Concern rises over impact of expected tax cuts on programs for the poor

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Tax policy is not a simple matter. It almost never has been, and may not ever be. Still, Congress is trying to simplify the tax code to deliver on President Donald J. Trump’s campaign promise to cut taxes for the middle class. Working under the “Unified Tax Reform Framework” introduced by congressional leaders on Sept. 27, efforts are underway to reduce the number of tax brackets, resulting in a tax cut for most Americans, and to incorporate numerous other provisions that some observers say primarily benefit the country’s top wage earners and largest corporations.

Some Catholic observers are concerned. They fear that large cuts in health care and other public services will follow as tax revenues fall under the tax reform plan expected to be unveiled on Nov. 1 by Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Their concerns are fueled by projections of lost tax revenues, and the reaction of conservative lawmakers who may try to lessen the impact on the federal debt by seeking cuts in spending on vital social services.

The Senate Finance Committee expects a $1.5 trillion reduction in tax revenues under the framework by 2027. A more pessimistic potential impact of proposals under the framework is from the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, which estimated that the outlook comes from the annual United Catholic Appeal (UCA) intention weekend in archdiocesan parishes.

The weekend of Nov. 11-12 is the annual United Catholic Appeal (UCA) intention weekend in parishes across the archdiocese.

The goal for this year’s appeal is $6.5 million. The money will be distributed to various ministries and organizations throughout central and southern Indiana that provide help that no single parish or deanery could independently offer.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson notes that diocesan appeals are “about how we continue to reach out to the dignity of persons through our ministries and services.”

“All it takes is one good person to restore hope’ to all those people in central and southern Indiana who are served in the UCA: faith formation and Catholic education; education of future priests and deacons and clergy care; and charity and outreach.

The UCA supports the formation of the 24 archdiocesan seminarians and future deacon candidates. It also aids more than 8,300 youths in youth ministry. A wide array of charitable and outreach ministries across central and southernIndiana also benefit from the UCA, including more than 210,000 people in need of food, clothing, shelter and support, as well as tuition assistance for students in need who attend the archdiocesan Notre Dame ACE Academies.

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By Sean Gallagher

It was a turning point on his path to his vocation. An event that has made a difference in his life ever since.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson looks back on the unexpected death in the early 1980s of a cousin, only a year older than himself at the time, as the decisive moment that led him to become a seminarian.

A college sophomore at the time, Archbishop Thompson had thought about the priesthood ever since his childhood. But it was this life-changing incident that spurred him into action.

“That triggered me to get off the fence,” Archbishop Thompson recalled.

“It was at that point that I thought, ‘How long do I just sit around and wait? Life is short.’ Up until that point, life was forever. It was a moment where I learned that life isn’t as long as I think it is.”

In a recent interview with The Criterion, Archbishop Thompson reflected on this turning point and all the other steps he has taken in his journey into life and ministry as a priest and now a bishop.

“An ocean of Catholicism”

The first steps that Archbishop Thompson took on his vocational journey were guided by his parents, Coleman and Joyce Thompson.

Their personalities and the way they lived out the faith complemented each other during Archbishop Thompson’s childhood, helping him to grow in the faith from an early age.

“It was the combination of my parents that had a great influence on my vocation,” he said.

His father, he said, showed him how to apply his faith in service more through his example than by his words.

Unexpected death leads Archbishop Thompson on journey of almost endless opportunities

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“All it takes is one good person to restore hope’ to all those people who society so often pushes aside,” he says, quoting this year’s appeal theme—a line from Pope Francis’ encyclical letter, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.”

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See UCA, page 2

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See UCA, page 2
Indianapolis, at 5 p.m. on Nov. 5.

40 Days for Life's campaign will host

The campaign runs twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. During the 40-day campaigns, individuals silently pray during one-hour time slots in front of abortion centers around the world.

For more information on Central Indiana (Indianapolis), 40 Days for Life's campaign, contact Debra Mooney at 317-709-5150 or debra@goangels.org.

