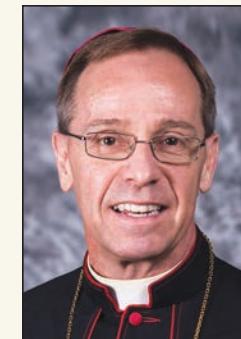




# The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Christ the Cornerstone

Giving witness to peace, Jesus shows us how to live, page 5.

CriterionOnline.com

January 9, 2026

Vol. LXVI, No. 13

## Archdiocesan history, providence, inspire Mother Olga

By Sean Gallagher

SELLERSBURG—Two members of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth religious order began their life and ministry at St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg at the start of the new year.

The community, founded in 2011 in the Archdiocese of Boston, came to the Church in central and southern Indiana with the approval of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson through the mysterious workings of God's providence during the past three years (go to [www.CriterionOnline.com](http://www.CriterionOnline.com) to read an article about this in the Dec. 19 issue of *The Criterion*).

Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart is the foundress of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth. A native of Iraq, she lived through four wars there before making her way to the U.S. Many Catholics in central and southern Indiana and others across the country first came to know this diminutive religious when she walked onto the stage in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis as a keynote speaker at the National Eucharistic Congress in July 2024.

Mother Olga recently spoke with *The Criterion* about learning of the history of the ministry of women religious in the archdiocese, including the witness of St. Theodora Guérin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and Indiana's first saint, and her hopes of

See **PROVIDENCE**, page 10

With members of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth beside her, Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart kneels in prayer during a Dec. 14, 2025, Mass at St. John Paul II Church in Sellersburg. Born in Iraq, Mother Olga founded the religious community in 2011 in the Archdiocese of Boston. Two of its members are beginning ministry at St. John Paul II Parish. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)



**Christians must resist allure of power, serve humanity, pope says at end of Holy Year**

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The powerful and violent cannot control, suppress or commodify God's grace, friendship and will to usher in a new dawn, Pope Leo XIV said.

"Around us, a distorted economy tries to profit from everything. We see how the marketplace can turn human yearnings of seeking, traveling and beginning again into a mere business," he said, celebrating Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany, and officially closing the celebration of the Holy Year dedicated to hope.

"Let us ask ourselves: has the Jubilee taught us to flee from this type of efficiency that reduces everything to a product and human beings to consumers?" he asked. "After this year, will we be better able to recognize a pilgrim in the visitor, a seeker in the stranger, a neighbor in the foreigner and fellow travelers in those who are different?"

Before the Mass, the pope, cardinals and bishops present in Rome gathered in the atrium of the basilica and gave thanks to God for the gifts received during the Holy Year. Dozens of the world's cardinals were in Rome to attend the pope's first extraordinary consistory on Jan. 7-8, to pray, support and advise the pope on the life and mission of the Church.

Pope Leo went to the threshold of the Holy Door and pulled each side shut. The door will be sealed until the next Holy Year, which is likely to be 2033, the 2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

While the last of the Holy Doors in the city was closing, "the gate" of God's

See **HOLY YEAR**, page 11

## At conclusion of Jubilee Year, priest says 'hope' must continue to guide the faithful

By Mike Krokos

After Pope Francis opened a Jubilee Year dedicated to hope in December of 2024, Merci McCoy began her "pilgrimage of hope" in Corpus Christi, Texas.

And it continued north through several churches in the U.S., crossed an ocean to St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican and other European churches, and landed in late December at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis, a jubilee site in the archdiocese where people could receive a plenary indulgence during the Jubilee Year of Hope.

See **JUBILEE**, page 2

Father James Brockmeier delivers a homily at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during the Dec. 28, 2025, Mass closing the archdiocesan observance of the Jubilee Year of Hope. (Photo by Mike Krokos)





Alan Dalisay, left, Cristina Dalisay, Jo Zabarte, Merci McCoy and Scott McCoy were pilgrims who attended the Dec. 28, 2025, liturgy closing the archdiocesan observance of the Jubilee Year of Hope. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

## JUBILEE

continued from page 1

McCoy, who is a liturgical artist, attended the archdiocese's closing Mass of the Jubilee Year on Dec. 28, 2025 at the cathedral with her husband Scott and three lifelong friends.

"We stopped at every single [jubilee church] from Corpus Christi up to here, and also [attended] every daily Mass we could along the way," McCoy said.

When asked how many jubilee churches they visited, her friend and pilgrimage companion Jo Zabarte of Gainesville, Fla., laughed and noted, "I lost count."

"It was a lot," McCoy interjected, adding it numbered in the several dozens.

Friends Alan and Cristina Dalisay of Davao, Philippines, joined the group on the pilgrimage, which included visits to jubilee churches in Avila, Spain; Fatima, Portugal; and Lourdes, France. The group also attended an audience in mid-November with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican.

After the Dec. 28 liturgy, McCoy reflected on the message shared in a homily by Father James Brockmeier, the cathedral's rector.

"I was in tears. I didn't know it was the closing [of the Jubilee year here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis]," she said. "And when he said it, it struck us that, 'Wow, this is the last church that we're going to be pilgrims of hope and able to get a [plenary] indulgence.'"

The Mass also marked the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

"His talk about the family, because

we're here for our family," moved McCoy, who added, "We're bringing them in our hearts, and we're bringing hope to them, we're doing this pilgrimage [for them]."

### Making a pilgrimage ... to see the cross of hope'

In his homily, Father Brockmeier reflected on opening the Jubilee Year in the archdiocese. The year, which had the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope," began with a prayer service and a procession on Dec. 29, 2024, from the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis across Meridian Street to the cathedral, followed by a Mass.

At the front of that procession a year ago was the cross that led the eucharistic procession through the streets of Indianapolis during the National Eucharistic Congress in July of 2024, and it stood in front of the priest on Dec. 28 as he revisited the importance of "this cross of hope."

"This Year of Hope has encouraged all of us to be pilgrims of hope," Father Brockmeier said.

"As we followed behind Christ and the Eucharist during the National Eucharist Congress, we were invited in this Year of Hope to seek Jesus in the Eucharist, to find hope in our Lord Jesus Christ and his cross, as pilgrims," the priest said.

Hope was expressed throughout the archdiocese in the past year, Father Brockmeier noted, "... in great acts of hope as well as love."

"Day after day, people came here to the cathedral, especially to our daily Mass, as an act of pilgrimage," he continued, "and

those of so many other refugees and displaced persons on every continent; or of the makeshift shelters of thousands of homeless people in our own cities?" he asked in his homily at the Mass on Dec. 25 in St. Peter's Basilica.

In celebrating the morning liturgy publicly, Pope Leo restored a tradition that had lapsed for 30 years. St. John Paul II did not preside over the liturgy in 1995



## Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

January 11–20, 2026

January 15 – 10 a.m.

Leadership Team meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center

January 15 – 1:30 p.m.

Virtual Diocesan Directors of Evangelization quarterly meeting

January 20 – 9 a.m.

Visit to Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School, Indianapolis

January 20 – 7 p.m.

Christian Unity Prayer Service at Lawrence United Methodist Church, Indianapolis

in the Lord," Father Brockmeier said.

Like Joseph, the priest added, we are called to place our hope and our trust in the Lord.

"We all come to the Lord, not knowing the answers, not knowing the way, but knowing that we need the hope of the Lord.

"May we find in the Lord and his work, true hope for our families, and continue to find in the Lord—even as we close this Year of Hope—true hope for the world."

### Hope in Christ will get us through it'

David and Olga Pratt, members of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, visited several churches around Indiana during the Jubilee Year of Hope. Their pilgrimage sites included the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad and the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Lafayette, Ind., in the Diocese of Lafayette.

The couple also attended the Dec. 28 closing Mass and felt Father Brockmeier's message tied in well to the end of the jubilee year.

"I was struck by the inspiration ... and the word 'hope' was there [several times in his homily]," David Pratt said. "You don't always think that way."

Olga Pratt appreciated how the priest tied in Jesus, Mary and Joseph's plight to what many face today.

"As the Holy Family went through struggles, they had God with them," Olga said. "It's a very good example for us. The struggles come, the joys come, and the hope in Christ will get us through it." †

## Open your hearts to baby Jesus and one another, pope says on Christmas

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Jesus entering the world as a little baby in need of everything is a sign of God's solidarity with every person in need, longing for love and a helping hand, Pope Leo XIV said at Christmas morning Mass.

"The Word has pitched his fragile tent among us. How, then, can we not think of the tents in Gaza, exposed for weeks to rain, wind and cold; and of

because he had the flu, and the morning Mass never returned to the papal calendar.

Like his predecessors, Pope Leo went to the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at noon to give his solemn blessing "*urbi et orbi*" (to the city and world). And, returning to a tradition set aside by Pope Francis, who claimed he was bad at languages, Pope Leo wished people a merry Christmas in

10 languages: Italian, French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Arabic, Chinese and Latin.

"Merry Christmas! May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts and in your families," he said.

In his homily and in his Christmas message before the "*urbi et orbi*" blessing, Pope Leo insisted that the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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# Join all Indiana dioceses for the annual state March for Life on Jan. 22

By Natalie Hoefer

The annual Indiana March for Life and associated events will take place on Jan. 22 in Indianapolis.

Youths and pro-life advocates from all five of Indiana's dioceses will participate in the event, which solemnly commemorates the date in 1973 when the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion across the country.

The Supreme Court's June 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* returned the legal issue of abortion back to individual states. On Aug. 1, 2023, a law abolishing most abortions went into effect in Indiana.

But the battle for the sacredness of life in the womb is far from over in the state.

On Dec. 5, the Indiana Court of Appeals upheld an order preventing the Indiana Department of Health from releasing terminated pregnancy reports, rendering it impossible to confirm the state's laws restricting abortion are being adhered to.

