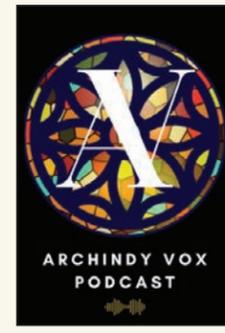




The

Criterion

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'Seeing Through the Heart of Jesus'

Lenten podcast aims to deepen faith and love, page 2.

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February 20, 2026

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For Bill Wells, right, connections with other officials, players and coaches have led him to continue being a referee for the Catholic Youth Organization for about 25 years. Here, he shares the court with a longtime friend and fellow referee Tim Quigley. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Retired major general makes the right call as a referee for Catholic Youth Organization

By John Shaughnessy

Watching Bill Wells referee a basketball game is a reminder of one of life's great truths:

There's more to all of us than what people initially see, even when they see us doing something we love.

And there's no doubt that the 78-year-old Wells still loves sports and the interaction he has with players, coaches and other officials.

After all, he's been doing it for 46 years, even after an angry adult player chased him with a baseball bat and another man tried to choke him because they thought he made a bad call.

And for 25 of those years, he has been an official in

basketball, football and volleyball for the archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization, a dedication that led the CYO to recently honor him as its Official of the Year.

Still, that's only part of Wells' story—and maybe not even the most interesting part.

He's a retired major general in the U.S. Army who served his country for 36 years, service that included jumping from an aircraft 85 times, from an altitude as high as 4,500 feet.

The former runner for Indiana University's varsity cross country and track teams was also moving on the ground in Saudi Arabia when the U.S. defended that country in 1990-91 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—a tour of duty that

See REFEREE, page 8

Advocates sound alarm on dangers of technology for teens

By Victoria Arthur

Parents, educators and other advocates are imploring state lawmakers to put safeguards on social media and other technology for young people amid what they call a growing crisis that threatens their well-being and their very lives.



The high-profile case of Fishers teenager Hailey

Buzbee, who was found dead in Ohio in January after allegedly leaving home with a man she had been communicating with online for a year, brought immediacy and urgency to a recent hearing on key legislation at the Statehouse.

The 17-year-old's father was among those who addressed lawmakers on a proposed amendment to Senate Bill 199—a wider education bill—that would place greater restrictions on social media use for children and teens, including stricter parental consent.

With his wife Ronya by his side, Beau Buzbee described how they are "living every parent's worst nightmare."

"From the perspective of a Hoosier family who lost our most precious gift from God, I assure you that the decisions you are considering today have the power to save children's lives," Buzbee said during a Feb. 9 hearing on the bill in the House Education Committee.

In his emotional testimony, which took place just days before his daughter's funeral services, Buzbee called on committee members to address the "glaring gaps" in oversight of minors' use of social media. His daughter had reportedly been communicating via an online gaming platform and a secure chat app with a 39-year-old man now facing federal charges in her death.

"We are in the midst of the greatest crisis of our time," Buzbee said. "We are losing the fight to protect our children. The internet and social media are the devil's and predators' playgrounds, and it's on this front that we must fight. I beg of you, please do not let this opportunity slip away."

See ICC, page 7

What can the Year of St. Francis do for the world? A lot, say Franciscans

(OSV News)—After Pope Leo XIV proclaimed the Jubilee Year of St. Francis from Jan. 10, 2026, to Jan. 10, 2027, the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary also issued a decree granting a plenary indulgence to mark the 800th anniversary year of the popular saint's death.

Listed among the "certain works" suggested

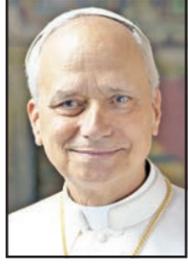
See ST. FRANCIS, page 7

A file photo shows a statue and church on the campus of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. (OSV News photo/courtesy Franciscan University of Steubenville)



Pope says that fasting in Lent purifies desires, directs them to God

(OSV News)—The ancient practice of fasting from food during Lent can free us from complacency and lead us to “hunger” for God, Pope Leo XIV said in his 2026 Lenten message.



Pope Leo XIV

Ahead of Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of the 40-day liturgical season of Lent, this year on Feb. 18, the pope encouraged people to embrace the “ancient ascetic practice” of abstaining from food, as well as “refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor.”

Lent is a time to “place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life,” the pope said.

“Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion,” he wrote. “Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we ‘hunger’ for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance.”

Fasting, he added, helps to identify and properly order our “appetites,” “keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency.”

In the message, titled “Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion,” and released by the Vatican on Feb. 13, the pope drew on the fifth-century theologian St. Augustine to reflect on “custody of the heart” regarding “the tension between the present moment and future fulfillment.”

Quoting Augustine’s work “The Usefulness of Fasting,” Pope Leo cited the saint’s observation, “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life.”

Pope Leo said that “understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so

that it is directed toward God and doing good.”

He cautioned that fasting must be “lived in faith and humility” rather than pride and should be grounded in communion with the Lord.

“As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since ‘austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic,’” Pope Leo said.

The Holy Father also highlighted what he called “an unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor.”

“Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgment, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves,” he said, urging Catholics to cultivate kindness “in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities.”

The pope encouraged Catholics to make room in their lives to listen to the word of God at Mass and by reading sacred Scripture, noting that fasting is a concrete way to prepare to hear the word of God.

“The Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ,” he said.

The pope also encouraged parishes, families and religious communities to “undertake a shared journey during Lent,” emphasizing “the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting.”

On Ash Wednesday, Leo presided over the traditional procession on Rome’s Aventine Hill from the Benedictine Monastery of San Anselmo to the Basilica of Santa Sabina, where he celebrated Mass.

“Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us,” he said in his Lenten message. †



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

February 19–28, 2026

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>February 19-22 Los Angeles Religious Education Congress at Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif.</p> <p>February 23 – 2 p.m. Virtual Catholic Relief Services Orientation for New Directors</p> <p>February 24 – 9 a.m. Mass for the students of St. Pius X School at St. Pius X Church, Indianapolis</p> | <p>February 24 – 1 p.m. Council of Priests meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis</p> <p>February 25-27 The Way Forward Ecclesial Gathering at University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.</p> <p>February 28 – 4 p.m. Mass for Holy Fire Youth Event at Pike Performing Arts Center, Indianapolis</p> |
|--|--|

‘Seeing Through the Heart of Jesus:’ Lenten podcast aims to deepen faith and love

Criterion staff report

ArchIndy Vox launched its Lenten podcast series, “Seeing Through the Heart of Jesus,” on Ash Wednesday, inviting listeners to view the world through Christ’s loving gaze and to grow more deeply in relationship with him and with all our brothers and sisters.

Created to help Catholics rediscover the heart of Catholic social teaching, the series reflects on how seeing the world through Christ’s lens fosters solidarity, compassion for the vulnerable, and a renewed commitment to the common good.

The series opens with a brief message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, echoing themes from his January statement, “An appeal for civility rooted in humility and empathy.”

The first episode, “Seeing All in the Image and Likeness of God,” features Theresa Chamblee, archdiocesan director of social concerns, and Deacon Kerry Blandford, who together discuss Catholic social teaching, explore its foundational principle—the dignity of the human person—and how Lent calls Catholics to deeper conversion.

All are welcome and encouraged to listen to the weekly episodes, which will be released on Wednesdays and can be accessed on Spotify or via the direct link at www.archindy.org/archindyvox during Lent. The episodes can also be heard on

Saturdays at 1:30 p.m. on Relevant Radio (89.1 FM WSPM in Coatesville, 89.5 FM WSOM in Indianapolis, 90.9 FM WSQM in Noblesville, 98.3 FM W252CY in Anderson, and 94.3 FM W232DV in Lafayette).

Other episodes in the series will include:

—**Episode 2:** “Mercy Through the Heart of Jesus” reframes the sacrament of reconciliation as an encounter with Christ’s healing mercy that restores

relationships and strengthens compassion.

—**Episode 3:** “Seeing Relationship Through the Heart of Jesus” reflects on prayer as an everyday relationship with Christ and explores how prayer shapes our ability to recognize and respond to human dignity.

—**Episode 4:** “Seeing Stillness Through the Heart of Jesus” highlights the renewal found in rest, retreat and silence, inviting listeners to create

space to hear God’s voice amid daily busyness.

—**Episode 5:** “Seeing Generosity Through the Heart of Jesus” explores stewardship and almsgiving as responses to grace that recognize Christ in those who are vulnerable and in need.

—**Episode 6:** “Seeing the Paschal Mystery Through the Heart of Jesus” guides listeners into the liturgy and journey of Holy Week, emphasizing how worship forms disciples sent forth to share Christ’s hope with the world. †



What act of joy and love helped you move closer to Christ and others in Lent?

With the Lenten season upon us, we are inviting you to share stories, ideas and acts of joy and love that brought you closer to Christ and others during a previous Lent.

We hope to share these stories and ideas with all our readers, to help all of us have a more meaningful Lent.

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



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'Mom always knows best' is even true for a woman walking the Camino

(Editor's note: A record 499,239 pilgrims from all over the world walked the Camino route in northern Spain in 2024. The Criterion has invited people from the archdiocese who have made all or part of that pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain to share how that experience has influenced their life and their faith.)

Ninth in an occasional series

By John Shaughnessy

It was another one of those moments that supports the belief that "mom always knows best."

Even thousands of miles from her home in Indiana, Rebecca Kirsch tapped into her maternal instincts during a defining moment in Spain as she and her husband Mike made their 160-mile Camino pilgrimage from Pamplona to Santiago de Compostela in 2025.

"There was a young German gentleman, Fabian Ackerman, who happened upon us as we were saying our daily rosary along the trail," says Rebecca, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus along with Mike. "He asked if he could join in, and he walked with us the rest of the day even though he was younger and much fitter. After seeing my rosary app, he was motivated to download a German app so he could learn the rosary."

"He also planned to call his mom that night—after this mother of two sons asked him when he last spoke to his mom."

And just as Rebecca helped the young man focus more clearly on the Blessed Mother and his own mother, other pilgrims helped the couple embrace their faith deeper too.

"There was the fellow Midwesterner, Paul from St. Louis, who presented Mike with a beautiful crucifix distributed by the 'Men of the Cross,'" Rebecca says, referring to the ministry that promotes wearing a crucifix as a badge of a person's true identity as a child of God.

"Mike had seen Paul the day before and commented on the beauty of the

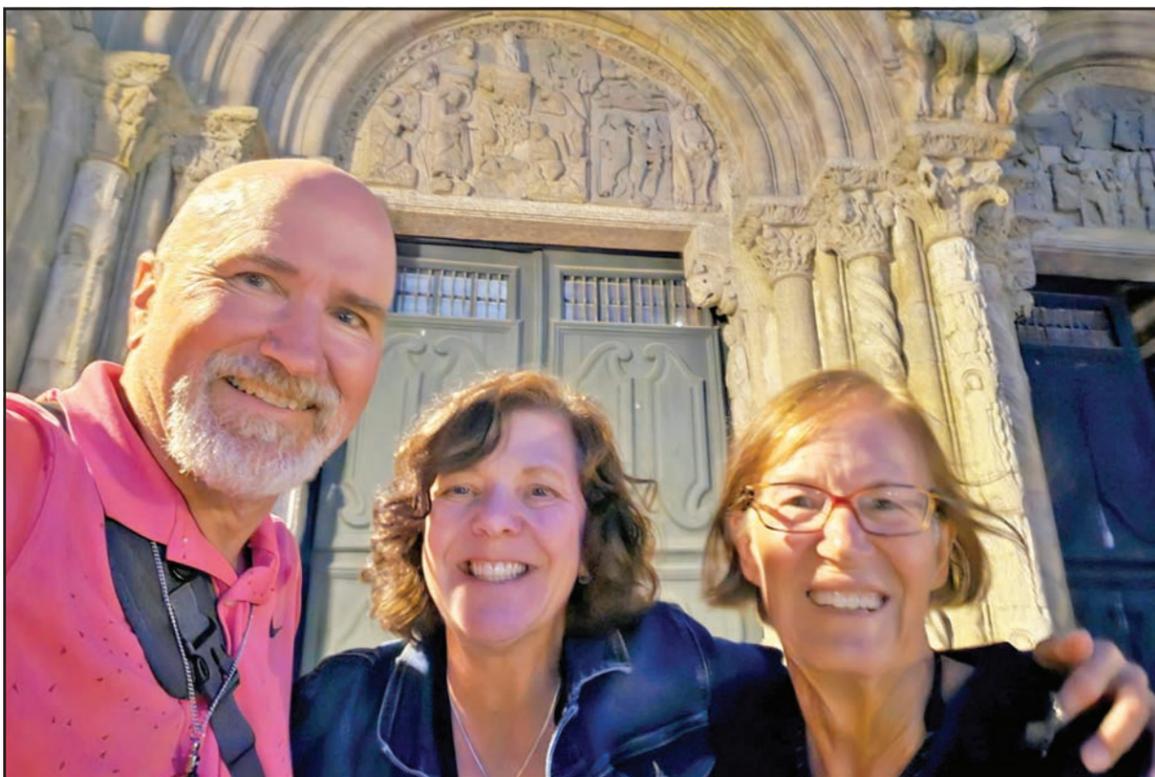
crucifix. We hadn't made plans to connect, but there he was at the Chapel of the Virgin Pilgrim in Pontevedra at the same time we were, with a brand-new crucifix to share. The Men of the Cross delight in sharing these crucifixes with others along the Way. I have always worn a cross daily as a way to witness. Now Mike is sporting a crucifix which creates additional opportunities to share our faith."

Their sharing of faith with other pilgrims also included a woman in her 70s traveling alone on the Camino.

"Kathy was very special to us," Rebecca notes. "She started the Camino in 2024 but was unable to finish it, so she came back to do so. Kathy was the first person we met as we started our journey. Imagine our surprise when she kept popping up again and again—in a market, at a beautiful village along the Way, on the trail, and ultimately at the pilgrim Mass at the cathedral on our last day of the trip."

"With thousands of pilgrims crammed into every nook and cranny of the cathedral, we found Kathy. She was excited to see us, share an embrace and exchange a story or two. So, there we were with our new friend, just steps away from the mortal remains of one of Jesus' closest friends, St. James."

"I could go on and on, but to sum up the beauty of the Camino for us, it is all about sharing your faith with fellow pilgrims who started the day as strangers but ended the day as friends."



Mike and Rebecca Kirsch, center, pose with their new friend Kathy outside of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain after they complete their Camino journey in 2025. (Submitted photo)

Another powerful impact of their pilgrimage was the deepening of the couple's shared faith and relationship.

"Time and perspective created the ultimate faith-filled adventure," she says. "We took 15 days to complete [the journey] and enjoyed every minute of it. Even the one day when the heavens opened and didn't close till evening, our spirits were never dampened. OK, I might have been a little cranky, but we found ourselves singing on the trail even as the rain was pouring down."

They also lifted their voices to God in prayer.

"While we prepared for the Camino physically, we also prepared spiritually. Mike and I asked friends and family for their needs for themselves and their loved ones, and we created a comprehensive prayer list which we prayed every evening on the Camino."

"I consider myself and Mike very

devoted to our Catholic faith. However, we had never prayed the rosary together before, except at funerals or organized church events. Praying the rosary together each day deepened our faith. It was particularly powerful for Mike, who didn't grow up Catholic but later converted, and it was special for me to share this part of our faith with Mike."

