President’s action banning refugees brings outcry from Church leaders

WASHINGTON (CNS)—President Donald J. Trump’s executive memorandum intended to restrict the entry of terrorists coming to the United States brought an outcry from Catholic leaders across the U.S.

Church leaders used phrases such as “devastating,” “chaotic,” and “cruel” to describe the Jan. 27 action that left already-approved refugees and immigrants stranded at U.S. airports and led the Department of Homeland Security to rule that green card holders—lawful permanent U.S. residents—be allowed into the country.

“The executive order to turn away refugees and to close our nation to those, particularly Muslims, fleeing violence, oppression and persecution is contrary to both Catholic and American values,” said Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich in a Jan. 29 statement.

“The Protection of the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” which suspends the entire U.S. refugee resettlement program for 120 days, bans entry from all citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries—Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia—for 90 days.

The executive action also establishes a religious criterion for refugees, proposing to give priority to religious minorities over others who may have equally compelling refugee claims.

“We are told this is not the ‘Muslim ban’ that had been proposed during the presidential campaign, but these actions focus on Muslim-majority countries,” said Cardinal Cupich.

The cardinal quoted Pope Francis’ remarks to Congress in 2015: “If we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us give opportunity.”

“I certainly see that coming through in their lives,” Biggs credits that transformation to the youths’ experience during the march, where they “witnessed hundreds of thousands of youths from all across the nation who stood up for life.”

Hundreds of young people from across the Archdiocese of Indianapolis contributed to that witness. Buses filled with youths from the New Albany, Indianapolis North and Indianapolis West deaneries made the journey to Washington.

Other groups from the archdiocese included youths from All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Columbus, where Biggs serves as coordinator of youth ministry.

By John Shaughnessy

The joy flows from Scotty Biggs as he mentions the best sign he saw from the 44th annual March for Life in Washington on Jan. 27.

The “sign” involved the transformation in the 32 youths who attended the march from St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, where Biggs serves as coordinator of youth ministry.

Before the march, Biggs noticed that many of the youths from St. Bartholomew often struggled to publicly proclaim their pro-life beliefs—because too few of their fellow students in the public high schools they attend share those beliefs.

“Since coming back from the march, they’re changing their Facebook profiles to photos of the march,” Biggs says, the enthusiasm filling his voice. “They’re posting on Instagram, and they’re posting on Twitter about the impact the march has had in their lives.

“It shows to me and to others that the Holy Spirit is at work here, because one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is courage. And I certainly see that coming through in their lives.”

Archdiocesan youths show their courage by marching, standing up for life in America

Surrounded by ‘new family,’ Cardinal Tobin takes possession of titular church in Rome

ROME (CNS)—Flanked by the parishioners and well-wishers he called his “new family,” Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., celebrated Mass at his titular church in Rome.

The cardinal formally took possession of the Church of St. Mary of the Graces on Jan. 29.

The church is located just a short distance from St. Peter’s Basilica.

Arriving dressed in his cardinal-red cassock, Cardinal Tobin was greeted by Father Antonio Raimondo Fois, pastor of St. Mary of the Graces Parish, and presented with a cross which he solemnly kissed before he entered and blessed the people in the packed church.

Each cardinal is considered an honorary member of the clergy of the Diocese of Rome, and is also named an honorary pastor of a parish church there. That church is known as their “titular church.”

In his homily, Cardinal Tobin, previously the archbishop of Indianapolis from 2012-16, reflected on Twitter about the impact the march has had in their lives.

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TOBIN said Christians should instead heed the world." Those who are shameful and despised by such a distinction unites Christians since (1 Cor 1:27). First Letter to the Corinthians, in which Bishop Cruz received 20 stitches and, although unable to celebrate Mass, he went out to greet parishioners and well-wishers after Sunday Mass at the cathedral. Father Fois said parishioners would join the cardinal in praying for Bishop Cruz’s “healing and quick recovery.”

Telling parishioners that he may be “a foolish missionary cardinal” in the world’s eye, Cardinal Tobin said that such a distinction unites Christians since throughout church history “has chosen those who are shameless and despised by the world.” In a “world that prides itself in having, in dominating others, in being fearful of others and in making selfish choices,” Cardinal Tobin said Christians should instead heed St. Paul’s call to “be in the Lord.”

Recalling the parish’s namesake, the cardinal said the first grace Mary gave to all Christians is the grace of knowing and following Jesus, embarking on a path that made her “the first disciple of Christ.”

“Today we invoke Mary’s help and graces, and we beseech her to accompany us in the great adventure of becoming missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Redeemer,” said the cardinal, a former superior general of the Most Holy Redeemer,” said the cardinal, a former superior general of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart. Jim Goodness, archdiocesan spokesman, told Catholic News Service on Jan. 29 that Bishop Cruz received 20 stitches and, although unable to celebrate Mass, he went out to greet parishioners and well-wishers after Sunday Mass at the cathedral.

Father Fois said parishioners would join the cardinal in praying for Bishop Cruz’s “healing and quick recovery.”

We will work vigorously to ensure that refugees are humanely welcomed in collaboration with Catholic Churches without sacrificing our security or our core values as Americans, and to ensure that families may be reunited with their loved ones,” he said. Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington called attention to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services in how to best serve those who are present here, and those who will be resettling here in the future. We are always grateful for the support of so many in our community who stand with us.”

Bethuram said the archdiocese respects “that safety needs to be addressed, not through an order like this that will do more harm than good.”

Welcoming migrants, immigrants and refugees reflects not only our Catholic tradition, but also our biblical tradition to welcome the stranger. This also includes embracing all who are vulnerable from many faiths.

Shortly after Trump signed the document at the Pentagon’s Hall of Heroes, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration, said the bishops “strongly disagree” with the action to halt refugee resettlement.

“We believe that now more than ever, welcoming newcomers and refugees is an act of love and hope,” Bishop Vasquez said.

The USCCB operates the largest refugee resettlement program in the United States, and Bishop Vasquez said the Church would continue to engage the administration as it had with administrations for 40 years.

“Welcoming those in need is part of America’s DNA.”

“This nation has a long and rich history of welcoming those who have sought refuge because of oppression or fear of death,” Cardinal Tobin said.

“The Acadians, French, Irish, German, Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Jews and Vietnamese are just a few of the many groups whom we have welcomed and helped to find a better, safer life for themselves and their children in America. Even when such groups were met by irrational fear, prejudice and persecution, the signature benevolence of the United States of America eventually triumphed. That kind confidence is what has made us, and will continue to make, America great.”

Around the country, people gathered at airports— including the Indianapolis International Airport—on Jan. 29 to express solidarity with immigrants and refugees. More than 550 people gathered at Lafayette Park across from the White House on Jan. 29 to celebrate Mass in solidarity with refugees.

In a letter to the president and members of Congress, more than 2,000 religious leaders representing the Interfaith Immigration Coalition objected to the action.

Sean Callahan, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), said: “Welcoming those in need is part of America’s DNA.”

“The United States is already using a thorough vetting process for refugees— especially for those from Syria and surrounding countries. CRS welcomes measures that will make our country safer, but shouldn’t jeopardize the safety of those fleeing violence, should not add appreciable delay nor entail unjust discrimination.”

(John Shaughnessy, assistant editor of The Criterion, contributed to this report.)

Correction

In the Jan. 27 issue of The Criterion, Abby Schmidt, a junior at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond, was misidentified in a Catholic Schools Week story as Emily Schmidt. —

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The students in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Catholic schools are doing great things! Please take the time to review a special publication from the Office of Catholic Schools at www.archindy.org/DCS-Special-Publication-2016-2017 highlighting our Catholic Schools and those who help us make us what we are today!

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The Office of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

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Catholics oppose actions on border wall, sanctuary communities

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Catholic organizations expressed distress and unease with President Donald J. Trump’s actions related to immigration while pledging to continue serving and supporting migrant people.

The reactions came within hours of Trump’s signing of executive memorandums on national security on Jan. 25 during a visit to the Department of Homeland Security. The memorandums authorized the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and directed John F. Kelly, secretary of homeland security, to look at how federal funding streams can be cut for cities and states that illegally harbor those in the country without legal permission.

Agencies cited the words of Pope Francis in criticizing the president’s actions and pledged to support and serve migrants in the United States.

“Pope Francis has urged people not to close the door on migrants and refugees,” Dominican Sister Donna Markham, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, said in a statement. “In concert with the Holy Father, we believe we must move from attitudes of defensiveness and fear to acceptance, compassion and encounter.”

“As the U.S. Catholic bishops have said, this is not an either/or situation for Pope Francis in criticizing the president’s policies is part of an emerging pattern of President Trump of not only bewildering people who dare to disagree with him, but isolating and further marginalizing people who are different than him,” said Eddie Carmona, campaign director for PICO National Network’s LA RED campaign.

“Such behavior is inconsistent with the long-held notion that America was a place of opportunity for all,” Sister Simone Campbell, a Sister of Social Service and executive director of Network, a Catholic social justice lobbying organization, recalled the presidential orders “antiethetical to our faith.”