Former Planned Parenthood abortion centers still provide referrals for out-of-state abortions and offer services that disrespect the dignity of life.

And while Marc Tuttle, president of Right to Life of Indianapolis, noted at the organization's Celebrate Life Dinner on Sept. 25 that the number of abortions reported in Indiana in 2024 was 145—down from 8,000 the year before the *Dobbs* decision—that still leaves 8,000 women in a crisis pregnancy who need help.

## Schedule of events

The day starts with a rally for youths in grades eight through 12 from throughout the state. It is organized by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, with involvement and financial support from the state's five dioceses.

The rally will take place from 9-11 a.m. in the Indiana Convention Center, 100 S. Capitol Ave., in Indianapolis. This year's keynote address will be given by Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, foundress of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, with praise and worship music by the Nico Cabrera Band. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available.

The youth rally is free, but registration is required by Jan. 15, 2026, at [archindiy.com/youth-rally-for-life](http://archindiy.com/youth-rally-for-life).

Following the rally, all are invited to worship at a Mass for Life at 11:30 a.m. in the convention center, concelebrated by the bishops of Indiana. No registration is required to attend the Mass.



Participants promote the sanctity of life during the Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis on Jan. 22, 2025.

(File photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Right to Life of Indianapolis is coordinating the remaining events of the day—the Indiana March for Life and a post-march rally.

The Indiana March for Life will begin at 1:45 p.m. at the corner of Georgia and Illinois streets. It will conclude with a rally on the south steps of the Statehouse from 2:30-3 p.m.

For more information, go to [tinyurl.com/INMFL2026](http://tinyurl.com/INMFL2026). †

## CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Christian mission of sharing the good news of salvation in Christ means being serious about what is going on in the world and working to alleviate suffering, promote dialogue and end wars and violence.

Taking on the fragile flesh of a baby, God wanted to identify with every human person, he said in the morning homily.

"Fragile is the flesh of defenseless populations, tried by so many wars, ongoing or concluded, leaving behind rubble and open wounds," he said.

"Fragile are the minds and lives of young people forced to take up arms, who on the front lines feel the senselessness of what is asked of them and the falsehoods that fill the pompous speeches of those who send them to their deaths.

"When the fragility of others penetrates our hearts, when their pain shatters our rigid certainties, then peace has already begun," the pope insisted.

The response of Christians to suffering and violence must be firm but tender, he said.

"We do not serve a domineering Word—too many of those already resound everywhere," the pope said, but rather Christians profess and serve a Lord who "inspires goodness, knows its efficacy and does not claim a monopoly over it."

The peace proclaimed by Jesus, he said, will take root "when our monologues are interrupted and, enriched by listening, we fall to our knees before the humanity of the other."

Pope Leo continued his reflection in his

"*urbi et orbi*" message, telling the crowd gathered in the rain in St. Peter's Square that Jesus, "out of love," wanted "to be born of a woman and so share our humanity; out of love, he accepted poverty and rejection, identifying himself with those who are discarded and excluded."

As is customary, the pope used his message to call attention to urgent needs and suffering in places around the globe and to urge people to help relieve that suffering.

"Those who do not love are not saved; they are lost," he said. "And those who do not love their brother or sister whom they see, cannot love God whom they do not see," as the First Letter of John says.

"If all of us, at every level, would stop accusing others and instead acknowledge our own faults, asking God for forgiveness, and if we would truly enter into the suffering of others and stand in solidarity with the weak and the oppressed, then the world would change," Pope Leo said.

Looking around the world, the pope

prayed for peace and justice in dozens of countries, including Ukraine, and, as he did the night before and during the Christmas morning Mass, Pope Leo also called attention to the plight of migrants and refugees, asking governments to accept and assist them.

"In becoming man," he said, "Jesus took upon himself our fragility, identifying with each one of us: with those who have nothing left and have lost everything, like the inhabitants of Gaza; with those who are prey to hunger and poverty, like the Yemeni people; with those who are fleeing their homeland to seek a future elsewhere, like the many refugees and migrants who cross the Mediterranean or traverse the American continent.

"On this holy day, let us open our hearts to our brothers and sisters who are in need or in pain," Pope Leo said. "In doing so, we open our hearts to the Child Jesus, who welcomes us with open arms and reveals his divinity to us." †



Pope Leo XIV gives his Christmas blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 25, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

## Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition

### Feb. 13 issue of The Criterion

Couples who are planning to be married between Feb. 13 and July 16 in a marriage that is recognized as a valid sacramental or valid natural marriage, or couples who were wed between July 11, 2025, and Jan. 25, 2026, in such a recognized marriage and did not have their engagement announcement in *The Criterion* are invited to submit the information for the upcoming Feb. 13 Spring Marriage Edition. Announcements can be submitted by mail using the form at [www.archindy.org/engagements](http://www.archindy.org/engagements).

#### E-mailed photos

Photos should be saved in jpg format and be at least 500 kb. Color photos are preferred. We recommend sending a photo where the couple's faces are close to each other. Please send the photo as an attachment to the e-mail: [alewis@archindy.org](mailto:alewis@archindy.org). Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). Photos may also be texted to 317-236-1585 with the couple's names.

If it is not possible to e-mail a photo, a photo can be mailed with the names of the couple to *The Criterion*, 14000 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis 46202. Please no photocopies or laser prints. To have the photo returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

#### Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by 5 p.m. on Jan. 27.

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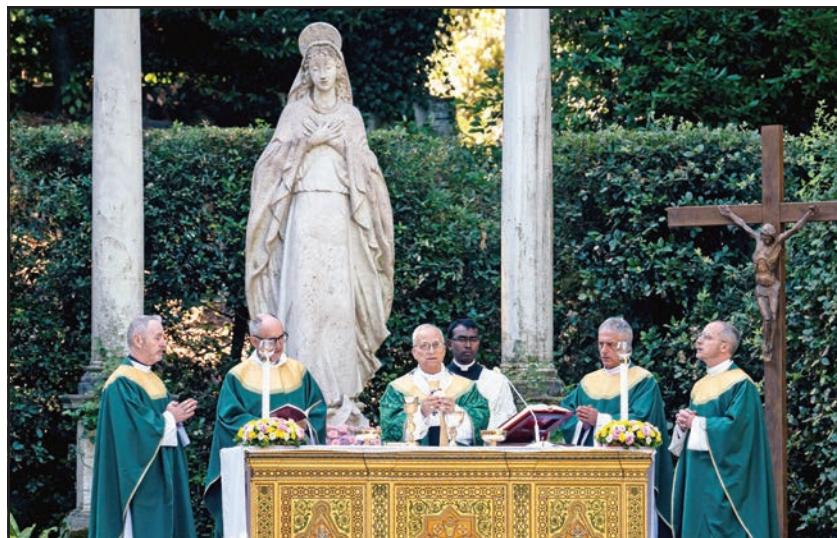
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## Editorial



Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass for the Care of Creation on the grounds of the Borgo Laudato Si' ecology center in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, on July 9, 2025.  
(CNS photo/Cristian Gennari, pool)

## Stewards of creation

The Book of Genesis tells us that the Creator God was pleased with his creation and that he entrusted Adam and Eve with a serious responsibility to care for everything that God had made.

*God blessed [Adam and Eve] and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the Earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the Earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the Earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the Earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. (Gen 1:28-30)*

The “dominion” that our first parents were asked to exercise over all creation is the opposite of what regrettably came to pass as a result of their sin. Instead of nurturing and caring for our common home, self-centered human beings have tended to take it for granted, to neglect their responsibility as stewards of God’s goodness, and to abuse God’s creation.

As technology has become more sophisticated—and more destructive—it has too often been used to manipulate the gifts of creation and use them for purposes that contradict what God intends.

In his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*: On Care for Our Common Home,” published on May 24, 2015, Pope Francis called attention to humanity’s stewardship responsibility for the care for creation.

Eight years later, in his apostolic exhortation, “*Laudato Deum*” (“Praise God”), the Holy Father wrote, “Responsibility for God’s Earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world” (#62).

At the same time, Pope Francis said, “the universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible richness of God. Hence, to be wise, we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships” (#63).

Along this path of wisdom, the Holy Father said, “it is not a matter of indifference to us that so many species are disappearing and that the climate crisis endangers the life of many other beings” (#63).

Indifference is a consequence of sin. When we are preoccupied with selfish things, we lose sight of our responsibility to exercise a respectful dominion over everything God has entrusted to our care. If we do not care for creation as God has asked us to do, it is because we no longer care for anything but our own selfish interests.

According to Pope Francis, Jesus, the new Adam, “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attraction full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things” (#64).

This is the mystical dimension that runs through the entire material universe. God’s grace transforms what is merely physical and makes it integral to the spirituality of creation.

Hence, the Holy Father says, “the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise, because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them toward fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence” (#65).

If “the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely,” the Holy Father writes, “there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.” In fact, the pope tells us, “The world sings of an infinite love: how can we fail to care for it?” (#65).

We cannot fail to care for our common home if we have any awareness at all of the spiritual richness contained in all aspects of the material universe. The stewardship responsibility we have been given is serious. It demands that we never take for granted the beauty, power and majesty of even the smallest and most mundane things that God has made.

We have been given dominion over all things visible and invisible. This is an awesome responsibility. Let’s embrace it with a firm sense of purpose and a desire for abundant joy.

—Daniel Conway

**Be Our Guest!** Michael R. Heinlein

## A call for peace in the new year

Pope Leo XIV’s new message for the Jan. 1 World Day of Peace, released on Dec. 18, offers a great deal of food for thought.



Building on the theme of peace that has been a main message of his pontificate since his first public words, Pope Leo uses this latest text to insert his voice squarely into the pursuit for peace on a geopolitical international scale.

