



The

Criterion

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Black Catholic Ministry

New coordinator excited to 'give my gifts back to the Church,' page 3.

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Bonnie Wentworth talks with customers about the upscale wigs she sells in Penelope's Covered Blessings shop in Madison on July 11. A portion of the proceeds from all items sold in the shop, including faith-based merchandise—both Catholic-specific and general Christian—go toward helping patients at Norton Cancer Institute in Madison and those suffering hair loss from cancer and other medical conditions. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Madison shop leads to blessings paid forward and 'Holy Spirit moments'

By Natalie Hoefer

MADISON—After 27 years volunteering and working for the two schools of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison, Bonnie Wentworth knew her life would change when she retired in 2022.

But there was one change she never expected, especially at 54. "I always had big '80s hair," says Wentworth. "About six or eight months after I retired, my hair started to fall out. It

looked like somebody all of a sudden had taken a razor and shaved it from the top of my head all the way to the back."

Devastated, she looked for a solution. In the process, God covered her with blessings—and showed her a way to do the same for others.

In 2023, Wentworth and her husband Nathan opened Penelope's Covered Blessings in downtown Madison, selling a unique mix of upscale wigs, turbans and faith-based gifts. A

See WIGS, page 8

Archbishop Thompson, U.S. pilgrims at Jubilee of Catechists have private audience with Pope Leo XIV

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Among the estimated 20,000 pilgrims in Rome for the Jubilee of Catechists, a group of three dozen from the United States had their

own private audience with Pope Leo XIV—including Archbishop Charles C. Thompson.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

The pilgrims—including the archbishop, volunteer parish catechists, diocesan employees, religious sisters and two staff members from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

(USCCB)—met with the pope on Sept. 27 before his Jubilee audience.

The pope told them that all Catholics, by virtue of their baptism, are called to be teachers of the faith, said Marilyn Santos, associate director of the USCCB Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis.

The next morning, during Pope Leo's Jubilee Mass, he formally installed in the ministry of catechist both Santos and David Spesia, executive director of the secretariat. The first reading at the Mass was proclaimed by another member of the pilgrimage: Robert Gallagher, a volunteer catechist at the Basilica of St. Edward in Palm Beach, Fla.

Archbishop Thompson, chair of the bishops' Committee for Evangelization and Catechesis, led the pilgrimage.

"We are just being pilgrims of hope," the archbishop told Catholic News Service (CNS). The pilgrimage was an opportunity to "deepen our own our faith, our own sense of God's grace and presence in our lives and our own calling—rooted in all of our baptisms, whether bishop or religious,

See CATECHISTS, page 10

Want to invite Christ into a deeper place in your heart, home and family? Try these books

By John Shaughnessy

In her desire to deepen her relationship with Christ, Theresa Chamblee has drawn inspiration from a book she views as powerful.

"Interior Freedom is a game changer in deepening your relationship with Christ. It definitely was for me," says Chamblee,

See BOOKS, page 2



Here are several of the books that *Criterion* readers say have helped them deepen their faith and their relationship with God. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

BOOKS

continued from page 1

director of social concerns for Catholic Charities in the archdiocese.

“I once joked with a friend that as I read *Interior Freedom*, I felt like



Theresa Chamblee

I was receiving spiritual direction on steroids, but in such a way that if I either read one paragraph or a whole chapter, I would put the book down feeling hope and a more profound love for Christ.”

Chamblee says the path to that profound love is captured in this passage from the introduction of the book by Beatitudes Father Jacques Philippe.

“From the introduction: ‘Every Christian needs to discover that even in the most unfavorable outward circumstances, we possess within ourselves a space of freedom that nobody can take away, because God is its source and guarantee. Without this discovery, we will always be restricted in some way, and will never taste true happiness. But if we have learned to let this inner space of freedom unfold, then, even though many things may well cause us to suffer, nothing will really be able to oppress or crush us.’ ”

When *The Criterion* invited people to share a favorite book that has helped them deepen their faith, Chamblee recommended *Interior Freedom*. Here are several other books that readers have recommended.

The Return of the Prodigal Son by Henri Nouwen

“This book really broke open the parable of the Prodigal Son in a deeper way than I have ever experienced before,”



Rachel Gilman

says Rachel Gilman, director of youth ministry for the archdiocese.

“I’ve heard this story over and over again, so much so, that it tended to lose a lot of its meaning for me until I read this book. This book transformed my

spiritual life and relationship with God and made the parable of the Prodigal Son come alive for me.

“Nouwen unpacks each of the three viewpoints of the characters in the parable—the younger son, the eldest son, and the father—and deeply challenges you to reflect on how you are like each of these characters in your own spiritual journey in a way that hits to the core of your heart and forces you to honestly look at yourself and your understanding of the loving and merciful father.

“Highly recommended if you need a bit of a gut punch in your spiritual life or are feeling stuck or stagnant in your faith.”

He Leadeth Me by Jesuit Father Walter Ciszek

“Over the past decade or so, *He Leadeth Me* has inspired my faith and that of my sons as I’ve told them stories about Jesuit



Sean Gallagher

Father Walter Ciszek,” says Sean Gallagher, a reporter and columnist for *The Criterion*. “The book is a series of spiritual reflections on the American priest’s experience of 22 years in captivity in the Soviet Union, from 1941-63.

“While in prison in Moscow for five years, most of it in solitary confinement, Father Ciszek could not celebrate Mass. He was finally able to do so when he was sent to prison work camps in Siberia. But it was always done clandestinely and at great risk and sacrifice.”

One passage particularly strikes a chord with Gallagher:

“Sometimes I think that those who have never been deprived of an opportunity to say or hear Mass do not really appreciate what a treasure the Mass is,” co-wrote Father Ciszek in *He Leadeth Me* as he reflected on the lengths to which he and prisoners in Siberia went to celebrate and worship at Mass.

Gallagher says, “Father Ciszek’s example and his love of the Eucharist that he shared in his book have nurtured my own gratitude for it, leading me to not think twice in making the sacrifice of waking up early to go to my parish’s daily morning Mass. His book helped me make it a joy that is an integral part of my day.”

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

“The catechism itself is great. What the compendium does is distill the basic doctrinal and moral teaching of our



Ken Ogorek

Church down to a series of questions and brief answers,” says Ken Ogorek, executive director of the Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis in the archdiocese.

“The answers ... provide succinct and accessible information—with a young adult audience, especially, in mind. The compendium helps me know that it’s the authentic Jesus of sacred Scripture and sacred tradition with whom I have a relationship, rather than a Jesus I create in my image and likeness to affirm how I vote, and how I spend money.

“We all need authoritative clarity on who Jesus is—and who he isn’t; the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* has helped provide this for me, and for many other folks.”

La Eucaristia en la teología vivida de los Santos. (The Eucharist in the Lived Theology of the Saints) by Ricardo Sada Fernandez

“The book has helped me in my faith,” says Claudia Corona, the coordinator for the archdiocesan

Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

September 23–October 16, 2025

Sept. 23 – Oct. 10
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pilgrimage, Italy, and European travel

October 13 – 3 p.m.
Virtual Evangelization and Catechesis Subcommittee and Committee Chair meeting

October 14 – 10:30 a.m.
Priest Personnel Board meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis

October 14 – 6 p.m.
Saint Meinrad Alumni Dinner at Ritz Charles, Carmel, Ind.

October 15 – 10:30 a.m.
Catholic Center Connection at

Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

October 15 – Noon
United Catholic Appeal employee lunch at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center

October 16 – Noon
Lunch gathering with archdiocesan priests, Indianapolis

October 16 – 6 p.m.
United Catholic Appeal Advance Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral followed by dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, both in Indianapolis

Department of Pastoral Ministries. “The theology lived by the saints is



Claudia Corona

useful for better appreciating the enormous mystery of a God hidden in the bread. In this work, enlightened thoughts and moving experiences are woven that infect us and ignite us in true eucharistic piety.”

The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything by Jesuit Father James Martin

“I read this book in the summer of 2018 before I went to college at Loyola Chicago, where I felt drawn to Jesuit spirituality,” says Meredith Farrar, development associate for St. Mary’s Early Education Center in Indianapolis.

“A couple of the concepts that were particularly striking to me in the book

were the Ignatian concepts of consolation and desolation, which encouraged me in my prayer life. Another thing that I



Meredith Farrar

enjoyed from this book was learning more about the life of St. Ignatius and his conversion story.”

(If you have a favorite book that has led you to a deeper relationship with God, we’d love for you to share it with us. Please send the title, the author and the reasons why the book has had an impact on your faith to John Shaughnessy by e-mail at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.) †

Official Appointments

Effective August 8, 2025

Rev. Paul John Mapacpac, R.C.J., appointed parochial vicar of St. Margaret Mary and St. Patrick parishes, both in Terre Haute.

Effective September 1, 2025

Rev. Roger Vazhappilly, O.F.M. Conv., appointed parochial vicar of St. Benedict and St. Joseph University parishes, both in Terre Haute.

Effective September 20, 2025

Rev. Baudelaire Martial, C.S.C., appointed parochial vicar of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis.

Effective September 29, 2025

Rev. Paul Nord, O.S.B., appointed pastor of St. Meinrad Parish in St. Meinrad, and St. Boniface Parish in Fulda.

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

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New Black Catholic Ministry coordinator excited to ‘give my gifts back to the Church’

By Natalie Hoefer

When her Nigerian parents gave her the first name “Irorobeje,” the name proved to be fitting.

“It means ‘when you’re making decisions, it can be difficult,’ and that was totally me” when it came to choosing a career, says Irorobeje Crystal Owoso-Maddox. “I like so many things, and I have so many interests. My parents would poke at me a little and say, ‘You have to pick one thing!’”

“When I found out that ‘iroro’ is actually a word that means ‘wisdom,’ I was like, ‘Dad, why didn’t you tell me that?’ Because wisdom helps with discernment.”

After working for several years in various areas—each often leading to new interests—Owoso-Maddox recently discerned a call to apply for the role of coordinator of archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry.

She started in the position in July.

‘Give my gifts back to the Church’

Her journey to the role began, in a sense, in 2007, when Owoso-Maddox, her parents and siblings were welcomed into the full communion of the Church in Covington, Ky.

Previously, the family had worshiped in the Baptist faith tradition. When they moved to the Midwest from the Boston area, one of her father’s sisters asked him what church the family was attending.

“And my dad didn’t have a concrete answer,” says Owoso-Maddox. “She encouraged him to look into the Catholic faith, and they had conversations and dialogues. So, my dad basically spearheaded the process with our family.”

She was 21 and living on her own at the time. But the family was “really tight-knit and close,” says Owoso-Maddox, and, unlike her difficulty in making other decisions, “I had no hesitancy on taking this journey with them.”

She moved to Indianapolis in 2014. For the next 11 years, her jobs ranged from working for [Nextdoor.com](#) to Horizon House homeless shelter. That experience stirred in Owoso-Maddox an interest in social work on behalf of children, which led to work with the City of Indianapolis Department of Business and Neighborhood Services and the Indiana Department of Child Services.

Her desire to help children took a turn toward education. She worked as family and community engagement coordinator for Vision Academy in Indianapolis and was director of the K-12 school and community programs for Marian University in Indianapolis for the last three years.

In one job, Oshowo-Maddox worked with another Black Catholic.

“We kind of were just like, ‘You know, where are the Black Catholics in Indianapolis? Like, it’s just us.’”

Around 2021, the two reached out to Pearlette Springer, then-archdiocesan coordinator of Black Catholic Ministry. Owoso-Maddox volunteered for the ministry and for Springer.

After Springer retired in June of 2023, Owoso-Maddox continued to assist the archdiocese by helping Catholic Charities Indianapolis-Social Concerns create a series of 10 videos on prominent Black Catholics in 2024 (available at [tinyurl.com/BlackCatholicVideos](#)).

“I really admired the work that Dr. Springer did to pave the way for that community and support network for Black Catholics,” says Oshowo-Maddox. “I’ve been basically set up to be successful, ... to be able to pour into and give my gifts back to the Church in whatever way that I can.”

Jack of all trades, ‘but now for the Church’

She says she is excited that her new role will provide the opportunity to speak on issues of relevance to Black, African,



‘Being able to speak about that freely in a way that is all about unity and sharing the many gifts that we have to bring to the Church—that’s something that I’m really excited about.’

—Irorobeje Crystal Owoso-Maddox, new coordinator of archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry

Caribbean and Creole- and French-speaking Catholics in central and southern Indiana.

“Being able to speak about that freely in a way that is all about unity and sharing the many gifts that we have to bring to the Church—that’s something that I’m really excited about.”

Owoso-Maddox also looks forward to using the many talents and skills she’s learned through her multiple interests—from community building, cross-cultural communications and event planning to photography, theater and production management.

“What’s that quote? ‘Jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one.’ That’s me,” she laughs.

“I get to just put on the thousands of hats that I always put on, but now it’s for the Church specifically, and to bring people to Christ.”

Owoso-Maddox plans to continue holding events the ministry has offered in the past. But she also has new ideas that call upon her list of skills and interests.

Some ideas are still being developed, like a podcast on Black Catholic history in Indiana with other possible topics included.

Other ideas are already being implemented. She just launched a periodically recurring series of events called Faith, Fellowship & Flow, with three events set for this month ranging from Mass and fellowship to outings to a Christian Hip-Hop concert and a clean comedy show.

here. Let me just start looking for jobs in California or just anywhere.”

She had a dating app on her phone that she had used from time to time, with no success.

Owoso-Maddox decided to “just go on [the app] one more time. It was my last hurrah, because I had one foot in Indiana and one foot who knows where.”