Rebecca believes their entire pilgrimage of 15 days was all part of God's plan for the couple.

"The pilgrimage for us was about the people," she says. "There were the new people we met and the people back home we were praying for."

"It is also about deepening your faith with your spouse, who has always been my best friend and is now a fellow pilgrim. It's great when you get to describe the faith-filled impact of the Camino to others, but sharing it with your spouse is a special gift to each other." †

Pope prays at Vatican's Lourdes grotto for the sick on World Day of the Sick

(OSV News)—Pope Leo XIV prayed with the sick at the Lourdes grotto in the Vatican Gardens on Feb. 11, asking Our Lady of Lourdes to accompany all those who suffer in the world.



Pope Leo XIV

Shortly after his Wednesday audience, the pope lit a candle in the Marian grotto and knelt in prayer before the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes on the World Day of the Sick. He was joined by about a dozen people in wheelchairs accompanied by their caregivers who sang "Immaculate Mary," the popular Lourdes hymn.

The pope thanked those present for joining him in prayer and reflected on Mary's role in accompanying people through suffering.

"It is a very beautiful day that reminds us of the closeness of Mary, our mother, who always accompanies us and teaches us so much: what suffering means, what

love means, what it means to entrust our lives into the hands of the Lord," Pope Leo said.

He prayed for God's blessing on the sick and all those who care for them, including doctors, nurses and others who provide support in difficult moments.

The Church marks the World Day of the Sick each year on Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The world day was instituted by Pope John Paul II in 1992, a year after he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

The feast day marks the anniversary of the first apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes to St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 in Lourdes, France. The 14-year-old girl saw the Blessed Virgin Mary standing in a small grotto. During a total of 18 apparitions over the course of six months, thousands of people gathered around Bernadette to witness these events. A new spring surged where Bernadette had been instructed to drink, and many miraculous healings occurred. Today, Lourdes is a Marian shrine visited by millions.

The Lourdes grotto in the Vatican Gardens dates back to Pope Leo XIII, who decided near the end of his life to install a reproduction of the Lourdes grotto in France. It was solemnly inaugurated in 1905 by his successor Pope St. Pius X.

In his message for the 2026 World Day of the Sick, Pope Leo urged Catholics to embrace a "Samaritan spirit" and to give of themselves "for the good of all who suffer, especially our brothers and sisters who are sick, elderly or afflicted." The pope also imparted an apostolic blessing to all who are sick, to their families and to those who care for them, including pastoral and health care workers.

Pope Leo's message concluded with the following prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick: "Sweet Mother, do not part from me. Turn not your eyes away from me. Walk with me at every moment and never leave me alone. You who always protect me as a true Mother, obtain for me the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." †

Entries are now being accepted for John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest

The Serra Club of Indianapolis is sponsoring its 2026 John D. Kelley Vocations Essay Contest.

It is open to any student who is Catholic in seventh through 12th grade in parochial or public schools or who is home-schooled in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Students entering the contest are asked to write about the following question:

As our nation marks the 250th anniversary of its founding this year, we also remember the priests and religious who built our parishes, schools, missions and communities of faith which have strengthened the soul of our nation. As America enters its next chapter, the Church depends on a new generation

willing to listen for God's call. What can the story of our past teach the youths in our Church today about their own vocation and their role in the future of the Church? How might God be calling you to make your own contributions?

Essays should be between 300 and 500 words in length and may be typed or hand-written.

For more details or to get an essay submission form, contact your school religion teacher, religious education program instructor, or parish catechist/youth minister. Information is also available from the archdiocesan Office of Vocations at vocations@archindy.org.

Submitted essays must be postmarked no later than Friday,

March 6. Essays can be mailed to: Serra Vocations Essay Contest c/o Office of Vocations

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Editorial



Young women pray during the National Prayer Vigil for Life Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on Jan. 22. Prayer is one of the penitential practices of Lent. (OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada)

Lent should be a humble spiritual undertaking with eyes set on Easter

Just two days ago, on Ash Wednesday, we began the season of Lent with a reminder from St. Matthew's Gospel (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18) of what the Lord expects of us:

Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. (Mt 6:1-2)

Lent is a time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These three virtues should characterize Christian life all year long, but they take on a special meaning during the 40 days before we observe Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

In order to prepare for the Lord's sacrificial gift of himself, which made possible our redemption, we need to turn our attention away from ourselves—from our own wants, needs and achievements—to the good of others. We do this through the three Lenten virtues of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, but it's not enough to do these things in a superficial or halfhearted way.

What the Lord expects from us is a wholehearted giving of ourselves in each of these three areas. "Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God" (Jl 2:12-13).

Our prayer must be more than lip service—the rote recital of prayers; our fasting should not be gloomy, calling attention to ourselves and the sacrifices we are making; and, finally, our charitable giving should be done in secret, not broadcast to the world. In other words, we should pray, fast and give alms quietly, invisibly, in all humility and unselfishness.

The season of Lent is a time to let go of our self-centeredness in order to walk in the footsteps of Jesus who came among us to serve and not to be served. Lent is about letting go of our preoccupation with self and this must be evident in our spiritual lives as well as in our temporal affairs. As the Lord admonishes us:

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray

in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Mt 6:5-6)

Humility requires a healthy dose of anonymity. It doesn't matter who sees us as we perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy. On the contrary, the more hidden our actions are, the more they help us to mature and grow in holiness. As Jesus says, "when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden" (Mt 6:17-18).

Bishop Erik Varden, a convert to the Catholic faith, was the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Mount Saint Bernard in Leicestershire, England, from 2015 until 2019. He then became the bishop of the region of Trondheim in Norway and offered this powerful insight into the humility of Ash Wednesday:

"When I remember I am dust I also recall that I was destined to be more. The confession echoes with a lost potential. To conduct my life with eyes set on Easter is to trust that what was lost has been restored and can be found again. How? ... Through humility. When we humble ourselves, God responds with flexibility. ... Our humility calls on God's inclination to bend down, to touch and reform us."

When we empty ourselves of egoism and selfishness, we make it possible for God to act in our lives. If we "rend our hearts" and "return to the Lord our God," we can create spaces where the Lord can enter and redeem us. That's why we pray, fast and give alms "with eyes set on Easter" so that we can share in the humility and selflessness of Jesus.

The holy season of Lent stretches out in front of us as a road that leads to the Cross of Christ, the greatest act of unselfishness ever made. We are invited to travel this road, but in quiet, hidden and self-sacrificing ways.

Our Lenten journey should be a humble spiritual undertaking with eyes set on Easter.

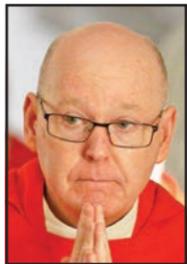
—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Bishop Brendan J. Cahill and Bishop Daniel E. Garcia

The right to protest peacefully

"But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for rights."—Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

As shepherds of the Catholic Church in the United States, we write with hearts shaped by the Gospel and a responsibility to speak when human dignity is threatened.



Bishop Brendan J. Cahill

Our Catholic teaching holds that all people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of every person, especially the poor and vulnerable.

As St. John XXIII wrote in his encyclical, "*Pacem in Terris*," every human person has a right to take an active part in public life, in reflection of our human dignity. In addition, due to our social nature, we have the right to meet and associate.



Bishop Daniel E. Garcia

This teaching must guide both our public policies and enforcement of our laws. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives us the right to "peaceably assemble

and to petition the government for redress of grievances." This right is not a privilege granted to a few—it is a constitutional right afforded to all Americans. No one should fear for his or her life or safety for exercising this right.

Peaceful protest has long been one of many moral and civic means of drawing attention to injustice, and it remains essential to the health of our democracy, which when rightly ordered should promote the common good of all people.

My brother bishops through our episcopal conference have asserted that seeking peace does not require overlooking injustice. Peaceful protest should be rooted in respect for human dignity. It must bear the Holy Spirit's marks of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

We see the importance of this right to protest today, as both immigrants and U.S. citizens are being racially profiled, targeted, detained or treated in ways that

fail to uphold the inherent dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life. Authorities must respect this peaceful protest and must themselves be bound by the law and exercise restraint.

The killing of two American citizens is horrific and rightfully inspires moral outrage. All people have the fundamental right—and at times the moral obligation—to speak out in diverse ways when certain actions undermine the common good. As the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. so powerfully reminded us, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Silence in the face of injustice risks complicity.

We bishops of the United States have called for a meaningful and humane reform of our immigration system. Our recent special message on immigration emphasized, "Human dignity and national security are not in conflict. Both are possible if people of good will work together."

While people can honestly disagree about the ways to achieve these goals, we can all agree that we must urge our government officials to listen to the voices and concerns of the people they serve. No one should live in fear of being racially profiled. Law-abiding citizens should not fear being wrongfully targeted or detained while going about daily life. No citizen should fear exercising his or her constitutional rights. A society rooted in justice cannot flourish where fear prevails.

Catholic social teaching reminds us that "nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means."

In this spirit, we call upon immigration authorities and all law enforcement agencies to carry out their duties in ways that respect the sanctity of all human life. Peaceful protest in pursuit of the common good serves as an expression of our personal dignity, including our right to participate actively in public life. Let the Church, in her wisdom, keep us rooted in the truth of faith: that we all are made in the image and likeness of God.

May the Lord send forth his Holy Spirit upon our nation. May he strengthen us to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with him. And may he guide us toward a future marked not by fear, but by mercy, justice and peace.

(Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' [USCCB] Committee on Migration, and Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, is chairman of the USCCB's Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation.) †

Letter to the Editor

Criterion reader: 'Please, do not confuse patriotism with religion'

I read a front-page headline twice in the Jan. 16 issue of *The Criterion* to make sure I had not misread it: "The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is back in 2026—with a patriotic twist."

After reading the article, I still do not understand how these two concepts, eucharistic adoration and American patriotism, have been merged.

The Eucharist is a universal sacred truth, a gift to all Catholics throughout the world. To conflate the Eucharist with nationalist pride would be an insult to Jesus, who came for all of humanity.

Patriotism is a good thing. It is a love of country and democracy, and a gratitude for our freedom of religion, among other rights granted by our Constitution. It is appropriate to celebrate our country's anniversary and to preserve our democracy. But please, do not confuse patriotism with religion.

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

should be focused on the more important and separate significance of giving thanks and praise for the Eucharist.

Anne O'Connell
Pekin

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful.

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

Letters may be e-mailed to criterion@archindy.org or sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Obedience is the key to freedom and joy

In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. (Rom 5:18).

Lent is sometimes portrayed as a season of gloom. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of this penitential time.

It's true that during Lent we pay special attention to the disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, but our objective is not to accent the negative aspects of life but, rather, to prepare ourselves for the joy that will come when sin and death are overcome by "one righteous act," the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

Lent is a time when we discipline ourselves. This is analogous to spring training or a rigorous rehearsal before an important event. During Lent, we prepare ourselves spiritually, and we train our minds, hearts and bodies to live as Christ lived—unselfishly, in loving service to others.

The Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Lent (Mt 4:1-11) tells us the story of Jesus' temptations by Satan. St. Matthew tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be

tempted by the devil. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and afterward, he was hungry. The devil tries to take advantage of his weakened condition, but he is unsuccessful. Jesus remains faithful to his mission, which is to do the will of his Father no matter what it costs him personally. His experience in the desert is a powerful foreshadowing of the obedience unto death that will bring about our salvation.

The second reading for the First Sunday of Lent (Rom 5:12-19) reminds us that sin and death entered the world because of the disobedience of Adam, and that our first parents' free decision to do what God had forbidden had dire consequences for them and for the entire human race.

St. Paul teaches that the only way that the effects of this fatal disobedience could be overcome was through an act of righteous obedience performed by God's only Son in the face of the all-too-human temptation to set aside his mission and do what was comfortable rather than to sacrifice himself for us on the Cross.

The temptations described to us in this Sunday's Gospel show Satan trying to convince Jesus to give in

to his hunger and weakness, to take advantage of his unique identity as the Son of God, and to betray his intimate relationship to the One God who alone deserves to be worshipped.

By refusing to accept the lies that Satan tells about himself and about the world that he claims to control, Jesus prepares himself for the even greater temptations that will come in the garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross. Jesus resists every temptation—in the desert and during his passion and death—to abandon his commitment to the redemptive mission given to him by his Father. This "righteous act" is what decisively overcomes the horrors of sin and death.

As St. Paul tells us, the obedience of Jesus to the will of his Father—and to his redemptive mission—is what sets us free. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

Obedience, then, is the key to freedom and joy. It is Jesus' act of unselfish commitment to the good of others that breaks open the prison that the original sin of Adam condemned

us to occupy. "Through one man sin entered the world," St. Paul writes, "and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned" (Rom 5:12).

As we learn in Sunday's first reading (Gen 2:7-9; 3:1-7), our sinful condition began with an act of disobedience. Our first parents chose to do their own will rather than God's will. Their profoundly self-centered act of defiance created a massive breach in the order of the universe. Afterward, nothing was exactly the way God intended it to be. Only an equally powerful act of unselfish conformity to the will of God could restore the world, and the people who occupy it, to sanity.

Lent celebrates this great truth of our redemption. It's true that we use this holy time of year to discipline ourselves spiritually and physically, but we do so in positive anticipation of the joy that we will receive on the great feast of Easter.

Let's be joyful, not gloomy, as we pray, fast, and give alms during Lent. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). †



Cristo, la piedra angular

La obediencia es la clave de la libertad y la alegría

Por tanto, así como un solo pecado causó la condenación de todos, también un solo acto de justicia produjo la justificación que da vida a todos. (Rom 5:18).

A veces, la Cuaresma se presenta como una época sombría. Este es un malentendido fundamental de este tiempo penitencial.

Es cierto que durante la Cuaresma prestamos especial atención a las disciplinas de la oración, el ayuno y la limosna, pero nuestro objetivo no es hacer énfasis en los aspectos negativos de la vida sino, más bien, prepararnos para la alegría que vendrá cuando el pecado y la muerte sean vencidos por "un acto de justicia": el sacrificio de Jesús en la Cruz.

La Cuaresma es un tiempo en el que nos disciplinamos. Esto es análogo al entrenamiento de primavera o a un ensayo riguroso previo a un acontecimiento importante. Durante la Cuaresma, nos preparamos espiritualmente y entrenamos nuestras mentes, corazones y cuerpos para vivir como Cristo vivió: desinteresadamente, al servicio amoroso de los demás.

La lectura del Evangelio del primer domingo de Cuaresma (Mt 4:1-11) relata la historia de las tentaciones de Jesús a manos de Satanás. Es interesante señalar que san Mateo

dice que el Espíritu guió a Jesús al desierto para que el diablo lo tentara. Ayunó durante 40 días y 40 noches, y después tuvo hambre. El diablo intenta aprovecharse de su condición debilitada, pero no lo consigue. Jesús permanece fiel a su misión, que es hacer la voluntad de su Padre cueste lo que le cueste. Su experiencia en el desierto es un poderoso presagio de la obediencia hasta la muerte que traerá nuestra salvación.

La segunda lectura del primer domingo de Cuaresma (Rom 5:12-19) nos recuerda que el pecado y la muerte entraron en el mundo por la desobediencia de Adán, y que la decisión libre de nuestros primeros padres de hacer lo que Dios había prohibido tuvo consecuencias nefastas para ellos y para toda la raza humana.

