stepping into a role in the Chicago-based province that Pope Leo—then Father Robert Prevost—once held himself.

Father Tom, 60, currently is the province’s vocations director. He said each week, the friars read and reflect on one chapter of Augustine’s eight-chapter rule.

“Throughout the year, you’re reading the rule completely six times,” he said of the Augustinians, whose order was established in 1244 and based on a rule of life St. Augustine wrote around 400. “And we’re doing it because Augustine said, ‘This should be read to you once a week.’ Just as you look in a mirror to see how you look, you look through this rule in a mirror of your spiritual life. How are you doing?”

Father Tom said the rule gives guidance on how to live together in community, how to carry out fraternal correction and dealing with the difficulties of religious life, among other rubrics.

He noted that Pope Leo entered the order’s minor seminary at 13 years old, giving him “56 years of being formed and trained in the way of Augustine.”

“So, this is nothing new for [the former Father Robert] as pope,” said Father Tom. “This is him just being who he is.”

He also noted the pope often quotes St. Augustine in his messages and homilies or refers to his writings, just

HIGHLIGHTS FROM POPE LEO XIV’S FIRST YEAR



MAY 8, 2025

Cardinal Robert F. Prevost elected pope; takes the name Leo XIV.

MAY 9, 2025

Celebrated first Mass as pope in the Sistine Chapel with cardinals.

MAY 18, 2025

Inaugurated his Petrine ministry with Mass in St. Peter’s Square.

MAY 19, 2025

Met with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and other faith leaders, as well as U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

JULY 7-22, 2025

Vacationed in Castel Gandolfo, a traditional papal summer residence.



JULY 9, 2025

Met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as the Holy See offered to help negotiate peace with Russia.

JULY 28-AUG. 3, 2025

Encountered young people at the Vatican during the Jubilee of Youth.

SEPT. 7, 2025

Presided over first canonizations: Sts. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis.

OCT. 9, 2025

Published apostolic exhortation “Dilexi te,” a text begun by Pope Francis on love for the poor.

OCT. 23, 2025

Prayed with King Charles III in the Sistine Chapel, a first since the Church of England’s break with Rome in 1534.



NOV. 1, 2025

Proclaimed St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the Church.

NOV. 20, 2025

Took first trip beyond greater Rome to conclude the Italian Episcopal Conference’s meeting in Assisi.

NOV. 27-DEC. 2, 2025

Made first apostolic visit to Turkey and Lebanon.

JAN. 6, 2026

Closed the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica, ending the Jubilee of Hope.

JAN. 7-8, 2026

Convened an extraordinary consistory of cardinals.



FEB. 15, 2026

Resumed tradition of visiting Roman parishes during Lent.

MARCH 28, 2026

Made apostolic visit to Monaco.

APRIL 2-5, 2026

Celebrated first Triduum as pope.

APRIL 13-23, 2026

Made apostolic visit to Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea.



as his brothers do regularly in conversation.

On the world stage, Pope Leo also has not shied away from directly addressing the U.S.-Israel war with Iran and other conflicts around the world, by passionately calling for peace.

The pope has also spoken out about the U.S. government’s immigration crackdown that has led to thousands of arrests of those without proper authorization to remain in the country.

Father Allan said the times call for the pope to speak out on what is morally wrong, just as St. Augustine did when he refuted the heresy of Manichaeism, a dualistic faith using cosmology to explain the forces of good versus evil while incorporating elements of Christianity and other religions. Talking about morality amid “so-called political decisions is really just a way of being human,” Father Allan said.

Father Kevin sees in Pope Leo a contemporary embodiment of the spirit of the saint who died in 430, and remains the inspiration of his religious community. “St. Augustine was concerned about fostering unity and communion,” and he “was masterful at dialogue and in bringing people to the table,” he said.

With Pope Leo on the world stage, “we will see [and have already seen] Leo call for encounter and dialogue, engage differences, gather, bring together and cut through polarization,” he said in his e-mail. “It’s in his bones to be this way, and it’s up to us and the world to listen attentively to this invitation to go deeper together, to walk together, as St. Augustine urged his followers 1,600 years ago.”

That, Father Kevin said, is also reflected in Pope Leo’s motto, drawn from one of St. Augustine’s sermons: “*In Illo uno unum*,” or “In the One, we are one.” †

REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT NOW

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

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

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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Pope meets with Catholic Charities USA leaders, urges mission of compassion

VATICAN CITY (OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV met the leadership of Catholic Charities USA in an audience at the Vatican on May 4, offering words of encouragement



Kerry Alys Robinson

to one of the country's largest disaster relief networks as it navigates growing demand for food and basic services to aid the poor in the United States.

Kerry Alys Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, spoke

after the papal audience about Catholic Charities' Gospel-driven mission, its emergency food response amid disruptions to federal food stamp programs and the new "People of Hope" initiative currently traveling the country. (See a related story in last week's May 1 issue of The Criterion or read it online at tinyurl.com/CordArticle.)

She said the encounter with Pope Leo XIV left the delegation "deeply moved and confirmed in our commitment to serve poor and vulnerable people of all backgrounds ... to bring merciful love and aid to people who need it the most, wherever they are suffering."

In Pope Leo's speech to the organization's board of directors and senior staff, the pope encouraged their work to "seek to find solutions to inhumane situations, to alleviate the suffering of individuals and families, and to relieve the burden of those who are weighed down by hardship and strife."

The pope also acknowledged the

difficulties inherent in charitable work, from securing sufficient resources to combating discouragement, and urged them not to lose heart.

"I am fully aware that the Catholic Charities agencies in the United States of America are by no means immune from these challenges," the pope said. "Yet it is precisely when we are confronted with such obstacles that we must learn to hear Jesus' voice saying to us once again, 'I am with you always!'"