And that’s how she met her husband Steve. The two dated for two years and were engaged and married in 2019. With his two children and the couple’s own two children, Owoso-Maddox is the mother of four, ages 3, 5, 11 and 16. She is in the process of registering herself and the two youngest children with Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis, whose school the two children attend.

The parish’s Black Catholic history is fitting, given Owoso-Maddox’s new role for the archdiocese.

The official mission of the archdiocese’s Black Catholic Ministry is “to identify and foster the rich diversity of Black Catholics of African descent [and to] empower the members so they can evangelize their brothers and sisters to take on the spirit of Jesus Christ.”

“That’s just right on the nose,” says Owoso-Maddox. “I don’t think that ethnic culture should be disregarded. It needs to be elevated, and in fact illuminated. They each bring their own gifts to the table, and their own form of spirituality, and we can all learn from each other.”

(For more information on the archdiocese’s Black Catholic Ministry, contact Irorobeje Crystal Owoso-Maddox at 317-261-3381 or iowhosomaddox@archindy.org. For more information on the October Faith, Fellowship & Flow events, go to [tinyurl.com/0926events](#) and scroll down to the General Announcements.) †

What is your favorite memory of walking the Camino?

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for people from around the world to walk all or a part of the *Camino de Santiago*, or “Way of St. James,” a pilgrimage path that leads to the tomb of St. James at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain.

The Criterion is inviting people who have made all or part of that pilgrimage to share one memorable moment from that journey, a moment that has led them into a deeper relationship with God and a deeper appreciation of their faith.

Comments and insights about the overall experience of that journey and how it has continued to influence your life and your faith are also welcome.

Please send your submission to John Shaughnessy at jshaughnessy@archindy.org or by mail in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †



Scenic landscape in Galicia in northwestern Spain is pictured on Sept. 3, 2023, from Camino Primitivo (Primitive Way), one of the paths of El Camino de Santiago, or the Way of St. James. According to the pilgrims’ office in Santiago de Compostela, a record 499,239 pilgrims from all over the world walked the famed Camino in 2024. (OSV News photo/Jörg Meyrer/KNA)



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Signed: Mike Krokos, Editor



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, *Publisher* Sally Krause, *Associate Publisher*
Mike Krokos, *Editor*

Editorial

St. Francis of Assisi and personal encounter with Jesus Christ

Tomorrow, Oct. 4, our Church celebrates the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the most popular figures in the pantheon of holy men and women whose lives give witness to Jesus Christ.

Something about this man who gave up everything and embraced a life of prayer, preaching and poverty captures our hearts. We want to embrace him and join with him in praising God and giving thanks for all creation.

St. Francis was a lover and a peacemaker. He was a true proponent of Christian ecology, and he proclaimed the joy of the Gospel in both his words and his actions.

Paradoxically, Francis longed to participate in the sufferings of Christ and so was given the gift of the stigmata—marks corresponding to those left on Jesus’ body by the crucifixion. Francis was a man who was known to be joyful and fun loving, yet he also desired to share our Savior’s pain.

In the person of St. Francis of Assisi, we learn how important it is for every baptized Christian to have a personal encounter with Jesus. Our faith is not primarily a collection of religious teachings or ethical principles. We believe in a person, not a code of conduct, and we trust that our salvation is found not in religious practices, but in surrendering our will and our lives to the one in whom we see the face of God revealed to us individually and in communion with all our sisters and brothers.

The late Pope Francis chose his name out of deep respect for his patron’s love for the poor, his passionate commitment to peace and his reverence for all God’s creation.

In his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*: On Care of Our Common Home,” Pope Francis wrote that God’s creation is like a sister, to be treated with reverence, respect and loving care. God sees everything that he has made as worthy of his love, and he invites us to be responsible stewards of the world we live in, our common home.

In Archbishop Charles C. Thompson’s recently published letter, “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” he writes that “Care for God’s Creation is not simply a political, economic or even scientific cause. It is a profoundly spiritual concern that is deeply rooted in the way we see ourselves and our world in relationship to our Creator.”

The archbishop goes on to say that St. Francis recognized everything as united in God’s family. All things visible and invisible, as we acknowledge in the creed, are one in Christ. The profound insight of St. Francis of Assisi is that all created things are sisters and brothers, members of the one family of God.

Catholic social teaching is rooted in this profound understanding. God saw that everything in creation was good, and he entrusted to our first parents (and all of us) the responsibility for stewardship of everything, especially the Earth, our common home.

—Daniel Conway



Pope Leo XIV feeds fish at a pond in the Pontifical Gardens of Castel Gandolfo, Italy, on Sept. 5. The pope inaugurated *Borgo Laudato Si’* the same day, opening the historic papal residence as a center dedicated to the principles of care for creation and human dignity outlined in Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Unity and peace are themes that are emerging as prominent in the teaching of our new Holy Father Pope Leo XIV as he carries on the teaching of his predecessor whose namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, was such a powerful witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Archbishop Thompson’s pastoral reflection stresses the value of a personal encounter with Jesus as essential to achieving unity and peace in our personal lives, in our families and in society.

For St. Francis, the words, “Go and repair my Church, which, as you can see, is in ruins” were the spark that ignited his radical commitment to poverty and his passionate embrace of the joy of the Gospel. Francis of Assisi fell in love with Jesus Christ, and he recognized his Lord and Savior in every person he met and in all God’s creatures great and small.

In the Gospel reading for the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi, we read:

“At that very moment [Jesus] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and Earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him’” (Lk 10:21-22).

St. Francis was a childlike figure who introduced thousands of followers during his lifetime (and millions of people since his death in 1226) to the person of Jesus Christ. Especially during this Jubilee Year of Hope, let’s look to Francis for inspiration and encouragement as we seek to encounter Jesus face-to-face.

Be Our Guest/Cecilia Cicone

Communion: A life-saving balm for mental illness

(Oct. 10 marks World Mental Health Day, whose objective is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health.)



The first time I was in an in-patient locked psychiatric unit, I was overwhelmed by the amount of suffering I saw in the people there.

While conversations about mental health are fairly common, the experience and suffering of serious mental illness—of psychosis, detachment from reality and life-threatening impulsivity—were completely new for me. My heart was filled with compassion and pity for the men and women on the unit for whom every single day was a fight to stay alive.

But I wasn’t on the unit as a health care provider or minister. I was there because I, too, was suffering more than I ever thought possible.

My mental health symptoms have led to diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and dissociative identity disorder (DID), which was formerly known as multiple personality disorder. Since that first time when I was hospitalized, I have been in treatment and hospitalized three more times. I take medication and I have been in therapy for years, both with varying degrees of success.

I try to remain rooted in my identity as a beloved daughter of God, but my symptoms impact nearly every aspect of my life. One of the most painful aspects of my mental illness—and this is true for many Catholics I’ve met who experience similar symptoms—is the impact it has on the ability to practice our faith.

When I first started experiencing symptoms of mental illness, I was in formation to become a religious sister, praying literally hours a day, participating in daily Mass, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and making a daily holy hour. Now, I can barely close my eyes long enough to pray a prayer before meals before my nervous system kicks into overdrive, sensing danger and pushing my brain and body into a flashback.

Many well-meaning people have recommended spiritual practices to me, picking up on the fact that mental illness can easily disrupt someone’s spiritual life. Regular confession and Communion, praying the rosary or St. Michael Prayer, novenas to SS. Dymphna and Jude and regularly using holy water are all beautiful expressions of trust in God’s goodness and the reality that all the saints in heaven intercede for our good.

But spiritual practices alone cannot heal mental illness. Only God can do that, and only if he wills it.

One of the greatest gifts that Catholicism has to offer those of us who experience mental illness is not chaplets or devotions, but a framework for understanding our pain and suffering, and the strong conviction that it will not be in vain. This belief, when taken to heart, can literally be lifesaving.

Suffering has purpose within

the Catholic worldview. Jesus is especially close to those who suffer because we are participating in the very same experience that won our salvation. When we suffer, we have an opportunity to be co-redeemers with Christ, rising above the despair the Evil One wants for us, and trusting completely in the Father even when it seems we have no reason to trust.

This kind of belief is only accessible to a rational mind grounded in faith, though. Rationality and logic are often not accessible to people who experience mental illness. That’s where another gift of the Catholic worldview comes into play in a lifesaving way: communion.

People who love someone who is mentally ill also suffer from the effects of their mental illness. It can be confusing and excruciating to love someone who experiences such existential pain and who may engage in self-destructive behaviors, unsure how to ease their suffering or even to keep them safe.

In the Church, we do not live or die on our individual faith alone. We are united with one another, in Christ, and we can cling to one another’s faith in the darkest of moments when our own faith fails.

In practice, this means being able to sit with those who experience mental illness even in the unbelievable darkness and irrationality that they may experience without attempting to fix it.

Mental illness can be extremely isolating, and the lies that accompany mental illness can quite literally kill those whose minds betray them. Someone who is grounded in reality and God’s love can be a life-saver. Sitting with someone in their pain without looking away or dismissing it, even when it doesn’t make sense or is frightening, and presenting that suffering to God as an offering takes what seeks to kill and makes it life-giving.

Someone suffering from mental illness may not be able to find meaning in their suffering by offering it along with Christ’s sacrifice at the Mass or through prayer and fasting. But if you love someone who is experiencing mental illness, you can pray and suffer on their behalf, accompanying them through the dark valleys to the light, even if they cannot fully experience that light on this side of heaven.

If you or someone you love is experiencing mental illness, there is hope. Cling to Jesus and the sacraments, find consolation in the Blessed Mother and the saints, pray for one another, and remain grounded in the knowledge that God will not allow suffering to be in vain. He will work through our wounds, which will be the very places he fills with grace to save us.

One closing word: If you or someone you love is unsafe due to mental illness, please do not hesitate to reach out for help. Contact emergency or professional services to maintain safety, such as the nearest emergency room, or call or text 988 for the national suicide and crisis hotline.

(Cecilia Cicone is an author and communicator who works in diocesan ministry in northwest Indiana.) †

Letters Policy

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

The editors reserve the right to select the letters that will be published and to edit

letters from readers as necessary based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content (including spelling and grammar). Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Care for creation is a core element of Catholic social teaching

The Church is not only committed to protecting the environment, but above all we seek to protect humankind from self-destruction. By respecting and caring for all things, we grow in our ability to respect and care for God’s gift of creation!

In “Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection,” published on Aug. 28, I offer the following observations:

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

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

All of these social issues are interrelated. Care for God’s creation, for example, is a

core element of Catholic social teaching that includes respect for the dignity of all persons and our concern for the poor and vulnerable. The late Pope Francis frequently reminded us that there is an essential link between stewardship of the environment and our care for our fellow human beings—especially the poor and the vulnerable.

“Peace and Unity: A Pastoral Reflection” points out that “Care for Creation demands that we rise above self-centeredness and reject any semblance of a ‘throw away’ culture. We must strive to embrace the environment and all creatures with a deep sense of appreciation, awe, respect and wonder.”

All life is sacred, as Pope Francis stated in his 2015 encyclical “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home”: “Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another” (#42). It should not be lost on any person of Jewish or Christian faith that the Torah and the Bible both begin with the story of creation, making clear how God entrusted humanity with the privilege and responsibility of its care.

Seven key principles of Catholic social teaching are intertwined throughout *Laudato Si’*. These include life and dignity of the human person; call to family,

community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; the option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God’s creation. From the perspective of justice, not one of these principles is optional. This makes “care for creation” a life issue, an essential feature of our efforts to reverence and defend all human life.

In the opening sentences of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis writes that God’s creation is not an object to be manipulated by us. It is like a sister, our “Mother Earth,” to be treated with reverence, respect and loving care.

Care for God’s creation is not simply a political, economic or even scientific cause. It is a profoundly spiritual concern that is deeply rooted in the way we see ourselves and our world in relationship to our Creator. In “The Canticle of the Sun,” a hymn of praise whose final verse concerning Sister Death was composed by St. Francis of Assisi on his deathbed in 1226, we recognize everything as united in God’s family. Unless we appreciate the truth and the importance of care for God’s creation as an expression of authentic Christian ecology, we cannot grasp the full importance of Catholic social teaching.

Authentic care for God’s creation

addresses the “inseparable bond” between respect for the environment and the love of humanity which alone makes justice and peace possible. We cannot be authentically eco-friendly unless we are also unselfish, loving and fair in our treatment of our fellow human beings—especially those who are most vulnerable, the poor, the sick and the unborn.

During his summer recess in Castel Gandolfo, Pope Leo XIV inaugurated a new Mass for the Care for Creation. And in his recent message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2025, the Holy Father said: “In a world where the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters are the first to suffer the devastating effects of climate change, deforestation and pollution, care for creation becomes an expression of our faith and humanity.”

Let’s pray for the grace to care for all God’s creation. May God grant us the courage to defend human life and dignity by caring for our common home!

(To read Archbishop Thompson’s pastoral reflection in English and Spanish, go to archindy.org/pastoral2025. Study questions are available at [facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis](https://www.facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis).) †



Cristo, la piedra angular

El cuidado de la creación es uno de los elementos fundamentales de la doctrina social católica

La Iglesia no solamente tiene el compromiso de proteger el medioambiente sino que, por encima de todo, procura proteger a la humanidad contra la autodestrucción.

Al respetar y cuidar de todos los seres, ampliamos nuestra capacidad de respetar y cuidar el obsequio de la creación divina.