San Pablo nos enseña que la única forma de superar los efectos de esta fatídica desobediencia fue mediante un acto de obediencia justa realizado por el Hijo único de Dios frente a la tentación demasiado humana de dejar de lado su misión y hacer lo que era cómodo en lugar de sacrificarse por nosotros en la Cruz.

Las tentaciones que nos describe el Evangelio de este domingo muestran a Satanás intentando convencer a Jesús de que ceda a su hambre y debilidad, de que se aproveche de su identidad única

como Hijo de Dios y de que traicione su íntima relación con el Único Dios que merece ser adorado.

Al negarse a aceptar las mentiras que Satanás cuenta sobre sí mismo y sobre el mundo que pretende controlar, Jesús se prepara para las tentaciones aún mayores que vendrán en el huerto de Getsemaní y en la Cruz. Jesús resiste todas las tentaciones—en el desierto y durante su pasión y muerte—de abandonar su compromiso con la misión redentora que le encomendó su Padre. Este "acto de justicia" es lo que vence definitivamente los horrores del pecado y de la muerte.

Como nos dice san Pablo, la obediencia de Jesús a la voluntad de su Padre—y a su misión redentora—es lo que nos hizo libres. "Porque así como por la desobediencia de uno solo muchos fueron hechos pecadores, también por la obediencia de uno solo muchos serán hechos justos" (Rm 5:19).

La obediencia, pues, es la clave de la libertad y la alegría. Es el acto de entrega desinteresada de Jesús por el bien de los demás lo que rompe la prisión a la que nos condenó el pecado original de Adán. San Pablo escribe que: "Por medio de un solo hombre el pecado entró en el mundo y por medio del pecado entró la muerte;

fue así como la muerte pasó a toda la humanidad, porque todos pecaron" (Rm 5:12).

Como descubrimos en la primera lectura del domingo (Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7), nuestra condición pecaminosa comenzó con un acto de desobediencia. Nuestros primeros padres eligieron hacer su propia voluntad en lugar de cumplir con la voluntad de Dios. Su acto de desacato profundamente egocéntrico creó una enorme brecha en el orden del universo, tras la cual, nada era como Dios quería que fuese. Únicamente un acto igualmente poderoso de abnegada conformidad con la voluntad de Dios podría devolver la cordura al mundo y a las personas que lo ocupan.

La Cuaresma celebra esta gran verdad de nuestra redención. Es cierto que aprovechamos este tiempo santo del año para disciplinarnos espiritual y físicamente, pero lo hacemos anticipando positivamente la alegría que recibiremos en la gran fiesta de la Pascua.

Por lo tanto: estemos alegres, no tristes, mientras rezamos, ayunamos y damos limosna durante la Cuaresma. "Porque así como por la desobediencia de uno solo muchos fueron hechos pecadores, también por la obediencia de uno solo muchos serán hechos justos" (Rm 5:19). †

Events Calendar

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

FISH FRIES

For a complete list, go to www.archindy.org/fishfries.

EVENTS

February 24

SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Church, 5901 Oliver Branch Road, Greenwood. **Leading by Example: Your Discipleship**, 6 p.m. Mass, 6:30 p.m. presentation by Premonstratensian Father Ambrose Criste presenting, free. Information: 317-859-4673.

February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25

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

February 28

St. Joan of Arc Church, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. **Healing Service**, 7 p.m., sponsored by Encounter School of Ministry, free, no registration required.

Information: indianapolis@encounterschool.org, 317-795-4912.

Concordia Lutheran Church, 305 Howard Road, Greenwood. **Right to Life of Johnson and Morgan Counties Annual Euchre Tournament**, 9 a.m.-noon, benefits local crisis pregnancy centers, first place \$200, second place \$100, coffee and donuts provided, bring package of diapers to enter. Information: 317-697-2441, ebrookehaskins@gmail.com.

March 6

St. Mary Church, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis. **The Soul's Journey: Choir Concert**, 7:30 p.m., Carthage College choir performing, free. Information: 317-637-3983, musicdirector@stainmarysindy.org.

March 7

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.

jluna@spsmw.org, 361-500-9505.

Anderson Hills Church, 7515 Forest Road, Cincinnati. **Stephen Ministries 50th Anniversary Celebration and Learning Event**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., check-in 8 a.m., \$15 includes light breakfast and snacks, additional box lunch is \$12. Information, registration: stephenministries.org/celebrateCIN.

Lindenwood Retreat Center, 9601 Union Road, Plymouth, Ind. (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend). **Entering Canaan: A Day of Prayer and Healing for Women Who Have Experienced Abortion**, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., includes personal testimony, Scripture meditations, eucharistic adoration, sacrament of reconciliation, Mass, lunch, free. Information: leverett@diocesefwsb.org. Registration: diocesefwsb.org/project-rachel.

March 8

McGowan Hall, 1305 Delaware St., Indianapolis. **Irish Hooley Celebration**, 2-7 p.m., Irish bands, Irish dancing, corned beef sandwiches, Irish stew and soda bread available for purchase, cash bar, live auction, games, \$10, clergy and children 12 and younger

free, walk-ins welcome, proceeds benefit St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis' unsheltered programs. Information, advance tickets: 317-924-5769, dsweeny@svdpindy.org, svdpindy.org/hooley.

March 12-13

Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Servant Leadership Workshop**, Thurs. 6:15 p.m.-Fri. 4:30 p.m., archdiocesan executive director of the Secretariat of Evangelizing Catechesis Ken Ogorek presenting, \$295 includes meals, \$100 additional overnight accommodation, \$50 deposit required for registration. Information, registration: saintmeinrad.edu/workshops, 812-357-6611.

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. 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, 317-800-9306, tinyurl.com/ccprecana3-26.

March 15

Ancient Order of Hibernians St. Patrick's Day Events. St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis: **Celtic Cross Blessing, Mass, Parade**: 10:15 a.m. Celtic cross blessing in church courtyard followed by 10:30 a.m. Mass, 11:30 a.m. parade to Indiana Roof Ballroom, 140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, for **Ancient Order of Hibernians St. Patrick's Celebration**, 11:45 a.m., plated luncheon, Irish bands, raffle for Ireland trip for two, \$40 adults, \$16 ages 12 and younger, register for dinner by March 10. Information: aohindy.com/spc. Registration: 317-341-3570, kmcginley720@sbcglobal.net.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Indianapolis Symphony Sphinx Series Chamber Music Concert**, 2-4 p.m., brass program featuring works by Giovanni Gabrieli,

J.S. Bach, Poulenc, Moncayo, Irving Berlin and Alice Gomez, free. Information: 317-902-3006, judithessex@icloud.com.

March 16

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women's Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online monthly on third Monday, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, all women welcome. Meeting: tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp. Information: iowhosomaddox@archindy.org, 317-261-3381.

March 20

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange** presenter TBD, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. March 17. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

March 27-28

Planned Parenthood, 8590 N. Georgetown Road, Indianapolis. **Indiana Knights of Columbus Overnight prayer Vigil**, Fri. 6 p.m.-Sat. 6 a.m., rosary 6 p.m., join for a few minutes, an hour or longer. Information: 317-223-4892. †

Retreats and Programs

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

March 9

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis. **Francis of Assisi and the Eucharist**, 9:30-11 a.m. or 7-8:30 p.m., Conventual Franciscan Father Steven McMichael presenting, freewill donation. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/lent-offerings, 812-923-8817.

March 10

Mount St. Francis Center for

Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis. **The Heart of the Gospel According to St. Francis of Assisi**, 9:30-11 a.m. or 7-8:30 p.m., Conventual Franciscan Father Steven McMichael presenting, freewill donation. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/lent-offerings, 812-923-8817.

March 20-22

Mother of the Redeemer

Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Gift of the Church & the Magisterium**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Catholic Answers apologist Tim Staples presenting, \$290 for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple includes four meals and room for two nights, commuter \$90 includes lunches. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **The Lord's Prayer: Praying the Prayer Jesus Taught Us**, 6 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun, Father James Farrell presenting, \$250, includes room and meals. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Road, Mt. St. Francis. **Death, Dust and New Life: Creating Soul Images in Lent**, Fri. 7 p.m.-Sun. 11 a.m., facilitated by Peggy Holthaus and retreat director Dr. Regina Proctor, includes materials, optional spiritual direction, private room and meals, \$275, bring notebook/journal. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org/lent-offerings, 812-923-8817.

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.

April 8-10

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Praise and Worship in the Fine Arts**, Benedictine Father Michael Reyes presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

April 10-12

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Into the Ocean of Mercy**, Benedictine Father Kolbe Wolniakowski presenting, \$350 single, \$550 double. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

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: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

April 17-19

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

April 20-24

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Priest Retreat: Faith Stories from the Gospel of Matthew**, Benedictine Father Eugene Hensell presenting, \$625. Registration: 812-357-6611, saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

April 25

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **Why We're Catholic**, 9 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Catholic Answers apologist Trent Horn presenting, \$65, includes lunch. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com. †

Retreat centers offer Lenten/Triduum retreat and reflection opportunities

Catholic retreat centers throughout central and southern Indiana will offer Lenten-themed and Easter Triduum retreats and reflection opportunities from March 6-April 2.

Here is a list of those opportunities as reported to *The Criterion*.

Mount Saint Francis Center for Spirituality, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis. Information, registration: mountsaintfrancis.org, 812-923-8817, retreatcommunications@mountsaintfrancis.org.

—**March 6-8:** Journeying Through Lent with Mary Magdalene, Fri. 6 p.m.-Sun. 10 a.m., facilitated by Conventual Franciscan Father Steven McMichael, includes materials, private room and meals, \$275.

—**March 14:** Lenten Letting Go Retreat: Clearing the Path to God this Lenten Season, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., facilitated by Judy Ribar, includes lunch and retreat materials, \$60.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. Information,

registration: 812-933-6437, www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

—**March 27:** A Day of Quiet Renewal, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Registration: ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

—**March 18:** 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.

—**March 28:** The Place that Holds You—Lenten Day Retreat, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., led by Father Jeffrey Godecker and Mary Schaffner, \$55, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds.

—**March 31, April 1, 2:** Holy Week Days of Silence, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., \$55 per day, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds, overnight stay available for additional \$42, dinner additional \$14.40. †

Wedding Anniversaries

DAN AND SUSAN (THOMPSON) TORZEWSKI, members of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Feb. 19.

The couple was married in Holy Spirit Church in Indianapolis on Feb. 19, 1966.

They have four children: Molly Pierce, Christine, Kerri and the late Kevin Torzewski. The couple also has three grandchildren.



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

ST. FRANCIS

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to obtain the plenary indulgence is “a pious pilgrimage to Franciscan churches.”

But several Franciscans told OSV News they hope Catholics will do more than simply stop by—as much as they and their fellow friars would enjoy visitors.

They hope Catholics will also learn about the life and charisma of their founder, and how St. Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226) remains a model blend of contemplation and activity for contemporary Catholics.

“It’s an exciting year; I don’t think any of us would have anticipated that Pope Leo would have declared this,” said Father Jonathan St. Andre, a Third Order Regular Franciscan friar and vice president for Franciscan Life at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. “We figured the pope would go to Assisi; there would be different events. But to make this a jubilee, and to offer an indulgence ... is just remarkable.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that an indulgence “is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven” (#1471).

Bishop Krzysztof Nykiel, regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary, told Vatican News that the specific conditions to gain the Year of St. Francis indulgence include “sacramental confession, eucharistic Communion, certain prayers according to the intentions of the pope, interior detachment from sin, and the performance of certain works, such as a pious pilgrimage to Franciscan churches, participation in Jubilee celebrations, prayer and meditation in the Franciscan spirit, as well as daily acts of charity and humility that express the spirituality of St. Francis.”

The 13th-century Italian saint is known for renouncing his family’s wealth to embrace “Lady Poverty,” attracting followers who ultimately formed the first Franciscans, the Order of Friars Minor. His “spiritual sister” St. Clare of Assisi founded the like-minded Poor Clares.

Visitors to the 250-acre Franciscan University campus can see three Franciscan churches, including the newly renovated Christ the King Chapel. A fall academic conference—“Sister Death, Gate of Life”—will focus on

St. Francis’ holistic vision of existence, the end of which he welcomed something like a cosmic relative by calling it “sister.” A Franciscan virtues series will be available to students, and the *Transitus*—an Oct. 3 remembrance of St. Francis’ death—will receive special attention.

All of it, Father Jonathan hopes, will get St. Francis out of the garden.

“Your typical person—and it’s not their fault—thinks of Francis as a bird bath. A lover of animals. And he was,” he said. “But I always try to bring people to the deeper vision of St. Francis; that even when it comes to the animals, he loved the animals because they were Christic—all things were created through the Father in [Jesus] Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

“St. Francis saw God’s presence imprinted on creation,” the priest continued. “That’s just one example, but I think this year will be an opportunity for people to come to a fuller, substantial, more authentic vision of St. Francis and the Franciscan tradition.”

The Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Ariz., is offering a full slate of programs that will assist in that aim, including retreats, conversations and a movie night.

Franciscan Father John Aherne is also hopeful that the faithful will focus on St. Francis’ spiritual heritage.

“Maybe even the larger question is what can the Year of St. Francis do for the world?” he asked. “You know, especially in a time when our world is so divided—politically and ideologically and economically—we can look to St. Francis as a guide in how we can come together.”

A member of the Order of Friars Minor and pastor of St. Mary Parish in Pompton Lakes, N.J., Father John offered examples from St. Francis’ life and legends, including the tale of the friar reasoning with a ravenous wolf terrorizing an Italian town.

“He brokered peace between the people of Gubbio and the wolf of Gubbio in that famous story. He brokered peace between the people of Assisi and the mayor of Assisi in the famous ‘Canticle of Creation.’ St. Francis ... was as comfortable with the leper as he was with the pope, and he brought them together,” said Father John.

“So I think—in fact, I know—there is something in our Franciscan charisma, by looking to the person of St. Francis of Assisi, that can help to heal some of the divisions that are in our world today,” he said.



A man walks past a mural of St. Francis of Assisi at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Ariz. (OSV News photo/Nancy Wiechec)

Father Edgardo Jara—also a member of the Order of Friars Minor and pastor of Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside, Calif.—agreed.

“The jubilee will be a tool to remind people what Francis showed us and told us 800 years ago—to incarnate God in our lives, and especially in our actions,” he said.

Father Edgardo and his fellow Franciscans shepherd a modern parish next door to Mission San Luis Rey, a National Historic Landmark completed in 1815 and the largest of the 21 California missions.

And like Father John, Father Edgardo sees St. Francis as a force for unity—a saint capable of issuing a global reminder “that we all are brothers and sisters, especially in this time of division and conflicts that the world is living right now, [and] that we need to see each other as all daughters and sons of God.

“It’s a good reminder,” he added, “that the Gospel is still something that we can live and practice.”

Banners proclaiming the Year of St. Francis festoon the Mission San Luis Rey campus, and special prayers, services and gatherings will punctuate the liturgical and social calendar—including a torch-lit procession on the Oct. 3 *Transitus* featuring an effigy of St. Francis.

Ultimately, said Father Edgardo, St. Francis’ spirituality is “something that we can live in our different ways—married or not, religious, priest, pope—everyone can prayerfully bring the Gospel to live this way of life.”