The papal audience comes at a moment when "many Americans are struggling to make ends meet," Robinson said, describing how donors to Catholic Charities stepped up to fill in the gap following disruptions to federal nutrition programs.

When funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP and commonly referred to as food stamps, was disrupted during the 43-day shutdown of the federal government in 2025, Catholic Charities USA launched an emergency fundraising appeal.

SNAP, which serves approximately 42 million Americans, provides food-purchasing assistance to low- and no-income individuals and families.

Catholic Charities was ultimately able to provide 2.5 million tons of food to families facing hunger, distributing 100% of donated funds directly to local Catholic agencies and food distribution partners serving those in need.

"When Americans are made aware of the names and the faces of hungry people, they want to help," Robinson said.

She noted that the organization has seen a rise in private giving as donors

become more aware of hardship at the local level, saying, "We're seeing an increase in anxiety around just the basics."

"Catholic Charities USA is the official disaster response agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S. and the third largest in the country, second only to the Red Cross and Salvation Army, but the only one without a congressional mandate to serve as such," she said.

"When there is a flood or a wildfire or a hurricane, I just see people rushing in to help," Robinson added. "I see the goodness that is common to all of us, and the desire to be part of a solution, to kind of be bridge builders, to be people of mercy and hope—and that covers the full theological and political spectrum."

Founded in 1910, Catholic Charities USA serves as the national membership organization for 169 independent Catholic Charities agencies operating across the United States and five territories. Collectively, those agencies serve more than 16 million people annually, regardless of their religious background.

Robinson, who has led the organization for two and a half years, spoke of the spiritual dimension of serving the poor

and its challenges. "That work, while deeply meaningful, is hard because you are bearing witness to human suffering every day, and there never seems to be enough resources to meet the plight of poor families and communities," she said.

"We know that in our 115-year history, whenever there is any kind of a dramatic change or upheaval, it is the poor who suffer disproportionately, and we see an increase in the demand for the services that we offer, basic things like food, shelter, job training," she said.

During the audience, Robinson presented Pope Leo with a bound edition of *People of Hope: Faith-Filled Stories of Neighbors Helping Neighbors*, a book filled with stories of people Catholic Charities serves, drawn from the organization's new traveling museum of the same name.

The museum, housed in a retrofitted semi-truck and made possible by a nearly \$5 million grant from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc., features 42 first-person video testimonials from Catholic Charities staff and volunteers across the country. It began a three-year national tour in March and is expected to visit more than 150 communities across the U.S. †

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Muncie Catholic Job Opening Pastorate Finance Manager

The Muncie Catholic Pastorate is seeking a detail-oriented, mission-driven Finance Manager to join our team. This role supports the life of our pastorate by overseeing the accounting team, financial reporting, budgeting, and our daily financial operations.

Ideal candidates will have a Bachelor's degree in accounting, CPA preferred, with at least three years of experience. Nonprofit experience is a plus.

A full job description is available at munciecatholic.com/employment.

Interested applicants should send a resume and cover letter to Tara Edmondson, Director of Operations, at tedmondson@parish.dol-in.org.

Employment

Director of Youth Ministry

St. John Paul II Catholic Church, Sellersburg

Saint John Paul II Catholic Church in Sellersburg, IN, a Divine Renovation Network Parish, is seeking a full-time Director of Youth Ministry for the parish. Responsibilities include overseeing of middle school, high school and young adult ministry in the parish. This role will support volunteers in these ministries, work hands on in development and implementation of programming for these ministries.

Applicants should have knowledge of and be willing to foster the Catholic Church's mission and an understanding of a comprehensive youth ministry program. Bachelor's degree or related field experience is required. Experience in Alpha for Youth is a plus. The ability to work effectively with young people, parents, employees and parishioners is necessary.

For additional information or to submit your resume please send to: employment@stjohnpaulparish.org.

Director of Operations

Holy Spirit at Geist Parish

Holy Spirit at Geist Catholic Church in Fishers, Indiana, a parish of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana, is seeking a full-time Director of Operations.

The Director of Operations is a full-time position responsible for budgeting and financial management for the parish, HR administration and staff supervision, facilities oversight, risk management and legal compliance. The Director of Operations is the primary person responsible for parish operations and serves as support to the ministry of the Pastor and will serve on the Pastorate Leadership Team.

General responsibilities: oversee all accounting and financial functions, including preparing the parish annual budget and reports; ensure internal financial controls are appropriate and followed; oversee and implement risk management; serve as liaison to diocesan administration, financial institutions, and vendors; function as local human resource contact for parish staff; directly supervise operations and maintenance staff; and coordinate parish capital campaigns and capital projects.

The successful candidate will be experienced in accounting, a strong leader and manager who possesses excellent oral and written communication skills. Essential skills are the ability to organize, prioritize, and manage multiple tasks concurrently while building effective working relationships with staff, parishioners and outside contacts. Experience handling confidential, sensitive, timely and critical matters using good judgment, tact, respect and discretion are also necessary.

We require a BS in accounting or CPA; minimum of five years' experience in finance/accounting/business management; strong proficiency in Microsoft Office, especially Excel; a minimum of three years' supervisory experience with human resource responsibility. A Catholic in good standing in her/his parish is preferred. The ability to satisfactorily complete the required criminal background and reference checks and complete Diocese-sponsored Safe Environment Training upon job offer is required.

We offer a salary and benefits package competitive for Catholic parishes across the country. Interested candidates should email a cover letter, resume, and salary requirements to Fr. Dale W. Ehrman, Pastor at dehrman@dol-in.org. Please write "DOO applicant" in the subject line.

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