En “Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral,” publicada el 28 de agosto, ofrezco las siguientes observaciones:

El papa León XIV ha advertido de los peligros asociados a la inteligencia artificial (IA), especialmente en relación con las noticias falsas, el engaño, la manipulación y otras intenciones poco éticas. ¿Hasta qué punto podría contribuir esto a la incapacidad de comprender, considerar y debatir auténticamente los asuntos de una forma humana básica?

¿De qué manera podría influir en nuestra interpretación de todo lo relacionado con el cuidado efectivo de la creación, la protección de los no nacidos y de las mujeres, la lucha contra el racismo, la erradicación de las causas de la pobreza, el tratamiento adecuado de la difícil situación de los migrantes y refugiados, la defensa de la dignidad del matrimonio y la familia, y la aceptación del carácter sagrado de toda vida? La polarización es un mal que debemos superar si queremos alcanzar la paz y la unidad verdaderas como seres humanos que compartimos el mismo hogar, el planeta Tierra.

Todas estas cuestiones sociales están

interrelacionadas. A manera de ejemplo, el cuidado de la creación de Dios es un elemento esencial de la doctrina social católica que incluye el respeto por la dignidad de todas las personas y nuestra preocupación por los pobres y vulnerables. El difunto papa Francisco nos recordaba a menudo que existe un vínculo esencial entre la corresponsabilidad con respecto al medioambiente y el cuidado que debemos a los demás seres humanos, en especial a los pobres y los vulnerables.

“Paz y unidad: Reflexión pastoral” señala que el cuidado de la creación exige que superemos el egocentrismo y rechacemos todo atisbo de la cultura del “descarte.” Debemos esforzarnos por acoger el medio ambiente y todas las criaturas con un profundo sentido de aprecio, asombro, respeto y fascinación.

Toda vida es sagrada, como afirmó el papa Francisco en su encíclica de 2015, “*Laudato Si’*: sobre el cuidado de la casa común”: “Porque todas las criaturas están conectadas, cada una debe ser valorada con afecto y admiración, y todos los seres nos necesitamos unos a otros” (#42). A ninguna persona que pertenezca a las tradiciones de fe judía o cristiana se le debería escapar que la Torá y la Biblia comienzan con la historia de la creación, dejando claro cómo Dios confió a la humanidad el privilegio y la responsabilidad de su cuidado.

A lo largo del desarrollo de *Laudato Si’* se entretejen siete principios clave de la doctrina social católica, a saber: la vida y la dignidad

de la persona humana; el llamado a vivir en familia, en comunidad y a participar; los derechos y las responsabilidades; opciones para los pobres y los vulnerables; la dignidad del trabajo y los derechos de los trabajadores; la solidaridad y el cuidado de la creación de Dios. Desde la perspectiva de la justicia, ninguno de estos principios es opcional. Esto convierte al “cuidado de la creación” en una cuestión de vida, en un aspecto esencial de nuestro esfuerzo por reverenciar y defender a toda la vida humana.

En las primeras oraciones de *Laudato Si’*, el papa Francisco expresa que la creación de Dios no es un objeto que debamos manipular a nuestro antojo, sino que es como una hermana, nuestra “madre tierra,” que debemos tratar con reverencia, respeto y cariño.

El cuidado de la creación de Dios no es simplemente una causa política, económica o incluso científica. Se trata de una inquietud profundamente espiritual que encuentra sus raíces en la forma en que nos concebimos a nosotros mismos y a nuestro mundo en relación con nuestro Creador. En el “Cántico del Hermano Sol,” un himno de alabanza compuesto por san Francisco de Asís en 1226 mientras se encontraba en su lecho de muerte y cuyo verso final trata sobre la Hermana Muerte, reconocemos que todo en la familia de Dios guarda una relación. A menos que valoremos la verdad y la trascendencia del cuidado de la creación de Dios como expresión de una auténtica ecología cristiana, no podremos comprender

la importancia de la doctrina social católica.

El cuidado auténtico de la creación de Dios aborda el lazo inseparable que existe entre cuidar del medio ambiente y el amor por la humanidad, aspectos que por sí mismos hacen que la paz y la justicia sean posibles. No podemos ser verdaderamente solidarios con el medio ambiente a menos que amemos desinteresadamente y seamos justos en nuestro trato con los demás seres humanos, especialmente con los más vulnerables, los pobres, los enfermos y los que no han nacido.

Durante su descanso estival en Castel Gandolfo, el papa León XIV inauguró una nueva Misa por el Cuidado de la Creación. Y en su reciente mensaje para la X Jornada Mundial de Oración por el Cuidado de la Creación de 2025, el Santo Padre afirmó: “En un mundo en el que los más frágiles son los primeros en sufrir los efectos devastadores del cambio climático, la deforestación y la contaminación, el cuidado de la creación se convierte en una cuestión de fe y de humanidad.”

Oremos por la gracia de cuidar de toda la creación de Dios. ¡Que Dios nos conceda el valor de defender la vida y la dignidad humana mediante el cuidado de nuestra casa común!

(Para leer la reflexión pastoral del arzobispo Thompson en inglés y español, visite archindy.org/pastoral2025. Las preguntas de estudio están disponibles en [facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis](https://www.facebook.com/ArchdioceseofIndianapolis).) †

Care for ‘our common home’ requires ‘radical discipleship,’ archbishop says

By Natalie Hoefer

FORTVILLE—The weather was glorious on Sept. 4, a fitting state for the archdiocese’s annual Mass for the Season of Creation, celebrated this year at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Fortville.

The annual liturgy marks the global Season of Creation from Sept. 1—the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation—through Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

The five-week focus was first promoted by the World Council of Churches in 2008. Pope Francis joined the Catholic Church to the movement in 2015, the same year he published his landmark environmental encyclical “*Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*.”

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson celebrated the Sept. 4 Mass, which was followed by a reception in St. Thomas the Apostle’s parish hall.

Overcome disregard for ‘gifts of creation’

In his homily, the archbishop noted how the readings that day “describe the radical nature of discipleship, which necessarily demands that we be willing to emerge from our comfort zones and all that may seem familiar. ...

“At the heart of such authentic discipleship is one’s relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Without that personal encounter, such demands of discipleship will seem overwhelming if not impossible.”

The Gospel reading on Christ’s call to Peter to be a “fisher of men” (Lk 5:1-11) provides a perfect example of such a personal encounter, he said.

Archbishop Thompson shared a comparison he heard between that reading and the story in Mt. 19:16-30 of the rich man who asked Christ, “What must I do to inherit the kingdom?”

In the story from the Gospel of Luke, Peter was able to leave everything and follow when Jesus called because he “focused on [Jesus] ... and there was a personal encounter,” said Archbishop Thompson.

Conversely, when the rich man asked Christ what he must do to inherit the kingdom in the story in Matthew, he was “really looking for a pat on the back,” he said. “Because when Jesus says, ‘Keep

the commandments,’ ... he says, ‘Well, I’ve done all that.’ ”

But when Jesus tells the rich man to sell all he owns and “come follow me,” the man walks away sad because he “never focused on Jesus. His focus stayed on himself,” the archbishop noted.

“We can call ourselves Catholic, we can call ourselves Christian, we can call ourselves spiritual,” he continued. “But if the focus stays on us and not on Jesus, we’re going to end up sad. ... Each person seeking a personal encounter with the Lord must be willing to embrace the radical nature of that kind of discipleship that Peter shows. ...

“Only a response to this radical nature of discipleship will enable us to overcome humanity’s indifference and disregard for the gifts of creation, our common home.”

Archbishop Thompson noted that the theme for this year’s World Day of Prayer for Creation on Sept. 1 was “Seeds of Peace and Hope.”

When announcing the theme, he said, “Pope Leo expressed concern for this integral connectedness between the environment and people, especially the poor, noting that in a world where the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters are the first to suffer the devastating effects of climate change, deforestation and pollution, care for creation becomes an expression of our faith and humanity.”

Thus, it was fitting to launch the Season of Creation with a Mass, Archbishop Thompson said.

“Here we are nourished in word and sacrament that we may go beyond our comfort zones to follow [Christ] in service of the Gospel to those in need, namely the poor, the vulnerable, the unborn, the migrant, the refugee, the sick, the elderly, prisoner, the dying, and of creation itself,” he said. “It’s all connected.”

He closed with a call that “we [may] be credible instruments of God’s transforming grace in creation and in ourselves.”

‘God created everything I have’

During the Mass, the offertory gifts were brought forward by archdiocesan Creation Care Ministry member Julie Reyes and her daughters Ana, 10, and Carmen, 8, members of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

Ana has worshipped at the Season of Creation Mass in past years as well. She likes the Mass because it celebrates “that God created everything I have, and I’m grateful for that.”

John Mundell, who helped create the archdiocesan Creation Care Ministry 10 years ago, was also present at the Mass and the reception that followed.

Educating and engaging people about care for the environment “is a slow process,” he said. “But compared to 10 years ago, there’s a lot more awareness. It’s an ongoing effort, but it’s worth it.”

Father Aaron Jenkins, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle and also of St. Michael Parish in Greenfield, has supported environmental projects in the two faith communities.

“As the two parishes in Hancock County, we’ve put over 10 acres of land into native grasses,” he said. “And at St. Michael, we planted close to 500 trees.”

One benefit he found from having acres of native grasses and wildflowers is saving on the cost of mowing.

“And the wildlife that we see now, because we have those native grasses on our campus, is just astounding,” he added, particularly at St. Michael where the plantings have been in place longer.

“We have more songbirds, way more



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson delivers a homily in St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Fortville during the archdiocese’s Season of Creation Mass on Sept. 4. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

butterflies and bugs, and just stuff that’s good for the environment,” said Father Jenkins.

“And then it’s also beautified the campus, so we have lots more people coming and just walking around,” particularly on the roughly 1-mile-long trail on the St. Michael campus.

“Care for creation is very big and central to my life,” said Father Jenkins. “It’s a good thing.”

(For more information on the archdiocese’s Creation Care Ministry and care for the environment, go to ourcommonhome.org.) †

Marian Authentic Women’s Conference will be held in Indianapolis on Oct. 25

Criterion staff report

A Marian Authentic Women’s Conference will be held at Primo Banquet & Conference Center, 2615 National Ave., in Indianapolis, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Oct. 25.



Marian Authentic Women’s Conference

reflection and a marketplace with Catholic vendors and resources.

The event will feature keynote speakers Claire Dwyer, Emily Wilson Hussem and Father Patrick Schultz.



Claire Dwyer

Dwyer is the author of *This Present Paradise: A Spiritual Journey with St. Elizabeth of the Trinity* and the creator of the “Let Yourself Be Loved” retreat and journal. She is also a speaker, retreat leader and spiritual director who, according to her bio on clairedwyer.com, seeks “to invite women to discover their exquisitely unique design and unrepeatable story so they can better discern God’s purpose for their lives, become more fully themselves, and make a whole-hearted yes to all the right things.” She will speak on “Let Yourself Be Loved,

The Enduring Message of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity,” a French Carmelite nun who died in 1906 at 26 and is considered to have a spirituality similar to that of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.



Emily Wilson Hussem

Wilson Hussem is the author of seven books, a YouTube Catholic influencer, the creator of video courses on seasons of significant change in women’s lives and producer with her husband of a faith-based children’s TV show. A wife and mother, she shares her witness at conferences and events around the world. Her talk will focus on the vocation of women to love.



Fr. Patrick Schultz

Father Schultz, a priest of the Cleveland Diocese, is administrator of St. Bartholomew Parish in Middleburg Heights, Ohio. He speaks at youth and young adult retreats and events, with a particular focus on promoting the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II on the Theology of the Body, as well as themes on apologetics and spirituality. Father Schultz has served as the chaplain for the Theology of the Body Institute, both for academic courses and pilgrimage programs, and can be heard on the podcast “Slaking Thirsts.” He will speak on love as women’s vocational call.

Katie Klee, a member of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis, will serve as emcee. She has spoken at retreats for nearly 20 years, most recently focusing on the topic of being single, Catholic and older than

30 while sensing a call to marriage. She seeks to create a space for others who are in the same space in their lives to feel seen and encouraged and grow in the hope of God’s promise that he has not forgotten them.

Internationally renowned Catholic composer, singer and songwriter Francesca LaRosa will serve as musician for the conference. Her word-for-word Psalm settings in English and Spanish featured on her YouTube channel gained international recognition and are used worldwide. LaRosa has performed at events around the world, including in Indianapolis for the 2011 National Catholic Youth Conference at age 18 and the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress. She received the Best New Singer award at the first-ever Catholic Music Awards held in Rome in July.

The event is co-sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life and by LOVE (Living Our Vocations Everyday) Ministries, Inc., a local ministry whose vision is “to unite and strengthen Catholic families, men and women of all vocations through enriching, Christ-centered events that inspire holiness, foster community and deepen their love for the Church.” It was founded by Lisa Brassie, a member of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis.

The cost is \$50 for ages 25 and older, \$360 for groups of eight, \$15 for ages 14-24 and free for religious women. The cost includes a light breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks. Tickets are available online and must be purchased by Oct. 21.

For more information on the event—including about becoming a sponsor, vendor or volunteer—or to register, go to loveministriesindy.org/mawc. For information not found on that site, contact Lisa Brassie at 317-361-8361 or info@loveministriesindy.org. †

WIGS

continued from page 1

portion of the proceeds from every item sold is used to help those with cancer-caused or medical hair loss—turning every purchase into a blessing.

But Wentworth, who manages the business, says she gains far more than she gives. By hearing the stories and journeys of customers, clients and passersby, by praying with them personally and by praying daily over the intentions they hang on a board in the shop, “My faith grows stronger every day,” she says.

“I was looking for ways to fix myself, but God had a different plan.”