He added: “So I think this year is going to teach us to not only think of ourselves—but to see how we can love our neighbor, love God, and love creation as well.” †

ICC

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The education committee voted two days later to adopt the proposed amendment to Senate Bill 199—an otherwise multi-faceted education bill—sending the entire measure to the full House for consideration. Among other provisions, the amendment would require parental consent for children younger than 16 to create or maintain social media accounts and place new requirements on social media companies to ensure age and identity verification.

Additionally, the amendment aims to restrict social media companies from using algorithms on children’s accounts that push personalized content intended to increase users’ time on the platforms.

These types of practices fuel young people’s increasing addiction to social media, according to a longtime school guidance counselor who testified at the hearing.

Amy Klink, director of counseling at Guérin Catholic High School in Noblesville, Ind., spoke of what she believes is a strong correlation between social media overuse and mental health issues among children and teens.

“The number of students seeking mental health services has increased exponentially during my time as a counselor,” said Klink, who has served in that capacity at both public and private schools for 26 years. “A large part of this can be attributed to social media.

“We need to do more to protect our children’s mental health and their safety,” she continued. “Our parents are asking for help. The children in their own way are asking for help, and I’m asking for help.

Please give parents more say in what their children have access to, and please help us in fighting this mental health crisis.”

An earlier version of Senate Bill 199 included language prohibiting anyone in Indiana younger than 14 from having a social media account and requiring those between the ages of 14 and 18 to have parental consent. That language was later stripped from the bill due to legal and enforcement concerns.

The new amendment, which re-introduced key elements of that original version, has the support of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA).

James McNeany, the INPEA’s new executive director, spoke on behalf of both organizations during his testimony before the House committee.



James McNeany

“Educators across Indiana are seeing a clear connection between excessive social media use and declining student well-being,” said McNeany, most

recently principal of Guérin Catholic High School before taking the helm of the INPEA, which represents the state’s more than 400 non-public schools, including Indiana’s 175 Catholic schools.

“Over the past decade, rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide among teenagers have risen sharply, and suicide is now one of the leading causes of death for adolescents nationwide,” McNeany added. “This trend closely parallels the rise of smart phones and social media.”

McNeany said he favored the original

language of the bill, but is pleased to see some elements of it moving forward.

“While I prefer a complete ban for our youngest and most vulnerable students, this is a meaningful step in the right direction that restores parental authority and introduces common-sense safeguards,” he said.

A related measure that advocates are closely following is Senate Bill 78, which would ban cell phone usage for students from “bell to bell”—that is, for the entire school day from the moment they enter the building until final dismissal. Current Indiana restrictions apply only to instructional time, not lunch time or passing periods.

The House Education Committee voted unanimously in support of the bill on Feb. 11, the same day it passed the revised Senate Bill 199. Although Senate Bill 78 would only directly affect public school corporations and charter schools, members of the INPEA spoke to the benefits of this sort of policy during the recent hearing in the education committee.

Some non-public schools have already adopted complete cell phone bans during the school day, including Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis.

“The results have been transformative,” said Brebeuf principal Greg VanSlambrook, who addressed education committee members both about Senate Bill 199 and Senate Bill 78 in his Feb. 9 remarks. “We find that students are more engaged in their lessons. We see more eye contact and real conversation in our hallways and our cafeteria. There is, quite simply, more human interaction, and we are seeing some positive effects on mental health.”

The INPEA and ICC were closely following both bills as they awaited final action in the House at press time.

“There are just so many things that happen in the school day that are magnified because of phones and social media,” McNeany said. “So we are hoping that these two bills together will have a positive effect on our young people.”

The ICC—the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana—had supported similar legislation last year that ultimately stalled at the Statehouse.

“The Church usually leans more to

the side of the state having a compelling interest in protecting kids and their well-being and giving parents the tools they need,” said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC. “We are very interested in seeing this legislation cross the finish line.”

The ICC and the INPEA are hailing another development in the realm of education. Indiana recently opted into a newly created federal tax credit scholarship program.

Indiana Gov. Mike Braun made the announcement in late January during a visit to St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis. The federal program will offer Indiana residents a dollar-for-dollar, nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$1,700 annually for donations to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) that serve students from kindergarten through high school.

SGOs provide K-12 scholarships for non-public school tuition and other educational expenses. Mingus said that opting into the federal tax credit scholarship program is another positive step for Indiana, which passed universal school choice in the 2025 legislative session.

“We are certainly blessed in Indiana to have a robust school choice program in addition to this new federal program, which complements what we already have in place,” Mingus said.

Now, the ICC is hoping for a successful conclusion to the 2026 Indiana General Assembly, set to wrap up by the end of February.

“We ask for everyone’s prayers for a smooth and positive conclusion to this legislative session, which has the potential to advance the common good in many areas,” Mingus said.

To follow this and other priority legislation of the ICC, visit indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

(Victoria Arthur, a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, is a correspondent for The Criterion.) †



‘The Church usually leans more to the side of the state having a compelling interest in protecting kids and their well-being and giving parents the tools they need. We are very interested in seeing this legislation cross the finish line.’

—Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC

REFEREE

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nearly killed him and contributed to a 60% disability in his lungs.

There's also his most humbling Army experience, the one that still makes the retired two-star general well up in emotion and tears years later—the times he led the Army's honor brigade that offered our country's respect, heartbreak and pride when the bodies of soldiers who were killed in combat were returned to the United States.

All those experiences—in sports, in service to his country, in life—have their start in his freshman year at Indiana University in Bloomington, including the wild and defining story of how he became a basketball referee against his wishes.

'Son, you need discipline'

When Wells wanted to attend Indiana University in 1966, his father—a veteran of both the U.S. Army and Air Force—told him he could only go there if he signed up for the Army's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), a program designed to train and commission military officers while they earn a college degree.

"The bottom line was my dad saying, 'Son, you need discipline,'" Wells recalls.

A touch of that discipline came after he angrily objected to a foul call during an intramural game at IU by firing the basketball through a window of the fitness center.

After getting a technical foul, Wells was told to leave the building. And the next day, he had to meet with the director of intramurals, who gave him a ref's whistle and said, "Congratulations, Bill, you are no longer a player. You are now a basketball official. Take your whistle. Get on the court. It starts now."

Sixty years later, Wells is still benefitting from that experience.

"I learned how it was to be an official. It certainly made a difference to me. I've been a player, a coach and an official, so I can understand all those perspectives, and that goes with players when they get upset."

That understanding showed during a

recent CYO game when a girl, who didn't like one of his calls, threw the basketball against a wall. He called her over and talked to her calmly.

"I basically told her, 'Hey, it's an emotional game. I understand we all make mistakes. You made a mistake by the way you threw the ball. Let's settle down. Let's play basketball.' She said, 'Yes, Mr. Official, I'm sorry.'"

"Instead of yelling across the court and everyone in the stands knowing what I said, I just talked to her in a normal voice. A lot of that is experience over the years. You understand there are emotions, highs and lows. That's how far I've come from throwing a basketball through a window."

A memorable jump from a helicopter

Wells also came a long way in the Army after earning a master's degree in exercise physiology and coaching in 1972.

Recalling his ROTC days, he says, "I was never a leader. I stood in the back of the formation."

His path to becoming a major general in charge of thousands of soldiers included stepping into the unknown—during the 85 times he jumped from an Army plane or helicopter.

"My big thing in logistics was airdrops—throwing things out of the back of aircraft and jumping out of airplanes," he says. "I even attended jumpmasters' school. That's where you throw your fellow Army men and women out the side or the ramp of a C-130 or a helicopter."

One particular jump still stands out to him. It's the story of when he was promoted to captain, a story he shares with a laugh.

"They took us up in a helicopter. I went up as a first lieutenant with a chaplain, a jumpmaster, myself and my commander. I was read my promotion

orders in the helicopter. They cut off my lieutenant's bar and taped on a captain's bar and threw me out of the aircraft. I went up as a lieutenant and came down as a captain."

He also shares the serious side of jumping from aircraft. "We were a parachute rigger unit. I dropped along with my warrant officer and my platoon. We packaged bulldozers and road scrapers for the engineer brigade. You can't make a mistake in the aircraft. If you make one mistake in the aircraft, you put people in danger."

Violent acts and powerful thank-yous

As always in a basketball game, no matter the level of competition, there are coaches and fans who forcefully try to help refs with a call and/or question their eyesight and judgment.

In a recent CYO game between fourth-grade girls, fans and coaches shout at different

times, "that's a foul!", "that's a travel!", "three seconds!" and other assistance.

Wells takes nearly all of it calmly, but when a fan gets too vocal, he shoots him a look that once upon a time must have made a soldier, who did something out of line, quiver in his or her boots.

He also offers this perspective, "I've mentored folks who have never been an official before and once they get out there and do a game or two, they come to you and say, 'Gosh, I thought this would be easy.' It is easy if you're sitting in the stands and you think you saw a foul from your angle, but what did the official see from their angle?"

His level of tolerance is high, but his voice is touched with disdain when he recalls the angry adult player who chased him with a baseball bat and another man who tried to choke him.

"In both those situations, players with cooler attitudes came and pulled the guy back," he notes.

He also has little tolerance for coaches at any level whose team is winning by a huge margin in the fourth quarter and is still using a press defense against an overmatched opponent.

Sportsmanship is important to him, and he sees plenty of it in the coaches and players in CYO sports.

"Something that has always stood out to me is when the winning and losing team come over to fist bump or shake hands with the officials and thank us," he says. "To some, it may seem like a simple gesture. To me, it shows the athlete's good sportsmanship and overall great character."

Wells knows the power of a thank-you, especially from CYO coaches.

"No matter how many times they yelled at you, 'that's a foul!' or 'that's a travel!', they come over at the end of the game and say, 'Hey, thanks for being here.'"

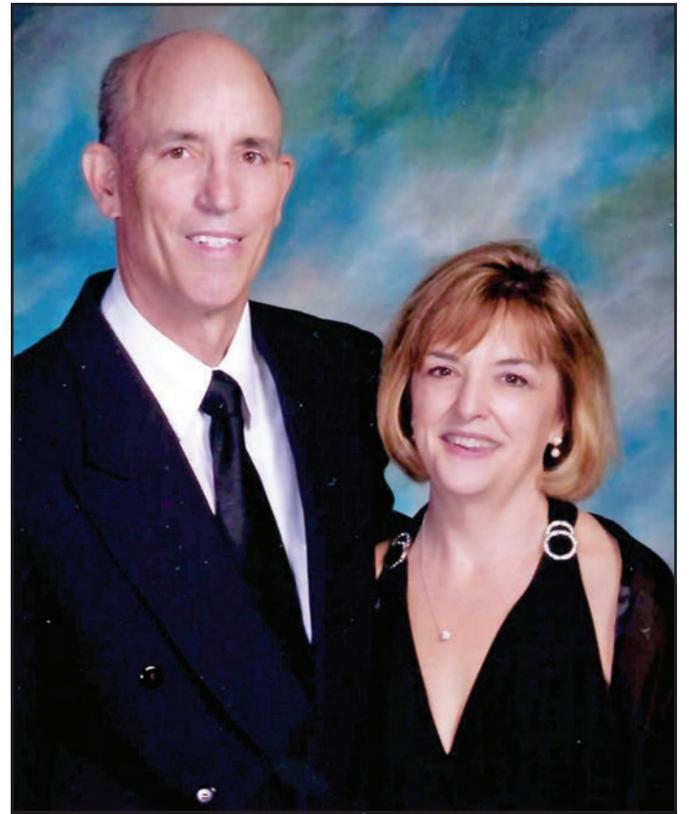
"That's important, not so much for me as an official, but really it's important that a young official gets that recognition of people saying thanks. That pumps up young officials—that somebody really recognizes me for what I do as an official. Without those people in stripes, we couldn't be out here having a game, whether you agree or disagree on how we call the game."

'You were lucky ... or you'd be dead'

In the Army, Wells knew danger far



Ever since he became a referee—after being thrown out of a game as a player in his youth—Bill Wells has strived to bring a calm approach in working with players and coaches. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)



On and off the court, Bill and Deb Wells make a good couple, including their times officiating volleyball games together. (Submitted photo)



Bill Wells served in the U.S. Army for 36 years, rising to the rank of major general. (Submitted photo)

beyond an angry player with a baseball bat.

He faced that danger as a result of his service in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield in 1990-91.

"We had just chased Sadaam Hussein [the then-president of Iraq whose forces invaded Saudi Arabia] out of Kuwait City," recalls Wells, who also was involved in operations in Turkey, Syria and the Balkans. "We flew through the burning oil wells. I was on the ground for maybe three days."

After leaving Saudi Arabia, Wells returned to a daily routine with his staff where they put on their gear and did a run.

"I ran at Indiana University, and there was no one in my unit who could outrun me," he says. "When I'd run with them, they were struggling usually. As the month went on, I started to have trouble breathing—to the point I couldn't walk up and down a set of stairs without having to stop and sit down."

When he checked into a MASH unit (a mobile Army surgery hospital), the medical staff did a CT scan on him. The image of his lungs alarmed everyone.

"A doctor said, 'See this picture? See all that red? That's a blood clot that blew up in your lungs. You were lucky it didn't go to your heart or you'd be dead.'"

'I still push it'

As Wells works his way up and down the basketball court, he does so with a 60% disability to his lungs.

Considering that reality and that he is 78, many people in a similar situation might choose something else to do. Wells has, but his choice is to do more.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Students from Los Angeles-area Catholic school get surprise meeting with pope after school vandalism

(OSV News)—Sometimes God’s providence and blessings are so obvious that they practically come with a spotlight.

That’s a little where the students and staff at Holy Innocents School in Long Beach, Calif., find themselves, having spent the first few days of February dealing with the ramifications of a heartbreaking desecration of their school hall and chapel, and less than two weeks later shaking hands with none other than Pope Leo XIV.

Holy Innocent’s nine-person senior class, four teachers, religious leaders and family were in Rome on Feb. 11 when they got an unexpected audience with Pope Leo. The pontiff gave them his blessing—and prayers—following the vandalism of their transitional kindergarten-12th grade school, which included a shattered life-size Virgin Mary statue that had been guarding the campus since its opening in 1958, and a ruptured bronze tabernacle that had been thrown to the ground.

So how did Holy Innocents go from pain to the pope? “Only God can write this story,” Holy Innocents School principal Cyril Cruz told *Angelus*, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The students from Holy Innocents School weren’t even supposed to be in Rome in February. The school’s annual pilgrimage for its senior class usually happens during Holy Week.

But Father Robert McGowan, associate pastor at Holy Innocents Parish, was leading the group this year, and he obviously couldn’t be away during the busy weeks of Easter, so school officials moved the trip to February.

The timing would prove to be heaven-sent.

With a senior trip pre-planned, Cruz walked into the school hall at Holy Innocents on the morning of Feb. 2, a Monday, and came across a scene that left her shaken. Vandals had broken in and left behind unspeakable damage. School officials couldn’t understand who might do such a thing.

Chairs were toppled, food strewn about and the contents of empty soda cans littered the floor. Elsewhere, wires were ripped out of the wall, lighting and audio equipment busted, and musical instruments were damaged and left scattered.