While acutely diagnosing the threats to peace today, Pope Leo also indicates the solutions are available to us, and he presents Christ as the path itself.

The text enables Pope Leo to emerge more distinctly as a leader who can transcend the polarization and polemics that prohibit the advancement of peace.

The pope spends a considerable amount of the 3,000-word message focusing on what has become a countercultural desire for peace. He laments that today “we treat peace as a distant ideal” and “we cease to be scandalized when it is denied.”

Even more disturbing are the exorbitant resources put toward military defense, which Pope Leo criticizes. “The idea of the deterrent power of military might, especially nuclear deterrence, is based on the irrationality of relations between nations, built not on law, justice and trust, but on fear and domination by force.”

The text brings to mind the popular hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” a prayer that recognizes it must “begin with me.”

Relying on his spiritual father St. Augustine, Pope Leo underscores this important point, quoting from Augustine’s Sermon 357: “If you wish to draw others to peace, first have it yourselves; be steadfast in peace yourselves. To inflame others, you must have the flame burning within.”

Stirring such an examination of conscience is a product of what has become a reliable Christocentric prism through which the Holy Father brings light to his flock. This makes peace something achievable and attainable because Christ who is our peace desires to dwell in every human heart.

While the wisdom of Pope Leo’s

message on peace will be considered above all for its ramifications on international affairs, it can pertain to the Church, too. He speaks of peace as “unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering.” While avoiding intraecclesial terms like “synodality,” the pope still encourages its methods as a path to peace. Listening and dialogue are methods toward achieving Augustine’s perception that “those who truly love peace also love the enemies of peace.”

How often are interlocutors within ecclesial life today unable to enter any conversations without being armed in their convictions and ideologies? “When peace is not a reality that is lived, cultivated and protected, then aggression spreads into domestic and public life.” The pope emphasizes that when Christ discloses his gift of peace, he immediately tells his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (Jn 14:27).

While the “distress and fear” Jesus counsels the disciples against is undoubtedly tied to the violence that awaited him, Pope Leo indicates that the Gospels also relate that “what troubled the disciples was his nonviolent response.”

“The way of Jesus continues to cause unease and fear. He firmly repeats to those who would defend him by force: ‘Put your sword back into its sheath’” (Jn 18:11; Mt 26:52). How effectively do Catholics accomplish this in our dealings with one another?

The liturgy wars we have seen unfold in recent years also came to mind. What message do we send to the world constantly fighting over the Mass—what should be the source of our unity? How often do we employ political categories, especially when arguing on social media, that skew our thinking and taint our faith? It’s truly concerning how little it seems Catholics model the peace the world needs so desperately.

What if ecclesial life could reflect the peace of Christ to the world? What if you and I answered the call of Pope Leo—the call of Jesus Christ—and helped to show the way?

(Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.*) †

## Letters Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



# Christ the Cornerstone

## Giving witness to peace, Jesus shows us how to live

*The heavens were opened and the voice of the Father thundered: 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him.'* (cf. Mk 9:7)

The Gospel reading for The Baptism of the Lord (Mt 3:13-17), which we will celebrate this Sunday, tells us that John the Baptist tried to prevent Jesus from participating in this ritual cleansing.

"I need to be baptized by you," John protests, "and yet you are coming to me?" (Mt 3:14) Jesus' response does not dispute the truth of John's statement. "Allow it now," Jesus says, "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15).

St. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus was not driven to this baptism of repentance because of his sinfulness. He did not need to do this.

On the contrary, Jesus freely chooses to undergo this ritual of cleansing and healing because he believes it is important to "fulfill all righteousness," in other words to be someone who chooses to do what is right—not for his own sake, but for the sake of others.

This free decision that the Son of God makes is in keeping with his mission. He humbled himself, as St. Paul tells, and became a man for our sake.

In fact, everything that he did during his brief time on Earth was done deliberately to save us from ourselves. His healing, his teaching, his words of comfort and of warning, and all his gestures large and small (the signs and wonders he performed) were all for our benefit. Our Lord was under no compulsion to do anything. Everything was freely chosen in conformity with his Father's will for him.

That is why when Jesus was baptized by St. John in the Jordan River, the voice of the Father "came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'" (Mk 1:11).

A simple sign of solidarity with the sinful human race (all of us) is treated as an event of profound Trinitarian significance. The One God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) acts with perfect unity in affirming the importance of our repentance as a necessary condition for recognizing and accepting God's unconditional forgiveness. God is always forgiving, but we can only accept this Divine Truth if we repent and allow our souls to be washed clean by God's healing power.

In Sunday's second reading (Acts 10:34-38), we hear the testimony of St. Peter:

*Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him"* (Acts 10:34-38).

God's grace is available to everyone. He shows no partiality but freely embraces anyone who turns to him seeking forgiveness with an open heart. God was with Jesus in the most intimate and profound way imaginable. He was the "Beloved Son," the Incarnate Word of God, whose every breath brings healing and hope to "all those oppressed by the devil," indeed to all of us who are subject to the power of sin and death.

The Baptism of the Lord, which takes place at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, is a powerful sign that

justice and mercy have come into the world in a radically new way.

As the first reading (Is 42:1-7) tells us:

*Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. a bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the Earth.* (Is 42:1-4)

The Just One has come tempered with mercy. He gives witness to a quiet and tender peace. By freely choosing to "become sin," Jesus fulfills all righteousness and shows us how to live as free women and men no longer subject to the slavery of sin and death (2 Cor 5:21).

Unlike Jesus, you and I were baptized out of necessity because as sinful human beings we needed Christ's saving grace. Let us fulfill our baptismal promises by choosing to live as faithful missionary disciples of Christ, whose free decisions in the Jordan River and on the Cross have cleansed us from our sins. †



# Cristo, la piedra angular

## Jesús nos enseña a vivir con su testimonio de paz

*Entonces apareció una nube que los envolvió de la cual salió una voz que dijo: "Este es mi Hijo amado. ¡Escúchennlo!"* (cf. Mc 9:7)

La lectura del Evangelio del Bautismo del Señor (Mt 3:13-17), que celebraremos este domingo, nos cuenta que Juan el Bautista trató de impedir que Jesús participara en este ritual de purificación.

"Yo soy el que necesita ser bautizado por ti, ¿y tú vienes a mí?" reclama Juan (Mt 3:14). La respuesta de Jesús no refuta la veracidad de la afirmación de Juan; en vez de ello, le dice: "Hágámoslo como te digo, pues nos conviene cumplir con lo que es justo" (Mt 3:15).

San Mateo deja claro que lo que lleva a Jesús a someterse a ese bautismo de arrepentimiento no es su condición de pecador; no lo necesitaba.

Por el contrario, Jesús elige libremente ese ritual de limpieza y curación porque cree que es importante "cumplir con lo que es justo," es decir, ser alguien que escoge hacer lo que es correcto, no por su propio bien, sino por el de los demás.

Esta decisión libre que toma el Hijo de Dios está en consonancia con su misión: se humilló a sí mismo, como dice san Pablo, y se hizo hombre por nosotros.

De hecho, todo lo que hizo durante su breve estancia en la Tierra lo hizo deliberadamente para salvarnos de nosotros mismos. Sus curaciones, sus enseñanzas, sus palabras de consuelo y de advertencia, y todos sus gestos grandes y pequeños (los signos y prodigios que realizó) fueron por nuestro bien. Nuestro Señor no estaba obligado a hacer nada. Todo lo eligió libremente conforme a la voluntad de su Padre para él.

Por eso, cuando Jesús fue bautizado por san Juan en el Jordán, se escuchó "una voz desde el cielo diciendo: 'Tú eres mi Hijo muy querido, en ti tengo puesta toda mi predilección'" (Mc 1:11).

Un simple signo de solidaridad con la raza humana pecadora (todos nosotros) se considera un acontecimiento de profundo significado trinitario. El Dios Único (Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo) actúa con perfecta unidad al afirmar la importancia de nuestro arrepentimiento como condición necesaria para reconocer y aceptar el perdón incondicional de Dios. Dios siempre perdona, pero solamente podemos aceptar esta verdad divina si nos arrepentimos y permitimos que el poder sanador de Dios limpie nuestra alma.

En la segunda lectura del domingo (Hch 10:34-38), escuchamos el testimonio de san Pedro:

*Pedro tomó la palabra y dijo— "Ahora comprendo que en realidad para Dios no hay favoritismos, sino que en toda nación él ve con agrado a los que le temen y actúan con justicia. Dios envió su mensaje al pueblo de Israel, anunciando las buenas noticias de la paz por medio de Jesucristo, que es el Señor de todos. Ustedes conocen este mensaje que se difundió por toda Judea, comenzando desde Galilea, después del bautismo que predicó Juan. Me refiero a Jesús de Nazaret: cómo lo ungí Dios con el Espíritu Santo y con poder, y cómo anduvo haciendo el bien y sanando a todos los que estaban oprimidos por el diablo, porque Dios estaba con él."* (Hch 10:34-38)

La gracia de Dios está al alcance de todos. No muestra parcialidad, sino que abraza libremente a cualquiera que se dirija a Él en busca de perdón con el corazón abierto. Dios estaba con Jesús de la manera más íntima y profunda que se pueda imaginar. Era el "Hijo Amado," el Verbo de Dios encarnado, cuyo aliento trae sanación y esperanza a todos los "oprimidos por el diablo," es decir, a todos los que estamos sometidos al poder del pecado y de la muerte.

El Bautismo del Señor, que sucede al comienzo del ministerio público de Jesús, es un poderoso signo de que la justicia y la misericordia han entrado

en el mundo de un modo radicalmente nuevo.