‘That was kind of the turning point’

In 2023, shortly after Wentworth started losing her hair, a friend told her about a woman originally from Madison who sold wigs and posted videos about them online.

Wentworth was skeptical. But she watched some videos—and was so intrigued by how natural the wigs looked that she contacted the woman.

“She said, ‘Why don’t I come to Madison and we’ll have, like, a little party at your house with some of your friends,’ like with any other thing people sell,” Wentworth recalls.

She agreed and mentioned it to some ladies as she was having her nails done at a salon.

“They said, ‘There’s nothing like that around here. Why don’t you have your wig party at the salon?’ So, we advertised it on social media,” says Wentworth.

“People came from all over. There were 18-year-olds and there were 80-year-olds. There were people with cancer. There were people with medical hair loss of all kinds. And there were people with no issues [who] just wanted to try on wigs and see what it was like.”

The originally planned four-hour afternoon event lasted until nearly midnight, and about 15 wigs were sold.

“It was emotional,” says Wentworth. “I was crying. People were crying. There were people laughing. It was just such a good feeling to help people and to see how it transpired.

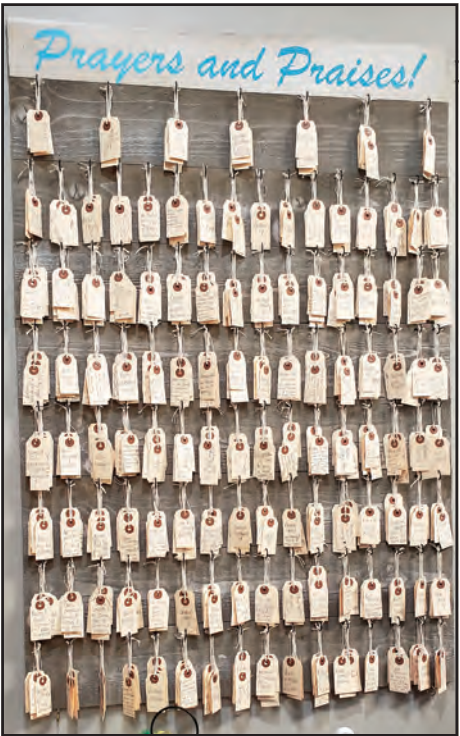
“And everyone said, ‘Bonnie, you’re retired. You need to do this.’ ”

Wentworth resisted, but her friends continued to encourage the idea. So did her husband.

“Nathan was one of my biggest supporters,” she said. “He was like, ‘I haven’t seen you this happy in a long time. This is something that you really need to pursue.’ ”

Wentworth, who along with Nathan worships at Prince of Peace, took the idea to prayer, asking God for guidance.

Not long after, she received a message



Penelope’s Covered Blessings in Madison offers a board where customers, clients and passersby can hang tags with prayers of petition or praise. Shop owner Bonnie Wentworth prayers over the intentions live on Facebook at the end of each business week. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

from a staff member at the Norton Cancer Institute in Madison.

“She said, ‘When are you going to do another one of those pop-ups? Because we have several people that missed it that would have really been interested.’

“And my husband looked at me, and he said, ‘How many more signs do you need?’ And that was kind of the turning point.”

‘A mission and journey’

Wentworth ordered some wigs, and she and Nathan leased a small space in the Trolley Barn Shops on Madison’s Main Street to open what was then called A Wig and a Prayer.

They shared about the new venture on social media.

Two people reached out before the shop was ready, a woman with medical hair loss and a mother in her 20s with stage four breast cancer.

“Their stories were both so humbling,” says Wentworth. “And right then, we knew that this was going to be more of a mission and a journey than it was about fixing me. God put me in a place to show me something different. ... I just knew after meeting with these two gals, this is what I wanted to do.”

Knowing walk-ins for wigs would not be steady, Wentworth added Catholic-specific and general Christian merchandise to the shop, from rosaries and sacrament-themed cards and gifts to Jesus dolls and faith-based jewelry.

Every item purchased is turned into a blessing.

“We use [a portion of the] proceeds from everything we sell to donate turbans and gift cards for patients at Norton,” she explains, noting the gift cards help traveling patients afford gas, groceries, eating out and more.

Customers contribute, too, purchasing and donating turbans sold at the shop and bringing in gift cards. Once a month, Wentworth delivers the items to the Norton staff to distribute to patients as needed.

And in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, the business holds a community-wide, month-long gift card drive for Norton patients, with contributed cards totaling nearly \$3,000 each of the last two years.

The shop became a means for customers, the community and Wentworth to pay blessings forward.

‘We want to bless whoever we can’

Still, Wentworth felt called to do more.

“It just kept weighing on me that I wanted to give wigs,” which typically cost between \$325-\$500, she says. But medical privacy laws prohibited Norton’s staff from giving her contact information for those in need.

So, Wentworth went to social media. She posted a form on the shop’s Facebook page for anyone to nominate a person with hair loss—whether from cancer or other medical reasons—who can’t afford a wig.

“It could be they don’t have insurance or a health savings account or any other means to purchase a wig,” she explains. “They can nominate themselves even.”

Wentworth then selects a nominee to receive a free wig and fitting, paid for with a portion of the shop’s proceeds. To date, 19 women have been helped by what she calls the Blessing Program.



In November of 2023, Bonnie Wentworth, second from right, and her husband Nathan present Emily Spitler, left, and Katie Alexander, second from left, both oncology nurses at Norton Cancer Institute in Madison, with a basket of gift cards for the center’s patients collected during a drive held by Penelope’s Covered Blessings, the couple’s business in Madison, along with a sign with the names of all who contributed. (Submitted photo)

“We don’t receive any reimbursement from taxes,” she says. “We just want to bless whoever we can, because we know that that’s what God’s calling us to do,” she says.

‘Let me be a blessing in someone’s life’

There have been challenges along the way.

With no other business in Indiana named A Wig and a Prayer, the Wentworths had no trouble receiving approval for the name from the state licensing board.

Early in 2024, Wentworth received a call from someone in Michigan. Not only did the person’s business bear the same name, but they had it trademarked. The couple would have to change the name of their Madison shop.

“I cried about it for about a day and a half, because I loved our name,” says Wentworth.

When the tears had dried, she thought, “What is it we do here?” The first word that came to mind was “blessing.”

“Every day I get up and I ask God to let me be a blessing in someone’s life,” she says. “And he’s given me so many blessings.”

Wentworth also thought of the comfort she found in Psalm 91, particularly its image of “how God covers us with his wings and protects us,” she says. “Then I thought how wigs cover us, and I knew I wanted ‘covered’ in the name.”

Finally, she thought of her mother Penelope, noting, “I wouldn’t have my faith if it wasn’t for her.”

In March of 2024, the shop moved to a larger space in the Trolley Barn and became Penelope’s Covered Blessings.

That December, Wentworth’s mother died.

“We did not expect that when I had to change the name—we had no idea,” she says, pausing to hold back tears. “I was so happy we were able to honor her with that blessing before she passed.”

The day of her mother’s funeral, Nathan’s father was admitted to the hospital and died just 15 days later.

“We were closed a lot in January,” says Wentworth. “And then things were slow because of the flood” in April that affected Madison and other parts of southern Indiana.

There have been other slow times, too. Wondering if she was on the right path, she “asked God over and over to guide my feet, just guide my feet.

“And that’ll be the day that, even if somebody doesn’t come in and buy anything, somebody would come in and share a story that reminds me why I’m there, what my purpose is.”

‘They’re Holy Spirit moments’

Such stories have become for

Wentworth the greatest source of blessing from the shop.

“I get excited when people come in and talk about their faith or their journey, whatever that journey is,” she says. “I want to know more about people and what they’re going through. I want to know more about God and see how he’s at work in their journey.

“I cry more,” she admits, either from a story shared or from learning of the death of a client—the youngest just 12 years old.

“But it’s not always sad tears,” Wentworth continues. “Sometimes it’s happy tears because of their story or if they’re a survivor.”

Prayer often flows through and from the stories. So, Wentworth added a board on a wall in the shop where anyone can leave a written prayer of petition or praise. Before closing the shop at the end of the week, she prays—live on Facebook—for the intentions and those who wrote them.

Wentworth is most moved when “people come in and ask if they could pray with me or pray over me, including people of different faiths, different views,” she says.

“It’s the Holy Spirit. My faith has absolutely grown because of the people, because of the moments, because of the prayers.

“When the days are slow and the people aren’t there, I long for it. I long for people to come in and just share with me what’s going on in their lives.

“They’re Holy Spirit moments, and they just feel so good. And they remind you what your purpose is and that God’s plan is so much bigger.”

Wentworth recalls being 18 and telling her mother she would never go to church again.

“I never thought when I was younger that I wanted to have faith,” she says. “And now I want it. I want to know more, and I believe it so much more, and I want it for everyone.”

(For more information on the Blessing Program and to access the form, go to tinyurl.com/PCBBlessingProgram. Gift cards or donations to purchase cards for the October Breast Cancer Awareness gift card drive can be dropped off at Penelope’s Covered Blessings in the Trolley Barn Shops, 719 W. Main St., in Madison, or mailed to Penelope’s Covered Blessings, 1752 McCord Lane, Milton, KY, 40045. Checks should be made out to Penelope’s Covered Blessings with October Gift Card Drive in the memo line. For questions about the Blessing Program or October gift card drive, send a message through Facebook at facebook.com/penelopescoveredblessings or call 812-701-6006.) +

St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County celebrates 175 years of faith

By Jennifer Lindberg

JENNINGS COUNTY—In the rural roads and farmlands of Jennings County, where Six Mile Creek once flooded the dirt roads and reindeer reportedly roamed near Sulphur Springs, a small parish named St. James began in 1850.

This year, that same community—renamed St. Joseph Parish in 1892—celebrates 175 years of unwavering endurance and faith.

To honor this milestone, the parish hosted a 175th anniversary celebration on Aug. 16 with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson. It was also an occasion to install Father Christopher Craig as the new pastor of St. Joseph and St. Ann parishes in Jennings County and St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.

“You are fulfilling the call of ministry,” Archbishop Thompson said. “We must live out our call to holiness and mission ... and transform the world along the way.”

The original St. James mission territory, made up of land, people and parish, began in the town of Buena Vista, meaning “good view,” but became commonly referred to as Four Corners after the four prominent buildings that marked the intersection of two main country roads. On the northeast stood the original St. James Church, rectory and cemetery. Across the road were a school, a general store, a dance hall and a saloon. The other corners held a blacksmith shop and a home. Today, only the church and cemetery remain on the long stretch of country road.

Father Joseph Thie arrived to lead the parish in 1891. He had St. James Church torn down, oversaw the construction of the current church building and renamed the parish St. Joseph. The congregation, originally German, had broken off from the nearby Irish community that founded the former St. Catherine Parish, whose cemetery still survives.

This history all points to one core truth, said Father Bobby Vogel, a son of St. Joseph Parish who was ordained in 2024 and is now parochial vicar of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

“Faith took root in this little humble place of Four Corners,” Father Vogel said. “Jesus Christ showed up and loved us. Most people don’t even know where Four Corners is, but the Lord shows up and makes himself present in the holy Eucharist.”

Father Vogel’s grandfather, Gilbert Vogel, said something must be working right in this little corner of the world.

“The people all grew up around here and took a big interest in the church, or we wouldn’t be here today,” he said.

Most families have stayed in the area, and those who left always seem to come back and remember this community where their faith was first nurtured.

“We always helped one another, and this made us a community in the body of Christ,” said Steve Elsner, a Houston resident who grew up in the parish. His family’s roots at St. Joseph go back more than 100 years, with ties to the local farming community since at least 1919.

Juanita “Gerth” McClellan, who grew up at St. Joseph and is related to some of the founding members, the Haags, remembers the old schoolhouse that used to stand at St. Joseph Parish. She attended vacation Bible school offered by Benedictine sisters who stayed at the school during the summer. She also remembers square dances and community functions at St. Joseph that created an atmosphere of family and faith.



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson prays the eucharistic prayer during a Mass on Aug. 16 marking the 175th anniversary of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County. With him at the altar are, left, Deacon Lawrence French, Father Christopher Craig and Father Jonathan Meyer. (Submitted photo by Jennifer Lindberg)

Mary Ann Maschino, who grew up in nearby St. Ann Parish and became a member of St. Joseph when she married Roger Maschino in 1957, also talked about the importance of the Catholic faith they all lived with children being baptized, prayers being recited and all serving the parish in various roles.

“It’s like one big family,” Maschino said. The celebration also brought a special letter from Seattle Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, who served as pastor of St. Joseph Parish from 1995 to 1998, while also being vocation director for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

“It is a providential time which we are happy to share with you,” Archbishop Etienne said, “because the Archdiocese of Seattle is celebrating 175 years as well.”

“Celebrating the arrival of the faith and the proclamation of the Gospel in our responsive parts of the country ... is no small event,” Archbishop Etienne wrote.

For many, it seems St. Joseph has been in the area forever. This continuous legacy is what struck Father Craig on his first night as pastor of St. Joseph. He resides at St. Joseph’s rectory, which overlooks the farmland and hills where Catholics raised their families and planted their faith.

“My first night here, I walked the cemetery reflecting on all the people who built this church,” Father Craig said. “This is a very sacred thing to think about and ponder all those who have gone before us, and it builds the community of saints.”

“Some of the gravestones go back to the 1800s, and I think about how these people made a contribution to the Church,” he continued. “It’s powerful to discover all these several generations.”

It’s remembering the past that leads to the future, said Deacon Lawrence French, whose family helped settle the area.