“When Nuns on the Bus visited the U.S.-Mexico border in 2014, we walked along the wall and listened to the stories of communities that have been torn apart for decades. That is the reality experienced by border communities. The wall is there, and it affects the daily life and commerce of the people. Federal appropriations for border security have grown to $3.8 billion in FY2015, from $263 million in FY1990, and fencing exists for hundreds of miles along our southern border,” she said in a statement.

The Washington-based Catholic Center for Advocacy and Outreach retrieved Pope Francis’ words at the close of the Holy Year of Mercy that concluded in November in which he decried a global “epidemic of animosity and violence” toward strangers, immigrants and refugees who often are considered a threat.

“Trump’s signings ‘present false and inhumane responses’ to the harsh reality of poverty, violence and conflict that cause people to migrate, the center said in a statement. “As people of faith, we are called to both address the root causes of migration and seek policies of welcome toward our migrant sisters and brothers. We stand against any policies that seek to build a wall, inhumanely detain women and families, end sanctuary cities, conduct immigration raids, limit migration based on a person’s country of origin and further militarize the border,” the statement added.

“Pax Christi USA sided with “our immigrant brothers and sisters living in fear of deportation and separation from their families.”

“No one flees their countries of origin on a whim,” a statement from the Catholic peace organization said. “We honor the multiplicity of reasons people migrate to the United States, many of which are poverty, gang violence and terror.”

The Franciscan Action Network expressed concern that the country would be turning its back on refugees after Trump’s actions.

“The Gospels call us to welcome the stranger, so as people of faith we advocate and support the rights and dignity of all people,” Patrick Carolan, the Franciscan network’s executive director, said in a statement. “The United States has been built by immigrants, and we must continue to protect our immigrant and refugee sisters and brothers and keep families together.”

The U.S. cannot be blinded to the despair of migrants and refugees, including those from Syria and different faith traditions, Carolan said in another statement.

“The faithful response is not to build a wall or to discriminate against Muslims, but to open our hearts and our homes to refugees of all faiths in recognition of our sacred call to protect and nourish life. If we refuse to welcome refugees in urgent need, we risk becoming like those we claim to deplore,” Lee said.

Elsewhere, the Jesuits of Canada and the United States said they were concerned about the administration’s actions “increasingly, migrants come to the U.S. fleeing violence and insecurity,” the Jesuits said in a statement. “Our faith calls us to see them, to understand their situations and to offer protection.”

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In addition to the ministries listed above, Pro-Life and Family Life Ministry receives $241,000 to support programs such as Project Rachel.

Project Rachel is a program that supports women and men suffering in the aftermath of an abortion as they begin the healing process.

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- Heals grief, guilt, anger and depression
- Offers mercy, forgiveness and peace
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United Catholic Appeal: Christ Our Hope

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Judge president’s actions on merit

Last fall, Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin wrote a series of columns on the then-upcoming presidential elections. The cardinal’s reflections took the teachings of the Church to the people, as articulated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and applied them to the “hot-button” social issues driving the campaign. These issues included:

• The ongoing destruction of more than 1 million human lives each year by abortion;
• Physician-assisted suicide;
• The excessive consumption of natural resources, which harm both the environment and the poor;
• The deadly attacks on fellow Christians and religious minorities throughout the world;
• The narrowing redefinition of religious freedom, which threatens both individual conscience and the freedom of the Church to teach;
• Economic policies that fail to prioritize the poor, at home or abroad;
• A broken immigration system and a widespread refugee crisis;
• Wars, terror and violence that threaten every aspect of human life and dignity.

With the election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States, and with Republicans in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, these and many other issues have taken on a new sense of urgency.

Where does the Church stand on these issues? Should Catholics in the United States be optimist or alarmed at what the Trump administration has begun to do in its first days in office? Cardinal Tobin’s columns repeated several times his conviction that “no candidate or political party fully represents the moral and social teaching of the Catholic Church.” As a result, the Church will stand at both ends of the political spectrum. Or, if you prefer, we can say that the Church stands at neither end of the spectrum—firmly in defense of the dignity of all persons and proactively interested in peace, social justice and the common good.

To learn the Church’s position on the nine issues noted above, consult the USCCB document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” or re-read Cardinal Tobin’s columns leading up to the November 2016 elections.

The Church’s position on the actions of the Trump administration is not pro-Trump or anti-Trump. It is not bleakly fatalistic or naively optimistic. The Church stands by its principles—on the dignity of every human life; on religious liberty, on care for the sick, on universal health care, on welcoming strangers, on poverty and injustice, on care for all of creation, on culture and security for all nations and peoples.

To judge the actions of the Trump administration, the bishops offered the following words of caution:

• We should listen carefully and respectfully to other people. Instead, we should assume others who hold different positions from ours, even if we disagree with them.
• We should carefully about language we use, avoiding inflammatory words and phrases.
• We should not assign motives to others, either good or bad, and assume that our family members, friends and colleagues are speaking in good faith, even if we disagree with them.
• We should carefully about language we use, avoiding inflammatory words and phrases.

By the standards of Church teaching and a carefully researched Catholic magazine, the widespread use of Spanish as a language for Catholic affairs. In many parts of the country, Catholicism is a de facto bilingual reality (i.e., English and Spanish).

The Hispanic presence is most advanced in some parts of the country, like the South and the West. It is impossible to miss it in virtually every major urban setting of our vast geography. Take the nine largest cities in the country according to population (in this order): New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego; Dallas; and San Jose, Calif. In most of them, the majority of Catholics are Hispanic.

Much has changed demographically and culturally about American Catholicism during the past five decades. At the heart of those transformations is the fast-growing Hispanic presence, both immigrant and U.S.-born. Along with immigrants and U.S. Catholics of other races and ethnicities, Hispanics have written a new chapter in the history of what it means to be American and Catholic.

During the 2016 campaign, as rhetoric grew more shrill and inflammatory on all sides, the American bishops offered the following words of counsel:

• Physician-assisted suicide;
• The excessive consumption of natural resources, which harm both the environment and the poor;
• Wars, terror and violence that threaten every aspect of human life and dignity.

As I viewed the thousands of women marching and “protesting for their rights” on Jan. 21 in Washington, many of them actually asserting for their rights to have an abortion, astonishingly I wondered what if the millions of souls who have been previously aborted in the world were standing before the throne of God, pleading for justice? For the record, I do not have an issue with women’s equal rights, as in God’s eyes all are equal. That is not the issue, but the right to have an abortion is the issue.

Has this happened before? In researching Jewish history, it actually has. In the Book of Kings, there was, essentially advised by God not to pray for the people of Judah. “Even if Moses and Samuel stood before me, we would not turn toward this people” (Jer 15:1-4).

God proceeds to explain four ways in which he was going to chastise the people of Judah. Then God continues to reveal to Jeremiah his deep displeasure with one particular person, and as the last of the bad events that the Davvidic kingdom had in over 400 years, but the one and only King Manasses of Judah. In the Book of Kings and Chronicles, it is validated that King “Manasses shed innocent blood” (2 Kgs 21:16). In fact, additional investigation exposes that Manasses worshiped the god of Moloch, which causae a multitude of transtions.

The next scene in Bible history is the blowing of the first trumpet. How magnificent it is own reflection.

The underlying message being shared is that this insanity must stop now before anything else is done. We, as a whole, will suffer for their wrongdoings. This is not a right. This is just immoral. Do not be deceived.

Dr. Kenneth J. Pulham
Brooklyn

Page 4 The Criterion Friday, February 3, 2017

U.S. Catholicism and the Hispanic experience in the second decade of the 21st century particularly in hand in hand.

The evidence? Well, just look around.

Look at the families attending Mass in our parishes, the children being baptized and receiving first Communion, the faces of young Catholics today, the various rhythms that give life to liturgical music in parishes, among many others.

In thousands of faith communities, these faces and expressions are Hispanic.

This is not news. It is who we are! It is about Catholicism, being Hispanic and Catholic is not new: It is who we are! It is about our cultural worldviews and traditions, the languages we speak and the many ways we experience the mystery of Jesus Christ as Hispanics. We see the world and our faith through Hispanic Catholic eyes.

For almost half of American Catholics, being Hispanic and Catholic is not news: It is who we are! It is about our cultural worldviews and traditions, the languages we speak and the many ways we experience the mystery of Jesus Christ as Hispanics. We see the world and our faith through Hispanic Catholic eyes.

For the rest of U.S. Catholics, the Hispanic presence is an invitation to

affirm particular ways of living the faith, old and new, while embracing their Hispanic sisters and brothers. A shared journey as we all continue to build vibrant communities, faithful families and a strong society rooted in the values of the Gospel.

With these realities in mind, during the next few years, January 2017 through December 2020, the Catholic Church in the United States is embarking in a most amazing ecclesial experience: The Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/ Latino Ministry (aka, V Encuentro). This is a significant new process of reflection, evangelization and consultation that aims at engaging about 8 million Catholics in more than 5,000 parishes and almost every diocese in the country.