Como nos dice la primera lectura (Is 42:1-7):

*Este es mi siervo, a quien sostengo, mi escogido, en quien me deleito; sobre él he puesto mi Espíritu y llevará justicia a las naciones. No clamará, ni gritará, ni alzará su voz en las calles. No acabará de romper la caña quebrada ni apagará la mecha que apenas arde. Con fidelidad hará justicia; no vacilará ni se desanimará hasta implantar la justicia en la tierra. En su enseñanza las costas lejanas pondrán su esperanza.* (Is 42:1-4)

El Justo ha venido templado con misericordia y da testimonio de una paz tranquila y tierna. Al elegir libremente "cargar con el pecado," Jesús cumple toda justicia y nos muestra cómo vivir como mujeres y hombres libres que ya no están sometidos a la esclavitud del pecado y de la muerte (2 Cor 5:21).

A diferencia de Jesús, usted y yo fuimos bautizados por necesidad, porque como seres humanos pecadores necesitábamos la gracia salvadora de Cristo. Cumplimos nuestras promesas bautismales eligiendo vivir como fieles discípulos misioneros de Cristo, cuyas decisiones libres en el río Jordán y en la cruz nos han limpiado de nuestros pecados. †

# Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/events](http://www.archindy.org/events).

## January 16

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, WTHR news anchor Scott Swan presenting "The Hope You Need Today," rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 13. Information, registration: [cutt.ly/CBE-Reg](http://cutt.ly/CBE-Reg).

## January 22

Indiana Convention Center, Sagamore Ballroom, 100 S. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis. **Indiana Youth Rally for Life**, 9-11 a.m., for youths in grades eight-12, Daughters of Mary of Nazareth foundress Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, music by Nico Cabrera, confession available, free, youth group leaders must register by Jan. 15 at [archindym.com/youth-rally-for-life](http://archindym.com/youth-rally-for-life), sponsored by archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry. Information:

317-456-7076, [rgilman@archindy.org](mailto:rgilman@archindy.org).

Indiana Convention Center, Hall J, 100 S. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis. **Mass for Life with Indiana bishops**, 11:30 a.m., all welcome, sponsored by archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity. Information: 317-236-1543, [bvarick@archindy.org](mailto:bvarick@archindy.org).

**Indiana March for Life, Indianapolis**: 1:45-2:30 p.m. march from Georgia and Illinois streets to Indiana Statehouse, 200 W. Washington St.; post-rally at south Statehouse steps, 2:30-3 p.m.; all are welcome, sponsored by Right to Life of Indianapolis. Information: 317-582-1526, [info@rtli.org](mailto:info@rtli.org).

## January 24

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18,

visit with elder sisters and help them with activities such as Bingo, exercise, baking and more. Information, registration: [teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org](http://teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org), [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org), 361-500-9505.

St. Teresa Life Center, 23345 Gavin Lane, Lawrenceburg. **Rooted in Truth: Day of Renewal**, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., women's day of reflection; includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, T-shirt and gifts; sponsored by Dearborn County Catholics, \$20, register by Jan. 10. Information, registration: 513-255-0782, [tinyurl.com/rootedintruth26](http://tinyurl.com/rootedintruth26).

## January 28

St. Nicholas School, 6459 E. St. Nicholas Dr., Sunman. **Open House**, 5:30-7 p.m., free. Information: 812-623-2348, [schooloffice@stnicholas-sunman.org](mailto:schooloffice@stnicholas-sunman.org).

## February 7

Mount Saint Francis Center for

Spirituality, 101 Saint Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. **Pre-Cana Retreat**, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., includes materials, continental breakfast, lunch, \$125 per couple, register by Jan. 29. Information, registration: [catalystcatholic.org/precana](http://catalystcatholic.org/precana), [michelle@catalystcatholic.org](mailto:michelle@catalystcatholic.org), 812-923-8355, ext. 201.

Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, visit with elder sisters and help them with activities such as Bingo, exercise, baking and more. Information, registration: [teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org](http://teenvolunteer.sistersofprovidence.org), [jluna@spsmw.org](mailto:jluna@spsmw.org), 361-500-9505.

## February 12

St. Mary Parish, 1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way, Greensburg. **Miracles of the Eucharist Exhibit**, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., exhibition on the Eucharistic Miracles of the World created by St. Carlo Acutis, freewill offerings accepted. Information: 812-663-8427, ext. 204, [anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.com](mailto:anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.com).

Marian Catechist coordinator and national coordinator for the Real Presence Association Patrick Brueggen, freewill donations accepted. Information: 812-663-8427, ext. 204, [anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.com](mailto:anavarra@stmarysgreensburg.com).

register by Feb. 8, sponsored by archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry. Information, registration: [archindym.com/holy-fire](http://archindym.com/holy-fire), 317-456-7076, [rgilman@archindy.org](mailto:rgilman@archindy.org).

## March 13-15

Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, 5440 Moeller Ave., Norwood, Ohio. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter**, \$75 non-refundable fee. Registration: [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org). Information: Andy and Melanie Reinersman, 859-653-8464.

## March 14-15

Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Pre-Cana Retreat**, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day, includes materials, light breakfast, box lunch and snacks, \$200 per couple, register by March 4. Information, registration: [ccorona@archindy.org](mailto:ccorona@archindy.org), 317-800-9306, [tinyurl.com/ccprecana3-26](http://tinyurl.com/ccprecana3-26). †

## Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).

## January 9

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## January 9-11

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Young Adult Retreat**, for ages 18-35, Benedictine Father Simon Herrmann presenting, \$50 single, \$100 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## January 10

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Mend Your Heart with Gratitude**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Jesuit Father Ed Kinerk presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## January 15

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay

available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## January 16-18

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Biblical Mercy: Matthew's Gospel as an Encounter with Jesus' Love**, Father Zachary Samples, Diocese of Springfield, Ill., presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48,

**Bloomington. The Beauty of the Sacraments Retreat**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Catholic Answers apologist Karlo Broussard presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple, commuter \$90, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

## February 13-15

Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Seasons of Us: Renewing Marriage Through Every Stage of Life**, married couples retreat, Josh and Angie Greulich presenting, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## February 18

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Ash Wednesday and the Contemplative Life**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. CT, Jane Feliz Rush presenting, includes lunch, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## February 19, March 18

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Day of Silence**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. Registration: [ftm.retreatportal.com/events](http://ftm.retreatportal.com/events), 317-545-7681, [lcoons@archindy.org](mailto:lcoons@archindy.org).

## February 20, March 27, April 17

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St.,

Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-357-6611, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## February 20-22

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Strong Marriage, Strong Parenting**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., EWTN personality and clinical psychologist Dr. Ray Guarendi presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple, commuter \$90, includes four meals and room for two nights, commuters \$50.70 includes lunch and dinner on Sat. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, [motheroftheredeemer.com](http://motheroftheredeemer.com).

## February 21

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Modern Day Saints**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., artist Gracie Morbitzer presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, [oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org).

## February 24-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Women of**

**the Bible**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## February 24, March 3, 10, 17

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Blessed Are You**, 10 a.m.-11 a.m. CT, four-week workshop, Benedictine Father Kolbe Wolniakowski presenting, includes all four sessions, \$75. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## March 27-29

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Pilgrims of Hope**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, [saintmeinrad.org/retreats](http://saintmeinrad.org/retreats).

## Submit an event or retreat

To submit an event or retreat, contact Ann Lewis at [alewis@archindy.org](mailto:alewis@archindy.org) or by phone at 317-236-1585.

You may also use the online form available at [www.archindy.org/events/submit](http://www.archindy.org/events/submit).

Additionally, you can send your event by mail to 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202.

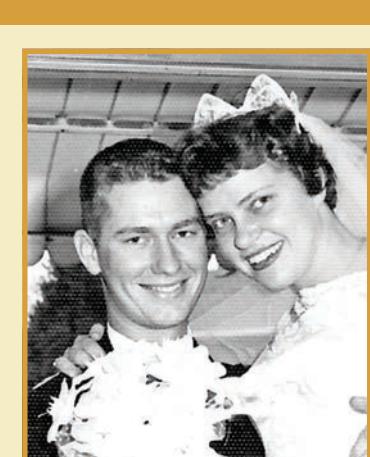
## Wedding Anniversaries

**HAROLD AND ANNA MAE (MOORMAN) KRAMER**, members of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Decatur County, will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Jan. 14.

The couple was married in St. Maurice Church, now a campus of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Decatur County, on Jan. 14, 1961.

They have six children: Terri Boyd, Lori Garringer, Nancy Means, Suzanne Miller, Patrick and Tim Kramer.

The couple also has 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. †



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

## Panel discussion on poverty will take place on Jan. 28 in Indianapolis

A "Poverty in Our Community: Complexities, Challenges and Hope" panel discussion will take place in Assembly Hall at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St. in Indianapolis, from 5:30-8 p.m. on Jan. 28.

The evening begins with time from 5:30-6:30 p.m. to visit with representatives of local organizations that work directly with those experiencing poverty.

The panel discussion, which will begin at 6:30 p.m., will address how poverty impacts seniors, children, veterans and those living within

urban and rural communities. Panelists include archdiocesan Holy Family Shelter program director Rachelle Frink, archdiocesan Catholic Charities Senior Service director Joyce Beaven and others.

The event, sponsored by the archdiocesan Catholic Charities-Social Concerns ministry, is free and includes refreshments.

Online registration is requested at [tinyurl.com/povertypanel2026](http://tinyurl.com/povertypanel2026), although walk-ins are also welcome.