Pictured is the former St. Joseph School in Jennings County. (Submitted photo courtesy of archdiocesan Archives)

“If you do not remember what you have, you lose perspective of what you have,” he said. “And you see that this didn’t happen overnight.”

(Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.) †

Rosary Society’s outreach has supported Jennings County parish for 100 years

By Jennifer Lindberg

JENNINGS COUNTY—The Rosary Society of St. Joseph Parish in Jennings County has faithfully supported its parish and community for 100 years.



Serving up homemade chicken and noodles at the 2005 Rosary Society Craft Bazaar are, left to right, Joan Duncan and Dee Vincent. Vincent has been in charge of making the noodles for more than 25 years. (Submitted photo)

While the exact founding date has been lost to time—early records were misplaced during years of parish transitions—it recognizes 1925 as its foundational year.

“I think the main thing is being involved, which helps raise your kids in the Catholic faith, too,” said the group’s co-president, Brooke Maschino. “The more they see you involved, the more likely they are to be involved. This makes me feel closer to God.”

Maschino remembers the bake sales as a child that have been a steady source of income for the group that members used to support good causes. She watched her mother Sherri, who is still an active member, help with the ministry.

As a mother of two boys and another child on the way, Brooke said the Rosary Society has always been important in her life as a mom and as a Catholic.

Part of that is because the women pray the rosary at their meetings and learn new prayers, she said.

The group was first formed as The Christian Mothers Society to bring women together for fellowship, prayer and charitable works. One of the earliest recollections comes from longtime member Janet Maschino, who remembers seeing her grandmother’s name in the old rosary society documents—and the story of her helping butcher chickens for a parish picnic.

Generations have been served by the ladies of the

Rosary Society. Their work has changed—gone are the days of making rosaries, knitting bandages for the leper missions and hand-sewing altar server surplices. But their commitment to prayer and the parish remains.

In the 1980s, the Rosary Society launched what has become a beloved tradition—the Annual Craft Bazaar, held every November and approaching its 44th year. It was here that the famous homemade chicken and noodles tradition began. The group also began the Four Corners Craft and Garden Show, which just celebrated its 19th anniversary.

From funeral dinners and clergy receptions to pies for the Knights of Columbus, they support a wide range of causes. Their contributions include hosting bake sales for seminarians, supporting pro-life initiatives and organizing an annual Feast of St. Joseph Dinner.

Through the years, members have cleaned the church and rectory, volunteered at Red Cross blood drives, wrapped Christmas gifts for patients of Muscatatuck State Hospital (which closed in 2005) and hosted bingo nights at nursing homes.

“Our history is fascinating and ever-evolving,” said Cari Hauersperger, secretary of the group.

(Jennifer Lindberg is a freelance writer and a member of St. Mary Parish in North Vernon.) †

CATECHISTS

continued from page 1

consecrated, single, married, what have you—to live out our call to holiness and mission and be witnesses of the faith.”

The formal institution of people in the ministry of catechist, a possibility opened by Pope Francis in 2021, shows “how important, how essential catechists are to the Church,” the archbishop said. “And I think it coincides beautifully with the synodality focus on co-responsibility, that we are all co-responsible for passing on the faith.”

The U.S. bishops are working on a national directory on the three instituted ministries that Pope Francis formalized: catechist, lector and acolyte. The directory aims to provide a theological understanding of the ministries, the formation needed, age requirements, the duration of the ministry and their role in a parish and diocese.

Spesia said that in the United States, parish catechists are “the ‘little engine that could’ that drives the Church and hands of the faith,” and recognizing that with a special Jubilee celebration “is just a beautiful thing.”

Asked about being chosen to be instituted as a catechist by Pope Leo, Santos said, “I’m thrilled. I’m a little shocked. I’m honored.”

Parish catechists “are priceless because they are the boots on the ground, so to speak,” she said. Those instituted in the ministry of catechist answer to their diocesan bishop and are called to be an example and resource for others.

Patrick Donovan, director of the Institute for Catholic Formation in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn., also was part of the pilgrimage.

He told CNS he hoped no one would see the formal institution of catechists as somehow saying that only some Catholics are called to share and teach others the faith.

“I think oftentimes we mistakenly talk about catechesis as a chore, catechesis as a project, as a program. It begins and it ends,” he said. But it is an ongoing process of growing in the faith and in one’s ability to share it with others.

“For me, the perspective is all about what we can do to help mom and dad be the best witnesses of the faith,” Donovan said, giving parents “the language to articulate the faith” and



Pope Leo XIV greets Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, chair of the U.S. bishops’ Committee for Evangelization and Catechesis, during a private audience at the Vatican on Sept. 27. The archbishop was leading a pilgrimage for the Jubilee of Catechists. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

share it with their children each day.

“We have to do less of the hostage situation with young people” forced to attend religious education classes, he

said, “and more of giving the language to articulate the faith to mom and dad and grandparents.” †

Pope will declare St. John Henry Newman doctor of the Church on Nov. 1

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Leo XIV announced he will proclaim St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the Church on Nov. 1 during the Jubilee of the World of Education.



St. John Henry Newman

universal Church which will soon be conferred on St. John Henry Newman, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Founder of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri in England.”

Speaking after Mass on Sept. 28 for the Jubilee of Catechists, the pope said Newman “contributed decisively to the renewal of theology and to the understanding of the development of Christian doctrine.”

The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints had announced on July 31 that Pope Leo “confirmed the affirmative opinion” of the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery “regarding the title of doctor of the

Newman was born in London on Feb. 21, 1801, was ordained an Anglican priest, became Catholic in 1845, was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1847, was made a cardinal in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII and died in Edgbaston, near Birmingham, England, in 1890.

Even before Newman was canonized by Pope Francis on Oct. 13, 2019, there were calls for him to be named one of the three dozen doctors of the Church—men and women saints, from both the Christian East and West, who are honored for particularly important contributions to theology and spirituality.

The 37 saints currently recognized as doctors of the Church include early Church fathers such as SS. Jerome, John Chrysostom and Augustine, and theologians such as SS. Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and John of the Cross, but also St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who was honored by St. John Paul II in 1997, despite her lack of scholarly achievement.

The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints said 20 bishops’

conferences had petitioned for Newman to be declared a doctor of the Church, including the bishops of England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia.

“His thought has had a significant impact on 20th-century theology, especially on the Second Vatican Council,” the dicastery said. “Several popes, from Leo XIII to Francis, have drawn from his authoritative teaching in their pontifical magisterium.”

Pope Francis authorized the dicastery to begin the process for the declaration in May 2024, and that September the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said that “there were no doubts about the excellence and the quality of the saint’s writings, expressing a completely positive judgment on his ‘*eminens doctrina*’ [eminent teaching].”

Consultants to the dicastery unanimously supported the petition, the dicastery said, as did the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery. †

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Do animals go to heaven? It remains an open question in the Church

By Paul Thigpen

(OSV News)—It’s a familiar question: What should we tell children when a pet dies and they ask whether animals have souls and go to heaven?

And given that the Church celebrates on Oct. 4 the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, a beloved patron saint of animals, it’s a good topic for Catholics to reflect upon.

The answer to the first question—do animals have souls?—depends on how we define “soul.” Ancient and medieval writers, both pagan and Christian, often used terms that we translate as “soul” (Greek “*psyche*,” Latin “*anima*”) to refer in general to that part of an animate (living) creature which sets it apart from inanimate (non-living) creatures.

In other words, a “soul” was simply what has been described philosophically as a living creature’s “principle of life.”

In fact, some biblical texts in the Old Testament seem to apply certain Hebrew terms in a similar way. For example, the phrase “*nephesh chayah*” (literally “living soul”) can refer both to human beings (see Gn 2:7) and to animals (Gn 1:30).

“*Ruach*,” the Hebrew term for “spirit” (and also for “breath,” as the indicator of life), is also applied to both humans and animals in Ecclesiastes 3:21.

If we think of “soul” in this general sort of way, then, animals and even plants have what could be called a “soul” simply because they are alive. Thus, the ancients spoke of animals as having “sensitive souls” and plants as having “vegetative souls.”

No doubt that may sound strange to our modern ears. How odd to think of the rosemary bush in the garden as having in some sense a “soul”—though, thank goodness, that “soul” would depart once it was harvested and dried to use in the spaghetti.

Nevertheless, it’s important to note that even if we use the term “soul” as the ancients did, we must observe (as they did) that plant, animal and human souls are of quite different kinds.

The plant’s “vegetative soul” (its life principle) enables it to reproduce and to assimilate nourishment for growth. That’s something a rock, for example, can’t do.

Animals can do that plus other things. Their “sensitive” souls allow them to move; to sense and respond to external stimuli; and (in some of them) to perform rudimentary mental functions such as learning and even communication.

Even so, the human soul is unique. Of all earthly creatures, only humans are made in the image of God (see Gn 1:26-27). Their soul is actually an immortal spirit, fully rational, able to reason and communicate at high levels, and able to choose good or evil with a free will.

Among earthly creatures, only humans are truly able to love in the full sense of the word: to will the highest good of another. Humans can know and love God and enter into friendship with him in a way that no other earthly creature can.

Through sanctifying grace, the human soul is capable of the beatific vision in heaven—that is, capable of

entering so fully into union with God that we can see him and know him as he is.

A child might understand these concepts like this: Animals have “souls” in the sense that they are alive; they aren’t just objects like rocks or chairs. That’s why we enjoy them so much!

But their souls aren’t the same as human souls. The human soul is something much higher and greater, and that makes it possible for humans to have a deep friendship with God in a way that other creatures can’t.

So, what about the second question: Do animals go to heaven? Some people point to the scriptural account of Elijah’s being taken to heaven by “a flaming chariot and flaming horses” as evidence that animals can be in heaven (see 2 Kgs 2:11-12). But it’s not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the matter from that particular passage.

Given that human beings can have fellowship with God in a way that the animals can’t, it would make sense that life in heaven is a privilege that animals don’t share with us in any form. But Scripture seems to be silent about the matter, and the Church has never pronounced on it authoritatively.

However, before we assure children too quickly that only people go to heaven, we should remember that even great Christian thinkers such as C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) have debated this issue and left the possibility open.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) taught that animal “souls” could not by their nature survive death. Unlike human souls, he said, they are perishable when separated from their proper bodies.

Even so, perhaps that leaves open the possibility that God might choose to keep at least some animal “souls” from perishing after death, granting them a privilege beyond their natural capacity.

In any case, we do know that, since animals cannot have sanctifying grace in their souls, they cannot receive the beatific vision, or the experience of seeing God face-to-face. So, if some animals go to heaven in some sense, it wouldn’t be for the same reason that humans are in heaven.

What other reasons could there be? It just might be that God would allow the animals we’ve loved on Earth to take part somehow in our heavenly life as part of our eternal happiness.

In fact, since God himself takes delight in all the good creatures he has made, perhaps he would give animals some sort of life in heaven for



Lisa Garofalo holds Kiki, an Alaskan Klee Kai, during a prayer service on Oct. 3, 2021, for the blessing of animals at St. Patrick Parish in Smithtown, N.Y. The event was held in advance of the Oct. 4 feast of St. Francis of Assisi, a patron saint of animals. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

the sake of his own pleasure and glory.

As Lewis pointed out, even in this life our pets sometimes become an important part of our lives, almost an extension of who we are. Their association with us elevates them to a higher kind of life than they would have had on their own. (Studies of canine behavior actually seem to lend some scientific support to the latter idea.)

“In this way,” Lewis concluded, “it seems to me possible that certain animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters.”

Might this possibly be one aspect of the final renewal of all creation that Scripture talks about?

St. Paul tells us that other creatures have suffered the consequences of human sin. But through Christ’s redemption of the human race, “creation itself” will be “set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (see Rom 8:20-22).

At the very least, we can say that all we have loved on this Earth has shaped who we are. So, the effects of those loves on us, including our cherished memories of them, will in some sense live within us forever.

Whatever the case, we probably do well to allow children to leave this particular question open. Perhaps the best answer would be to affirm that if, by God’s help, they go to heaven, they will carry their pets with them in their hearts.

We can also assure children that God loves every creature he makes, that he loves their pets even more than they do, and that when their beloved pets die, we can entrust them to him.

Perhaps we should conclude with one final and encouraging note: Since the lower creatures aren’t morally responsible for their behavior on Earth, they cannot deserve a reward, but neither can they deserve a punishment. So, they cannot suffer in hell.

One of Lewis’ readers once made fun of his speculation that at least some animals might be allowed a heavenly existence. The wag demanded to know: “Where will you put all the mosquitoes?”

Unperturbed, Lewis replied wryly that, “if the worst came to the worst, a heaven for mosquitoes and a hell for men could very conveniently be combined.”

(Paul Thigpen is a retired theology professor and a best-selling author.) †



Father Todd Goodson, pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, leads a prayer service for the blessing of pets on Oct. 4, 2024, on the campus of the Indianapolis South Deanery faith community. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Challenges of new pumpkin patch remind us how to grow deep roots

There’s something about pumpkins. Lumpy and bumpy, impossibly orange, harbinger of harvest. Instant cheer on a front porch with a hint of moonlit mystery.



An invitation to trick-or-treat treaters that later nods to the pilgrims—centerpiece for a table of plenty, symbol of gathering and gratitude. When we moved to the country earlier this year, I couldn’t resist the urge to plant a pumpkin patch. Finally, my chance had come.

We seized an early Saturday morning in June to bury seeds in the ground. Once we’d emptied every package and the kids had scattered, I stood there in silence, surveying the ground.

“Our Father,” I prayed, “who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

It felt right to gaze into the sky and call upon the Father to connect us—“on Earth as it is in heaven,” from our little patch of dirt to his majestic throne above.