But the most jarring part of the break-in was the desecration done to holy objects. The original Virgin Mary statue was broken, lying on the floor near the altar. Another Mary statue had its hands cut off. Catholic missals and hymnal books spilled to the floor. The bronze tabernacle had been thrown to the floor, apparently in an attempt to open it. While ruptured, the box held the holy Eucharist inside, relatively unharmed.

After witnessing the horror, school officials only allowed one group of students to view the damage: the senior class.

“When I did see the destruction, then my eyes got really watery, and I just felt so sad,” Sophia Gutierrez, 17, one of Holy Innocent’s seniors, told *Angelus*.

“Because, like, why? Why would they do that to our faith? Why would they do that to Our Lord?”

“All of us were really in shock. I think especially since we were the senior class. We never really expected this to happen at all.”

The next morning, after intensive cleanup by staff, students and volunteers, Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop

Marc V. Trudeau celebrated a reparation Mass in the hall, sprinkling the space with holy water and calling for healing, noting that “people who are broken tend to break things.”

In the aftermath of the break-in, the local and larger community stepped up in a big way.

Some volunteered to help clean up. Others volunteered to donate items or services. Donations poured in, more than \$150,000 from a GoFundMe account and about \$75,000 donated directly to the school.

“What happened with the vandalism was pretty horrible,” said Carlos Martinez, 17, one of Holy Innocents’ seniors. “But since we believe that God uses bad for good, I don’t think it was a coincidence that happened right before we went to Rome.

“Like we met the pope, and there were so many people supporting our school, even people not from our school. And it was really beautiful.”

Of all the grand gestures, a smaller offer had a bigger impact.

A benefactor who wanted to remain anonymous got the school in touch with Msgr. Anthony Figueiredo, a priest who worked in Rome but is now based in Assisi, Italy, and travels the world with the relics of newly canonized St. Carlo Acutis.

Msgr. Figueiredo was able to arrange for the group to receive an audience with Pope Leo and to have their school be named during the general audience.

The only issue: The tickets had to be picked up on the evening the group’s flight landed in Rome. That seemed easy enough until several things began impeding their progress, like an issue with their bus that caused them to leave hours after they planned.

When they arrived to pick up the tickets, Kiernan Fiore, the director of academics at Holy Innocents who was helping to chaperone the trip, sprinted to the office.

They just made it.

The next day, still bleary-eyed and jet-lagged from the flight, they were inside the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall, still unsure what to expect.

Carlos’ family received the first surprise while Pope Leo was entering the hall.

“He was walking down the middle aisle, and my mom wanted to get my little baby brother, who came with us, to go get blessed by Pope Leo,” Carlos said. “I tried to go, but there were people in front of us, so we couldn’t get all the way to the front. So I was able to ask the guy in front of us to carry my brother out.”

It worked.

Once Pope Leo’s audience remarks were over, the group figured they’d stand way in the back and would get a photo with the pope that way.

Instead, they were invited onto the steps and Pope Leo greeted each person individually, shaking hands and offering prayers for the desecration of their school.



Sophia Gutierrez, center, a senior at Holy Innocents School in Long Beach, Calif., reacts to meeting Pope Leo XIV following the pope’s general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican on Feb. 11. The school group met Pope Leo less than two weeks after their school was found vandalized and desecrated on Feb. 2. (OSV News photo/Vatican Media via CPP)

“I was actually the first one he came up to when we were going to take a picture, and he shook my hand, and I just, I was like, ‘This is so crazy. How am I meeting the pope?’” Sophia said. “Just being able to tell him that this happened, and him saying that you’re going to be in my prayers, it was really moving.”

“I think when you are in the presence of the Holy Father, you can really feel the depth of his prayer life, and the way that comes out in his generosity to other people, his warmth, the way he seeks to be truly a pastor,” Fiore said. “But for me, personally, the thing that I really remember him commenting to me was just about the tabernacle at our school. It’s so meaningful for us to know that he has heard that, and can personally pray for us.”

Following the audience, the group visited other holy sites around Italy before returning home just before Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. But the students and staff at Holy Innocents are still buzzing from the meeting with Leo and what it means as the school continues its healing and recovery.

“Just being able to meet him, it really just made it feel so real,” Sophia said. “Like he actually is a pope, it’s not just like who you see on TV. It’s not like on the news. He’s actually somebody who cares for our faith and who really wants to lead his flock.”

“It is so tempting when something like this happens to say, ‘Why me?’” Fiore said. “We all have suffering in our lives, and I think it’s when we’re open to Our Lord bringing us consolation, he always does.

“I don’t really believe in coincidences. I think we can see the Holy Spirit everywhere. But there where you can feel singled out for suffering, when you look to Our Lord, you’ll find [yourself] singled out for grace as well.”

Maybe what was shared on Holy Innocent’s social media channels said it best.

“Standing before the Holy Father, receiving his blessing, was not just a photo opportunity—it was a moment of healing for our students and our school community,” the post said. “In a week that began with desecration, it ended with grace.” †

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He also officiates football, volleyball and softball games. And there’s this choice.

“I still run,” he says. “Running up and down the court when there are fast breaks, it sometimes gives me my speed work. So, there’s health benefits. And I still like to go out and compete as a runner six or seven times a year. I run mostly 10 Ks [6.2 miles]. Even with the bad weather, I have a treadmill. Every other day, I do 6 to 7 miles to get in shape.

“And I’m competitive, even though I have a disability from the war with my lungs. I still push it. All in all, it’s good stuff.”

There’s also the sense that Wells keeps trying to drain every ounce and every joy of life because of what he saw during his time in the Army—the heartbreak of young lives cut far too short.

‘The most humbling honor I could have done’

That devastating reality takes him back to his days in the Pentagon in Washington when he served in the Army Reserves.

One of his responsibilities included a

duty that he is still “most proud of” and “very humbled by,” an experience that even years later makes him well up in tears.

“When we had forces in battle and our soldiers were killed, they flew them back on an aircraft into Dover Air Force Base in Delaware,” Wells says. “Each of the services did their own thing when the aircraft landed. The Army chief of staff said that when any aircraft lands and there are American Army soldiers on there, there will be a flag officer representing and receiving those people. That was my duty, besides my other work.

“I’d get a notice that might say, ‘Tomorrow morning at 2 a.m., there’s an aircraft coming in with 20 to 25 casualties.’ My colonel would go with me, and I’d take the honor guard that also does the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We would go up to Dover. I may be there with a Navy admiral or someone from the Marine Corps.

“When the aircraft landed, we had a procedure where we would march out. We’d go up in the aircraft with the chaplain, and he’d say a prayer for the people who had come back. Then they

would be ceremoniously taken off the aircraft and placed in a van. And that van would go across the post to the mortuary.”

Wells pauses. His voice grows softer as the emotions set in again.

“It’s very humbling, very emotional. When I speak to people about that, I tear up. Because that’s the most humbling honor I could have done—to receive back those people who gave their lives for our country.”

‘I am forever grateful’

Thoughts of those young men and women sometimes return him to his younger days.

“One of the things I kid about officiating is that it keeps you young,” Wells says. “It keeps you attached to the game you love. Basketball is what I really loved when I was in junior high. Officiating keeps you youthful.

“And there’s the camaraderie you have with the players, no matter if they’re in high school or they’re fourth-graders who are just learning. Sometimes you get to instruct, which I enjoy.”

He also enjoys officiating volleyball matches with his wife Deb, which they

have done for 10 years. And there are the bonds he gains from connecting with people, especially through the CYO.

“CYO has given me wonderful, lasting friends with other officials, coaches and CYO staff members,” he says. “I am forever grateful.”

The archdiocese showed its appreciation for him by choosing him as the Edward Tinder Official of the Year, named for a longstanding executive director of the program.

In honoring Wells, current CYO executive director Jack Schmitz said, “Bill, thank you for your many years of service to our country. We also thank you for your passion, love and dedication to CYO for the past 20-plus years. Without a doubt, we all owe the intramural director at IU a huge thank you for forcefully guiding you in the direction of officiating!”

Wells still smiles at the honor and the reference to his start as a ref.

When he is asked what he would tell the intramural director now, 60 years later, Wells shares this thought:

“I would tell him, ‘You gave me the greatest gift I could ever have.’” †

Sheen beatification is back on—and the Engstrom family says it will be ‘a little glimpse of heaven’

WASHINGTON, Ill. (OSV News)—One of James Fulton Engstrom’s favorite things to do is track the weather, which can be pretty tricky in central Illinois in the middle of January. The 15-year-old grows excited as he points to his computer and shows the projected snowfall amounts for a recent weekend storm.

Another love, although one he keeps closer to his heart, is his relationship with Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, who will take another step toward sainthood when he is beatified.

On Feb. 9, Bishop Louis Tylka of Peoria, Ill., announced that the cause for the revered archbishop had been approved by the Vatican to proceed to beatification, and he is working with its Dicastery of the Causes of Saints to determine details.

“He’s my protector,” James said of Archbishop Sheen in a recent interview with OSV News. “He was a part of my healing, and I pray to him basically every day.”

Born on Sept. 16, 2010, James didn’t have a pulse or take a breath for 61 minutes after a planned home birth due to a knot in his umbilical cord. His parents, Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, had entrusted their baby to Fulton Sheen during their pregnancy, and they turned to him now for a miraculous healing through his intercession. Word spread quickly, and people around the Diocese of Peoria—where Archbishop Sheen was ordained a priest in 1919—and beyond joined the Engstroms in storming heaven with prayer.

James’ heart started to beat just as the medical team at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria decided they were out of options. The newborn’s healing, which doctors

could not explain, was attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen. It became the miracle that cleared the way for his beatification.

“It’s pretty cool. I like being the ‘miracle baby,’” James recently told OSV News, adding that having a role in Archbishop Sheen’s sainthood cause makes him feel “special.”

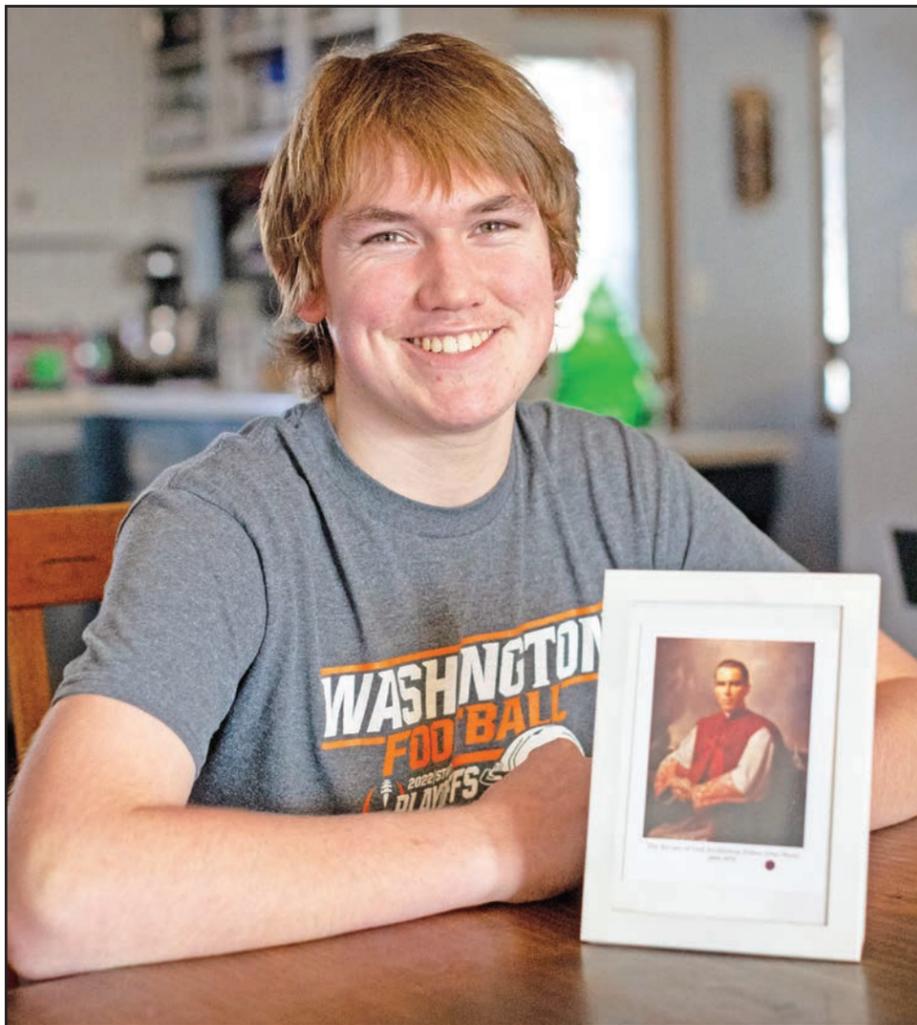
“Protector” is a good word for Archbishop Sheen, who has become a close family friend, Bonnie Engstrom shared as she sat in her cozy living room in Washington, Ill., a nearby suburb of Peoria. In late January, the Christmas tree was still up and likely would be until Candlemas, and there were books everywhere—including a basket of picture books, Bibles and *The Seven Last Words* by Fulton Sheen on the end table.

“That’s not staged, honest,” Bonnie said with a laugh. “We were just talking about something in that.”

That is a natural part of Engstrom family life and has been since Bonnie and Travis decided to name their son after the theologian, author and media evangelist. Archbishop Sheen won the Emmy Award for Most Outstanding Television Personality in 1952 for his show “Life is Worth Living,” and episodes remain popular on social media today.

“From that very beginning I started asking for his intercession, to walk with James his whole life. That was literally my prayer,” Bonnie said. “That is still how I see him, as a figure in James’ life who just loves him for who he is, who wants nothing from him but to love God more, and is someone who is always praying for him.”

The couple keeps the conversation going by visiting Archbishop Sheen’s tomb at the Cathedral of St. Mary



James Engstrom, 15, is pictured with an image of Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen at his home in Washington, Ill., on Jan. 23. Engstrom, who was born without a pulse on Sept. 16, 2010, and remained clinically dead for an hour before his heart began beating, led to a Church-approved miracle that helped advance the cause for Fulton Sheen’s beatification. (OSV News photo/Daryl Wilson)

of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, reading his books and talking about him with James and his seven siblings, ages 6 to 17. When it comes to questions about the faith, they often turn for guidance to the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Archbishop Sheen.

During a recent conversation, Bonnie and her daughter Teresa, 13, talked about their holy friend’s commitment to making a Holy Hour every day from the time he was ordained a priest on Sept. 20, 1919, until he died on Dec. 9, 1979. He was found dead on the floor of his private chapel, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

“Every day, for all of those years, he made a Holy Hour. How long is a Holy Hour?” Bonnie asked.

Teresa responded, “60 minutes.” “And James came back to life at 61 minutes,” Bonnie said. “Isn’t that interesting?”

While James has had more than his fair share of tests, surgeries and medical emergencies and continues to cope with the aftermath of some of that, he is an active teen who just happened to have something extraordinary happen to him through God’s grace, his family members say.

He loves being with his friends at Washington High School, playing basketball and swimming. In ninth grade, he was the team manager and waterboy for the freshman football team, working with his father, who is the offensive coach and teaches physics at the school.

“He likes being social—loves being social,” his mom said. “He’ll chat up the players and the cheerleaders and everyone on the side lines.”

Among those he encountered was Chris Yates, chief meteorologist at WMBD-TV in Peoria. That conversation resulted in a recent visit to the studio, something James thoroughly enjoyed.