The campaign said the tax system should raise "adequate revenues" to pay for society's needs, be progressive in nature so that people with higher incomes pay higher tax rates, and exempt families living below the federal poverty line from paying income taxes. Any shortfall that comes about because of tax reform worries Presentation Sister Richelle Friedman, director of public policy at the Coalition on Human Needs. "It's very, very clear what we're doing here. We're doing tax cuts for very wealthy individuals and corporations, many of them which pay little or nothing to begin with. In order to do that, we're looking at ways to cut programs to pay for tax cuts," Sister Richelle told Catholic News Service.

Cutting programs that primarily benefit poor people fails to adhere to moral principles on tax policy espoused in Catholic social teaching and the U.S. bishops, she said. "The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church maintains that "tax revenues and public spending take on crucial economic importance for every civil and political community. The goal to be sought is public financing that is itself capable of becoming an instrument of development and solidarity." Sister Richelle expressed particular concern for changes in how low-income families will be able to take advantage of the child tax credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Both programs have proven helpful in boosting family incomes, lifting many out of poverty.

"40 Days for Life's campaign, the Myth of the "Unwanted" Child, and Peaceful Prayer Vigils Around the World"

Marching address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202-2507. Periodical postal use at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2017 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.
Listening, sharing are highlights of V Encuentro event

By Natalie Hoefer

They gathered from throughout central and southern Indiana—more than 190 Latino, African and Anglo Catholics of various ages and a variety of languages. At times, the many tongues recalled the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. But the overall effect was more like Pentecost, when each regardless of language heard the same message—one of need, one of hope, one of evangelization.

Such was the scene at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis on Sept. 30 as Catholics from around the archdiocese met for the V Encuentro—Spanish for “encounter”—process.

The daylong archdiocesan event was the capstone to a more than yearlong effort in response to a call by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to define best ministerial practices in regard to the Catholic Hispanic population in the United States.

“The day has gone fast!” said Leticia Pasillas of St. Ambrose Parish in Seymour. “At first I thought it was going to be a long working day, but it’s gone by so quickly, just hearing in my group and the other people’s experience—it’s been great!”

A USCCB fact sheet describes the Encuentro effort—the fifth one since 1972—as “a four-year process that invites all Catholics in the United States to intensify missionary activity, consultation, leadership development and identification of best ministerial practices in the spirit of the New Evangelization.”

The theme of V Encuentro is “Missionary Disciples, Witnesses of God’s Love.”

The process started at the parish level. Twelve parishes in the archdiocese formed groups that met for five sessions over the course of the last year, discussing pre-determined topics of the V Encuentro material.

The parish process culminated in the bilingual event on Sept. 30. During the day, participants discussed in small groups during the event, when a representative from their group.

Two “plenary sessions” were held during the event, when a representative from each table shared one idea, comment or question from their group.

“They talked about the necessity for formation, needs and wants [and] being more disciples, not just in the family but outside,” said Juan Pablo Romero of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis.

Other suggestions during the day were to include parents in the sessions for sacramental preparation of Latino children, to help evangelize and educate the adults.

“As part of the V Encuentro . . . I came to know the importance of evangelizing other Catholics who sit in the pews with us every Sunday,” said Francisco Ruiz of St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis during a reflection he gave during the day.

“According to Dynamic Catholic, . . . there are 32 million Hispanic Catholics in the United States. Ten million have roots in their faith, but more than 20 million do not. We must continue to seek ways to introduce them to Catholicism, and then look for more ways to feed their faith.”

Franciscan Father Larry Jancecz, pastor of St. Sacred Heart Parish in Indianapolis, also spoke of evangelization.

“An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first, and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast,” he said, quoting from paragraph 24 of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “Evangelic Guamán” (“The Joy of the Gospel”).

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson served as the principal celebrant at a Mass at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis on Sept. 30.

The theme of the V Encuentro is “The Joy of the Gospel” (Gaudium). Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, who served as the principal celebrant at a Mass at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis on Sept. 30, noted in a homily spoken in Spanish. “As we bear his sufferings, so we shall bear his glory. . . the everlasting Encuentro.”

Oscar Castellanos, director of archdiocesan Office of Intercultural Ministry, who spearheaded the Encuentro process in central and southern Indiana, was pleased with the day.

“We encountered the Lord through each other, particularity through the small groups sharing,” he said. “We listened to each other’s challenges and disenchantments, particularly through the plenary sessions. . . . At the end, we went home with the true desire to share the same message of hope with other people.”