The V Encuentro has a twofold goal: Discern how the Church can better embrace the Hispanic/Latino presence, and strengthen the ways Hispanics/Latinos respond as part of the Church to the call to a new evangelization. Though the emphasis is on Hispanic/Catholic, given the special influence that the Trump administration can impart upon thousands of faith communities nationwide, all U.S. Catholics are invited to join the Hispanic/Latino presence.

Pope Francis himself has recognized the importance and potential of the V Encuentro’s focus. In November 2016, speaking from Rome, he addressed the Catholic bishops of the United States, affirming:

“It is my hope that the Church in your country at every level will accompany the Encuentro with both an active and pastoral discernment. In a particular way, I ask you to consider how your local church can correspond to the call of this new growing presence, graces and potential of the Hispanic community.

Yes, this is a unique moment to be a Church that goes forth in the spirit of the V Encuentro, a great time to contemplate Hispanic Catholicism “through Hispanic Catholic eyes.”

(Hoffman Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College. He is a member of the leadership team for the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry.)

Letter to the Editor

‘Do not be deceived,’ reader says, transgression of abortion must end

As I viewed the thousands of women marching and “protesting for their rights” on Jan. 21 in Washington, many of them actually asserting for their rights to have an abortion, astonishingly I wondered what if the millions of souls who have been previously aborted in the world were standing before the throne of God, pleading for justice? For the record, I do not have an issue with women’s equal rights, as in God’s eyes all are equal. That is not the issue, but the right to have an abortion is the issue.

Has this happened before? In researching Jewish history, it actually has. In the Book of Kings, there was, essentially advised by God not to pray for the people of Judah. “Even if Moses and Samuel stood before me, we would not turn toward this people” (Jer 15:1-4).

God proceeds to explain four ways in which he was going to chastise the people of Judah. Then God continues to reveal to Jeremiah his deep displeasure with one particular person, and as the last of the bad events that the Davvidic kingdom had in over 400 years, but the one and only King Manasses of Judah. In the Book of Kings and Chronicles, it is validated that King “Manasses shed innocent blood” (2 Kgs 21:16). In fact, additional investigation exposes that Manasses worshiped the god of Moloch, which causae a multitude of transtions.
Legislation to lift a ban on food assistance for reformed drug offenders passed a Senate panel on Jan. 23 by an 8-1 vote, and is headed to the Senate floor. The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) supports the legislation.

Senate Bill 9, authored by Sen. James Merritt, R-Indianapolis, allows Indiana to opt out of a federal law which bans convicted drug felons from receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

SNAP is a program of the federal government designed to alleviate hunger and address poverty. Formerly known as the food stamp program, SNAP helps low-income individuals and families buy food. SNAP benefits are provided in the form of an electronic benefit card, which acts like a debit card, and can be used in grocery store lines for the purchase of food. The program is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and administered in Indiana by the Family and Social Services Administration.

“We support efforts to enhance access to SNAP benefits for those returning from incarceration back into society because it helps former offenders get the food they need to get back on their feet and stay with their lives,” said Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the ICC, who serves as the public policy spokesman for the bishops in Indiana. “Senate Bill 9 would help offenders get the food they need to become self-sufficient.”

Merritt said, “You can murder someone, do your time, be released from the Department of Corrections, and receive SNAP benefits. But if you are convicted of a drug felony, do your time, and are released from the Department of Corrections, you cannot receive SNAP benefits.” The senator added there is a lot of evidence showing those individuals who lack proper nutrition are more likely to return to crime or drug use.

Merritt said it is the state’s goal to eradicate its heroine epidemic in the next five years, a comprehensive solution to the problem must be the way forward. Lifting the ban on people who exit the Department of Corrections after serving their time for a drug felony is one part of this comprehensive plan.

“Let’s think about someone who leaves the Department of Corrections, who has been there a long time,” said Merritt. “I hope that when they leave they would not go hungry. You have no job. You have a felony on your record. Maybe you live out in rural Indiana. We don’t want this individual to re-offend. We want to support this individual on what we hope would be a very temporary basis.”

The senator said his hope is to allow former offenders to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” but also to give them a start to getting their life on the right track.

Emily Bryant, executive director of Feeding Indiana’s Hungry, an association of Indiana food banks, testified in support of the bill. Said Indiana is one of seven states that have a permanent ban on SNAP benefits for drug felons. Bryant said anyone convicted of a drug felony in Indiana since 1996 to the present has a lifetime ban on receiving SNAP benefits. In Indiana, the SNAP monthly benefit for an individual is $118 per month, and any able bodied person ages 18-49 must work as criteria to receive SNAP.

Merritt has authored another bill, Senate Bill 154, to assist low-income persons receive access to SNAP benefits. Senate Bill 154 would remove asset limits on SNAP benefits. In Indiana, the asset limit for SNAP recipients is $2,250 per household, or $3,250 for a household if there is a person with a disability 60 years or older. The asset limit includes children’s assets; real estate, other than a person’s home; cash and bank accounts. Besides the asset limits, recipients must pass a gross income test of not more than 130 percent of poverty to qualify for SNAP benefits.

Thirty-five states and Washington have eliminated their asset resource limit for SNAP benefits, noted Merritt. “Asset limits create a disincentive for savings,” he said. “Savings are a prerequisite for self-sufficiency. Eliminating an asset test leads to an increase in low-income persons having a bank account.”

Merritt said having asset limits burdens charities, non-profits and the state’s tax burden.

Some of the other organizations that supported Senate Bill 154 include: the Indiana Coalition for Human Services; the Children’s Coalition of Indiana; the Marion County Corporation on Youth; the Indy Hunger Network; Indiana Citizens Action Coalition; and the Marion County Reentry Coalition.

Tebbe expects a committee vote on Senate Bill 154 before the end of February, and if approved, the bill moves to the Senate floor for further consideration.

(Barbara Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

Pro-life leaders praise House vote to make Hyde Amendment permanent

WASHINGTON (CNS)—U.S. House passage of the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act, which prohibits public funds from paying for abortion once and for all, is a “step closer to getting the country ‘one step closer to getting the right track.’”

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Thirty-five states and Washington have eliminated their asset resource limit for SNAP benefits, noted Merritt. “Asset limits create a disincentive for savings,” he said. “Savings are a prerequisite for self-sufficiency. Eliminating an asset test leads to an increase in low-income persons having a bank account.”

Merritt said having asset limits burdens charities, non-profits and the state’s tax burden.

Some of the other organizations that supported Senate Bill 154 include: the Indiana Coalition for Human Services; the Children’s Coalition of Indiana; the Marion County Corporation on Youth; the Indy Hunger Network; Indiana Citizens Action Coalition; and the Marion County Reentry Coalition.

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(Barbara Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

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Events Calendar

February 7
Mission 27 Resale, 132 Lesta St., Indianapolis. Senior Discount Day, every Tuesday, seniors get 30 percent off clothing, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. The ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society.

February 7

February 11
Intercultural Pastoral Catholic Congress Day of Reflection, sponsored by the Archdiocese Office of Intercultural Ministry, 9 a.m. a day of prayer for the Church, especially the African-American community, free-will offering. Registration and information: 317-236-1474 or register@saintmarysindy.org.

Holy Rosary Parish, Priory Hall, 520 Stevens St., Indianapolis. St. Paul Street Evangelization Training Workshop, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., $20 includes lunch and materials. Information: 317-234-6020 or SPinstitute@gmail.com. Registration: goo.gl/2fXQYV.

February 12
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 300 N., Indianapolis. Mass in French, 1 p.m. Information: 317-990-1449 email: sttherculab@gmail.com.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, 4720 E. 13th St., Indianapolis. Class of ’63 monthly gathering, 6 p.m. Mass, optional dinner afterward. Information: 317-408-6396.

February 13-April 6
St. Lawrence Parish, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. “The Blood of the Lamb” Bible Study, offered eight-weeks on Mon. 7 p.m., Wed. 12:45 p.m. and Thurs. 7 p.m. $15 for book. Information: Sandra Hartlith, 317-372-5925 or shartlh@saintlawrence.net.

February 14
Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Monthly Tai Chi Prayer Service, theme “Praying for Peace in the World and in Our Hearts,” 7-8 p.m., silent and spoken prayers, simple music, silence. Information: 821-535-2952, prc002t@yahoo.com.

February 15

February 16
St. Joseph Church, 1401 S. Mickley Ave., Indianapolis. Third Thursday Adoration, interceding for women experiencing crisis pregnancy, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., with Mass at 5:45 p.m.


February 18-20
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Used Book Sale sponsored by Linden Leaf Gifts, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., books not pre-priced but donations accepted Information: 317-535-2952 or lindennegfifts@yahoo.com.

Bishop Edward K. Braxton of Belleville, Ill., will speak on “The Racial Divide in our Country and Church,” at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 4625 N. Kenwood Ave., in Indianapolis, at 8 p.m. on Feb. 18. Bishop Braxton, an African-American, is the author of such pastoral letters as “The Catholic Church and the Black Lives Matters Movement,” and “The Racial Divide and the United States: A Reflection for the World Day of Peace.”

The event will explore past and present steps to justice, reconciliation and harmony.