As someone who tracks the weather, James loves being outside. He works for a friend from church, mowing and doing yard work. Bonnie said the whole family chips in to help around St. Patrick Church at Mary, Mother of

God Parish in Washington, and James is quick to take action when snow is on the ground.

“He’ll grab the shovel and start clearing the sidewalk,” she said. “He loves working hard.”

Add decorating the church for Christmas to the list of things he enjoys.

His food allergies can make teen life tricky, but James said he likes gluten-free Mint Oreos and Pepsi. “Sloppy Joes is my favorite meal,” he adds.

The tribunal to investigate James’ healing was opened in Peoria on Sept. 7, 2011, just a few days shy of his first birthday. It closed with a Mass at St. Mary’s Cathedral on Dec. 11 that year.

The alleged miracle was unanimously approved by a team of medical experts who advised the now-named Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints on March 6, 2014, and a panel of theological advisers unanimously approved it three months later on June 17. Pope Francis would approve the miracle on July 6, 2019, and plans were made for a beatification in Peoria on Dec. 21 of that year.

The cause was paused, however, when a request for more time was made by American Church officials.

“At the time it was really hard,” Bonnie said. “But the further we got from that moment, the more we just felt like God has a different plan.”

Now that the beatification can proceed, the Engstroms are wondering what’s going to happen and what the celebration is going to look like.

“We are so excited,” Bonnie said. “Travis and I have a wonderful community. Our family is wonderful, but we are also very blessed with lots of awesome Catholic friends.”

It’s meaningful for the Engstroms “to be able to celebrate with them,” Bonnie added.

She said the beatification will be “a little glimpse of heaven.”

“This whole space filled with the saints, the Church, people you love. Everyone’s excited. We’re all worshipping Jesus together,” Bonnie said. “It will be amazing.” †

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+ Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

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SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Venerable Fulton J. Sheen embodied the theological, cardinal virtues in his life

By Michael R. Heinlein

(OSV News)—With his beatification once again on track, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen will be memorialized in the Church for reasons far beyond his contributions to the Church’s intellectual life or his evangelical zeal, incredible and legendary though they are.

As the Church prepares to acknowledge the reasonable hope that he is in heaven, Archbishop Sheen’s life of heroic virtue now belongs to the ages—and indeed, what better could be remembered about his or any life?

He is a model for those striving for holiness. Through his practice of the theological and cardinal virtues, which comprise the primary characteristics of candidates for sainthood, the archbishop’s life gives a glimpse of what ours could and should resemble.

—Faith

Faith illuminated Archbishop Sheen’s life above all else. He knew that his Redeemer lives, and it shaped and defined everything about him. “If you do not live what you believe, you will end up believing what you live,” he once said.

The strength of Archbishop Sheen’s faith meant he could do nothing other than dedicate himself to the mission of making Christ known and beloved. Initially immersed in academia, the archbishop studied philosophy and theology. He wrestled with the enduring questions of faith and reason, and, as a professor, he clearly taught their integration.

A successor of the Apostles as a bishop, Archbishop Sheen possessed a faith marked by an apostolic zeal for souls. He put his many gifts to the service of transmitting God’s word in fresh, attractive and convincing ways. The internal depth of his faith came across so magnetically that he attracted millions to the truth.

A faithful son of the Blessed Mother, the archbishop devotedly adhered to her example. He abandoned himself to God’s providence, following Mary’s directive to do whatever Christ tells us.

—Hope

Archbishop Sheen had a great hope and longing for eternal life. He trusted that God was in control and that God’s designs all worked for the good. To multitudes, he imparted that, as in the title of his successful prime-time TV show, life truly is worth living.

Amid troubled times and with a joyful persuasion, Archbishop Sheen proclaimed to the world that, because of Christ’s death and resurrection, we know God has the final word. He gave people reasons for hope amid darkness. Ultimately, he wanted others to desire eternal life as much as he did.

Archbishop Sheen’s exercise of hope also meant he knew the importance and value of suffering as a share

in Christ’s cross. Well-acquainted with suffering, the archbishop trusted that not only did it have a purpose for the good, but it was also to be embraced for our salvation. He once said, “In the end, we will discover that sometimes when we are very good the suffering is to make us better, and we will have a higher place in heaven.”

—Charity

Charity is intrinsic to the Christian life. St. Paul said it is the “greatest” of the virtues (1 Cor 13:13). As Archbishop Sheen put it himself, “it does not require much time to make a saint. It requires only much love.”

The archbishop once said that “the greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host.” This was the love that transformed him.

His daily eucharistic holy hour was legendary. From the day of his ordination to the day of his death, Archbishop Sheen spent an hour each day praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. From his office desk, through an open door, he could gaze upon a tabernacle at all times.

His union with Christ enabled him to more fully, more accurately and more convincingly lead others to Christ in all he said and did. Archbishop Sheen was a man of many talents and accomplishments, but it was Christ who enabled him to use them in the best ways.

It was charity that motivated the archbishop’s zeal for souls. Bringing others to Christ was the greatest good he could perform in service to them, and it often came in the form of self-sacrifice. With a pastoral heart, Archbishop Sheen lived for others. He offered wise counsel with fatherly love. And he gave of himself constantly. Even his time was not his own, for he devoted himself to his studies and in preparation for his ministry of evangelization, for work on behalf of the missions or in the diocese that he governed.

Where Archbishop Sheen saw a need, he responded in charity. He loved his neighbor as himself. He once preached about our judgment: “Show me your hands. Have you a scar from giving? A scar of sacrificing yourself for another? Show me your feet. Have you gone about doing good? Were you wounded in service? Show me your heart. Have you left a place for divine love?”

The archbishop’s love of Christ also was manifested in a love for the poor and marginalized, often in hidden ways. He also worked to raise funds for missionary work around the world and donated the vast majority of the earnings from his books and television show for that purpose. “Never measure your generosity by what you give, but by what you have left,” Sheen wrote.

—Prudence

Archbishop Sheen exercised prudence by trusting in God’s providence. It attuned him to listen for God’s voice, even when God spoke through others. Sheen did not rush to judgments, taking time to prayerfully discern.

When he listened to others, either those who were seeking advice or those who were giving it to him, Archbishop Sheen exhibited a twofold attentiveness: first, to the person with him, but, moreover, to what God might be saying in the given situation. This was no easy task for a man of Sheen’s enormous responsibilities and fame.

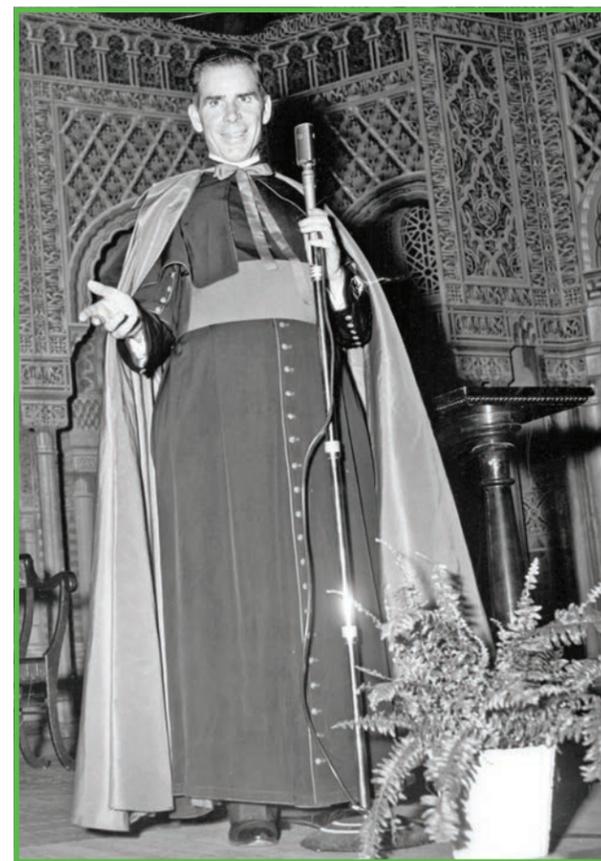
A supernatural prudence shone through his dealings with others. Keenly aware of how greatly others admired him or wanted to be in his inner circle, the archbishop navigated such relationships with grace and distinction, employing equal amounts of caution and concern.

—Justice

Archbishop Sheen acted with justice toward God and others. Not taking himself too seriously, Sheen recognized that any talents he had were because of God working through him. In all that he said and did, he remembered that his work was the Lord’s.

Known for leading many to the faith, particularly through his media ministry, Archbishop Sheen once was asked by Pope Pius XII how many converts could be attributed to his work. The archbishop replied, “I am always afraid if I did count them, I might think I made them, instead of the Lord.”

Archbishop Sheen’s preaching and teaching also demanded the dignity of the human person. That all are made in the image of God was no abstract theological concept for him. It was a lived reality. The archbishop advocated for social justice—from racial harmony to an end to war and violence. He treated people equally and made himself available to all, no matter their status. Archbishop Sheen was approachable to the greatest as much as to the least.



In addition to being a trailblazing media evangelist on radio and television, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, seen in this undated photo, heroically lived a life of virtue. After his beatification was put on hold for more than five years, the Holy See recently announced that it can now take place. (OSV News file photo)

—Fortitude

Archbishop Sheen exhibited fortitude amid an abundance of difficulties in both private and public life. Committed to a life of holiness and virtue, he refused to compromise on his own convictions and beliefs. In the face of trials, he remained a joyful and indefatigable herald of the Gospel, admired for maintaining peace of the soul.

Archbishop Sheen’s happiness was found in the knowledge that God always brings good out of any situation. Publicly, his fortitude was seen in his preaching of hard truths. Consider here his prophetic critiques of American society or his staunch denunciations of communism at the height of its flourishing.

Amid his successes and popularity, Archbishop Sheen quietly yet bravely faced envy, contempt and their resulting pain—especially from other members of the hierarchy.

“The real test of the Christian, then, is not how much he loves his friends,” he once wrote, “but how much he loves his enemies.” By the end of his life, a purified Archbishop Sheen could say, “I’ve had a great deal of suffering in the 83 years of my life—physical suffering, and other suffering, which should never [have] happened, but lasted over many years. And yet, as I look back, I know very well that I have never received the punishment that I deserved. God has been easy with me.”

The archbishop exhibited heroic doses of self-control, humility and kindness, which also were antidotes to the temptations presented to him throughout life, especially those associated with his accomplishments, accolades, position and fame.

—Temperance

Archbishop Sheen allowed God to reign in his heart. As a man of temperance, he was not controlled and dominated by the passions of the will. He was not known for immoderate temper or humiliation of others, but instead for an attractive peacefulness that he achieved through self-control and moderation. In his interactions with others, the archbishop often was meek, easy-going and gentle.

Not dependent or attached to earthly goods, his habits of life were marked by simplicity, though he also appreciated the finer things of life. Not intent on storing up worldly treasures, Archbishop Sheen cultivated a storehouse for eternity. He acknowledged his own sinfulness and sought reconciliation.

In the end, he knew, like St. Augustine, that only in God could his heart find rest.

(Michael R. Heinlein writes from Indiana.) †



Dolores Sheen, standing, a niece of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, and her daughters Lynn McCaddon and Mary Lou Sheen pray at the tomb of the famed evangelist, media pioneer and sainthood candidate at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria, Ill., on Feb. 4, 2021. (The Catholic Post/Tom Dermody)

Evangelization Outreach/Brie Anne Varick

Youth rally and Mass for Life offer signs of hope in the pro-life movement

On Jan. 22, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis hosted the annual Indiana Youth Rally and Mass for Life at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. This year marked the ninth annual gathering that brought together Catholics from across the state for prayer, formation and public witness to the dignity of human life.



That day, we welcomed more than 1,500 youths from all five Indiana dioceses for the Youth Rally for Life, and nearly 2,000 youths and adults joined us for the Mass for Life that followed.

The Youth Rally for Life was created with a mission: to inspire, equip and empower young people to be missionary disciples of the “Gospel of Life.” The event offered dynamic speakers, inspiring music, opportunities for confession, and the chance to interact with pro-life ministries that serve women, children and families throughout local communities.

The Mass for Life brought together people of all ages to pray for a culture in which every person is valued and the vulnerable are protected. The bishops of Indiana concelebrated the Mass with clergy from

across the state. This year, we were blessed to have Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson serve as the principal celebrant. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend was the homilist, and Bishop Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette offered a special blessing for those participating in the March for Life that followed.

As I prepared and prayed for this year’s events, my heart was especially drawn to the division and hostility present in our communities, our Church and our country.

I prayed for all our Catholic schools and parishes sending their youths, as well as those who were unable to join us.

During prayer, the Lord reminded me: “I am the face of the pro-life movement.” I pondered this truth and was reminded of the passage in the Gospel of Matthew, “Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, you do unto me” (Mt 25:40). I was reminded that Jesus is the face of the vulnerable, the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, the dying, the immigrant and the poor.

Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, our keynote speaker at the rally, offered a powerful witness to this truth by sharing stories of her ministry to the vulnerable—stories of infants in a neonatal intensive care unit, children with short but joy-filled lives and elderly individuals suffering

memory loss or illness. She reminded participants that every human person bears a unique dignity and has a purpose that not only reveals God’s love but reveals the face of Christ.

Jesus’ revelation to me in prayer as well as Mother Olga’s witness reaffirmed that the teachings of the Church cannot be separated from the person of Jesus Christ. Relationship leads to understanding, and understanding leads us deeper into relationship. The youth rally and the Mass together embodied this rhythm—encounter, formation and communion.

On Jan. 22, I witnessed the face of Christ in our youths, our adults, our families, our clergy and religious, and in the many volunteers who served at this event. The faith, joy and courage of our youth and families are signs of a Church alive and moving forward in hope.

My prayer is that all who attended not only encountered the face of Christ, but were reminded that we are all called to reveal his face to the world.

(Brie Anne Varick is the director of archdiocesan Office of Human Life and Dignity within the Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. She can be reached at bvarick@archindy.org.) †

Truth and Light/Leonard J. DeLorenzo

Sounds of silence in place of a homily at daily Mass allow God to speak

Imagine a daily Mass where, after the Gospel is proclaimed, the priest simply sits. The congregation sits. Silence fills the space—not an uncomfortable void, but a presence. After perhaps two minutes, the priest rises and continues with the prayers.



What might such a practice offer in our word-saturated world?

We live surrounded by constant noise. News alerts interrupt our meals. Podcasts accompany our commutes. Social media scrolls endlessly before sleep. Even our churches have embraced verbosity, as if more explanation equals more faith. But the Church’s own law recognizes what we’ve forgotten: the homily at daily Mass is recommended, not required.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* makes this explicit—while Sunday homilies are mandatory “and may not be omitted without a grave reason,” on weekdays the homily is merely “recommended, especially on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and

Easter Time” (#66).

This isn’t a loophole but a liturgical wisdom: daily Mass can breathe differently than Sunday Mass.

More striking still, that same instruction prescribes silence as part of the Liturgy of the Word itself (#56). The Second Vatican Council went further, listing “reverent silence” among the primary ways the faithful achieve “active participation” (“*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” #30). This isn’t passivity but engagement—silence as a deliberate liturgical act.

Pope Benedict XVI developed a “theology of silence,” arguing that the word of God can only “find a home in us” through interior quiet. “The great patristic tradition teaches us,” he wrote, “that the mysteries of Christ all involve silence. Only in silence can the word of God find a home in us, as it did in Mary, woman of the word and, inseparably, woman of silence” (“*Verbum Domini*,” #66).