The next step for the V Encuentro is “Encuentro” page 8

Catholics of different ethnicities from around central and southern Indiana discuss questions in small groups during the V Encuentro event at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis on Sept. 30. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)
Reflection/Shayna Tews

As you work toward humility, remember God’s great gift to us

One thing I struggle greatly with is humility. And I think the Lord is testing me and encouraging me to grow in this virtue, even though I am failing time and time again. I have been bothered by words and statements, by my own situation in life. Essentially, we always want more, better, something else. Humility brings me closer to Christ.

It occurred to me at Mass recently—As I prepared and waited for the Eucharist—how in the world do I have a God and king who not only humbled himself in his earthly lifetime and through his death, but humbles himself at every Mass, is present to me at each and every Mass, and allows himself to be consumed by sinners like me? Wow.

Name another king who has ever or would ever lower himself in this way? Lord, help me humbly submit to him and to my lowly peasants with the giving of himself, over and over again.

Many people, regardless of our situation, have no one else but our great and mighty God. It is his love for us that gives way for this humility. Humility and love go hand in hand. So the next time I am struggling to humble myself, I ask myself—Why is it so important to me?—and I hope I will be able to do that as well in any way that God’s will guide me. My challenge to myself and you, the next time we feel humbled, is to smile and thank God for the lesson in virtue.

Letters to the Editor

Catechism addresses both sides of the immigration debate in right proportions

In his recent editorial in the Oct. 20th issue of The Criterion, editor emeritus John F. Fink seems to say that those of us who oppose unfettered illegal immigration are in danger of losing our faith because we are ignoring biblical morality and Christ’s command to “welcome the stranger.”

A few of our bishops have been using the same ambiguous formulation, so it may be time for them—and Mr. Fink—to say exactly what they mean. Are they really making the preposterous claim that Catholics must support an open-borders immigration policy in order to be saved? Because we are dealing with a complex social problem with a moral component, our natural desire for justice can prompt us to embrace an extremist position.

At one extreme, conservative Catholics sometimes allow their passion for law and order to override their concern for those who have been mistreated. At the other extreme, liberal Catholics often underestimate their compassion for the needy to override their common sense and lead them to propose suicidal immigration policies. 

Authentic Catholicism, which is not conservative or liberal, acknowledges the emotional extremes because it draws wisdom from the natural moral law. It follows that a nation has the moral right to regulate its borders, which means that it also has a conditional right to say no to the stranger—unless, of course, someone can explain how it is possible to regulate without saying no. In short, American Catholics are not required to support an open-borders immigration policy, and that it is not a damnable heresy to say so.

Stephen L. Bussell

Indianapolis

‘Celebrate Life Dinner’ stories can provide wisdom and inspiration, reader says

The articles about the “Celebrate Life Dinner” in the Oct. 20 edition of The Criterion were really outstanding. It was inspiring to read about the people who received the awards for their participation in activities promoting respect for life.

It was especially heartening to read about keynote speaker Pam Stenzel’s mission in life, and to read about what she speaks of on the subject of extramarital sex. She said a lot of things that I have never heard of other people saying that are very sensible and could certainly influence people, especially young people who need guidance and good example.

I think these articles should be required reading for anyone—from a young person of appropriate age and maturity to parents and grandparents—including those who may not consider themselves “young people” any more, but aren’t yet married or parents. It seems that almost anyone could derive wisdom and inspiration from these articles.

Jane Pictor

Napoleon

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are published in The Criterion as part of the newspaper’s commitment to “the responsible exchange of freely-held and expressed opinion among the People of God” (Communio et Progressio, 1116).

Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representative viewpoints as possible. Letters should be brief—usually less than 300 words. In general, letters should be proofread and typed. Letters should be signed and include the writer’s complete name and address. They must be dated, and must reflect an appropriate level of courtesy and respect. Letters that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church will not be published. 

Letters to the Editor: The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367.

Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
“Sabemos sin lugar a dudas que estas son víctimas inocentes, que merecen ser tratadas con respeto y dignidad, y que son las personas que la Biblia nos exhorta a que unamos. Al obedecer al llamado del papa Francisco de compartir su camino, llegamos a comprender esta verdad.” (Sean Callahan, presidente de Catholic Relief Services)

El papa Francisco considera que es de vital importancia para los cristianos de todo el mundo ‘compartir el viaje’ de los inmigrantes y los refugiados que se ven obligados a abandonar sus hogares en busca de una mejor vida en otro lugar. Para lograr que este profundo acompañamiento espiritual sea una realidad, el papa Francisco ha emprendido una campaña de dos años que el papa Francisco está convencido de que la crisis migratoria internacional y el desplazamiento de personas, familias y comunidades enteras es algo que no se puede reducir a un asunto de política pública, de ideologías o conflictos raciales. Déjese de cada lucha para encontrar seguridad, alcanzar la libertad y una mejor forma de vida, se encuentra la historia profundamente personal de cada refugiado. Únicamente al conocer y compartir estas historias podemos llegar a captar la magnitud de lo que están viviendo nuestros hermanos y hermanas, tanto aquí en nuestro país, como en todo el planeta.

El cardenal Daniel N. DiNardo, arzobispo de Galveston-Houston y presidente de la USCCB, ha afirmado que esta campaña es ‘el mismo tiempo, espiritual y práctica’. Este es un ejemplo de los ‘cátaros del tanto y el como’ que resultan tan importantes para nuestra forma de vida católica. La campaña “Compartir el viaje” nos invita a recordar con y por los inmigrantes y refugiados. Nos desafía a convertirnos en los ‘amigos generales’ (más) de los hermanos y hermanas, a compartir su camino de una forma profundamente espiritual y al mismo tiempo nos desafía a actuar, a abrir nuestros hogares y corazones, y a dar la bienvenida a aparentes extraños suyos en todo el mundo, experimentaremos su verdadero, más humano para ellos y sus familias.

Nuestra motivación para llegar a los representantes de los 65 millones de personas en todo el mundo (es más alta que la II Guerra Mundial) es la caridad; es el amor al prójimo que Cristo nos ordena que demos en el momento justo, en el que Él camina con quienes no esperan nuestra ayuda. Al presentar al samaritano como el buen vecino, el Señor elimina los prejuicios locales de sus interlocutores y deja en claro la responsabilidad de compartir el viaje de los necesitados. Sabemos que la caridad empieza en casa, pero el Señor nos desafía a más allá de lo que nos resulta familiar y cómodo, y a caminar (espiritualmente y en la práctica) incluso con quienes nos resultan incómodos, sencillamente porque sus costumbres son extrañas para nosotros.

Si en verdad caminamos con los inmigrantes y los refugiados en India y en todo el mundo, experimentaremos su grave situación de un modo muy personal. Resistiremos la tentación de decir que sus problemas no nos incumben o que sus caminos son distintos de los nuestros.

Busquemos formas genuinas para participar en la campaña “Compartir el viaje” del papa Francisco. Si rezamos con sinceridad, diciendo “Señor, ¿cómo puedo compartir el camino que se está ofreciendo a mis hermanos inmigrantes y refugiados?”, y “¿Cómo puedo compartir mi camino?” Él nos responderá. Nos dará las ideas para seguir sus pasos puesto que Él camina con quienes no tienen dónde reposar su cabeza.

Pídamosla a la Sagrada Familia, que nos guíe en estas difíciles y penurias que atraviesan todas las familias inmigrantes, cuando buscan de la injusticia del tirano Herodes, que nos ayude a acompañar a todos los que buscan una mejor vida.

“Somos parte de una familia, una verdad que deberíamos conocer, que tenemos que compartir con el mundo entero. Y también es un llamado para todos nosotros, que queramos apartarnos de la mera complacencia de que las cosas vayan de la manera en que siempre han estado, y a que nos preocupemos por el bien de los demás.” (¡Compartir el viaje: el llamado a amar al prójimo! Archiepiscopado de Galveston-Houston, 22 de diciembre de 2016)
November 6

November 7
Mission 27 Renale, 132 Lots St., Indianapolis. Senior Discount Day, every Tuesday, seniors get 30 percent off clothing, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., donations encouraged. Information and registration: 317-725-1586, ext. 3919, rsbaleys@sammartin.org.