Bishop Braxton will also preside at the parish’s 10:30 a.m. Mass on Feb. 19, and will take part in a forum at Marian University’s College of Osteopathic Medicine, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis, at 2:30 p.m. later that day.

All events are free, and open to the public. For more information, log onto www.stmarysindy.org/church.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish offers ‘8-day Festival of Prayer’ in honor of two feasts

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis is offering its annual “8-day Festival of Prayer” for its church, 5333 E. Washington St., in Indianapolis, on Feb. 11-18. The festival commemorates the feasts of Our Lady of Lourdes on Feb. 11 and St. Bernadette, the seer of Our Lady of Lourdes, on Feb. 4.

The events are as follows: Feb. 11: Mass for Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, singing by the University Indianapolis choir, 5 p.m.; Feb. 12: Mass with anointing of the Sick, 10 a.m.; Feb. 13: Sacred music concert, 7 p.m.

• Feb. 14: Rosary at 5:45 p.m., followed by Mass with Valentine’s Day Mass at St. Anthony Catholic Church, 337 N. Morse Ave., Indianapolis; event venue doors open at 5:30 p.m., trivia is 6:30-9:30 p.m. for persons 21 and older. Prizes awarded to winning trivia team. Information, registration: Amanda Lungerman, 317-353-3769 or angie@archindy.org.

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Papa Francisco: Compartan las experiencias de la oración, el aprendizaje y la acción

As a grandfather, I confess that I was delighted to hear Pope Francis urging young people to listen to their grandparents—and older people in general. The pope himself celebrated his 80th birthday last year and is, perhaps more than ever, conscious of his “senior status.”

According to Pope Francis, older people “have the wisdom of life,” and are eager to share their experiences and insights—if only someone will listen.

Thus, the pope said to the young people he was meeting with—members of an Italian Catholic lay association called Azione Cattolica Italiana (Catholic Action of Italy)—“I would like to give you a task: Speak to your grandparents, ask them questions. They have the memory of history, the experience of living, and this is a great gift for you that will help you in your life journey.”

Of course, listening and sharing are two-way streets. We who are older need to listen to young people and to understand their hopes and aspirations, the pope said. We are not simply to be dispensers of wisdom, but to listen to young people what to do and how to think. No, we are called to be fellow travelers or sojourners on the journey of life who never stop learning along the way.

“Azione Cattolica Italiana was established in Italy by St. Pope Pio X in 1905 as a nonpolitical lay organization under the direct control of bishops. The movement had its beginnings in the latter part of the 19th century, when people proactively took measures to counteract the anticlericalism running rampant, especially throughout Europe. Catholic Action of Italy is probably the most active Catholic Action group still around today.”

Young Catholics can be a force for joy and peace,” Pope Francis said during his meeting with members of Catholic Action of Italy.

“Proclaiming to all the love and tenderness of Jesus, you become Apostles of the joy of the Gospel. And joy is contagious,” he said.

“Denying on the activity of Jesus Christ, the Holy Father said: “The birth of Jesus is announced as a great joy, originating from the discovery that God loves us and, through the birth of Jesus, made himself close to us to save us. We are helped by God’s love to do wonderful thing.”

“When we are a little sad, when it seems that everything is going wrong, when a friend disappoints us—or rather, when we disappoint ourselves—we let us think: ‘God loves me.’ God never abandons the ‘sick’ souls.”

He said that God is always faithful, and never ceases to love us even when we stray. “This is why in the heart of a Christian there is always joy,” the pope said. “And joy multiplies when shared!”

In his encouragement of Catholic Action, Pope Francis is continuing the work of his predecessors. St. John Paul II entrusted the members of this movement with three “missions.” He called these “contemplation, communion and mission.”

He saw as variations on the traditional Catholic Action themes of prayer, learning and action. In 2008, the 140th anniversary of the worldwide Catholic Action movement, Pope Benedict XVI said: “It is not perhaps possible, even today to make your lives a testimony of communion with the Lord, one that becomes a real masterpiece of saintliness? Is that not the goal of your association? This will be possible if Catholic Action continues to be faithfulto its own profound roots of faith, nourished by full adhesion to the word of God, by unconditional love for the Church, by judicious participation in civic life, and by a constant commitment to encounter the youngest generously to this call to sanctity!”

Prayer, learning and action—in whatever forms are most appropriate for young people and their elders—today are what Pope Francis earnestly recommends.

Prayer keeps us connected with the God of mercy, who loves us and who makes all good things possible. Learning keeps our minds and hearts open to the truth, which is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ who is Love incarnate. Action moves us beyond our comfort zones into new, often uncharted territories where we can share the love of Christ with both the especially poor and the marginalized.

We grandparents and older Catholics have a responsibility to share our experiences with prayer, learning and action with the young Church. When we do, we too can be “a force for joy and peace.”

“May the Lord bless this project!” Pope Francis said.

Pope Francis is a member of The Criterion’s editorial committee.†

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Como abuelo que soy, debo confesar que me encantó la exhortación del papa Francisco a que los jóvenes se comuniquen con sus abuelos y a las personas mayores en general. El propio papa celebró su 80.º cumpleaños el año pasado y que aún ahora está consciente de que pertenece a la “tercera edad.”

Aquí es donde entran en juego, según comentó el Sumo Pontífice, los jóvenes católicos. “Los jóvenes católicos pueden ser un compromiso constante con la educación. ¡Respondan generosamente a este llamado a la misericordia!”

La oración, el aprendizaje y la acción, independientemente de la forma que adopten y las experiencias con las que cuenten, son las recomendaciones vehementes del papa Francisco para el mundo de hoy en día.

La oración nos mantiene unidos al Dios de la misericordia, quiénes nos am para todos, especialmente al amor de Cristo con los demás, especialmente los pobres y los marginados.

Los abuelos y los católicos mayores tenemos la responsabilidad de compartir con la Iglesia joven nuestras experiencias en la oración, el aprendizaje y la acción. Al hacerlo, también nosotros nos comulgar en la vida de cada uno, especialmente a aquellos que nos condenan a estar de pie en la calle, o a aquellos que estamos dispuestos a escuchar y compartir un intercambio. Nosotros, los jóvenes, tenemos la responsabilidad de escuchar y compartir nuestras experiencias, aprender de la sabiduría de los mayores.

La oración, el aprendizaje y la acción nos mueven más allá de nuestra comodidad y nos llevan a territorios explorados donde podemos compartir el amor de Cristo con los demás, especialmente los pobres y los marginados.

El hilo que une a los jóvenes y a sus abuelos es la oración. Así, estos abuelos conscientes de lo que significa ser abuelos, son una deuda que tenemos con nuestros abuelos. Por eso, el papa Francisco nos invita a escuchar a nuestros abuelos y a aprender de ellos.

“Un abuelo no puede ser un adulto, no puede ser un joven, no puede ser una persona mayor. Un abuelo es un personaje de Jesucristo, el amor encarnado. El abuelo es una persona de Jesucristo, un apóstol de amor. El abuelo es un apóstol de la fe, un apóstol de la fe.”

El papa Francisco nos invita a escuchar a nuestros abuelos y a aprender de ellos.

“Cuando nos sintamos un poco tristes, cuando parezca que todo va mal, cuando una experiencia nos deje, cuando nos fallemos a nosotros mismos, pensemose: ‘Dios me ama, Dios jamás me abandonará.’”

El Sumo Pontífice nos dice que Dios es siempre fiel y que nunca deja de amarnos aunque nos apauntemos de Él.

“Es por ello que en el corazón del cristiano siempre hay alegría,” nos recordó el papa. “Y en eso reside la verdadera, la verdadera alegría, la alegría es contagiosa,” expresó.

Al reflexionar sobre el nacimiento de Jesucristo, el Santo Padre destacó que: “El nacimiento de Jesús se anuncia como una gran alegría que emana del descubrimiento de que Dios nos ama y, a través del nacimiento de Jesús, se acerca a nosotros para salvarnos. Dios nos ama. ¡Qué maravilloso!”

“Cuando nos sintamos un poco tristes, cuando parezca que todo va mal, cuando un amigo nos falle, o más bien, cuando nosotros mismo nos sintamos tristes, cuando parezca que todo va mal, cuando el mundo nos abandona,” dice el papado.

“A los jóvenes, a los abuelos, a la vida” y están deseosos de compartir sus experiencias y aprendizajes.

Por supuesto, escuchar y compartir un intercambio. Nosotros, los jóvenes, tenemos la responsabilidad de escuchar y compartir nuestras experiencias, aprender de la sabiduría de los mayores.

“Por supuesto, escuchar y compartir un intercambio. Nosotros, los jóvenes, tenemos la responsabilidad de escuchar y compartir nuestras experiencias, aprender de la sabiduría de los mayores.”

“¡Qué maravilloso!”