For more information, contact Laura Sheehan at [lsheehan@archindy.org](mailto:lsheehan@archindy.org) or 317-542-2492. †

# SIMPLY CATHOLIC

## “Gaudium et Spes” was the ‘capstone’ of the Second Vatican Council

By Deacon Omar Gutierrez

(OSV News)—In many ways, “*Gaudium et Spes*” (“Joy and Hope”), or the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” was the culmination of what the Second Vatican Council hoped to accomplish, the capstone of the council that concluded 60 years ago last month.

The English title helps us see why. When Pope St. John XXIII called the council, he wanted a pastoral council, not a dogmatic one. He desired a council that would not so much produce condemnations or “anathemas” in response to pressing heresies, but rather a council that could lay out a vision for the future of the Church with updated expressions for its ancient faith.

The promulgation of “*Gaudium et Spes*” on Dec. 7, 1965, at the very end of the council, was the council’s first and only pastoral constitution. The title also tells us that it is addressed toward the modern world.

About a century before “*Gaudium et Spes*,” Blessed Pius IX had all but rejected the modern world, saying in the “Syllabus of Errors” that he need not “reconcile himself” to “modern civilization.” The violence directed at him and the Church was intense. However, the Church in 1965 found itself in a far different relationship, a world still suffering under the weight of the effects of two disastrous world wars. It was exhausted by violence and could have benefited from the Church’s leadership in promoting peace.

The modern world needed the Church, and “*Gaudium et Spes*” responded to that need.

The first step in this pastoral approach was an extension of the Church’s open hand. The first words of the document are “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted—these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (#1).

One would be hard-pressed to find words more tender and more inviting than these. “*Gaudium et Spes*” continues addressing the “genuinely human” when it declares that the Church is dedicated not just to Catholics but to the whole world. More than that, the Church is dedicated to more than mere socioeconomic freedom, but to the freedom that comes from knowing and accepting God’s love, which helps us to know ourselves fully and authentically.

Included among the council fathers who wrote the document was Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, the future St. John Paul II. This aspect of the teaching of “*Gaudium et Spes*” would later stand at the heart of his own papal magisterium as he led the Church from 1978 until his death in 2005.

The modern desire for self-discovery and self-actualization are answered ultimately in Jesus Christ: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of him who was to come ... Christ the Lord.

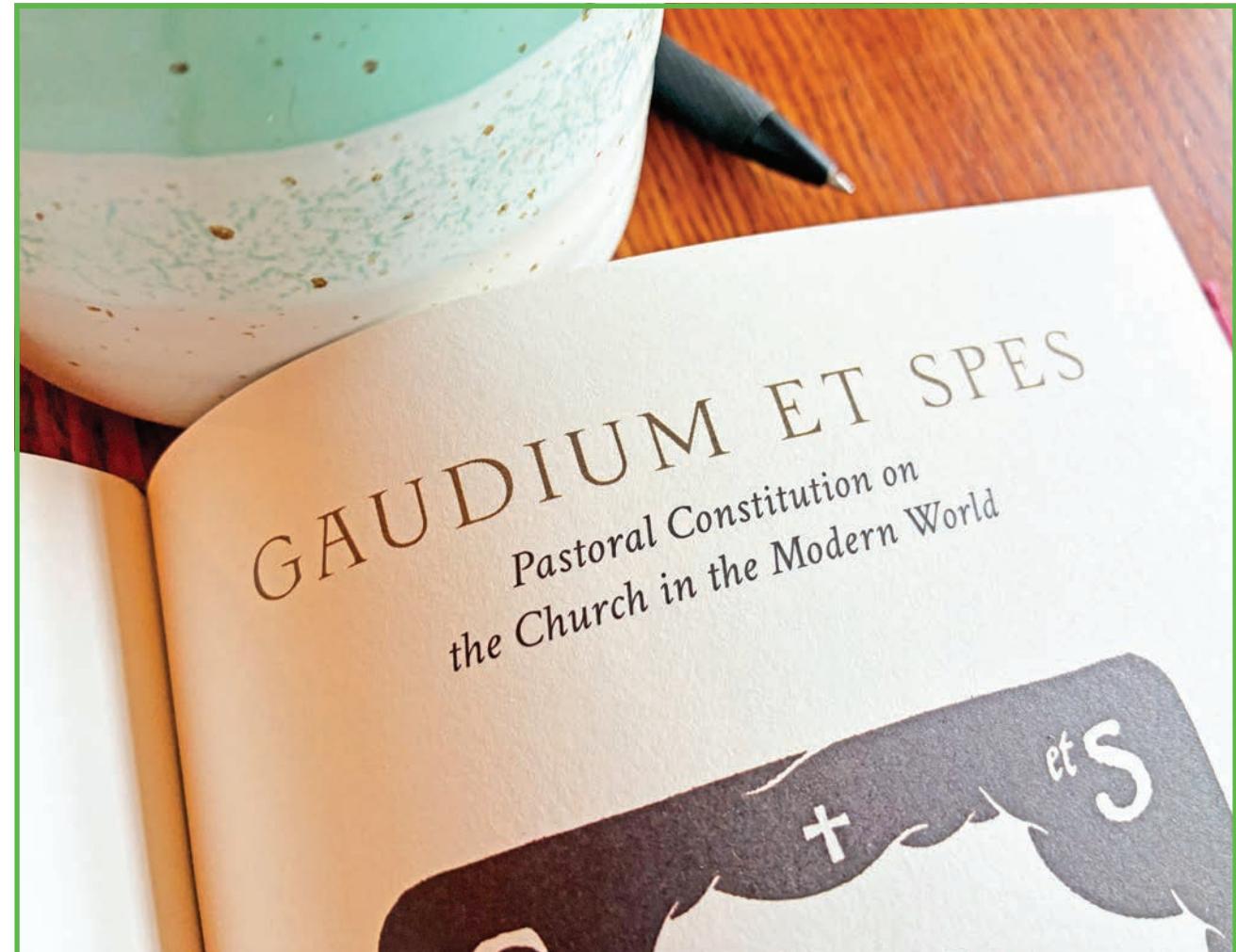
“Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown” (#22).

The Church’s role in all of this is, first and foremost, to be the gateway through which every person and all of human society receives life in Christ. It is through the Church that we encounter Christ, so it is through the Church that we experience our vocation and its meaning, and the truth of the Gospel. The Church offers God to us and so meets our desires and teaches us that, without him, we are lost.

By teaching us about the poor, leading us into service of the defenseless and by speaking for the voiceless, the Church points us to the dignity of the human person. In her prophetic mission, the Church stands before the world to denounce injustice and support the love of neighbor.

But we ought not think this is the work of our bishops and priests alone. The laity have a particular duty in this regard.

From our pastors, the laity may seek “spiritual light and nourishment,” but it is their primary duty to make sure “that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city” (#43). Enlightened by the teachings of the Church, the layperson must both act in a Christian spirit and “be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society” (#43). The laity must carry Christ whom they encounter in the Church out into the world so that all might be saved.



“*Gaudium et Spes*” (“Joy and Hope”), the title of the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” was approved by the bishops of the council on Dec. 7, 1965. In many ways, the document is the culmination of what Vatican II hoped to accomplish, the capstone of the council. (OSV News illustration/Maria Wiering)

Up to this point in “*Gaudium et Spes*,” the council fathers have addressed human nature, our need for Christ, the role of the Church and the role of the laity in bringing about the kingdom of God. The second part of the document focuses on specific areas which “go to the roots of the human race” (#46) and into which Catholics are called to action.

In the first area, we are called to foster “the nobility of marriage and the family” (#47). As the fundamental cell of society, the family is “a kind of school of deeper humanity” (#52).

The family must be grounded in prayer, for through family prayer children and everyone in the family “will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness” (#48). The purpose of family is holiness, and that holiness fosters a deeper humanity that informs and shapes society.

The next section of “*Gaudium et Spes*” deals with the “proper development of culture” (#53). Culture, a word rich in meaning, is that by which humans develop and perfect physical and spiritual qualities. It presumes the family; but it also includes art, labor, literature, customs, institutions, civic memory and much more that may exist outside of one’s particular family.

The council fathers state that our action within culture must begin with fostering an understanding of the universals: “truth, goodness and beauty” (#57). In this way, the culture provides man with authentic liberty; for freedom is not doing what we want, but rather the freedom to pursue the good. This approach is accessible to all people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

As Catholics, however, we understand that truth is not merely a concept. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, who took on flesh and dwelt among us.

“The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man,” say the council fathers (#58). This is because liberty cannot be authentic unless it is founded on the truth of the human person; and since Christ reveals man to himself, only Jesus Christ and the truth of his Gospel can truly provide us with the fullest liberty to create a culture of life.

This liberty can nevertheless be frustrated by a material poverty which isolates. This is why the next area of human action is “economic and social life” (#63). Here, the council fathers insist that society views human labor as more than a commodity.

“Human labor,” they write, “which is expended in the production and exchange of goods or in the performance of economic services is superior to the other elements of economic life, for the latter have only the nature of tools” (#67). Work is connected to real people with full dignity.

Everything else is merely a tool in the hands of humanity.

The council fathers also articulate what is referred to as the universal destination of goods, one of the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Private property is a natural right of the human person, and God desires that all people have access to what is necessary for life and for human flourishing. Therefore, property exists to secure our own life and to be sure that everyone has enough to live. All are called to share his or her wealth with radical generosity.

Now the council fathers introduce the penultimate area for human action: “the life of the political community” (#73).

Government is necessary in order to secure the common good for a society. That is its whole purpose. However, the fathers write that “citizens ... must be careful not to attribute excessive power to public authority” (#75). Though necessary, governments must be kept in check, especially when they ignore our “eternal vocation” (#76).

Finally, the last area of human action involves the “fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations” (#77).

Here, the foundational principle is solidarity, that we are all responsible for all, an idea rooted in natural law.