November 10
St. Rose of Lima Church, 114 Lancelot Dr., Franklin. Sermon on the Mount, live performance featuring nationally acclaimed actor Frank Runyon, 7 p.m., dramatic presentation for all ages, free admission. Information: 317-738-3929. epistle@strossens.org.

November 12
Knights of Columbus Mater Dei Council 8437; McGowan Hall, 105 N. Delaware St., Indianapolis. Servorgne? The Musical, presented by the Agape Performing Arts Company, a ministry of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, Nov. 10 7:30 p.m.; Nov. 11 7:30 p.m.; Nov. 12 7:30 p.m.-5:45 p.m. admission information and tickets: www.agapeshows.org.

November 11
Mary Queen of Peace Parish, 1005 W. Main St., Danville. Women’s Club Christmas Bazaar, baskets, food, prizes, raffle, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 317-745-4284.

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 7575 Holiday Dr. E., Indianapolis. “Leaving a Legacy: Are Your Plans in Order?” presented by the Catholic Community Foundation, Inc., information on pre-planning a funeral and planning a gift, 9 a.m. check-in, 9:30-11:30 a.m. presentation, refreshments, free, reserved, registration requested. Questions and registration: call the parish office 317-259-4373 or solf@archindy.org.

Father Thomas Sceina Memorial High School, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis. Club 53 Annual School Fundraiser, dinner and live auction, beer and wine, $5,000 raffle, $50 per person by Oct. 31, $65 after Oct. 31, 6:30-11:30 p.m. Information: burnundy@sceina.org, 317-352-3225.


Huber’s Orchard and Winery, 19816 Huber Road, Borden. “Listenings” Benedictine Sister Anoinette Purcell presenting, join the sisters and learn about the relationship between grief and spirituality. This retreat will provide a safe environment for participants to explore these issues, and learn about the relationship between grief and spirituality. The holidays add another dimension to the grief process. Some helpful suggestions for dealing with the holidays will be provided. The cost is $45, which includes lunch. Pay an additional $20 to receive a CDU! For more information or to register, e-mail center@agapeshows.org or call 812-933-8437.

‘Grieving Your Losses’ day retreat set for Nov. 18 at Oldenburg Franciscan Center

A day retreat called “Grieving Your Losses” will take place at the Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., in Oldenburg, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 18. When one experiences significant loss in their lives, the process of grieving and the feelings that arise need to be understood. This retreat will provide a safe environment for participants to explore these issues, and learn about the relationship between grief and spirituality.

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Conference speakers equip men for spiritual battle

By Sean Gallagher

Catholic men from across the state prayed together, participated in a eucharistic procession on the streets of Indianapolis and learned how they have been equipped to enter into spiritual battle and share the Good News during the annual Indiana Catholic Men’s Conference on Sept. 30.

The conference, attended by nearly 400 people, took place at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis and was organized by the Marian Center of Indianapolis.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson greeted the participants and prayed that the conference “truly be one of fruitfulness, of encounter, of accompaniment, of dialogue, one that helps us to continue to cultivate those virtues so necessary in our society today, transforming hearts, minds, the world itself by the witness to the Good News of the Gospel.”

He also encouraged the participants to be “like St. Joseph, to make a difference in your family and other families, keeping Christ at the center.”

Speaker Brian Patrick explored how Catholic men can follow the example of St. Joseph.

“We are called to be spiritual leaders,” said Patrick, host of EWTN’s flagship radio show, “Morning Glory.”

“We are called to be the fathers of our families … We are called to be like St. Joseph, to have our minds and our hearts open to the will of God. We are called to be courageous men of action when we hear that simple, quiet voice.”

In the middle of the day, the conference featured Mass at nearby St. John the Evangelist Church.

Father Michael Keucher, who served as the conference’s master of ceremonies, was the principal celebrant and homilist at the liturgy. He encouraged the worshippers to read Scripture daily.

“You spend part of your day, every day, with Scripture, and you will be a better man, a better husband, a better father, and a little bit closer to heaven every day,” said Father Keucher, administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville.

A eucharistic procession on the streets next to the church followed.

Kevin Chaffe, a member of St. Louis Parish in Batesville and a conference participant, was glad to be in the procession that was witnessed by many pedestrians.

“It’s great that we show Jesus to other people,” he said. “We got a lot of quizzical looks today. I hope some people asked some questions and learned a little bit about the Catholic faith.”