En 2008, durante el aniversario número 140 del movimiento de Acción Católica mundial, el papa Benedicto XVI expresó que: “Acaso no es posible, incluso hoy en día, convertir sus vidas en un testimonio de la comunión con el Señor y transformarlas en una verdadera obra maestra de la santidad? ¿Acaso no es esta la meta de vuestra asociación? Esto será posible si Acción Católica continúa siendo fiel a sus profundas raíces de fe alimentadas mediante la completa fidelidad a la Palabra de Dios, el amor incondicional a la Iglesia, la participación activa en el trabajo de su obra, un compromiso constante con la educación. ¡Respondan a este llamado a la misericordia!”
The Mass is a reverent call for the sanctity of all life. I least. The Mass is a reverent call for the Life opening Mass. To spend time in the Washington. “But honestly, the march itself in my faith,” says Graydon who planned of the 32 youths from St. Bartholomew Parish in Brownsburg, St. Mary Parish in Bloomington, St. John the Parish in Fort Wayne, Ind., in the Oberhausen, a member of Our Lady of Good declared these truths to be self-evident— More than 30 participate in pro-life gathering on Jan. 27 in Terre Haute More than 30 participate in pro-life gathering on Jan. 27 in Terre Haute

**Catholic News Service (CNS)**

Jennifer Buell holds a pro-life sign along with Doris Fisher and Jill Pfister, Ann Doris Fisher and Jennifer Buel hold signs in front of the Vigo County Courthouse in Terre Haute during a pro-life observance on Jan. 27. (CNS photo/Tom McBloom, Roman)
Vigil for Life offers powerful witness in conjunction with March for Life

By Natalie Hoefer

And it is the role of Catholic Christians to help bring about that will, he said, noting that “our job is to be the Church. Our job is to follow [Christ].”

Hickman listed three characteristics of the Church that are important to modern times: the Church follows Christ, welcomes sinners and has the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To the first point, Hickman cautioned against not taking action to follow Christ. He likened this tendency to telling his son to take out the trash.

“His back comes back 30 minutes later and he says, ‘Dad, I memorized what you said. That wouldn’t fly. What if he came back 30 minutes after that and said, ‘Dad, I memorized what you said, and now I can say it in Greek!’ And I have this idea—I’m going to invite my friends over once a week, and we’re going to sit around a table, and we’re going to look at what you said and really think about what the world might look like if I took out the trash.”

Hickman again used his children in an example to demonstrate the necessity of actively following Christ.

“If my kids were to play ‘Follow the Leader,’ and the leader says ‘flip your wings,’ it wouldn’t fly if one of them went off to the side and said, ‘I’m flapping my wings—in my heart. I’m totally following, I’m just doing it in my heart.’

That doesn’t work.”

The second important characteristic Hickman addressed was the role of the Church as a place for sinners.

“This is not a museum for soon‑to‑be‑canonized saints,” he said. “As the pope points out, it’s a field hospital. The best place for a sinner is the Church. It’s here that we find what we need. It’s here that we find mercy and grace and forgiveness. God doesn’t just need to give us gifts—he gives us gifts.”

And that point, he said, leads to the third characteristic—the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

“God sent us the Holy Spirit,” said Hickman. “He continues to help. If we want to create a better society, then we must accept the gift of the Holy Spirit into our lives—not just figuratively, not just in confirmation, but understanding that any action that the Church exhibits in the world is propelled by the Holy Spirit.”

He pointed to the weakness of the Apostles as proof of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Church.

“The early Church, they were smart—they were fishermen! Jesus went to the least, to the margins, to the people that weren’t too smart, because he knew they would be more willing to let the Spirit be the one to move them. Peter became the first pope, he converted thousands, his shadow healed people—not because he was great, but because he was receptive to the Spirit.”

Hickman closed his talk with words of encouragement.

“If you feel like there’s no way you can do anything, remember [Christ] said, ‘I’m going to make my home in you.’

‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. … Jesus wants it to take a step further. ‘It’s not me and you—it’s me in you’.”

Hickman’s talk was followed by a eucharistic procession. Both were led by Father John Hollowell, pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenacres.

“In the Old Testament, people would bring offerings of animals to the priest to offer up as sacrifice,” he explained in his reflection. “As part of that ritual, the priest would wash themselves, don their robes, grab the various instruments they would use for the sacrifice, then they would go before God to offer sacrifices on the altar.”

“In the New Testament, he said, “Jesus is now the perfect priest who, unlike the Old Testament, is now offering the perfect sacrifice—himself. … The Mass is a re‑presentation of that, the people—in ‑‑‑ the priest offering up to the Father the perfect victim, himself.”

He compared this perfect sacrifice to the evil that takes place at abortion centers.

“At an abortion facility, an abortion ‘doctor’ washes his hands, dons his robes, grabs his instruments and goes to a steel altar where a pregnant woman lays with her perfect child,” he said.

“Evil is perversion of that which is good. The greater the good that is perverted, the greater the evil.”

Father Hollowell closed his reflection with a challenge.

“The saying goes that without the priest, there is no Eucharist,” he said. “I believe there are a lot of you sitting here tonight who Christ is calling to be priests. I invite you to allow him to work through your hands, and bring the Eucharist to a world so desperately needing it.”

Father Hollowell attended last year’s Vigil for Life when “we bailed on our trip [to Washington] because of the storms,” he said in an interview with The Criterion “As soon as I was here, I was like, ‘This [vigil] needs to grow and keep happening.’ It was just beautiful …

“It’s prayer. It’s adoration, beautiful music, and to hear some reflections—it’s a great combination. And not everyone can travel out to D.C. We’re all called in different ways to stand up for life. This seems like an awesome way to do that.”

Cathi Wahnsiedler of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis was grateful to be “involved indirectly in the March for Life,” said. “Since we can’t be in Washington at the march, we wanted to be focused on it here.”

Katie Maples and Beth Clark, both members of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, came with their parish’s young adult group to participate.

“We saw that this [vigil] was on our Wednesday meeting night,” said Maples. “We’re very pro-life and wanted to be involved.”

The same was true of members of a men’s group at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, who chose to attend the vigil in place of their regular meeting.

“I’m looking for a prayerful atmosphere,” said Kevin Ellenberger, a member of the group. “Around this issue, there’s a lot of yelling. I think it’s best we don’t yell at each other.”

Emily Taylor, 15, a member of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, invited to the vigil members of the pro-life group she started at Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis.

“Usually we have around 12 [people] at meetings. I sent an e-mail out to the group inviting them tonight,” she said, noting that the group, being in a public school, “has to be very careful to present ourselves as a pro-life club, not an anti-abortion club.”

Emily was pleased to see Birthline volunteers in the narthex at the vigil, and people coming to the vigil with donations for Birthline. The Herron pro-life club she leads held a drive for the archdiocesan ministry providing material assistance to pregnant women and mothers of infants.

Shayna Tews, who entered into the full communion of the Church at the Easter Vigil last year at Annunciation Parish, brought her five children to the vigil, two of whom were altar servers for the event.

“I think it’s fascinating how the Catholic Church really steps up to the plate where life is concerned, where these lives who don’t have a voice suddenly get that voice on a powerful stage—a voice coming from a priest standing right next to the Blessed Sacrament,” she said. “It’s just a powerful witness to the sanctity of human life and the dignity of human life, and I’m so thankful that the Catholic Church is willing to take a stand on it and to pass that voice on.”

Father John Hollowell, pastor of Annunciation Parish in Brazil and St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greenacres, carries the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance during a eucharistic procession at the Vigil for Life at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Jan. 25. He is preceded by Deacon Michael Braun, left, and Simon Lackey of Annunciation Parish. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)
Marian pilgrimage of faith connects past with present

By Katie Breidenbach

Special to The Criterion

ST. MEINRAD—Garrett Braun knew it was going to be a wet and cold January day, but the second-year seminarian had made a commitment. He was going to stick to it.

“I think our faith is really a discipline,” he said. “That means even when it’s hard.”

The rain had increased and was steadily falling. Braun, a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, Ind., in the Diocese of Evansville, donned a warm coat and met three of his fellow seminarians under a canopy at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. Rosaries in hand, the four set out on their pilgrimage of more than a mile.

“I was just trying to think about the intercession of Our Lady, and asking her to bless this time for the community,” Braun said.

The seminarians of St. Meinrad, who currently come from 27 dioceses, have made the same January pilgrimage for nearly 150 years. The procession started as a request for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and has continued as a prayer of thanksgiving for what is widely believed to be a miracle.

The destination is a small sandstone church called the Our Lady of Monte Cassino Shrine, named after the famous Italian monastery founded by St. Benedict some 1,500 years ago. Situated atop a hill, the shrine was dedicated in 1870 to honor St. Agnes Parish in Scottsbluff, Neb. “It’s important to be grateful to God,” said Clark Lenz, a fifth-year seminarian from St. Rose of Lima Parish in the Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyo. “I think it’s a wonderful way to give thanks to God for what he did for this seminary.”

Making their way up the hill through dense fog, the four pilgrims arrived at the shrine wet and chilled. There, they were warmly greeted by a dozen fellow students and the vice rector of the seminary, Benedictine Father Tobias Colgan. All joined their prayers together for a Mass of thanksgiving.

“It’s been a long process over the nearly 150 years. And it’s our turn, for taking our place in the procession,” Father Tobias said in his homily. “But in God’s eternal present, his eternal now, our prayers join with those of all who have gone before us in this place in this very moment, this eternal present.”