We read that “contemplating this melancholy state of humanity, the council wishes, above all things else, to recall the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles. Man’s conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice to these principles” (#79). This aspect of natural law helps to connect one nation to another and connect various faith traditions.

As “*Gaudium et Spes*” closes, it strikes an ecumenical note, encouraging cooperation between Catholics and our “separated brothers” as we try to advance the kingdom of God (#90).

The “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” is rich in tradition and yet boldly new in the way it presents that tradition to the world. It is a manifesto of love directed toward an ever more secularized world, a world that looks with skepticism at the Church.

In this way, it is truly a pastoral constitution, for it aims to win the heart and mind of that skeptical, modern soul and bring the whole world closer to Christ Jesus, in whom all “truths find their root and attain their crown” (#22).

(Deacon Omar Gutierrez is the president and co-founder of the Evangelium Institute, a non-profit dedicated to providing dynamic formation to adults.) †

## Twenty Something/Christina Capecci

## Stovetop spirituality: cookbooks share wisdom of kitchen as chapel

The older I get, the more I crave a practical spirituality—one tied to dirty dishes not pristine libraries, one that recognizes hungry bellies along with hungry hearts.



Some days, talking theology feels beside the point. We are living it as we match mittens and pack snacks. We pray as we start the car, and zoom! Off we go, bringing the light of Christ to our meetings and tournaments.

Last year, I interviewed Mark Berchem, founder of NET Ministries, a Catholic evangelization center he launched 44 years ago. Upon his retirement, I asked about his winning approach to the apostolate.

"None of us had any theological training," he told me. "All we had was our real-life experience: 'This is what God has done in my life. I know God is real. He wants to be real in your life too!'"

Over time, Mark came to embrace that. "Somebody once told me: 'If it's not practical, it's probably not spiritual,'" he said. "The integration of faith and life is what happens at NET."

That statement stuck with me. God wants to meet us in the here and now, the knotted shoelaces and jammed zippers, the dash to the gas station, the smile from the

cashier. He loves us through the minutiae of daily life.

That's why, for me, I hesitate to draw the line between cookbook and prayer book. When I'm holding a collection of tried-and-true recipes, it can feel like much more.

This year my mother-in-law gave us a treasure: a beloved parish cookbook. Titled *Our Favorite Recipes*, it was created by members of St. Patrick Parish in Ryan, Iowa—a tiny town named after a priest, Father Patrick Ryan. Its palette is cream and cinnamon: yellowed pages, brown spiral binding, a sepia-toned photograph of the church.

It begins with The Kitchen Prayer: "Lord of all pots and pans and things, since I've not time to be a saint by doing lovely things or watching late with Thee or dreaming in the dawn light or storming Heaven's gates, make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates."

The prayer concludes: "Warm all the kitchen with Thy love and light it with Thy peace. Forgive me all my worrying and make my grumbling cease. Thou who didst love to give men food, in room and by the sea, accept this service that I do, I do it unto Thee."

The pickles and jams and rolls follow, with cookies outnumbering casseroles by a ratio of 10 to one and dozens of pies rounding out the desserts. It was a fundraiser for their beloved house of worship,

completed through late nights and phone calls, wrapped in prayer and dusted with flour. The practical in the spiritual. Follow these steps, feed these people, offer it up.

Emily Stimpson Chapman's new cookbook does the same. *Around the Catholic Table* from Emmaus Road Publishing combines heartfelt essays with delicious recipes, wrapping stories around each one: a beloved rigatoni, a hearty vegetable beef soup, a carrot and ginger soup that can brighten "the greyest February days."

The cookbook is peppered with Emily's beliefs both as a Catholic and a cook. "I am a firm believer that if you top a fruit crisp with yogurt instead of ice cream, it is a breakfast food, not a dessert," writes the 50-year-old mom of three from Steubenville, Ohio.

In her final essay, Emily explores the deeper meaning of cooking for her family. "I believe that when they eat what I've made, my mind, my heart, my strength, my energy, my creativity and my tenacity in some mysterious way become theirs too," she writes. "In the kitchen, I have found intimacy with Christ, who gives his life to us in the form of food."

Practical and spiritual. Sustenance for a long Tuesday—and a foretaste of heaven.

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

## Truth and Light/Leonard J. DeLorenzo

## Kneeling in the pigpen: Human connection in the age of efficiency

We live in an age that prizes efficiency above almost everything else. Tap your phone and a car arrives. Click a button and groceries appear. Swipe right and ... well, that's supposed to be connection, isn't it? Except it's not. What we've gained in convenience we're losing in something harder to quantify: actual human closeness.

Josef Pieper saw this coming. Writing decades before smartphones existed, the German Catholic philosopher understood that love—real love—can't be engineered for maximum efficiency.

"What is really sought, human closeness, overcoming of loneliness, union with another personal being," he wrote, "all that can be had only in real love. But at this point we see a further segment of the vicious circle. For love—above all, *eros*—is by nature something that cannot be fitted smoothly and easily, without problems, into the functional context of utilitarian plans."

In other words, love made to serve other ends ceases to be love at all. The moment we try to make relationships efficient, productive, useful—the moment we optimize them—we kill the very thing we're after.

This is uncomfortable news in a modern culture that tends to treat everything as a problem to be solved. But love doesn't work that way. Neither does friendship. Neither does the slow, messy work of actually knowing another person. Real connection requires what we're increasingly unwilling to give: time. Embodied presence. Inefficiency. The awkwardness of sitting with someone who's struggling instead of sending a text. The risk of being misunderstood or rejected.

It's easier than ever to pull away from people with minimal consequence: ghost someone, block, unfollow. We've built technologies that make disconnection frictionless.

Which means forgiveness and reconciliation have become more radical, more essential to our humanity than ever. When you can walk away from any relationship at the first sign of difficulty, choosing to stay and work through conflict becomes revolutionary.

This is where St. Claude La Colombière speaks to our moment with unexpected power. He wrote: "Really humble people are never scandalized: They know their own weakness too well; they know that they themselves are so close to the edge of the precipice and they are so afraid of falling over that they are not at all astonished to see others do so. ... We have no reason to despise anyone. A humble man sees his own faults. It is a sign of little virtue to notice the imperfections of others. A person may

be imperfect today who in a little while, recognizing this, may rise to great sanctity."

This should perhaps be written across the top of every screen and scroll across every social media site. What have our digital platforms become if not engines of scandalization? We've created spaces where noticing and broadcasting the imperfections of others has become not just entertainment but social currency. The algorithm rewards outrage. The architecture encourages judgment.

Real humility—the kind St. Claude describes—makes that impossible. When you know your own fragility, when you've faced your own capacity for failure, you can't maintain the posture of the perpetually scandalized. You remember that you too are close to the edge. You extend to others the grace you desperately need for yourself. And that creates the possibility for actual relationship instead of performance.

There's an image that captures this better than words can. Albrecht Dürer's engraving "The Prodigal Son Among the Swine" (c. 1496) shows the wayward son at his lowest point—kneeling in prayer amid the pigs, surrounded by ruins. But here's what strikes me: The one who prays in the midst of his sin already sees beyond his sins, even if he believes he can see nothing else. Dignity, which is reborn in the redeemed sinner, is here in its embryonic stage.

That's the moment Dürer chose to depict. Not the celebration of the son's return. Not the father's embrace. But the instant when someone broken by his own choices turns toward home. Prayer amid the wreckage. The first stirring of hope in the heart of the lost. The prodigal hasn't cleaned himself up yet. He's still in the pigpen. But he's already being transformed.

This is what human connection requires in our age: the willingness to kneel in the pigpen with each other. To stay present in the mess. To pray together when nothing is fixed yet. We can't optimize our way to this. We can't hack intimacy or engineer belonging. We can only do the slow work of showing up, choosing reconciliation over

convenience, presence over productivity, the risk of real love over the safety of managed relationships.

The father in the parable was watching for his son. Watching requires time. Waiting requires patience. Welcome requires generosity. None of these fit into our utilitarian plans. But they're the only way home.

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

## Guest Column/Richard Etienne

## When caring for someone, human dignity is not a 'concept' but a decision

I have thought a great deal about and studied the concept of human dignity throughout my lifetime.

But I was recently immersed in a situation where the concept of human dignity came face-to-face with reality.

My life was settled into a fairly steady routine when in October 2024, my wife and I received a disturbing call. Our special needs son Eric had passed out unexpectedly and fallen.

After two fairly brief stays at an IU medical center, we were advised to put Eric on a "do not resuscitate" list and to begin a period of hospice in our home.

Eric lived with us for over two months as the pancreatic cancer continued to progress in his abdomen.

He never indicated that there was a great deal of pain, and he seemed quite happy nearly all of the time. And, by the grace of God, we were able to surround him with a predictable environment that respected his human dignity until his last breath.

We will never be able to fully thank the family members who assisted us with his care, or those friends and family who brought so many meals to our home during this time.

The best that most of us can hope for in many situations is opportunities to "pay it forward" to others when given a chance.

To this point, you may remember that Jesus told a parable about the Good Samaritan, when he was asked the simple question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10:29)

Will you one day have to decide how to act in the care of a loved one? How will you respond? Will you trust that

God will give you everything necessary to complete the task? How will you monitor your own needs so that you will have the long-term energy needed to care for another when you don't even know the timeline?

These are not easy questions, but they become critical when you are one of the key caregivers for a loved one whose health is failing.

The point that I am trying to make is that human dignity is not a "concept"—it is a decision. It is a way of life that determines how we will act in a situation of caring for someone—from embryo to that last breath.

This is, as they say, where the metaphorical "rubber meets the road."

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



Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# The Sunday Readings

Sunday, January 11, 2026

- Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
- Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38
- Matthew 3:13-17

As winter begins each year, the Church presents three great feasts to celebrate our salvation in Jesus and to teach us the meaning of it.