The mysteries themselves require stillness to penetrate our hearts. Without it, the proclamation remains external, informational rather than transformational.

Cardinal Robert Sarah pressed this further, warning that we’ve created a “dictatorship of noise.” “God is silence,” he wrote, “and in a world generating so much noise, seeking moments of silence has become both harder and more necessary than ever before.” When even the liturgy becomes dominated by human words, we lose the sense that God is the primary actor.

The irony runs deep: We fill the Mass with explanations of God’s word while suffocating the space where that word might actually take root. This is especially true at daily Mass, which attracts those already committed—people who return day after day not for instruction but for encounter. These are disciples hungry for the Bread of Life, coming before work, during lunch breaks, in the quiet hours of early morning.

For Sunday Mass, where the homily remains essential, Pope Francis offered gentle correction about brevity. The homily “should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a speech or a lecture,” he wrote in “*Evangelii Gaudium*.” It should be like “a mother’s conversation”—warm, personal, focused on one nourishing idea. When Sunday preaching becomes sharper and more concentrated, it carries greater impact.

But daily Mass offers a different gift entirely. Here, silence becomes mystagogy—a means of entering more deeply into the mystery rather than explaining it from the outside. The regular faithful don’t need the basics repeated; they need space to let the proclaimed word sink into the soil of their hearts.

A priest who embraces silence at daily Mass doesn’t abandon his role; he deepens it. His preparation focuses on proclaiming the readings with care and celebrating the eucharistic prayer with reverence. After the Gospel, he gives his people the gift of quiet—a chance to hear not just with their ears but with their hearts.

This requires courage from priests and preparation from the laity. Pastors must trust that silence itself is ministry, that their people don’t need their words every day to be fed. The faithful, in turn, must come prepared—perhaps reading the Mass readings at home the night before, arriving early to settle their hearts, approaching the silent time as prayer rather than awkward pause. This isn’t emptiness but fullness, not absence but presence.

“Silence is more important than any other human work,” Cardinal Sarah insisted, “for it expresses God.” In our words, we express ourselves—our thoughts, our insights, our understanding. In silence, we allow God to speak. And God, as Scripture reminds us, often speaks most clearly not in the earthquake or fire but in the gentle whisper that requires stillness to hear.

(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.) †

Feeling IV/Effie Caldarola

A letter from a Birmingham jail and the ongoing challenges our society faces

In April 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. sat in jail in Birmingham, Ala.

Famously committed to non-violence, King was arrested after leading a peaceful march of Black protesters who were urging a boycott of white-owned stores in the deeply segregated city.



His offense? He had not been granted a permit and marched without one. As he languished behind bars, a group of eight local clergymen wrote an editorial saying the protest, in their words, was “unwise and untimely.”

King’s 7,000-word response, “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” written in the margins of a newspaper and smuggled out by his attorney, has become a classic of the Civil Rights Movement and a good re-read during Black History Month.

You can understand King’s frustration. It had been nearly a century since Black Americans had been freed from slavery, and yet they were still denied the most basic American freedoms, even the freedom to order a cup of coffee at a white man’s lunch counter. Underscoring these denials were decades of voter suppression and dehumanizing violence.

Was this protest “untimely?” When, I wonder, would these clergymen have agreed that the time was right?

Now, we find ourselves once again embroiled in dark times.

Yet I increasingly find hope in the faith response of the Catholic Church to our present crisis. Our wonderful pope, Leo XIV, has been speaking out on human dignity, the rights of the immigrant, the unborn and the need for dialogue in international relations. He decries “diplomacy based on force.”

In conjunction with our pope, the three American cardinals, Blase J. Cupich of Chicago, Robert W. McElroy of Washington, and Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., issued a joint statement reminding us that “the common good” is bedrock Catholic moral teaching.

They mention “the need for international aid to safeguard the most central elements of human dignity,” at a time when our country has drastically reduced foreign humanitarian aid, causing untold suffering and death.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, archbishop for Military Services, spoke out unequivocally against using our military against Greenland and supported the right of military personnel to obey their conscience in refusing to participate.

And all over the U.S., we see bishops, priests, congregations of religious women and Catholic laypeople speaking out in opposition to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions, indiscriminate deportations and the killings of two protestors in Minneapolis. The chorus of bishops protesting ICE action only grows louder.

But are American Catholics hearing this message?

How many know that we can receive alerts from the U.S. Catholic bishops on issues that are important to our faith? That we can be directed to a site where we can easily reach out to our elected representatives?

Simply go to uscceb.org, click on “issues and action,” then “take action.” Sign up to receive alerts in your e-mail box on the topics you choose. We all want to “do something” in these troubled times—here’s a way to do just that. Perhaps parish bulletins could share this information weekly.

After reading King’s letter, I wondered, who were these eight clergymen? King wrote that he knew they were “men of genuine good will.”

Were any of them Catholic? Yes, I discovered a broad range of denominations was represented, including a rabbi and a Catholic auxiliary bishop, whose obituary would later call “a civil rights advocate.”

Perhaps their words to King represented a misguided reluctance to make their faith “political.”

But the issues faced, then and today, are not Democratic or Republican issues—they are issues of human life and dignity, war, racism and the future of our planet.

The time is now.

(Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master’s degree in pastoral studies from Seattle University.) †

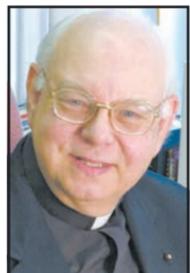
First Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 22, 2026

- Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
- Romans 5:12-19
- Matthew 4:1-11

The first reading for Mass on this first weekend of Lent 2026 is from the Book of Genesis.



Few passages in the Scriptures are as abundant in literary technique and in theological message as is this reading from Genesis. Bluntly confronting paganism and the tendency of all humans to avoid accusing themselves

of fault, it goes to the heart of sin.

The heart of sin is that it is the result of a freely chosen act by humans. While in this reading the role of the tempting devil is clear, it is also clear that the devil only tempts. He does not force the first man and woman to sin. They sinned of their own will.

The temptation has a lesson. Rebelling against God, the perfect and the perfectly just, was foolish. The first man and woman followed bad advice, trusting one another over God. It is a process that has been repeated untold number of times in the lives of us all.

The second reading is from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

In this passage, the Apostle looks back to the incident described in Genesis. He reminds us that, by their original sin, the first humans introduced sin into earthly existence with chaos and trouble being the inevitable results.

Thus, death and hardship are not God's designs for us. They were not curses sent upon the human race by an angry God. Believe it or not, the first humans chose them when they sinned. Sin, voluntary and deliberate, brought such devastatingly bad results into the world.

God is the center and source of everlasting love and mercy. He did not leave humanity in the whirlpool of death and despair created by sin. Instead, God sent Jesus, the Redeemer, the Son of God.

St. Matthew's Gospel provides the last

reading. It recalls the temptation of Jesus in the desert. It is a story also found in Mark and Luke.

As was the case with Genesis, this reading is heavy in symbolism. For example, bread in the time of Jesus much more obviously represented survival than bread would be today.

Modern refrigeration and quick transportation of food products have given us in our day a great variety of possible foods to consume. In the time of Jesus, the selection was considerably less. Bread was a principal food. So, as the devil tempts Jesus, bread is a familiar symbol of life and strength.

Then, the devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple to survey the world. It is diversion, to think of the earthly and not the heavenly.

The final, most powerful message is that Jesus commands the devil. Jesus is God.

Reflection

Watching the terrible events unfold recently in Minneapolis, the long, brutal wars in Ukraine and Gaza, someone exclaimed, "Why doesn't God stop it?"

Well, God has given us the way to stop all brutality and evil. He sent us Jesus, but we have a choice. Hear Jesus, follow Jesus—or not.

This is the first weekend of Lent. The Church uses the opportunity of this weekend to teach us that deliberate sinful human behavior is real, removing us from God and bringing disaster in its wake.

A very deadly effect of original sin was to leave humanity with the mind that sin somehow is not voluntary, and that we are without the power to resist sin.

In these readings, the Church calls us to wake up, be strong and then always follow the Lord. It insists upon our own personal role in sin. It gives the alternative, the path to life and peace, the path that follows and leads to the Lord.

Following Jesus is the purpose of Lent. †

Daily Readings

Monday, February 23

St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr
Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18
Psalm 19:8-10, 15
Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday, February 24

Isaiah 55:10-11
Psalm 34:4-7, 16-19
Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, February 25

Jonah 3:1-10
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19
Luke 11:29-32

Thursday, February 26

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25
Psalm 138:1-3, 7c-8
Matthew 7:7-12

Friday, February 27

St. Gregory of Narek, abbot and doctor of the Church
Ezekiel 18:21-28
Psalm 130:1-8
Matthew 5:20-26

Saturday, February 28

Deuteronomy 26:16-19
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8
Matthew 5:43-48

Sunday, March 1

Second Sunday of Lent
Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22
2 Timothy 1:8b-10
Matthew 17:1-9

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Ordaining a bishop without a papal mandate is a grave crime in the Church

I've read a lot recently about how the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) is planning to ordain new bishops this summer, with or without the pope's permission. Why is this such a problem, if the SSPX are all validly ordained anyway?



The quick, big-picture, short answer is that the

SSPX's proposed episcopal ordinations are a problem because ordaining new bishops without the permission of the pope (called a "mandate") is gravely injurious to Christian unity.

It is true that a truly ordained bishop is able, by virtue of his ordination, to confer the sacrament of holy orders on other men. This includes the ability to ordain lay men as deacons, deacons as priests and priests as bishops. So, if a bishop attempted to ordain a priest as a bishop without a pontifical mandate, the sacrament would still "work" and would result in a new and real bishop.

However, while such an ordination would be valid, it would be illicit—that is, against the law—and gravely so. In fact, canon law applies one of its most severe penalties for those directly involved with the ordination of a new bishop without a mandate from the pope.

As per canon 1387 of the *Code of Canon Law*, both the ordaining bishop and the new bishop who received the illicit ordination from him "incur a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See." This means that both men are excommunicated automatically as soon as the mandate-less ordination takes place, and their excommunication can only be "lifted" or

reversed by the authority of the pope.

The reason why canon law is so strict on this particular crime is because ordaining a bishop without the mandate of the pope, and especially if this happens against the pope's express wishes, is strongly connected to the sin, and more foundational crime, of schism.

Canon 751 defines schism as "the withdrawal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or from communion with the members of the Church subject to him." A Catholic can be schismatic on an individual level, such as if a lay Catholic personally decides he or she will no longer obey the pope or follow the laws of the Church.

But the negative effects of schism are multiplied exponentially when a bishop ordains new bishops totally on his own initiative, since this has the potential to create a sort of "parallel church," by which large numbers of the Catholic faithful might be drawn out of communion with the legitimate successor of St. Peter and the visible Church which Christ himself founded.

For background on this particular situation, the Society of St. Pius X was founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in 1970 in response to what he saw as the overly modernizing influence of the Second Vatican Council. Originally, the society was founded in the proper canonical way as a "pious union," at the time the first step toward becoming a recognized religious community.

But then in 1988, frustrated by Rome's lack of support for his work, Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated four new bishops against the explicit warnings of the Holy See. In his July 2, 1988, apostolic letter "*Ecclesiae Dei*," Pope St. John Paul II recognized this as a "schismatic act" and formally declared that the bishops involved were excommunicated.

Over the years, popes since St. John Paul II have made efforts to reconcile the SSPX to full communion with the Church. For instance, in January 2009, Pope Benedict XVI lifted the automatic excommunication of the surviving affected bishops as an act of mercy and pastoral concern; and at various points in Pope Francis' papacy priests in the SSPX were granted the wider ability to celebrate the sacraments in some circumstances.

If the SSPX were to go forward with the ordination of new bishops without a papal mandate, this would likely re-set the state of their dialogue with Rome to where it was in 1988.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.) †

My Journey to God

Looking in a Mirror

By Janine Schorsch

Scripture tells me that I am made in the image and likeness of God ...

I look in the mirror—
I see tired eyes; waking in the night,
Lines of worry,
Stressed features.
And a voice tells me, "Keep looking."

I look in the mirror.
I see eyes that view my life and others,
Lines of concern for our well-being,
Stress over their future and mine.
And a voice tells me, "Keep looking."

I look in a mirror.
I see eyes filled with love,
Lines formed in laughter and joy,
A relaxing of my features as I surrender my life to God.
And a voice tells me, "Keep looking."

I look in the mirror.
I see a child of God,
A Christ-bearer to the world,
An unmistakable Family resemblance.
And a voice asks me, "Who do you see now?"

I see the image and likeness of
my Lord, my God, my Father.



(Janine Schorsch is a member of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright. Photo: A visitor uses a mirror to take a closer look at the ornate architectural details of Iglesia de la Compania in Quito, Ecuador, on July 3, 2015.) (CNS/Barbara Fraser)

Rest in peace

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

BEYL, Shirley M., 92, St. Mark the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Jan. 24. Mother of Shelly Aaker and Thomas Beyl. Grandmother of one.

BUNYARD, James, 85, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Jan. 24. Father of Jay and Jeffrey Bunyard. Grandfather of one. Great-grandfather of one.

CLARK, Michael R., 88, St. Joseph, Corydon, Feb. 2. Father of Brenda Bozynski, Veronica Stidham, Joe and Michael Clark, Jr. Brother of Shirley Slucher and Robert Clark. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of 21. Great-great-grandfather of seven.

DALL, Betty J., 91, All Saints, Dearborn County, Feb. 8. Mother of Bonita McCoy and Roger Dall. Sister of Sharon Peelman, Dale, Jerry, Larry and Steve Grace. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of five.

DALTON, Eleanor T., 83, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 5. Wife of Charles Dalton. Mother of Susan Cameron, Michael and Stephen Dalton. Grandmother of four.

GESWEIN, Maurice C., 95, St. Mary, Lanesville, Feb. 1. Father of Jane Berkley and Diane Kost. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of five.

JONES, Sherry K., 69, St. John Paul II, Sellersburg, Jan. 30. Mother of Brooke Staples. Sister of Kathy Maertz and Nancy Wilding. Grandmother of one.

LINGG, Jr., George F., 100, All Saints, Dearborn County, Feb. 9. Father of Mary Finn and Monica Wiggins. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of several.

MOORMAN, James K., 95, St. Louis, Batesville, Feb. 9. Husband of Joan Moorman. Father of Jama and Steve Moorman. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of eight.

PIERLE, Jerome F., 88, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Feb. 6. Husband of Charleen Pierle. Father of Karla, Karen, Keith, Kent and Kevin Pierle.



Pope Leo XIV chats with children before posing for a group photo on Feb. 15 during his pastoral visit to the Parish of Santa Maria Regina Pacis in Ostia Lido, Italy. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Brother of Richard Pierle. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of 30.

SCHWEGMAN, Threasa V., 71, St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty, Feb. 7. Wife of Stephen Schwegman. Mother of Ashley Otto and Steve Schwegman. Sister of Tonya Dare, Tammy Drudy and Tara McCreary. Grandmother of four.

SHARPE, Lou Emma (McIntyre), 92, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Feb. 7. Mother of Edward and Leroy Sharpe. Grandmother of one.