By Wednesday, to my delight, tiny green sprouts had emerged.

I developed a new hobby: watering the seedlings.

Watching the soil absorb water soothed my nervous system. I couldn’t get enough. If there were seedlings to be nourished, if there was sun shining down, then the dishes could wait. There was noble work to be done.

Once I did a little research, I discovered I was over-watering my beloved plants. Some of the leaves had yellowed. Others developed a powdery mildew.

My good intentions had gone awry. If there was always water near the surface, I learned, the pumpkins’ roots wouldn’t bother going downward, growing strong and deep. They wouldn’t tap into the better soil that holds reserves of moisture and minerals. And the pumpkins would be less hardy, less resistant to inevitable trials: heat, wind, temperature swings, hungry rabbits.

I had landed on a metaphor, a lesson of the spiritual life: Suffering forces us to grow deep roots. The times we struggle—when we are not spoiled by daily drinks and ready comfort—make us hardy. We become resourceful and resistant.

Though we do not know why or when, we can be certain that eventually, we will rely on those firm roots. There will be drought. There will be storms. And we will know how to dig deep and endure. We will tap into those vast reserves. We will find strength in hidden places.

St. Paul conveys this truth in his Letter to the Romans, writing: “We even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope—and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:3-5).

Compassion doesn’t simply appear. It is forged through trials we would rather avoid. A failure, a firing. A miscarriage, a heartbreak. A divorce, a death. But while we regret the reason, we never regret the growth. We are always grateful to be softer and wiser.

We learn from these losses, and the next time around, we know what to do. We have a roadmap sketched by scars. Friends lean on our deep roots as they strengthen their own. Together, we withstand the storm, trusting that the love of God has been poured into our hearts. And hope does not disappoint.

My pumpkin patch isn’t as far along this fall as I would’ve hoped, but as I watch butterflies and bees flit through the vines, I am sure it has been fertile ground.

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

Guest Column/Rachel Muha

Mother of slain college student: God bless Erika Kirk for her act of forgiveness

“I forgive him.”

We heard those words on Sept. 21 from Erika Kirk, spoken about the young man who had murdered her husband less than two weeks before, and her message immediately went around the world. God bless Erika Kirk for her very difficult act of forgiveness, for sharing it with us and for inspiring others to forgive. I hope it starts a tsunami of forgiveness because forgiveness can heal the world.



The Lord forgives us, we are told to forgive, we want to do his will—so we forgive.

It might sound simple, but it is the hardest thing one ever has to do if it means forgiving a person who committed a horrendous act against someone you love.

My 18-year-old son Brian was murdered by two young people who didn’t know him and didn’t care. Brian was a student at a Catholic university, sound asleep in his off-campus house when two men high on crack chose that house at random, broke in, beat Brian unmercifully—quite literally—killed him and left him outside for the elements and animals. It took police, rescuers and searchers five days to find his body. Before his body had been found, I publicly forgave my son’s killers.

How does one forgive something so heinous? Only by the grace, the power and the strength of God and the dependence, faithfulness, obedience and love we all owe God.

And that, my friend, changes almost everything. It changes your heart. You can go from confusion, tension, trauma, heartache and intense grief to being clear-headed, calm and comforted in the midst of heartache and intense grief (yes, heartache and grief stay).

Forgiveness does not take away the God-given desire for justice. And that’s a gift from God. True forgiveness means to refuse to hate or want revenge, but it strengthens your desire and need for justice because justice and forgiveness (mercy) have to go together. They are united in God; they have to be united in us, or our forgiveness is not total and complete.

Forgiving doesn’t mean excusing. Bad behavior should not be brushed off. That won’t help anyone. Our Lord forgave the good thief, but he didn’t take away his punishment. Forgiveness is real when we say to the offender, “You did something wrong, and I forgive you. Let’s correct it together.”

But be ready for the temptations. Whenever someone is trying to do God’s will, the devil is trying to make them do the opposite. Be alert, stay strong. Don’t give in. Think. Reason. Pray. Fight.

An act of forgiveness is not a one-time event, which Erika Kirk will learn, if she hasn’t already. It has to be repeated, probably many times. Not because the act of

forgiveness wasn’t true and authentic, but because we are human beings with emotions that can overcome us.

I remember seeing one of Brian’s killers in person on the first day of his two-week trial, and the feelings that welled up inside of me were scary. I made that act of forgiveness again. And again and again over the years. We have to ignore what we “feel” like doing (not forgiving) and do what we know God wants us to do. Then, the grace and power of God, and the comfort and calmness he gives again, will take over once more.

And that’s not all. An act of forgiveness isn’t just words, just like saying “I love you” can’t be empty words. Show me, we might say. A true act of forgiveness has another component that can’t be separated from it: the requirement to have good will toward the person who has hurt you. We are Christians. Christians don’t just walk away. Christians stay and try to change the world.

The Christian meaning of forgiveness is to refuse to hate, to love justice and to have good will toward the person who hurt you and your loved one. That means wanting what is best for them, praying for them, loving them with the very real love of salvation.

That sounds hard to do, but it isn’t once you are committed to that act of forgiveness that you have to renew again and again.

That good will toward someone who has hurt you has to be extended to the whole community, the whole Church, the whole country and the whole world! It’s so beautiful. Once you can have good will toward someone who killed or hurt someone you love, you can have good will toward anyone. Your heart opens. You love others like you have never loved before. And you want to go to work, helping others become who God created them to be.

So you give yourself to others. You do something for others. Serving others is the best medicine you will ever take. Forgiveness is a balm; serving others is the cure.

Forgiveness can change the world. Please pray that Erika Kirk will turn to God when she needs to renew her act of forgiveness, however many times it takes. And please pray for everyone who has something to forgive—pray that they do it. Is it you? Choose to forgive. The world will be a better place.

In doing so, we fulfill the great mission we are given in St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

(Rachel Muha writes for OSV News from Columbus, Ohio, where she serves inner-city children through the Run the Race Center and Day School. Her story can be found in Legacy of Mercy: A True Story of Murder and a Mother’s Forgiveness. A link to purchase the book can be found at tinyurl.com/LegacyOfMercy.) †

Guest Column/Richard Etienne

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

Are you basically a “loner” at your core? Do you believe that a person can do almost everything by his or her own efforts with little help from others?



As a citizen of the United States, you are probably not alone if you hold such personal beliefs.

From an early age, many of us have been schooled in the concept of “rugged individualism.” In this vein of thought, all that a person has to do to accomplish any task is to “buck up” and power through.

“Don’t be such a weakling! Just grow a spine,” some of us heard growing up.

But as a follower of Christ, are such beliefs encouraged?

As Christians, how important is a community of like-minded people in achieving any significant God-driven task? Why should a baptized person bother to engage with others when attempting to carry out a task that seems ordained as important by the Holy Spirit?

In St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, we read, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... that whoever is joined to the Lord

As Christians, how important is a community of like-minded people in achieving any significant God-driven task? Why should a baptized person bother to engage with others when attempting to carry out a task that seems ordained as important by the Holy Spirit?

becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:15, 17).

This vision of community is not built on a model of rugged individualism. We are encouraged to be much more co-dependent in our quest in building the kingdom of God.

And, yes, this co-dependence is messier in the short run. It requires much communication and group decision making or discernment. But the final product or outcome will have a wider ownership and could look significantly different than the original inspiration when it is carried out by a larger segment of the body of Christ.

So, are you ready to work alongside others in building the kingdom of God? Are you willing to surrender your personal vision for a wider view of God’s ultimate plan, his will?

May God continue to bless the body of Christ in all endeavors that are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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

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

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, October 5, 2025

- Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4
- 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14
- Luke 17:5-10

The first reading for Mass this weekend is from the Book of Habakkuk, by comparison among the prophets a short work, including only three chapters. In some cases, little is known about the author of a given biblical book.

In this case, the prophet identifies himself by name (Hb 1:1, 3:1). However, this hardly stills all

other questions. Who was Habakkuk?

Some experts believe Habakkuk was a prophet associated with the temple in Jerusalem. When did he write? The most accepted opinion is that Habakkuk wrote this work in the latter part of the seventh century BC. At the time, the struggles among the great powers of the Middle East were numerous and intense, and the small Jewish community was threatened in the accompanying clash.

It is not hard to imagine fear and anxiety among the people of God. Desperation and confusion easily led them away from strict obedience to God.

Like the other prophets, Habakkuk appealed to his contemporaries to rely on God for protection in the uncertain international situation. The prophet insists that the “just” will survive (Hb 2:4).

St. Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy gives us the next reading. In this letter, the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy of the strength available to him as a bishop. Indeed, the reading refers to the ancient gesture of laying on hands on the head of a person being ordained. It remains today an essential and primary act in the ordaining of deacons, priests and bishops, not only for Catholics, but also Orthodox Christians.

Finally, Timothy was instructed not to preach his own mind, but instead to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

St. Luke’s Gospel is the source of the third reading. This Gospel was proclaimed during the liturgies of recent weekends. What already has been heard in these earlier readings forms an umbrella over what is proclaimed this weekend.

The overall theme is that following Jesus requires strong determination and much faith. The Lord has many disciples who stumble and fall. They live in a world of sin and selfishness. Temptations are rampant.

Security and success result from faith, which we ourselves must nourish and preserve with the help of God’s grace.

In the second part of the reading, Jesus employs a parable, speaking of a farmer and shepherd who has engaged a servant.

Scholars do not agree on the term used to describe the servant. Is he “worthless,” or lazy, “unprofitable” or “unproductive”? One ancient Greek text has him as “owing nothing.” It is clear, however, that the servant is not so worthless as to be beyond God’s love.

Also clear is that the master in no way depends upon the servant. But the context is that the servant is kept, not discharged, despite his seeming poor qualities. Indeed, the relationship between the servant and master is so close that the servant assumes to have a place at the master’s table.

Reflection

For weeks, through Scriptures proclaimed at Mass, the Church has been summoning us to discipleship. It has been no promise of a primrose path ahead. It has not exalted human nature above and beyond what human nature is in fact. Rather, it has been frank, even somberly warning at times.

This is the background from which these readings appear. Taken together, they are instructive, alerting us to dangers, but also consoling us with assurances of hope and of life.

Each sincere follower of Jesus must see herself or himself as like the servant mentioned this weekend in Luke’s Gospel. As human lives demonstrate again and again, we are not as capable of finding the right path as we think we are. When will we learn? We need God to show the way.

Habakkuk lets us know that many detours and obstacles lie before us, but God will lead us, if we allow him.

Our resolve must be to follow Christ, and only Christ. †

Daily Readings

Monday, October 6
St. Bruno, priest
Blessed Marie Rose Durocher, virgin
Jonah 1:1-2:2, 11
(Response) *Jonah 2:2-5, 8*
Luke 10:25-37

Tuesday, October 7
Our Lady of the Rosary
Jonah 3:1-10
Psalm 130:1b-4ab, 7-8
Luke 10:38-42

Wednesday, October 8
Jonah 4:1-11
Psalm 86:3-6, 9-10
Luke 11:1-4

Thursday, October 9
St. Denis, bishop, and companions, martyrs
St. John Leonardi, priest

Malachi 3:13-20b
Psalm 1:1-4, 6
Luke 11:5-13

Friday, October 10
Joel 1:13-15; 2:1-2
Psalm 9:2-3, 6, 8-9, 16
Luke 11:15-26

Saturday, October 11
St. John XXIII, pope
Joel 4:12-21
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
Luke 11:27-28

Sunday, October 12
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
2 Kings 5:14-17
Psalm 98:1-4
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Good marriage preparation programs likely do not affect a marriage’s validity

I’ve noticed that in many flourishing Catholic communities with a lot of young adults (such as some



Catholic university communities, or parishes in some big cities with an active young adult ministry), marriage preparation programs often seem to go far beyond what you find in most parishes.

I’m thinking of things like retreats, serious catechesis, good mentorship programs for engaged couples, etc. This had me wondering. Would a couple who had this level of marriage preparation have a harder time getting an annulment if their marriage ever broke down? (Ohio)

The short answer is that it would all depend on the specifics of the case in question. It is possible that excellent marriage preparation could “work against” a couple seeking a declaration of nullity in some circumstances. But most of the time, it probably would not.

For background, it’s important to recall what a declaration of nullity is. As Catholics, we believe that a

valid, consummated, sacramental marriage bond is absolutely permanent and can only be ended by the death of one of the spouses. However, it is possible that there could have been some problem before the union that was serious enough, and of such a nature, so as to have prevented a true marriage bond from being contracted in the first place. In technical language, these potential problems are called “grounds” for nullity.

If people think their failed marriage might actually have been invalid all along, they can approach a canonically qualified Catholic marriage tribunal as a “petitioner” for clarity on this.

The tribunal will investigate the petitioner’s claims, looking for evidence that either proves or disproves the alleged ground or grounds in question. If the canon

lawyer judges conclude that the marriage was in fact invalid, they will draft a formal sentence attesting to this. That is, they are issuing a declaration of the objective fact of nullity, not actively “annulling” a valid marriage.

One other important thing to remember is that the ability to contract a valid marriage is a fairly low bar to clear. Marriage is a natural part of human life, and thus something normal adults are presumed capable of contracting. The ability to marry does not require any special talent, virtue, theological insight or anything beyond an age-appropriate level of personal maturity.

Of course, one could certainly argue that a good marriage does require an unusual degree of virtue and a serious commitment to growth in holiness. But marriage tribunals are not concerned with whether a marriage was happy or even prudent; tribunals are only concerned with questions of bare-bones validity.