Christmas was the first of these feasts. Then came the Epiphany of the Lord. This weekend is the third, the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord.

Each of these feasts, through its liturgy of the word, introduces us to a vital dimension in the identity of Jesus and to important considerations for Christians as they seek to follow the Lord.

Supplying the first reading for this weekend is the Book of Isaiah. He writes about a loyal servant of God, a servant who is steadfast in his faithfulness despite enduring the hostilities of others around him and the unhappy twists of his fortune. He is therefore the most perfect servant. Regardless of the injustices surrounding him and the temptation to forsake God, the servant never falters.

This reading is among four quite similar passages in Isaiah, called the "songs of the suffering servant." They form a major part of the liturgy in Holy Week when the faithful concentrate on the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary.

The second reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, reveals what life was like in the first generation of Christianity. It verifies that the structure of the Church then essentially was as it is today.

St. Peter is central. He appears before Cornelius, whose name indicates Roman origins, and Peter preaches in the name of Christ, discharging his responsibility as an Apostle, a responsibility given him by the Lord.

The reading is revealing since it shows that Peter offered salvation not just to Jews, whose heritage Peter shared, but also to pagans, indeed even to the brutal Romans whose military conquest and

## My Journey to God

### IT'S TIME TO BEGIN

By Gayle Schranck

During this special time of year  
Be filled with God's faith hope and love  
God wants to share His many gifts with you  
Trust God and look to heaven above  
God's strength and power are unchanging  
Like a child you must have faith and believe  
Be mindful of God and be filled with hope  
Grace is there for you to receive  
Your humility will welcome God to serve you  
God's many gifts can always be found  
Open your heart and rise with Christ  
Divine love and light are all around  
In Christ there is no darkness  
God's hidden mysteries are within your reach  
God's love for you is beyond any love on Earth  
Do not be afraid to pray and beseech  
Inspired by hope and lasting joy  
Look to heaven throughout your days  
God made you and wants to give you His love  
God's providence will always amaze  
God sustains you throughout your lifetime  
He holds you and preserves you from harm  
God's purpose and Will formed our universe  
With God as your friend evil is disarmed  
God hears you and wants to heal you  
Give your troubles and pain to Him  
In return He will give His many gifts to you  
Stop waiting it's time to begin



(Gayle Schranck is a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton. Photo: The Union Station clock tower in Indianapolis rises tall into a blue sky on Dec. 17, 2025.)

## Daily Readings

### Monday, January 12

*1 Samuel 1:1-8  
Psalm 116:12-19  
Mark 1:14-20*

### Tuesday, January 13

St. Hilary, bishop and doctor of the Church  
*1 Samuel 1:9-20  
(Response) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8d  
Mark 1:21-28*

### Wednesday, January 14

*1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20  
Psalm 40:2, 5, 7-10  
Mark 1:29-39*

### Thursday, January 15

*1 Samuel 4:1-11  
Psalm 44:10-11, 14-15, 24-25  
Mark 1:40-45*

### Friday, January 16

*1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22a  
Psalm 89:16-19  
Mark 2:1-12*

### Saturday, January 17

St. Anthony, abbot  
*1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1  
Psalm 21:2-7  
Mark 2:13-17*

### Sunday, January 18

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time  
*Isaiah 49:3, 5-6  
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10  
1 Corinthians 1:1-3  
John 1:29-34*

## Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

### The Church celebrates feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, on Jan. 1

Q If the Church's new year begins on the first Sunday of Advent, then why is the secular New Year's Day (Jan. 1) a holy day of obligation?



A You are correct

that the Church's liturgical new year begins usually in late November with the first Sunday of Advent, and you are likewise correct that in the United States and for the universal Church in general, Jan. 1 is a holy day of obligation (see canon 1246 of the *Code of Canon Law*).

But Jan. 1 is not a holy day of obligation because of the civil new year, but because it is the feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

"Mother of God"—also known by the theological Greek term "Theotokos," or "God-bearer"—is an ancient title for Mary which not only references her own great dignity, but further points to deeper Catholic teachings on Jesus' identity and the nature of the holy Trinity.

Although this title had been in use among the Christian faithful long before then, formal endorsement of the practice of calling Mary the "Mother of God" is most closely associated with the Council of Ephesus held in the year 431. Among other things, the Council of Ephesus refuted the Nestorian heresy.

The Nestorian heresy is named after the fifth-century bishop Nestorius, who argued that Mary should be considered the mother of only Jesus' human nature, because to say that she was the mother of Jesus' divine nature would seem to imply that she herself was divine.

Nestorius

preached against the use of the term "Theotokos" and in favor of the title "Christotokos," or "bearer of Christ." However, this was problematic because it undermined the Church's doctrine on what in the theological tradition has been called the "hypostatic union," or the teaching that Jesus has two natures—a divine and a human nature—fully "united in the one person of God's Son" (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #481).

To make a long story short, the Council of Ephesus formally declared Nestorius a heretic. The council clarified that, because Jesus' two natures were distinct but not separated into different persons, and since Mary was the mother of the person of Jesus in his human nature, she was also the mother of him in his divine nature. Hence, she can, in this specific sense, rightly be called the "mother of God": not because Mary was herself the source of Jesus' divinity, but because she bore to the world the man who was also God.

It's fitting that in our current calendar we observe the solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God on the eighth day after Christmas. In our Catholic liturgical tradition, especially important feasts like Christmas and Easter are celebrated for eight days in what is called an "octave." It gives the faithful the space to fully ponder the mystery of faith being celebrated, often in its many various nuances and facets.

The fact that we commemorate Mary as the Mother of God on the octave day of Christmas reminds us, as the catechism puts it, that "the incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word" (#483).

On a side note, there is one Catholic custom that is specifically tied to the civil celebration of the new year. Provided the other usual conditions for obtaining an indulgence are met, Catholics can earn an indulgence on Dec. 31 if they devoutly pray or chant the "Te Deum" prayer.

This is an ancient hymn of thanksgiving which today is most often prayed as part of the Liturgy of the Hours on Sundays and major feast days, but is to be prayed on Dec. 31 as a way to thank God for the blessings and graces of the past year. Similarly, a Catholic can earn a second indulgence on Jan. 1 for praying the "Veni Creator Spiritus," a kind of hymn called in a "sequence" in the Church's liturgy. This particular sequence asks for the Holy Spirit's light and guidance.

(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](mailto:CatholicQA@osv.com).) †

# PROVIDENCE

continued from page 1

how her religious community will follow in their footsteps.

Mother Olga also reflected on the welcome she and her sisters have received at St. John Paul II and the working of God's providence to bring them to southern Indiana.

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Q. Your religious community is new, founded only in 2011. As you discerned whether or not to have members from your community serve at St. John Paul II Parish, you learned about the history of the archdiocese and the communities of women religious who have served in Sellersburg going back to 1870: Franciscan sisters from Oldenburg, Benedictine sisters and members of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Why was it important for you to do this?**

**A.** "In 2011, I wanted to study the history of religious communities in the United States, especially the communities which were founded here in this country. For me, it was very important to build on a foundation that has contributed to the Church in America. We have been very blessed by many pioneers, religious women who built Catholic schools and health care institutes.

"After meeting with Archbishop Thompson as part of my ongoing discernment, I began to read the history of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

"I made a pilgrimage to visit the tomb of St. Mother Theodore, a co-patron saint of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. I also visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Providence at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence.

"After studying such rich history of religious life in this area, I feel we are very blessed and humbled to follow in the footsteps of so many holy, faith-filled religious women who gave their lives for the service of the Church and the people of Indiana.

"We are grateful to God for this opportunity to serve, to continue to build on the foundation that began in the 1800s. In a way, it is so affirming that the work of the sisters who have gone before us and the work that our sisters will do all belongs to God, who is the author of our calling. Because it is not possible for any human to build such a strong foundation and make it continue to grow if it was not the work of God and all by his grace."

**Q. Like Mother Theodore Guérin, you came from a country far away before starting a religious community here in America. What was it like for you to visit her shrine in Saint Mary-of-the-Woods?**

**A.** "It is hard to describe in words how I felt drawn to make a pilgrimage and drive three hours each way [to and from Sellersburg] to visit St. Mother Theodore's tomb. In general, I feel drawn to learn on the experiences and the prayers of foundresses, especially those who founded religious communities in foreign countries outside their land.

"I was very eager to know about Mother Theodore, who came to this country and to this part of United States to follow God's calling to serve wherever he led her. When I visited her tomb, I had a profound experience being there by myself, praying through her intercession for our new beginning in Sellersburg."

**Q. While at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, you also visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Providence on the grounds of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence.**



Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart smiles at George Tipker V prior to a Dec. 14 Mass, 2025, at St. John Paul II Church in Sellersburg. George is held by his mother Katie Tipker, director of communications at the New Albany Deanery faith community. Looking on is George's sister, Eden Tipker, and at right are Katie Tipker's parents, Kevin and Rebecca Kruer. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

**How was that meaningful for you?**

**A.** "I believe that was a special gift that Mother Theodore gave me during that pilgrimage, because she knows how much I will need to depend on God's providence as I begin this new convent in a new part of our country for us. I felt so much peace as I surrendered the decision of coming to Indiana by entrusting everything into the hands of Our Lady of Providence. That's why I have placed a big picture of her in our new convent here in Indiana."

**Q: Please describe the experience that you and your sisters had when you were first welcomed to St. John Paul II Parish on Nov. 30 during a Mass on the First Sunday of Advent?**

**A.** "I was moved to tears when Father Tom Clegg invited me up to the steps of the sanctuary to receive the keys of the convent. I was overwhelmed by the goodness of God and his Church.