Craig Schelber, 23, a member of St. John Parish, was impressed by the procession.

“We don’t have to hide our faith,” he said. “We can show it and be proud of it as a large group of guys who stand out in the crowd.”

Kory Schelber, another young adult member of St. John Parish, was glad to see so many other Catholic men at the conference.

“You don’t see a Catholic culture anymore if you’re not really looking for it,” Schebler said. “So, seeing that there are this many young guys who are willing to give up a Saturday to grow deeper in their faith and learn how to be better Christian men encourages me to continue on the path.”

During the afternoon, Msgr. Charles Pope, a priest of the Washington Archdiocese and a regular columnist and blogger for national Catholic publications, described the struggles Catholics face in contemporary culture, but noted that the battle is ultimately a spiritual one.

“What is the war now that’s going on all around us?” Msgr. Pope asked. “It’s not about clubs, swords or tanks. It’s about ideas. It’s about the truth versus a lie. It’s about light versus darkness. It’s about God’s vision versus Satan’s. That’s what the war’s about.”

At the same time, he encouraged his listeners to be confident in the battle.

“We’re on the winning team, brothers,” Msgr. Pope said. “We have the victory. The victory is ours. Jesus has already won the victory. And we are simply asked to apply that victory to our lives and the lives of others.”

Deacon Larry Oney of the New Orleans Archdiocese then shared with the participants how the Catholic faith—and especially the gifts of the Holy Spirit—have empowered them to fight boldly in that battle.

“It can even, he said, be as simple as a father making the sign of the cross on his children at the start of their day.

“When you make the sign of the cross on your son, in particular, as a man and father, you’re making a declaration to the Enemy,” Deacon Oney said. “You’re invoking the power of God and the protection of God around him.”

Another powerful weapon to use against the devil, he said, is simply to praise God.

“Praise is a weapon,” Deacon Oney said. “It tears down strongholds. You’ve got a problem? Begin to praise God. … The devil doesn’t want you to know these things, praise scatters the enemies of God.”

Msgr. Pope concluded the conference by exhorting participants to be witnesses to their faith in their daily lives.

“If we’re going to have authority and be witnesses, we can’t just know about what we’re talking about, we have to know what we’re talking about,” he said. “You can’t just know about the Lord, you have to get to know him personally in your life, to see and know by your own experience what he’s doing in your life and to be able to testify to it.”

He encouraged the participants to be able to tell others how they have come to know Christ and how the Lord has worked in their lives, telling them to have “a three-minute elevator version and a longer one, too.”

“Many brothers, we have an awesome, beautiful, wonderful moral vision that we’re proclaiming,” Msgr. Pope said. “This is the life that Jesus Christ died to give us, a life free of greed, free of sensuality and sexual confusion, free of anger, wrath and bitterness, free of all that stuff and more, a life that has a heart that’s on fire for love of God.”
Escuchar y compartir son los aspectos más destacados del evento V Encuentro
Por Natalie Hoefer

Fue una reunión conformada por más de 180 católicos de origen latino, africano y anglosajón, de diversas edades y de varias lenguas, perteneciendo a todo el centro y el sur de Indiana. En algunos momentos, la variedad de lenguas habladas recordaba el relato bíblico de la Torre de Babel. Pero el efecto general se asemejó a un montón de piedras, procedente de todos los vecindarios de la tierra. El arte de la arquitectura que la humanidad ha construido, no es una esfuerzo solamente de un pueblo, sino de todos nosotros, independientemente del idioma que hablamos, es decir: el sueño de la parroquia católica de los Estados Unidos.

El evento arquidiocesano de un día fue el servidor de corromper que es un esfuerzo de más de un año, en respuesta al llamado de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB) a definir las prácticas más adecuadas en el espíritu del papa Francisco.

El evento arquidiocesano V Encuentro fue el lugar del Encuentro, con el que se celebra desde hace mucho tiempo como un evento de cuatro años de duración [...]. El Encuentro se llevará a cabo más a [...] El proceso de cinco sesiones que se llevó a cabo en 2018. El documento final que se derive de esta reunión se presentará a la USCCB. El proceso refina la información que la información reunida en el ámbito parroquial se suma a los obispados. El objetivo principal es que la información reunida en el ámbito parroquial se proporcione a las parroquias. El objetivo principal es que la información reunida en el ámbito parroquial se proporcione a las parroquias.