Good marriage preparation programs can foster healthy and holy marriages, and as such they are a valuable part of the Church’s pastoral ministry. And, of course, serious marriage preparation can give an attentive pastor the opportunity to catch any major issues and perhaps urge the couple to postpone or reconsider the wedding.

But since true causes of marital nullity are relatively rare in the big picture and also somewhat extreme, for many grounds of nullity it’s unlikely that a good premarital preparation could have “fixed” the invalidating problem.

For example, some of the more common causes of invalidity in North America are psychological issues that impeded an individual’s ability to consent to marriage (See canon 1095 of the *Code of Canon Law*). But even the best of sacramental preparation programs are not designed to heal serious psychological wounds.

Similarly, “error concerning the unity or the indissolubility or the sacramental dignity of marriage” is a ground for nullity (canon 1099). Yet error requires a genuine ignorance about marriage being a permanent union that requires exclusive fidelity, and even poorly catechized Catholics are usually clear enough on these foundational basics in order to marry validly.

So, the bottom line is that, while good preparation is not likely to support an allegation of nullity, in most cases a Catholic’s level of “extra” catechesis is not a very relevant question.

(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.) †

A Prayer to My Fortress

By Charles Wentworth



Wonderful Counsellor open my confining mind,

Show me the righteous path to seek and find.

Mighty God give me the strength to do your will,

I beseech that you grant my supplicating spirit fill.

Eternal Father absent not your presence from me,

I bow with love and adoration on bended knee.

Prince of Peace instill within me a clean heart,

So that my joy in your Kingdom I may impart.

May the joy of the Resurrection flood my soul,

Until the end time my soul becomes whole.

(Dave Charlesworth is a member of St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg. Photo: A rock formation creates a fortress of stone on the grounds of Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre in Morrison near Denver, Colo., in this Sept. 10 photo.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

My Journey to God

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

BAURLEY, Bernita M., 74, Prince of Peace, Madison, Sept. 20. Wife of Robert Baurley. Mother of Sara Powers and Nathan Baurley. Sister of Junaita Egnew, Debbie Hollingsworth, Kathy Jones, Jane Robbins, Jerry and Paul Adyt. Grandmother of five.

DELL, Joseph W., 84, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Sept. 9. Father of Carmella Musillami, Anthony and Timothy Dell. Brother of Jerome and John Dell. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of one.

JOHNSON, Sherman D., 70, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Sept. 18. Husband of Carol Johnson. Father of David and Jared Johnson and Lauren. Son of Peg Johnson. Brother of Deb and Kristeen. Grandfather of 10.

LAX, Jeffrey J., 71, Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis, Sept. 7. Brother of Nancy Kozar, Bill and Jim Lax. Uncle of several.

MATHES, Alfred S., 90, St. John the Baptist, Osgood, Aug. 31. Husband of Joyce Mathes. Father of Jennifer

Knowlton, Mike and Steve Mathes. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of 12.

MAYES, Thomas, 88, St. Francis Xavier, Henryville, Sept. 23.

MCCAMMON, Fabian A., 94, St. Mary, North Vernon,

Sept. 22. Father of Tina Updike, Mike and Patrick McCammon. Grandfather of seven.

SCHMOLT, Charles W., 86, All Saints, Dearborn County, Sept. 11. Brother of Julia Garvey, Elizabeth Luscheck, Charlotte Rouse and Paul

Schmolt. Uncle of several.

SEIBERT, Mary, 84, St. Paul, Tell City, Sept. 20. Mother of Barbara Powers and David Seibert. Sister of Becky Hagedorn. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of several. Great-great-grandmother of one. †



Praying for peace

A nun holds a candle during a “Peace for Gaza” prayer vigil on Sept. 22 at Rome’s Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. The Community of Sant’Egidio, together with numerous Catholic associations and movements, promoted the prayer vigil, which was organized in response to an appeal by Pope Leo XIV for prayer for peace in the war-torn region. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

Bishops mourn deadly attack on Latter-day Saints church in Michigan

(OSV News)—Several Catholic bishops are expressing their sorrow over a deadly attack at a Michigan house of worship, which took place just weeks after a mass shooting at a Minnesota Catholic church.

At least four were killed when a gunman drove his truck into a church, or “ward,” of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in Grand Blanc Township, Mich., during a Sept. 28 service, then set the church building on fire while shooting with a semiautomatic rifle into the congregation.

Eight victims remain in the hospital, with one in critical condition.

There may be more victims. In a Sept. 28 press conference following the attack, Grand Blanc Township police chief William Renye said, “We do believe we will find additional victims once we have that scene secured.”

The suspect, 40-year-old Thomas Jacob Sanford of Burton, Mich., died in a shootout with law enforcement. Investigators believe an accelerant was used in the fire, which gutted the building. They also found three improvised explosive devices linked to Sanford, a former Marine and Iraq War veteran.

Survivor Brian Taylor—who spoke to media immediately afterward while still wearing his bloodstained shirt—told ABC Detroit affiliate WXYZ that the gunman had been dressed in camouflage as he opened fire.

A motive for the attack remains unknown, although Reuben Coleman, acting special agent in charge of the FBI’s Detroit field office, told media on Sept. 28 that his agency “is investigating this [the attack] as an act of targeted violence.”

Authorities are also looking into whether the shooting’s timing was connected to the passing of Russell M. Nelson, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who died peacefully at his Salt Lake City home on Sept. 28. Nelson, who had been a respected heart surgeon, was 101 years old.

In a statement provided to OSV News, Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing, Mich., in whose diocesan territory the Grand Blanc congregation is located, assured the Latter-day Saints congregation of his prayers and “assuring those who mourn, and those who are injured” of his “solace and support.”

“Any place of worship should be a sanctuary of peace,” Bishop Boyea said on Sept. 29. “The violation of such a haven, especially upon a Sunday morning, makes yesterday’s act of mass violence even more shocking. I commend the first responders for heroically assisting at the scene and for working to safeguard other local places of worship.”

In a Sept. 29 statement posted to his X account, Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger of Detroit said he was “heartbroken” by the attack.

“In this time of immense sorrow, I ask that we stand in solidarity with the victims, their families, and the Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” he wrote. “Let us pray for peace and stability in our world and let us commit ourselves to actions that help to create that peace.”

Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn, New York, posting on X on Sept. 28, said the attack was “beyond disturbing.”

“We pray earnestly for those who died and were injured, for their families and for all those who were gathered on a Sunday morning to pray,” he added.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul–Minneapolis noted in a Sept. 28 statement that the Catholic and LDS communities now share a common sorrow.

“Just last month, the regional leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints extended their sincere condolences and prayers to the faithful of this archdiocese in the aftermath of the shooting at Annunciation Church, expressing their closeness to us at that challenging time,” said Archbishop Hebda, referencing the deadly Aug. 27 targeted attack that killed two children and injured 21 other individuals during a school liturgy at a Minneapolis parish.

“I will be promising them our prayers for those who were killed, as well as for those who were injured, their families, and all who were present in that house of worship,” said Archbishop Hebda. “Please join me in praying for them and for an end to senseless violence around the globe.”

In a Sept. 28 post on his platform Truth Social, President Donald J. Trump—noting he had been briefed on the incident—said, “This appears to be yet another targeted attack on Christians in the United States of America.”

While members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, sometimes in the past referred to as Mormons, call themselves Christians, the Catholic Church holds that the Latter-day Saints’ teachings about the nature of God, Jesus Christ and baptism fundamentally diverge from the trinitarian Christianity handed down from the Apostles.

While Catholics believe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons in one God, Latter-day Saints



Emergency personnel work at the scene of a shooting at a church, or “ward,” of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc, Mich., on Sept. 28. A gunman opened fire inside the church during a Sunday service and set the building ablaze, killing at least four people and injuring at least eight others. Police shot and killed the suspect, authorities said. (OSV News photo/Rebecca Cook, via Reuters)

view the Trinity consisting of three separate gods with the Father above all, and the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively subordinate. Catholics understand Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, while Latter-day Saints do not regard Jesus as one with the Father in either nature or substance.

Despite crucial doctrinal differences, however, members of both faiths “often find themselves working together on a range of problems regarding the common good of the entire human race,” wrote then-Father, and now Cardinal, Luis Ladaria, in a 2001 Vatican document. “It can be hoped therefore that through further studies, dialogue and good will, there can be progress in reciprocal understanding and mutual respect.”

Following the Grand Blanc attack, prayer and charity are at the heart of that dialogue.

“In an era marked by hostilities and division, let us all come together in faith and compassion, upholding the fundamental right to worship freely and without fear,” said Archbishop Weisenburger in his statement. “May God’s infinite love and mercy embrace and heal us all.”

“Let us remember that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Hence, in this moment of tragedy, let us all draw closer to Jesus, Prince of Peace. Our Lady, Comforter of the Afflicted, pray for us,” said Bishop Boyea. †

Conference for Latinos stresses hearts must be healed by Christ to fully love

By Claudia Corona

On July 19, the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life hosted a major conference for the Latino community called “Heal to Love” at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis.

The conference was an initiative to promote true love as a reflection of trinitarian love, as today’s society is threatened by a throwaway mentality. The lecture given by international speaker Evan Lemoine was rooted in the Theology of the Body of St. John Paul II.

The event was attended by roughly 300 adults. Married, single, young and old were there to grow in love and heal from wounds that separate the human heart from true love.

Lemoine offered an introduction to the Theology of the Body, the power of communication to grow love, healing from use, growing in love. and the secret of sexual fulfillment.

He offered testimonies of people who, as a result of knowing the Theology of the Body, were able to redirect their misdirected desires and found Christ, who Lemoine said is the only one that can satisfy our deepest longings.

The speaker made it clear that we have to be attentive to a world that offers us things to enjoy, use and throw away. Many couples are affected by this vision, where they no longer want commitment but only to live in a free union and stay together as long as the enjoyment lasts. This vision does not promote true love which, as Christ teaches, must lead the couple to sacrifice themselves, to desire their best good, to achieve their full happiness, Lemoine said.

Regarding the issue of communication,

he encouraged those present to always ask before complaining and to be aware of the three types of communication: aggressive, passive and assertive. The latter leads people to really express what we want, with respect and empathy.

He also emphasized the greatness of the sacrament of marriage compared to cohabitating with no commitment to each other, which he said is like having the back door open to leave when the other person is no longer of use.

The speaker also said that premarital relations are the sin that takes away love and weakens the ability to love. True love implies giving yourself, that is, giving to another everything you are, which is not the same as lending love until the other is of no use.

Conjugal love, he continued, leads us to be a gift of communion, a creator in the image and likeness of God.

Lemoine dedicated part of his lecture to developing the theme of God the Creator, where he touched on the point of openness to life. Parents, being open to life, must take care of two aspects—responsible parenthood, which implies prudence and generosity, and constant respect for procreative capacity.

When talking about procreative capacity, if the couple wants to avoid pregnancy, neither of the couple nor the conjugal act should be totally or partially sterilized—these are not licit means of regulating the births of children.

Lemoine was clear on the issue of contraception. He said contraceptives were made to prevent abstinence.

Natural family planning methods—such as Billings, symptothermic, Creighton and Marquette—allow couples to regulate the birth of children while respecting God’s plan for sexuality.



International speaker Evan Lemoine addresses participants during the “Heal to Love” conference for Latinos at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis on July 19. (Submitted photo)

They have no side effects, he noted, and they promote love in the couple and communication.

At the end of the conference, Lemoine offered a healing prayer for all those in attendance, saying: “If you want to truly love, you have to let God heal your wounds. Let him touch them, redeem them, and from there begin a new path.”

(Claudia Corona is coordinator for the archdiocesan Department of Pastoral Ministries. For more information about natural family planning methods from the archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, go to marriageandfamily.archindy.org/nfp or contact Gabriela Ross at gross@archindy.org or Claudia Corona at 317-236-7310 or ccorona@archindy.org.) †

Conferencia para la comunidad latina destaca que Cristo debe sanar los corazones para que puedan amar plenamente

Por Claudia Corona

La Oficina de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar de la Arquidiócesis organizó el 19 de julio una importante conferencia para la comunidad latina llamada “Sanar para amar” en el Centro Católico Arzobispo Edward T. O’Meara de Indianápolis.

La conferencia fue una iniciativa para promover el amor verdadero como reflejo del amor de la Santísima Trinidad, en un momento en el que la sociedad se ve amenazada por una mentalidad de usar y descartar. A cargo del conferenciante internacional Evan Lemoine, la ponencia se basó en la Teología del Cuerpo de san Juan Pablo II y atrajo a alrededor de 300 adultos. Casados, solteros, jóvenes y mayores se dieron cita allí para crecer en el amor y procurar la sanación de las heridas que separan el corazón humano del amor verdadero.

Lemoine ofreció una introducción a

la Teología del Cuerpo, el poder de la comunicación para hacer crecer el amor, cómo superar la tendencia al uso y habló del secreto para lograr una vida sexual plena.

Compartió testimonios de personas que, gracias a la Teología del Cuerpo, pudieron reorientar sus deseos mal encaminados y encontraron a Cristo, que, según Lemoine, es el único que puede satisfacer nuestros anhelos más profundos.

El orador dejó claro que no debemos prestar atención a un mundo que nos ofrece cosas para disfrutar, usar y descartar. Muchas parejas se ven afectadas por esta visión, en la que ya no desean el compromiso, sino vivir en unión libre y permanecer juntos mientras dure el disfrute. Esta perspectiva no fomenta el verdadero amor que, tal como enseña Cristo, debe llevar a la pareja a sacrificarse, a desear su bien superior

y a alcanzar su plena felicidad, afirmó Lemoine.