The community is taking pains to preserve their beloved shrine for future pilgrims. Time and exposure had worn down the sandstone and made the foundation unstable. Some of the paintings that cover the walls and ceiling are marred with water damage.

“The wear and tear of the years takes its toll on everything, even a hallowed shrine like this one,” explained Father Tobias. “And so in our time, in our way, we do what we can to preserve and protect the places we honor, the places that are important to us.”

A generous benefactor stepped forward to initiate repairs and help save the shrine. During the summer, Monte Cassino received a new roof, the walls were reinforced, and the foundation was stabilized.

Other community members sponsored brick pavers that will be part of a new outdoor patio and prayer garden. Funds are also being raised to restore the interior murals, and to install a heating and air conditioning system.

“It’s been a prayerful place and a real place for Our Lady’s intercession for over 100 years,” Braun said, “so I think it’s very important that we preserve it and have it for future generations to come pray here.”

The seminarians concluded their prayer with a chorus of “Holy God We Praise Thy Name.” Exiting the small sandstone church, they slowly dispersed down the soggy hill to continue their priestly formation.

Less than an hour later, a local resident pulled up in a white sedan and disappeared through the shrine’s bright red doors. Re-emerging after several minutes, he explained why he drove all the way up the hill to pray at the Our Lady of Monte Cassino Shrine.

“It’s just real special,” he said.

Katie Breidenbach is a freelance writer in Bloomington. For more information on the Monte Cassino Shrine, go to www.saintmeinrad.org/the-monastery/monte-cassino-shrine.

Pictured on Jan. 14 is the Our Lady of Monte Cassino Shrine near St. Meinrad. The church was dedicated in 1870, and is a frequent destination for pilgrims.

A statue of the Virgin Mary is shown in the sanctuary of the Our Lady of Monte Cassino Shrine. Pilgrims have prayed for Mary’s intercession in this church since 1870.
Faith Alive!

Time for worship, family on Sundays is ‘holy leisure’

By Paul Senz

The Fathers of the Church in the first centuries of Christian history often spoke of the concept of "otium sanctum," or "holy leisure." In the later works of St. Augustine, he would use this term to refer to the monastic life, in which the monk is free of everyday obligations and can devote his time to study and prayer. However, it is not only the cloistered who are called to live this "otium sanctum": all are to live lives of holy leisure. We all recognize the need to set aside time for important things. How often do we tell ourselves we are too busy to do something? When something is important, you make the time.

If we have a deadline coming up at work, we make sure that we get the project completed, even if it means coming in early, staying late or putting aside other projects. This example certainly illustrates the point: When we recognize that something is important, we simply make it happen. We do everything we can to accomplish what is set before us.

How much more, then, should this be the case with this idea of holy leisure? Holy leisure is not about doing what we want. It’s about taking the time to do the important things that we let ourselves put off the rest of the week. It is about spending time with family—quality time, face time, truly giving our lives to God.

It is not just about spending an hour at Mass on Sunday, or even spending an additional hour at the coffee and doughnuts social afterward. We need to commit ourselves to consciously giving that time to the Lord. Part of the importance of holy leisure comes from the Third Commandment, which decreed an observation of a Sabbath day each week. For Christians, this day of rest is Sunday, the Lord’s day.

Contrary to popular understanding, Sunday has not supplanted Saturday as the Sabbath. The Sabbath was, and remains, the seventh day of the week: Saturday. But Christians commemorate Sunday as their holy day, the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus, as the work of Christ fulfilled what the Sabbath was pointing toward.

What Christians mark on Sundays is not strictly the “Sabbath,” but something the Sabbath prefigured: the Lord’s day. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “For Christians, [Sunday’s] ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath. In Christ’s Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man’s eternal rest in God” (#2175).

Furthermore, the catechism goes on to say that “the institution of the Lord’s day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social and religious lives” (#2184).

Pope Benedict XVI provided a wise insight on this matter in his encyclical “Charity in Truth,” advising us of the importance of keeping eternal life at the forefront of our minds, and living so that we strive for more than material accomplishments:

“Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing space. Enclosed within history, it runs the risk of being reduced to the mere accumulation of wealth; humanity thus loses the courage to be at the service of higher goods” (#3).

Jesus said clearly that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mt 2:27). We should not be scrupulous about whether or not we are doing too much work on Sunday—there are certainly things that need to be done.

If you are driving and get a flat tire, the tire must be changed; if a tree falls in your backyard and breaks a window, that must be repaired; there are a number of exceptional circumstances we could easily come up with.

But the spirit of the proscription remains: We must diligently and conscientiously set aside time for the Lord, time for our families, time for ourselves.

How are we to understand where the line is when trying to discern what amount of work is appropriate, and how to let ourselves observe this holy leisure? The catechism once again gives us guidance here:

“The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” advice is often referred to with regard to time management: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s day, the performance of the works of mercy and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body” (#2185).

The catechism continues, “Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse the obligation of Sunday rest. The faithful should see to it that legitimate excuses do not lead to habits prejudicial to religion, family life and health” (#2185).

“This time is more than just “down time.” It is more than simply time between commitments, time between chores.

This should be the day that our whole week revolves around, and what we spend every moment working toward: the day we give ourselves over completely to our loved ones, and to the worship of our Lord in the Eucharist.

It is a day where we intentionally set aside other commitments and troubles, and simply be present with those we love.” (Paul Senz; is a freelance writer living in Oregon with his family.)

The Gospels show Christ placed a priority on taking time for prayer

By Daniel Mulhall

Because we can neither find nor create time, we must set aside the time given to us by God to accomplish anything of importance. Prayer was clearly important to Jesus because, as the Bible tells us, he frequently took the time to go off by himself to pray. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is regularly shown taking time for prayer, but also at critical times during his life. For example, following his baptism by John, Jesus went off by himself into the desert to fast and pray for the temptations he would experience (Mt 4).

When Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist, “he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself” (Mt 14:13). When the crowds followed him, he was then prepared to heal them, and later fed the multitudes with the five loaves and two fish (Mt 14:14-21).

In addition to taking time for prayer before he faced a difficult task, Jesus also went off by himself following a busy day. After feeding the thousands, he dismissed them, sent the Apostles off by boat, and then “went up on the mountain by himself to pray” (Mt 14:23; Mk 6:46).

Matthew tells us that he was alone there until the evening. Jesus “time away for prayer varied. His time in the desert following his baptism lasted for 40 days. The Gospel of Luke tells us that prior to sending his disciples off on a mission, Jesus “departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer” (Lk 6:12).

And, as Mark 1:35 notes, Jesus would go off to a deserted place early in the morning when everyone else was asleep.

While there may be many reasons why Jesus went off by himself, one of those reasons was clearly that he would have had no private time otherwise. When his disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he not only taught them the Lord’s Prayer (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4), he also instructed them to “go into your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret” (Mt 6).

Yet Jesus became so popular that it was hard for him to find even a moment of solitude. Mark 1:36 reports that when Jesus went off early in the morning to pray, he was soon followed by Peter and the other disciples.

Mark writes that they “pursued” Jesus because the crowds were demanding him.

While we might not be as popular as Jesus, or continually surrounded by crowds seeking our attention, each of us has demands on our time that may hinder us from doing what we want to do.

As Stephen Covey, author of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, noted, urgent matters frequently prevent us from doing important ones. So it might be difficult for us to set aside time regularly for prayer. This time would be when we would be well served to follow Jesus’ example and simply go off alone to find the time and quiet we need to pray.

(Daniel Mulhall is a catechist who lives in Louisville, Kentucky.)
Big hearts, fashioned like God, have room for many friends

Recently, my 9-year-old encountered a snap with her schoolmates over something trivial.

The object of contention was a New England Patriots pencil. Our classmates, who are friends playfully hid her from when she got up early and was planning to give away in the classroom. (Please don’t judge. It is the Super Bowl.) The next morning, Patti, a relative newcomer, received a birthday party goodie bag long ago and, because there’s football player on it, it’s among her favorites.) The teacher got involved, the pencil showed up, and all ended well.

But Margaret was quite disturbed when we recounted the episode at home that evening.

“...But those were my best friends,” she said, despairingly. “My besties,” she stressed, as if I’d need to remind her. “…But those were my besties.”

We talked about how that’s a very “unfriendable.”

I think we can all go back and remember particular neighborhood or school and playdate friends we considered our closest pals. Then, as we get older, those friendships evolved, and new ones formed. From my experience, I have learned, over the years, that our hearts have room for many friends. And I explained that we don’t necessarily need to rank them in any particular order, or categorize them as “best.”

We discussed how we’d encounter friends who help us to keep life light and make us laugh, even though the depth of the friendship don’t run very deep. And we also talked about how, if we’re lucky, some earthly friends will be the kind we can call in the middle of the night, when life has thrown us a curve ball and we need someone in our darkest hours. Those kinds of friends seem to grow roots and become invisible. (True story.)

At that point, Margaret stopped me to tell me that her grandmother’s mom has 450 friends on Facebook.

“She must love them,” she said.

Yes, I agreed. “Her heart must feel very full,” she said.