El proceso de cinco sesiones que se llevaron a cabo en Indiana y Wisconsin para celebrar un evento similar al que se llevó a cabo en Indianápolis. “No debería haber ni un día sin un día, especialmente en las sesiones plenarias. [...] Al final, regresamos a nuestros hogares con un verdadero deseo de compartir ese mismo deseo de evangelizar con los demás.”

El siguiente paso del proceso del V Encuentro es resumir los comentarios de la jornada de trabajo y redactar un documento arquidiocesano con ellos. En 2018, 25 representantes de la arquidiócesis reunirán con representantes de 14 diócesis de Illinois, Indiana y Wisconsin para celebrar un evento similar al que se llevó a cabo en Indianápolis. Una de las catorce reuniones regionales de la USCCB presentará un documento de resumen que se compilará y se debatirá en una reunión nacional en 2018. El documento final que se derive de esta reunión se presentará a la USCCB.

El padre francisco Larry Janezik, pastore de la Parroquia Sagrado Corazón de Indianápolis, también habló acerca de la evangelización. “La comunidad evangelizadora experimenta que el Señor tomó la iniciativa, la ha primedado en el amor, y se ha dado adelantado, tomar la pastoral inmedia, salir al encuentro, buscar a los lejanos y llegar a los crucecitos para invitar a los excluidos, dijo, citando el párrafo 24 de la exhortación apostólica Evangelii Gaudium ("La alegría del Evangelio") del papa Francisco. El arzobispo Thompson acotó que el olímpico principal de la mesa para los participantes fue como "un presidente de la mesa para los participantes. “Juntos, como una iglesia santa, católica y apostólica, somos el cuerpo de Cristo,” expresó en su homilía en español. “Al igual que acogemos su sufrimiento, también acogemos su gloria…” el Encuentro eterno.”

El director de la Oficina para el ministerio intercultural, Gary Castellanos, quien encabezó el proceso del Encuentro en el centro y el sur de Indiana, explicó que “la evangelización esta guía con ansias leer el documento final. “Una medida que la comunidad eclesiástica, más la can se recoja, mejor podrá responder a nuestra comunidad católica eclesiástica,” declaró. “El documento que redacten los obispos podría convertirse en un plan pastoral para la evangelización hispánica, como ocurrió en el III Encuentro en 1985, recordó Castellanos. O quizás podría ser un documento en el que se indiquen las prácticas más adecuadas. A Romero le gustaría que el proceso del Encuentro se llevara a cabo más a [...]”

El padre francisco Larry Janezik (izquierda), los diáconos Jeffrey Dufresne y Emilio Ferrer-Soto, el arzobispo Charles C. Thompson y el padre Thomas Schlesseman rezan con nuestra joven con la congregación durante la misa en la Iglesia de San Andrés Apóstol el 30 de septiembre, como parte del evento arquidiocesano V Encuentro. (Foto por Natalie Hoefer)
Franciscan Sister Barbara Leonard had just earned a doctorate in Christian spirituality in the early 1990s from the prestigious Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif. A relatively comfortable life teaching in universities could have easily been hers.

But when she was invited to travel around the world to teach Scripture to a fledgling community of Franciscan sisters in Papua New Guinea, Sister Barbara jumped at the chance.

“Not everyone out in Berkeley understood that,” Sister Barbara recalled. “Some people saw it as me throwing away my education. In my tradition, that wouldn’t be called throwing away my education. That would be called sharing it with people who could use it.”

The tradition that Sister Barbara had embraced was that of the religious community she had joined in 1967, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Germany. The Principals General of their common life is the example of St. Francis of Assisi and his first followers.

Some 800 years ago, they broke new ground in religious life in the Church. Unlike the monks who came before them, who were known for living within cloistered monasteries, Franciscans were on the go, traveling from town to town to preach the Gospel.

So Sister Barbara embraced the chance to join missionaries from the order in the southwestern Pacific Ocean island nation.

“I didn’t see doing work in an area like that as making it less worthwhile or less important,” she said. “I find myself attracted to invitations to places where I get the impression it’s difficult to find people.”