"For me, the key was not only a key to open the door of our new convent, but a key to the future and the work that God is calling us to do. I received that key with a profound sense of responsibility and a way of saying 'yes' to open this path and this door for the Lord to show us the way and to lead us to where he wants us to be and how he wants us to serve."

"One of the things that I experienced after the welcoming Mass was the desire that the people of Sellersburg and [the New Albany] Deanery have for religious sisters to be in their midst and to serve their families. In a way, I felt the people's reaction at the welcoming Mass was an affirmation that we are meant to be here."

**Q. What are your hopes for the ministry of your sisters at St. John Paul II and the life of faith that they'll share**

**with the parishioners there?**

**A.** "My prayer and hope is that our ministry will glorify the Lord and highlight the beauty of our mother Church.

"By the grace of God, I hope that our faithful, humble and joyful presence will strengthen the faith of our people here and, please God, bring those who may have left the Church and heal the wounds of those who may have been hurt.

"We serve in the Church, with the Church and for the Church. The Church is a mother. And like any mother, she likes to bring her children home. So, we serve in the heart of such a mother who loves all her children, near and far."

**Q. Many people in Sellersburg worked hard and gave generously to turn an old rectory there into a convent where your sisters can live. How do you see a connection between their work and generosity and the ministry that your sisters will carry out in the parish?**

**A.** "In Psalm 127:1 we read that 'if the Lord does not build, in vain labor the builders.'

"This newly renovated convent came to exist by the generosity of so many people, near and far, and the hard work and dedication of so many workers. Most of all, it happened through the many prayers of the local faithful and the friends of our community beyond Indiana.

"Just as the physical existence of this convent came by the grace of God through the hands and hearts of so many people, I believe it will be the same for our mission and ministry here. We cannot do it without the grace of God and the blessing of his hands upon us, as well as the prayers of the faithful."

(For more information on the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, visit [dmnazareth.org](http://dmnazareth.org).) †



Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart kneels in prayer by the casket of St. Theodore Guérin at the shrine of the foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. (Submitted photo)

## INDIANA YOUTH RALLY & MASS FOR LIFE

**JANUARY 22, 2026**

**9:00 – 11:00 AM YOUTH RALLY – 8<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS**  
**11:30 AM MASS FOR LIFE – ALL INVITED**

**INDIANA CONVENTION CENTER – SAGAMORE BALLROOM**

**FEATURING MOTHER OLGA AND THE NICO CABRERA BAND**



**Project Rachel Ministry**  
**Archdiocese of Indianapolis**

# Rachel's Vineyard

**UPCOMING**  
**RACHEL'S VINEYARD RETREAT**  
**FEBRUARY 6-8**  
**GREATER BLOOMINGTON AREA**

for confidential help and to register  
 call 317-452-0054  
 or email [projectrachel@archindy.org](mailto:projectrachel@archindy.org)

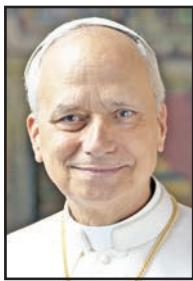
# Pope Leo: New year marks time to usher in era of peace and friendship

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—The world is not saved by threatening violence or by judging, oppressing or getting rid of others, Pope Leo XIV said.

"Rather, it is saved by tirelessly striving to understand, forgive, liberate and welcome everyone, without calculation and without fear," the pope said during Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day on Jan. 1.

Therefore, at the beginning of a new year with "new and unique days that await us, let us ask the Lord to help us experience at every moment, around us and upon us, the warmth of his fatherly embrace and the light of his benevolent gaze," he said in his homily.

The Mass also marked the 59th World Day of Peace celebrated by the Church. The pope's message for the world day, published in December, was dedicated to the



Pope Leo XIV

humble, "unarmed and disarming" peace of the risen Christ who loves unconditionally.

Thousands of people were present in the basilica for the celebration on New Year's Day, including young people dressed as the three kings who visited Jesus. A figurine of the infant Jesus was before the altar, in keeping with the Christmas season of celebration, and an image of Our Lady of Hope was to the side of the main altar as a sign of the Jubilee of Hope, which ended on Jan. 6.

In his homily, Pope Leo reflected on the mystery of Mary's divine motherhood, which "helped give a human face to the source of all mercy and benevolence: the face of Jesus. Through his eyes—first as a child, then as a young man and as an adult—the Father's love reaches us and transforms us."

By being born of Mary in a grotto, he said, "God presents himself to us 'unarmed and disarming,' as naked and defenseless as a newborn in a cradle.

"He does this to teach us that the world is not saved

by sharpening swords, nor by judging, oppressing or eliminating our brothers and sisters," he said. Rather, the world is saved by seeking to understand, forgive, free and welcome everyone with love.

Mary bearing the Christ child represents "two immense, 'unarmed' realities" that come together, he said, "that of God, who renounces every privilege of his divinity to be born in the flesh, and that of a human person who, trustingly and fully, embraces God's will.

"Thus, at the dawn of the new year, the liturgy reminds us that for each of us, every day can be the beginning of a new life, thanks to God's generous love, his mercy and the response of our freedom," Pope Leo said. "It is beautiful to view the coming year in this way: as an open journey to be discovered.

"Indeed, through grace, we can venture forth on this journey with confidence—free and bearers of freedom, forgiven and bringers of forgiveness, trusting in the closeness and goodness of the Lord who accompanies us always," he said. †

## HOLY YEAR

continued from page 1

mercy will never be shut, Pope Leo said before shutting the door. God "will always sustain the weary, raise up those who have fallen" and offer "good things" to those who place their trust in him.

In his homily, Pope Leo compared the millions of men and women who came to Rome on pilgrimage to modern-day Magi, "who left palace and temple behind" in search of a new "king," which they found in the baby Jesus in a humble grotto in Bethlehem.

"Yes, the Magi still exist today. They are the people who sense the need to go out and search, accepting the risks associated with their journey, especially in a troubled world like ours that may be unpleasant and dangerous in many ways," he said.

However, Pope Leo cautioned, today's

seekers must encounter in today's churches and sacred places the same humble source of life, hope and joy that the Magi encountered in Bethlehem.

"How important it is that those who pass through the doors of the church perceive therein that the Messiah has just been born, that a community gathers in which hope springs forth and that a story of life is unfolding!" he said.

"Jesus encountered and allowed himself to be approached by all people," he said, because "the Lord wants his presence to grow among us as God-with-us.

"No one can sell this to us. The child whom the Magi adore is a priceless and immeasurable good," the pope said, criticizing "a distorted economy," which even tries to exploit and commodify the human desire for freedom and true fulfillment.

God revealing himself to humanity as man is "a gift," Pope Leo said. "He

reveals himself and lets himself be found.

"His ways are not our ways, and the violent do not succeed in controlling them, nor can the powers of the world block them," he said, recalling the great joy the Magi felt upon finding the Messiah and despite Herod's efforts to destroy what had been promised.

The fear and violence unleashed by King Herod "make us think of the many conflicts by which people resist and even damage the new things that God has in store for everyone," he said. "Loving and seeking peace means protecting what is holy and, consequently, that which is newly born like a small, vulnerable, fragile baby.

"God challenges the existing order," the pope said. "God is determined to rescue us from both old and new forms of slavery. He involves young and old, poor and rich, men and women, saints and sinners in his works of mercy and in the wonders of his justice.

"Let us ask ourselves: is there life in our Church? Is there space for something new to be born? Do we love and proclaim a God who sets us on a journey?" Pope Leo asked.

"Fear does indeed blind us. Conversely, the joy of the Gospel liberates us. It makes us prudent, yes, but also bold, attentive and creative; it beckons us along ways that are different from those already traveled," he said.

"It is wonderful to become pilgrims of hope," who journey together and are amazed by God's faithfulness, he said.

"If we do not reduce our churches to monuments, if our communities are homes, if we stand united and resist the flattery and seduction of those in power, then we will be the generation of a new dawn," he said. In Jesus, "we will contemplate and serve an extraordinary humanity, transformed not by the delusions of the all-powerful, but by God who became flesh out of love." †

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### Employment

#### Principal

#### Our Lady of the Greenwood Elementary School

Our Lady of the Greenwood Elementary School, a Blue Ribbon Award winner, is seeking faith-driven, academically oriented candidates for Principal to start the 2026-27 academic year. This 71-year-old school of 320 students is located in south suburban Indianapolis. OLG has one of the most ethnically diverse Pre-K through 8th grade student populations in the archdiocese.

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Anne Krieger ([akrieger@archindy.org](mailto:akrieger@archindy.org))  
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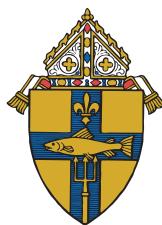
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# Legacy Gala

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### CELEBRATE WITH FELLOW PARISHIONERS!

This is an event you will not want to miss!

This year, we are honored to recognize Patricia Etling of Terre Haute, IN, as our 2026 Legacy Gala honoree. Co-founder of Catholic Charities Terre Haute, Patricia has spent decades living out her faith through tireless support of Catholic education, charitable outreach, and parish ministry. Her example inspires us all to give generously and live faithfully.

### BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW! SPACE IS LIMITED

We are excited to spend a wonderful evening together in support of three vital ministries in our archdiocese: Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, Catholic Charities, and Catholic Schools. Come enjoy a fun night of fellowship, hear from Archbishop Thompson, listen to impactful ministry stories, enjoy a delicious meal, bid on great auction items, and enjoy dancing to The Bishops at the end of the evening!

Our 2026 Legacy  
Gala Honoree is:  
**Patricia Etling**

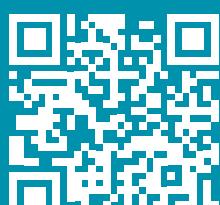
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