As I tucked her in that night, I read my version of the following lines from the Gospel of John.

Jesus said: “No longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends because I have heard of my Father’s and you are now in my name in the name you give me.”

I said that we have many earthly friends who make our hearts content, but God is truly the best friend of all, because he chose us, even when we were seemingly unremarkable.

When I shut off Margaret’s lamp, I asked her to remember that her heart, fashioned like God’s, is a big place. It’s not only to be limited to best friends or like-minded buddies, but it has room for those who think differently than us and sometimes even choose unwisely and hurt us.

“Your heart is a big place,” she repeated, and then drifted off.

(Parri Lamb, a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, a regular columnist for The Criterion.)

For the Journey/Effie Caldarola

The sun rose this morning in dramatic flourishes of pink and orange. Never mind that the clouds and the gray winter light reasserted themselves as members of my family left for the airport. I am grateful for the memory of standing in the middle of the living room with my youngest daughter, and marveling at the stunning display that was today’s brief sunrise.

Today was a day full of farewells, and here would be a good time to say, “But that’s not quite the same thing.”

During the first third of January, our home devolved into a cold hell. The chaos. Because of work and other family obligations, our immediate family, which lives in four different time zones, was not together for Christmas. Even so though the poignancies were delectable, I had a late celebration that began on New Year’s Eve and stretched beyond Epiphany. With two 20-somethings who still like to party, a 2-year-old who likes to rise with the dawn, and her parents who reluctantly rise with her, the dead quiet of night was something I was looking forward to. The children were playing, and the house quiet.

Under the best of conditions, I sleep poorly. A full circle, or different schedules is not conducive to rest for the insomnia. And no matter how much several people love to sleep another, we are genuinely easy to get along with, there’s an occasional moment of stress. No matter what, sometimes reigned was a beneficent ruler, and we had fun. But those goodbyes are tough. My goodbyes were full. A neighbor needed me because this was the first time he would need help. I needed to help him through his hospitalization, and she had to be at the hospital to be induced by 8 a.m. Her best-laid plans were thwarted when her 2-year-old who had no idea his world was about to rock. My poor husband was flying out on business. I felt lonely and as I looked at my little friend, I marvelled at how it seemed just days away. The next day, I got to as if they were mine to keep.

Eventually, I was so glad to see us that he became emotional. Pope John Paul II, who chose us, even when we were seemingly unremarkable.

Pope John Paul II also made Deskur a cardinal. Deskur outlined his good friend. He died on Sept. 3, 2011.

(John Fink’s recent series of columns on Church history is now available in book form from Amazon. It is titled How Could This Church Survive? with the subtitle, It Must Be More Than a Human Institution.)
The Sunday Readings

Sunday, February 5, 2017

• Isaiah 58:7-10
• 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
• Matthew 5:13-16

The Book of Isaiah’s third section is the source of this week’s reading. Scholars believe that this section was written perhaps in Jerusalem by the Hebrew remnant that had returned from Babylon. This would put this section of Isaiah at about the time of the Babylonian Captivity. As political fortunes changed, the Persian ruler Cyrus, had overthrown Babylon, and he allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland after an absence of four generations. Indeed, probably few had ever seen their homeland. Nevertheless, release from Babylon brought utter exhilaration to the exiles. They were free to go home! This seemingly wondrous opportunity was bittersweet. When the exiles reached their ancestral homeland, they found deprivation and want, conditions worse than anything that they had experienced in Babylon. Amid the disappointment and anger, the prophet reaffirmed God’s goodness, calling upon the people to provide for those in need. Then they would experience the fullness of vindication, the fullness of God’s promise to give them life and peace. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This epistle was addressed to Christians living in Corinth, then one of the major cities of the Roman Empire. Rich and sophisticated, Corinth was a virtual center of the culture at the time. It also was a cesspool of vice. Paul’s message ran directly counter to what was happening in Corinth. He urges the Corinthians to live a life of faith full of purity, worthiness, and respectability. Of course, to be pure, worthy and respectably living, these Corinthians have to have a source greater and more dependable than human wisdom, namely the Holy Spirit. In the first statement, Jesus tells the disciples that they are the “salt of the Earth” (Mt 5:13). In the second, the Lord admonishes followers to be the “light of the world” (Mt 5:14). These images, salt and light, hardly are unknown today, but an ancient aspect of each of them is unknown in contemporary culture. At the time of Jesus, salt was precious. Roman soldiers were paid in salt. (“He is not worth his salt.”) The word “salary” derives from this practice. Salt also was unrefined. Dust or sand usually mixed with salt. The less the dust and sand, the better the salt. Today, people are accustomed to seeing bright lights at night. Darkness was a serious obstacle at the time of Jesus. Light, then, was precious in its own sense. Jesus urges disciples to uplift the earthly society by being “salt” and “light.”

Reflection

Gently, but deliberately, the Church is guiding us onward from its introduction of Jesus of Nazareth as the son of Mary and the Son of God, as Redeemer of the sinful human race, as exalted at Christmas, Epiphany, and his baptism in the Jordan. It challenges us to respond to Jesus. These readings and one Discipleship is not mere life service. It is the actual and intentional resembling of Christ in our daily lives. Matthew makes clear, however, that believers have a strength upon which to draw as they illumine the world. It is within the grace of their faith. As disciples, they are precious. Being a disciple is demanding, but it is not impossible. Of course, to be pure, worthy and therefore as strong as salt free of impurities, disciples must rid themselves of sin and fortiy their Christlike resolution. This is the task of Lent, soon to begin.

The Sun, His Son is There

Just because we can’t see the sun
Doesn’t mean it’s not there
On cloudy days, I can’t see it
But I know it’s there
Because on sunny days
It’s everywhere
The sun doesn’t promise us
No storms along the way
But it does promise to bring us
Another new day
The sun doesn’t promise us
Days of warm and comfort
But it does promise
With light and support
So like our sun, His Son
May be hidden in the air
This doesn’t mean He isn’t there
But He is ever so talkative
The Son doesn’t promise us
Warmth and comfort all our days
But He does promise
To bring us in all our ways
The Son doesn’t promise us
No suffering, afflictions, or pain
But He does promise
To be with us again and again
Just because we can’t see His Son
Doesn’t mean He is not there

Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Social interaction, worship both good, should take place in different places

Growing up in our family, God always came first. Our parents taught us to love and to see the Eucharist, especially when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar. Our parish church now exposes the Eucharist before Sunday Mass. I am glad to see people (young and old) come into Mass, plop themselves down in the pew and whip out their cellphones. Then they begin to laugh and text—without, it seems, so much as a glance at the altar. Can’t people forget their phones and their friends for just one hour, and reflect on just why they are there and whom they have come to worship? (New York)

The Sun, His Son is There

By Jim O’Connell

Q

Recently, a friend asked me what the difference was between the Knights of Columbus and the Masons, and I didn’t really know what to tell her. I’ve read about the good works done by each of these organizations, and we were wondering whether a Catholic gentleman can belong to both. (Georgia)

A

The Knights of Columbus is an international organization of Catholic men, whose chief work involves helping those in need. Their charitable donations total nearly $2 million annually, and they engage in joint projects with such organizations as Special Olympics and Habitat for Humanity.

 Freemasonry is a fraternal society that traces its origin to medieval associations of stonemasons; in the U.S., there are grand lodges in every state, with a total membership of about 1.2 million. Masons, too, involve themselves in a variety of charitable works and no doubt many Americans view Masonry primarily as a social and philanthropic fraternity.

The reality, though, is that Masons is at heart a naturalistic religion whose basic tenets are incompatible with Catholic faith and practice. Pope Leo XIII said in 1884 that Masonry had as its fundamental doctrine “that human nature and human reason ought in all things be mistress and guide,” and denied “that anything has been taught by God.”

The Vaticans Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared in 1983 that “the Church’s negative judgment in 1983 regarding Masonic associations unchanged,” and that “the faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive holy Communion.”

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr. Albany, New York 12203.)