SILER, Mary C., 74, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Dec. 28, 2025. Stepmother of Sarah Siler. Sister of Anne Everhart,

Terry James, Monica Sutton, Jim, Joe, John, Mike and Pat Siler. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

STAGGE, Joseph L., 87, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 7. Husband of Barbara Stagge. Father of Melissa Yeley and Tony Brewsaugh. Brother of Diana Hoeing, Marilyn Nies and Norma

Zobel. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of one.

WAGNER, Mattie H., 95, St. Louis, Batesville, Feb. 7. Mother of Carol Heidlage, Cathy Kerker, Ginger Saccomando and Beth Zawaski. Sister of Mildred Gabbard and Brenda Werner. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 22. †

Bishops join Bishop Rhoades in outcry over Notre Dame appointment

(OSV News)—Bishops, former faculty and other Catholic leaders are backing a call from an Indiana bishop to rescind the administrative appointment of a pro-abortion professor at the University of Notre Dame.

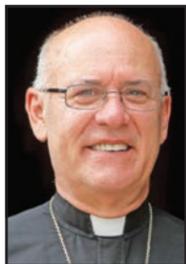
As of Feb. 13, at least nine bishops, including Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, have expressed their support for a Feb. 11 call by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend to reverse the naming of associate professor Susan Ostermann as director of Notre Dame's Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, effective on July 1.

"I fully support Bishop Kevin Rhoades in his challenge to Notre Dame to rectify its poor judgment in hiring a professor who openly stands against Catholic teaching when it comes to the sanctity of life, in this case protection of the unborn," Archbishop Coakley said on Feb. 13.

The institute is part of the university's Keough School of Global Affairs, of which Ostermann—who specializes in the study of regulatory compliance, comparative politics and environmental regulation, with a focus on

South Asia—has been a faculty member since 2017.

In his statement, Bishop Rhoades—in whose diocese the university is located—expressed "dismay" and "strong opposition" to the appointment of Ostermann, due to her robust public endorsement of legal abortion, and her work as a consultant for the Population Council, an international research and policy firm that works to advance "sexual and reproductive health, rights and choices" as a key aim.



Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Noting he had read "many of the op-ed pieces co-authored by Professor Ostermann," Bishop Rhoades said the appointment violated "a core principle of justice that is central to Notre Dame's Catholic identity and mission," while "causing scandal to the faithful of our diocese and beyond."

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minn., posted Bishop Rhoades' full statement on X shortly after its release, noting his "strong support" for the message while describing Ostermann as "not simply 'pro-choice'" but "a sharp critic of the pro-life position and those who advocate it."

"I believe that going ahead with this appointment is repugnant to the identity and mission" of the university, said Bishop Barron.

Bishop Donald J. Hying of Madison, Wis., also reposted Bishop Rhoades' statement on X, saying in a Feb. 12 post, "I stand in solidarity with Bishop Rhoades and his letter," which Bishop Hying described as "a profound reflection on human dignity and the culture of life."

"We pray that all of our educational institutions support Catholic teaching, especially regarding human life," he added.

Among the other prelates endorsing Bishop Rhoades' statement are recently retired Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, Bishop James D. Conley of Lincoln, Neb., Bishop Michael F. Olson of Fort Worth, Texas, Bishop David L. Ricken of Green Bay, Wis., and Bishop James S. Wall of Gallup, N.M.

Two current Notre Dame faculty severed their affiliation with the Liu Institute following news of Ostermann's appointment.

Diane Desierto, professor of law and global affairs, relinquished her role as a Liu faculty fellow, pointing to Pope Leo XIV's statements on abortion and explaining in

a LinkedIn post that "in my work of teaching, scholarship and service at our pre-eminent Catholic university, I take and reflect on Pope Leo XIV's words seriously."

Another Liu fellow, professor emeritus of theology Robert Gimello, also walked away from the institute on account of Ostermann's appointment.

In a statement to *The Observer*—the independent student newspaper that serves Notre Dame, as well as nearby Saint Mary's and Holy Cross colleges—Gimello said, "Continued formal association with a unit of the university led by such a person is, for me, simply unconscionable—this regardless of whatever considerable talents and accomplishments the appointee might otherwise bring to the job."

He described Ostermann as "a scholar who has repeatedly, publicly and adamantly proclaimed her opposition to [verging at times, it seems to me, on contempt for] the Catholic Church's firm teaching that protection and nourishment of human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, is a sacred duty incumbent upon the whole human community."

In a Feb. 13 article for *First Things*, retired faculty member Christian Smith—a sociologist and former director of the school's Center for the Study of Religion and Society—said that Notre Dame's leaders are at an institutional level "equivocal about that Catholic mission and make decisions and pursue practices that undermine it."

Without naming Ostermann or explicitly addressing the controversy surrounding her appointment, Smith lamented that despite formal requirements that most Notre Dame faculty should be Catholic, "in many if not most cases that goal is achieved through a 'tick the box' approach, whereby a candidate who was baptized Catholic but now despises Catholicism counts as Catholic."

"Faculty who have no business being at Notre Dame—both for the university's mission and students and for their own sanity—are regularly hired and promoted with tenure," said Smith. "No effort is made systematically to orient and educate new faculty in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Some department chairs are appointed who not only are indifferent to the Catholic mission but actively resist and subvert it."

In a statement provided to OSV News, Ostermann said that her "primary focus is to serve as a steward for the Liu Institute mission in the context of the University's larger mission, and a facilitator for our world-class faculty," adding that she is "fully committed to maintaining an environment of academic freedom where a plurality of voices can flourish." †

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

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

Head of Ukrainian Church thanks Pope Leo XIV for ‘solidarity and support’

(OSV News)—The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) met with Pope Leo XIV, briefing the pope on the situation in Ukraine as Russia’s



Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk

full-scale invasion reaches the four-year mark.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk spoke with Pope Leo at the Apostolic Palace on Feb. 12, the second personal audience the prelate has had since meeting with the pope days after his election,

said the UGCC press office in an update released shortly after the meeting.

During the meeting, Major Archbishop Shevchuk thanked the pope for the “solidarity and support” he has shown to Ukraine.

That support has included diplomatic efforts by the Vatican to end the conflict and to secure the return of prisoners of war. Major Archbishop Shevchuk provided Pope Leo with lists of prisoners and missing persons whose names he had received from families.

Under both Pope Leo and the late Pope Francis, the Vatican has also worked for the return of thousands of Ukrainian children who have been systematically

deported by Russia, forcibly stripped of their Ukrainian identity and placed for adoption in Russian families, with many children militarized.

The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and child commission Maria Lvova-Belova for the deportations, which began in 2014 and which violate international law.

Major Archbishop Shevchuk thanked Pope Leo for the Vatican’s “important mission in saving human lives, in which the Holy See has been systematically involved since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine.”

Pope Leo and Major Archbishop Shevchuk also discussed the UGCC’s pastoral ministry amid Russia’s ongoing attacks, which continue assaults launched in 2014, and which have been declared a genocide in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

Russia’s most recent assaults have particularly targeted civilian infrastructure and energy systems amid winter.

Speaking to Ukrainian Catholics in Rome during a Feb. 8 Divine Liturgy, Major Archbishop Shevchuk—referencing the dire conditions faced by Ukrainians lacking heat—said, “I have come to you today from frozen but indomitable Kyiv as a witness to the indomitability of our people.”

Major Archbishop Shevchuk said that Pope Leo “was impressed that our Church has developed and is actively implementing its pastoral plan ‘Healing the Wounds of War.’”

The plan seeks to address the physical, emotional and spiritual consequences of Russia’s war on Ukraine. In the U.S., the UGCC’s Archeparchy of Philadelphia has a dedicated charitable fund of the same name for projects associated with the pastoral plan.

Pope Leo was also pleased that the UGCC “is a space of solidarity and unity that unites Ukrainians in Ukraine with the global Ukrainian community,” said Major Archbishop Shevchuk.

The two also reflected on the global reach of the UGCC, with Major Archbishop Shevchuk stressing that “our local Church of Kyiv Christianity is Ukrainian in origin, but it is not a Church

only for Ukrainians—instead, it is open to the proclamation of the Gospel to all peoples, precisely thanks to its full visible communion with the successor of the Apostle Peter.”

Major Archbishop Shevchuk extended once again an invitation to Pope Leo to visit Ukraine.

He also presented the pope with “The Dove of Peace in Time of War,” a ceramic sculpture by Italian artist and cardiologist Luciano Capriotti.

The work includes a metal fragment from a Russian missile leveled at the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv.

Reflecting on the piece, Major Archbishop Shevchuk said, “This wound provokes great pain for the bird, but we see that it is not dead—it is alive.

“This is a beautiful symbol of modern wounded but alive Ukraine,” he continued. †

Classified Directory

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Employment

Editorial Assistant

The Criterion

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis seeks a detail-oriented and creative Editorial Assistant to support the weekly production of its newspaper, The Criterion. The position resides within the Secretariat for Communications, supporting mission-driven storytelling across print and digital platforms.

This position is ideal for someone with basic layout/design skills (InDesign or similar), strong writing, proofreading, and attention to detail, ability to meet weekly deadlines and an interest in journalism, communications, or Catholic media.

For the Full Job Description and Qualifications, visit www.archindy.org/hr/jobs/2026-01-Editorial.html or scan the QR code.

To Apply: Send résumé, cover letter, and writing/design samples to Mike Krokos, editor, – mkrokos@archindy.org.



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For the Full Job Description and Qualifications, visit www.archindy.org/hr/jobs/2026-01-Communications.html or scan the QR code.

To Apply: Send résumé, cover letter, and writing/design samples to Mary King, assistant director – mking@archindy.org.



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Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Lent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

Batesville Deanery

Feb. 20, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
 Feb. 20, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
 Feb. 24, 7 p.m., at St. Mary, Greensburg
 March 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
 March 6, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Martin Church of All Saints Parish, Dearborn County
 March 10, 6 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
 March 20, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
 March 24, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church of St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County
 March 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
 March 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
 March 26, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
 March 28, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville
 April 1, 9-11 a.m. and 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery:

Fridays 11 a.m.-noon at St. John the Evangelist Church of St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Decatur County
 Wednesdays 5-6 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan
 Saturdays after 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Nicholas, Ripley County, and 4-5 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo, Milan

Bloomington Deanery

March 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
 March 17, 7-9 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
 March 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
 March 26, 6-7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
 April 1, 6-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

Connersville Deanery

Feb. 25, 6 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle
 March 11, 6:30 p.m. at St. Bridget of Ireland, Liberty
 March 12, 6 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
 March 13, 5:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Richmond

Indianapolis East Deanery

March 12, 6:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit

Indianapolis North Deanery

March 1, 2 p.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas
 March 2, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence
 March 3, 7 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist

Additional opportunity for reconciliation in the Indianapolis North Deanery:

March 30, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., no appointment needed

Indianapolis South Deanery

March 3, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
 March 11, 7 p.m. for St. Jude and St. Mark the Evangelist, at St. Mark the Evangelist
 March 12, 6:30 p.m. for Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, and Good Shepherd, at Holy Name of Jesus
 March 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
 March 26, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood
 March 28, 8:30-10 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

Feb. 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
 March 3, 7 p.m. for St. Gabriel the Archangel, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Monica, at St. Monica
 March 10, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
 March 12, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony
 March 24, 7 p.m. at St. Christopher

New Albany Deanery

Feb. 24, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
 Feb. 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. John Paul II, Sellersburg
 March 5, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Lanesville; St. Joseph, Corydon; and St. Bernard, Frenchtown, at St. Mary (confession available in English and Spanish)
 March 11, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
 March 12, 6 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany (confession available in English and Spanish)
 March 23, 7 p.m. for St. John the Baptist, Starlight, and St. Mary, Navilleton, at St. John the Baptist
 March 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
 March 25, 7 p.m. for St. Michael, Charlestown, and St. Francis Xavier, Henryville, at St. Michael (confession available in English and Spanish)
 March 26, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery

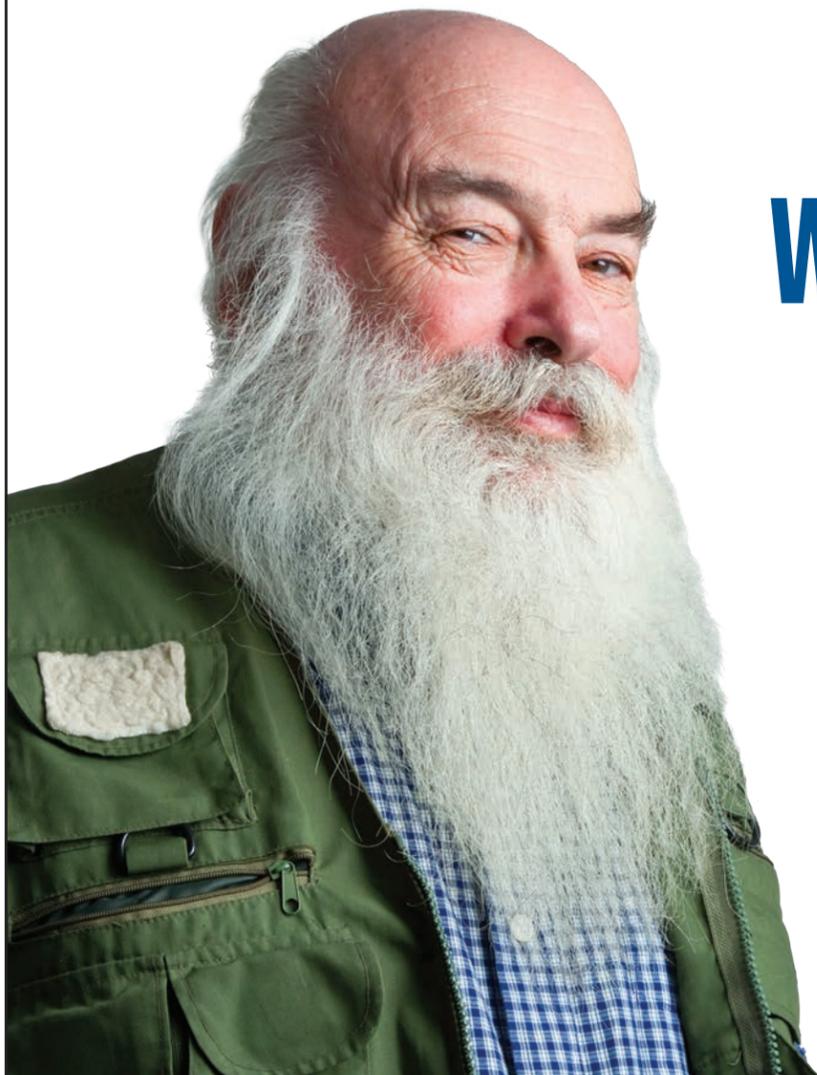
March 4, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus
 March 10, 6:30 p.m. for St. Mary, North Vernon, and St. Ann and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Mary
 March 19, 6:30 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace
 March 24, 6 p.m. at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh
 March 25, 6:30 p.m. for St. Ambrose, Seymour; St. Patrick, Salem; and American Martyrs, Scottsburg, at St. Ambrose

Tell City Deanery

March 15, 2 p.m. CT at St. Paul, Tell City

Terre Haute Deanery

March 6, 1-4 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
 March 24, 6-8 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
 March 25, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
 March 25, 6 p.m. at Sacred Heart, Clinton
 March 26, 6-8 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle †



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