En cuanto al tema de la comunicación, animó a los presentes a preguntar siempre antes de quejarse y a ser conscientes de los tres tipos de comunicación: agresiva, pasiva y asertiva. Esto último lleva a las personas a expresar realmente lo que desean, con respeto y empatía.

También destacó la grandeza del sacramento del matrimonio en comparación con la cohabitación sin compromiso mutuo que, según dijo, es como tener la puerta del fondo abierta para marcharse cuando la otra persona ya no resulta útil.

Lemoine señaló además que las relaciones prematrimoniales son el pecado que aparta del amor y debilita la capacidad de amar. El verdadero amor implica entregarse, es decir, dar al otro todo lo que uno es, algo muy distinto de “prestar amor” hasta que el otro deje de satisfacer nuestras necesidades.

Según explicó, el amor conyugal nos lleva al don de la comunión, a ser creadores a imagen y semejanza de Dios.

Lemoine dedicó parte de su conferencia a desarrollar el tema de Dios creador que abarca la noción de estar abiertos a la vida. Los padres, al estar abiertos a la vida, deben cuidar dos aspectos: la paternidad responsable, que implica prudencia y generosidad, y el respeto constante a la capacidad procreadora.

En cuanto a la capacidad procreadora,

si la pareja quiere evitar el embarazo, ni ellos ni el acto conyugal deben esterilizarse total o parcialmente, pues no son medios lícitos de regular el nacimiento de los hijos.

Lemoine fue claro en el tema de los anticonceptivos: aseguró que están diseñados para evitar la abstinencia.

Los métodos de planificación familiar natural—como el Billings, el sintotérmico, el Creighton y el Marquette—permiten a las parejas regular el nacimiento de los hijos y al mismo tiempo respetar el plan de Dios para la sexualidad. Mencionó que no tienen efectos secundarios y que son métodos que fomentan el amor y la comunicación en la pareja.

Al final de la conferencia, Lemoine ofreció una oración de sanación para todos los asistentes, diciendo: “Si quieres amar de verdad, tienes que dejar que Dios cure tus heridas. Deja que Dios toque tus heridas, te redima y que a partir de ese momento comience un nuevo camino.”

(Claudia Corona es coordinadora del Departamento de Ministerio Pastoral de la Arquidiócesis. Para obtener más información sobre los métodos de planificación familiar natural de la Oficina de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar de la Arquidiócesis, visite marriageandfamily.archindy.org/nfp o comuníquese con Gabriela Ross en gross@archindy.org o con Claudia Corona en el 317-236-7310 o ccorona@archindy.org.) †



El conferenciante internacional Evan Lemoine guía a alrededor de 300 participantes en oración durante la conferencia para la comunidad latina titulada “Sanar para amar,” celebrada en el Centro Católico Arzobispo Edward T. O’Meara de Indianápolis el 19 de julio. (Foto enviada)

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Little Flower Parish celebrates 100 years as a neighborhood faith community

By Sean Gallagher

During much of the archdiocese’s history, most of its parishes were started in places where Catholics were already living.

St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish on Indianapolis’ east side is an exception to that general rule.

In 1925, Indiana and the rest of America were in the midst of what became known as the “roaring ’20s” with a high-powered economy ruling the day.

Real estate developers approached Indianapolis Bishop Joseph Chartrand and offered him land east of Sherman Drive on the city’s east side for \$1—on the condition that he would establish a parish with a school on the tract.

But the offer came with a risk. Bishop Chartrand was being asked to start a faith community on speculation. In 1925, no neighborhood existed there to populate such a parish and school. But the hope was that people who lived close to downtown Indianapolis in the heady economy of the time would want to move further east into the new neighborhood that the developers wanted to create.

Bishop Chartrand weighed the risk and accepted the developers’ offer. In March 1925, he announced the organization of Little Flower Parish, which would be located at the intersection of 13th Street and Bosart Avenue. The first Mass was celebrated in a nearby building in early July.

As St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus was declared a saint on May 17, 1925, Little Flower Parish claims that it is the first parish in the world named after the popular saint.

St. Thérèse had died only 28 years earlier. But her spiritual autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, published the year after her death, had become a worldwide sensation. In that book, St. Thérèse, a French Carmelite nun who was only 24 when she died in 1897, humbly referred to herself as simply a “little flower” in the garden of the Lord.

That quickly became her nickname, and so it also served as the common name for the new parish and the name of the neighborhood that grew up around it.

Within three decades after Bishop Chartrand took the risk to found Little Flower Parish, it had become the largest faith community in the archdiocese in terms of the number of its households. Its school in the mid-1950s had more than 900 students.

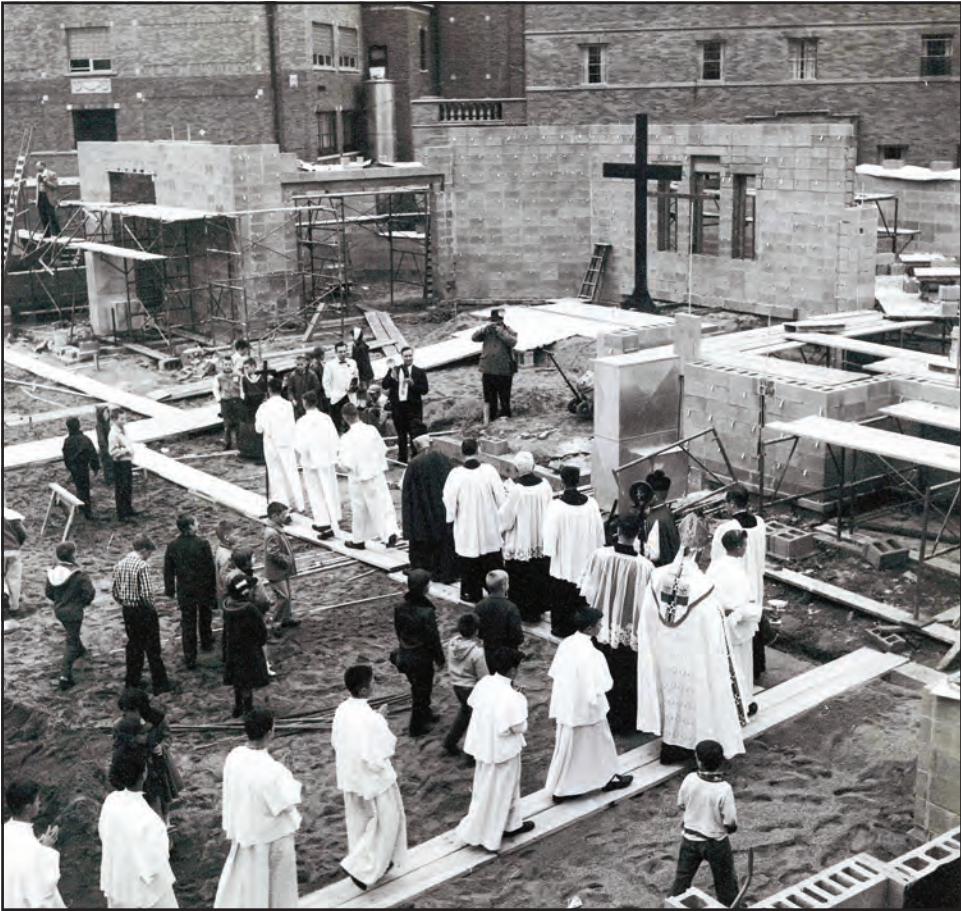
That was the Little Flower Parish in which Father Robert Gilday grew up.

“It was a destination parish,” said Father Gilday, 75, who retired from active ministry in July after serving as Little Flower’s pastor since 2003. “People would come and say that they wanted to move into Little Flower.

“Back in the day, this parish was a perfect bell curve. You had people who were poor. You also had people who were actually quite wealthy. Most were somewhere in the middle. It had a draw to all kinds of people.”

Little Flower continues to have a strong community of parishioners, even if it is no longer the largest parish in the archdiocese. A large portion of its members now live far beyond the confines of the neighborhood that grew up around it.

Many of them gathered on Sept. 6 to celebrate the centennial of the parish’s founding with a Mass celebrated by archdiocesan vicar general Msgr. William F. Stumpf and to share a gala dinner together.



Archbishop Paul C. Schulte, priests and altar servers take part in a 1961 procession on the building site of St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis to bless the cornerstone of the east side faith community’s church. (Submitted photo)



Msgr. William F. Stumpf, archdiocesan vicar general, right, prays the eucharistic prayer during a Sept. 6 Mass at St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Indianapolis East Deanery faith community’s founding. Concelebrating the Mass are, from left, Father Jude Meril Sahayam, Little Flower’s administrator, and retired Father Robert Gilday. Deacon Gary Blackwell, second from right, assists at the Mass. (Submitted photo by Caleb Baue)

‘It feels like home, like family’

Little Flower’s new administrator Father Jude Meril Sahayam spoke with *The Criterion* about how humbling it is for him to begin his ministry there at the time of its centennial.

“I feel really small being a part of this great tradition and culture that they have in this parish, celebrating the 100th year,” said Father Sahayam, who also ministers as administrator of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.

Although humbled to be asked to lead Little Flower, the priest from the Diocese of Palayamkottai in southern India has an appreciation from his native culture for the parish that is located not on a main thoroughfare but is in the middle of a neighborhood.

“There’s a saying in Tamil, my native language, that if there is no worship place in your neighborhood or village, don’t live there,” Father Sahayam said. “That’s what this reminds me of, being part of a neighborhood. Christ is always a part of this neighborhood.”

The ties of Catholic families who lived in the Little Flower neighborhood to the parish has been strong enough that many people who grew up in the neighborhood continue to be members of the parish after moving farther away.

Kurt Schnell grew up in Little Flower neighborhood in the 1970s and 1980s.

“Growing up, when I was a kid, I thought it was such a neat thing to have the parish so close,” he said. “You could see the church. The parking lot was our playground. It was a gathering place.”

Schnell now lives in Beech Grove, several miles south of his old neighborhood. But Little Flower is still his spiritual home. He helps lead Bible study groups there with parishioners who hail from as far away as the north side of Indianapolis to New Palestine and Shelbyville.

“It’s amazing how people will drive that far and pass two or three other parishes to get to Little Flower,” he said. “I don’t have any intention of ever leaving Little Flower. It’s my home.”

It’s also home for Jessica Freudenstein, who helps lead special education efforts in Little Flower School. She grew up blocks away from the parish, graduating from the eighth grade of its school in 2001, but now lives with her family in Wanamaker in southeastern Marion County.

“You lived close with people in the parish,” Freudenstein said of her time growing up near Little Flower. “You went to school with them. Your activities and sporting events were all around each other. We formed bonds, friendships and traditions.”

Her two daughters Mya and Macy, current Little Flower students, are the fifth generation of her family to be members of the parish.

Father Gilday was an altar server at her grandparents’ wedding

Mass. He celebrated the wedding Mass for Jessica and her husband Corey.

“It feels like home, like family,” said Freudenstein. “Getting to share that with my children is just a blessing.”

Influential pastors

Father Gilday has been tied to Little Flower Parish for nearly three quarters of its history. His family moved into the neighborhood in 1952 when he was 3.

He knows well how different pastors of Little Flower contributed to making it a strong community through its 100 years.

In an interview with *The Criterion*, he named three pastors who helped shape Little Flower: Father Charles Duffy, Father John Riedinger and Msgr. Raymond Bosler.

Father Duffy was the founding pastor of Little Flower, leading it until his death in 1939. “The founding pastor always sets the tone and personality of a parish,” Father Gilday said.

Father Riedinger was Little Flower’s pastor from 1942-66 and oversaw the building of its church, which was completed in 1962. Previously, the parish had worshipped in its school gym.

Building a church “was Father John’s dream,” recalled Father Gilday of the pastor of his childhood and teenage years.

“He was the builder,” Father Gilday said. “He built most of the buildings here, plus the church. He had a vision.”

Msgr. Bosler, who had attended the Second Vatican Council as a “*peritus*” (a theological expert) under Archbishop Paul C. Schulte, served as Little Flower’s pastor from 1966-77.

“He came and all of a sudden, Little Flower was thrust into the world of Vatican II,” Father Gilday said. “People were hearing about it in ways that they hadn’t heard before.”

Although he led his home parish for nearly a quarter of its history, Father Gilday didn’t include himself in the list of its most influential pastors.

“We improved some things,” he said. “But I didn’t build anything. I really kind of carried on what was going on.”

Multicultural and multigenerational

During the 22 years that Father Gilday led Little Flower, he saw changes happening in the parish.

“Over the years, so many of the longtime parishioners have died and some new people have moved in,” he said.

Father Gilday also observed that there has been a growth in the racial and ethnic diversity of the school’s students, something that Father Sahayam noticed, too, in an early visit to the school.

“I visited one of the classrooms, and one of the girls said, ‘You look like me,’ ” said Father Sahayam with a laugh. “Even the children are aware that they’re in a multicultural situation.”

As the parish changes, members like Freudenstein with deep roots in the faith community are dedicated to contributing to its future.

“I think we’re still known as a parish and school that [are] close knit and want to have all those connections and activities that involve our community,” she said. “We’re still known as that, even though it’s not quite like it used to be. It’s still important to us.”

And as seen in parishioners like Freudenstein, Little Flower also continues to be a multigenerational faith community as its multicultural aspects grow.

“Those two things will make the parish rich,” said Father Sahayam. “It will move us forward into a great future.”

(To learn more about St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus [Little Flower] Parish in Indianapolis, visit littleflowerparish.org.) †