Daily Readings

Monday, February 6
St. Pauli Miki and companions, martyrs
Genesis 1:19
Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 24, 35
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday, February 7
Genesis 1:20-24a
Psalm 8:4-9
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday, February 8
St. Jerome Emiliani, priest
St. Josephine Bakhita, virgin
Genesis 2:1-4a
Psalm 104:1-2, 27-30
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday, February 9
Genesis 2:18-25
Psalm 128:1-5
Mark 7:24-30

Friday, February 10
St. Scholastica, virgin
Genesis 3:1-8
Psalm 90:2-6, 12-13
Mark 8:1-10

Saturday, February 11
Our Lady of Lourdes
Genesis 3:9-24
Psalm 90-2-6, 12-13
Mark 8:1-10

Sunday, February 12
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sirach 15:15-20
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 25
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-17
or Matthew 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

Question Corner

Fr. Kenneth Doyle

Page 13
Never underestimate the courage and wisdom of Ruth Ann Cowden and Paul Lechler, Janet Sample, James Rosemary Landis, Patricia Michele Arthur, Kathryn Brown, Bruno Costa, Jerome Barnhorst. Grandmother of 99, St. Maurice, Napoleon, Ohio. Jan. 1. Wife of Cathi Webber, Andrew and Geoffrey Wilson. Husband of Michelle Landis. Sister of Marshall Patrick. Sister of John Patrick. St. Therese of the Infancy of Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis. Jan. 15. Sister of Daniel and Michelle McGrath. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, 1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52003 or to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 5200 North River Road, Decatur, Illinois 62522. Sister of Charity Gracita Daly died on Jan. 20 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 91. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 30 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ motherhouse cemetery. Jeanne Sandschulte was born on Aug. 12, 1919, in Loretto, Tenn. Jeanne Sandschulte was born on Aug. 12, 1919, in Loretto, Tenn. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 12, 1939, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1945. During 77 years as a Sister of St. Francis, she taught in an urban school, served as a music teacher, and worked in Catholic schools in Indiana, New Mexico and Ohio. In the archdiocese, she served in Indianapolis at St. Therese of the Infancy of Jesus (Little Flower) School from 1949-52, the former Holy Trinity School from 1952-53 and Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1963-64. She also ministered at the former St. Mary School in New Albany. After retiring from ministry in Catholic education, Sister Francine Jean served at the motherhouse from 2007-17.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47366-0100.†

Sister of Charity Gracita Daly served at United Senior Action in Indianapolis

Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Gracita Daly died on Jan. 15 at Marian Hall on the grounds of the motherhouse of her order in Dubuque, Iowa. She was 92. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Jan. 30 at the Motherhouse Chapel. Burial followed in the community’s Mount Carmel Cemetery. Sister Gracita was born on Sept. 18, 1924, in Butlerville, Indiana. She entered the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sept. 8, 1941, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1945. Sister Gracita earned a bachelor’s degree in 1959 in English and Spanish from St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa, and a master’s degree in 1967 in administration and supervision from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa.

During 75 years as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sister Gracita ministered as an educator in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and New York. In the archdiocese, she served at the Blessed Virgin Mary School in Oldenburg, the former Sisters of Charity at Indianapolis from 1991-97. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Charity, BVM Support Fund, 1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52003 or online at www.bvmsupport.org/contribute donates f i.
Sister Dawn looks back on Mother Theodore’s writings, and tries to take her deeper meaning. "What I have learned most from her writings is her desire to remain in a relationship with all people—even those with whom she might be struggling," she said. "She used the very difficult moments to hand to accomplish this. This has had a great influence on me—as a person, as a communicator, and now, as general superior.

"It seems to me she was never afraid to approach someone, raise an issue with someone, or offer a word, a challenging word, if needed. So, I hope I want to do that in my own way in these times."

As Sister Dawn communicates with the members of her congregation about the fulfillment of their mission in the future, this focus on community will play a large role.

"We do this together," she said. "Together, we are provision. Not 'I,' 'we.' Together, we can have one impact, one voice, one heart.

In the meeting of the members of the order in which she was elected general superior, the sisters did much to begin discerning what they called their "emerging future."

Much of this happened in discussions aimed at constructing building about the sisters' future role in education, which has been the historic focus of their ministry, but also in advancing the signs of the times and in bringing about a greater justice in society and in the broader environment.

The consensus was so that we can have a collective impact, make a statement and hopefully effect positive change," Sister Dawn said. "That is how we’ll figure out our emerging future together, in a reflective and conversational way. That allows the signs of the times to really break through.

Achieving this mission will happen, she said, through the ministry of the Sisters of Providence, the cooperation of its lay Providence Associates and others in and beyond the broader Church, and communicating well with all of them.

One of the members of the congregation with whom Sister Dawn will communicate as general superior will be Providence Sister Catherine Campbell, who was a high school journalism teacher of Sister Dawn in the late 1960s at Guerin College Preparatory High School in River Grove, Ill.

"I was very pleased and humbled," said Sister Cathy of Sister Dawn’s election as general superior. "When you play a part in a kid’s life, you never know exactly how that journey is going to unfold and undo.

Sister Cathy, who is the coordinator of the archdiocese’s Circle of Grace program, a safe environment training program for children in grades K-12 in archdiocesan schools and catechetical programs, called Sister Dawn "the right person at the right time" to lead the Sisters of Providence.

"Clearly, one of her strengths is her ability to communicate, both as a listener and as someone who sends messages out," Sister Cathy said. "She has a real gift for being able to catch the themes that people are very concerned about, and be able to articulate a vision of their sense of who they are and who we are at a particular time.

In all of the communicating that Sister Dawn will do as general superior, she will bring a conviction about the goodness of religious life and of the mission of the community founded by Mother Theodore. "I believe in religious life very strongly," Sister Dawn said. "I believe in the charism of providence. It’s a charism for this time. And I want to have the same kind of trust that Mother Theodore had, that if we’re faithful and open to God and God’s providence, God will lead us where we need to go."

—Providence Sister Dawn Tomaszewski, general superior

Church without martyrs is Church without Jesus, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Martyrs and Christians who endure persecution for their faith are the Church’s great glory, strength and hope, and they humble those who have so much yet still complain, Pope Francis said.

The heart of the Church is made up of “those who suffered and gave their life like Jesus,” who were “stoned, tortured and killed by the sword” in order to remain faithful to Christ, the pope said on Jan. 30 during Mass in the chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae.

“A Church without martyrs, dare I say, is a Church without Jesus,” he added.

In his homily, the pope focused on the day’s first reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 11:32-40), which emphasized that faith means trusting in God no matter what happens, even if it brings great personal suffering, hardship and death.

Martyrs are the ones who carry the Church forward, they are the ones who sustain the Church,” the pope said. While big Church events that draw a lot of people and are a big success are “beautiful and powerful,” “the greatest strength of the Church today is in the small churches, really small, with a few people, persecuted, with their bishop in prison,” he said. “This is our glory and strength today.”

There are more Christian martyrs today than in the first centuries of the Church, “but the media doesn’t say so because it isn’t newsworthy,” he said.
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York warned that if the sanctuary of the womb is violated, then other sanctuaries are at risk.

“Can any of us be safe, can any of us claim a sanctuary anywhere when the first and most significant sanctuary of them all, the mother's womb protecting a tiny life, can be raided and ravaged?” he asked in a homily during the Jan. 26 opening Mass for the National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The vigil always precedes the annual March for Life, which takes place on the National Mall.

Cardinal Dolan, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Pro-Life Activities, called the womb “a sanctuary which beckons us, where we are safe and secure in our mother's tender yet strong embrace, where the Creator himself assures us of protection and life itself, a sanctuary God has designed for us to protect our lives now and in eternity.” He summoned up a montage of sanctuaries throughout human history, including those used by the Israelites, the sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem where Mary and Joseph took Jesus each year, the use of cathedrals and churches where Mary and Joseph took Jesus each year, the use of cathedrals and churches as sanctuaries from violence, and the sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem which beckons us, where we are safe and secure in our mother's tender yet strong embrace, where the Creator himself assures us of protection and life itself, a sanctuary God has designed for us to protect our lives now and in eternity.

The faithful were squeezed more tightly than usual as pews in the left transept were blocked off so work crews could continue work on the shrine’s Trinity Dome, which should be completed next year’s March for Life. The blockage resulted in the loss of “several hundred” seats, according to shrine spokeswoman Jacqueline Hayes.

Auxiliary Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Washington received hearty applause when he announced near the end of the Mass that the starting times for three pre-March for Life Masses elsewhere in Washington the next morning would be moved up an hour to allow for longer lines in security checkpoints at the pre-march rally, as among those speaking at it included “senior White House officials and a special guest.” No name was mentioned, but earlier in the day it was announced Vice President Mike Pence would address the March for Life rally in person. After a lineup of speakers on Jan. 27, rally participants marched from the National Mall to Constitution Avenue, then up the avenue to the Supreme Court.

The weather changed overnight from the low 50s at the start of the Jan. 26 Mass to a more typical near-freezing temperature with stiff winds before a Jan. 27 morning Mass at the shrine celebrated by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans, USCCB secretary.

Archbishop Aymond’s homily sounded a similar theme to Cardinal Dolan’s in terms how acceptance of abortion is “used to justify” other disrespect for life at various stages, citing assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty and the rejection of immigrants. Quoting from that day’s Gospel, Archbishop Aymond said, “Jesus says, ‘Let them come to me, let them come to me’.

He received applause from a Mass attendance estimated 3,500 when he cited the results of a recent study that showed the “abortion rate in the United States has hit a historic low since Roe v. Wade.” Archbishop Aymond said the study speculated on various reasons for the decline, but “one was not” mentioned.

That reason was “the witness of so many people for life,” he said. “Youth and young adults are strongly pro-life in our world and in our Church,” he added to applause. “You are making a difference in the United States. You are changing our culture from a culture of death into a culture of life,” the archbishop said to still more applause.

During the March for Life and afterward in the marchers’ parishes and neighborhoods, Archbishop Aymond said, “We will continue to witness, and with God’s help, we will continue to be strong voices for the respect and the dignity of human life.”

Cardinal Dolan: If sanctuary of the womb is violated, no one is safe