Sister Barbara described this aspect of the Franciscan charism as going “where there is a need, to use the gifts you have.”

In traveling from place to place, the early Franciscans often reached out to people on the margins of society. Sister Barbara did this in her missionary work, but also in ministry to Native Americans in New Mexico who are lay associates of the Oldenburg Franciscans.

Like her experiences in other parts of the world, Sister Barbara soon found that she benefited as much from those she served as New Mexico as they benefited from her.

She recalled a conversation with a woman who worked as a shepherd about a Gospel passage describing Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and how he called each of his sheep by name.

“She smiled and said, ‘It’s true, you know, calling them by name. I have a name for each one of my sheep.’”

Sister Barbara recalled. “Then she paused and said, ‘I also have a song for each one. If a sheep wanders off, I’ll start singing that one until it comes back.”

Sister Barbara paused and said, “It works both ways. Any time that I’m in any place, something there enriches my perception of Scripture.”

Closer to Oldenburg, Sister Barbara teaches in the Spiritual Direction Internship Program, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. The program, which takes place at the monastery’s Benedict Inn & Retreat Center, helps participants hone skills at guiding people in growing in their relationship with God.

“I think this is going to become even more of a need as parishes keep growing in size,” Sister Barbara said. “There’s such a need to have time to sit down with people and help them explore their questions and spiritual growth. Priests can’t possibly do all that as parishes get bigger and bigger. There’s really a need for more laypeople in that area, as well as priests and religious. That’s why I thoroughly enjoy being a part of this program for spiritual directors.”

Living in Franklin County close to her community’s motherhouse in Oldenburg also allows Sister Barbara to learn from her fellow sisters.

“It’s a huge blessing for me to have as much time as I do with my retired sisters and those in the infirmary,” she said. “Just to sit with them and hear their stories and their perspectives on life and prayer—I don’t think they always realize that that’s probably more of a gift to me than it is for them when I’m there.”

Sister Barbara encourages women considering religious life today to visit communities and “find out if you feel at home with the spirit of the group.”

But she knows that discerning today is different than it was when she entered the Oldenburg Franciscans 50 years ago with 22 other young women.

“People entering the vocation today are not going to be doing it in classes, like we used to do,” Sister Barbara said. “You have to have a greater sense of your own self, courage and personhood to be able to move into a group and hopefully find yourself welcomed and able to share and be received there. It takes so much more courage these days to use it.”

As Sister Barbara’s experience over the past 50 years has shown, having the courage to make a vocation call can send a person around the world to share the Gospel and to be drawn closer to God by those a person is called to serve.

(“Learn more about the Oldenburg Franciscans at oldenburgfranciscans.org.”)

**Waste time with God, to be open to hear his call in your life**

By Sean Gallagher

“Dost thou love life?”

— The Kathryn Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana

Wasting time is at the heart of vocational discernment.

Often, when speaking to families, Pope Francis has advised parents that they should waste time with their children—set aside projects and programs, practices and phones in order to simply spend time with the people we love.

No agenda. No goals. No deadlines. No technology. Play with your children. Go for a long walk together. Share stories and hopes and dreams. Sit and watch the sunset. Wasting time with people who are important to us builds bonds and strengthens our ties. It also shows what is really important in our lives.

Is it people? Or is it things?

When it comes to living as disciples of Jesus Christ, we can apply the same advice to that most important of all relationships—our relationship with God. There is no better way to grow in relationship with God than to waste time with him, in prayer, in eucharistic adoration, in serving those in whom we see the image of God.

So often we come to prayer with an agenda, things we need to say to God or questions for which we want answers. Or we set a time limit to our prayer. Or we allow ourselves to be distracted by the countless things on our to-do lists or the incessant buzzing of text messages on our phones.

But the best prayer sets all of those aside, and simply wastes time in the presence of our Lord. No agenda. No goals. No deadlines. No technology. Just me and God, wasting time together, growing in love, opening our hearts to receive God’s grace.

And in that wasting of time with God, our hearts start to be opened to hear God’s call, to know God’s voice, to have the strength to follow him. Our restless hearts find meaning and purpose in the God who made us.

Our distracted and unfocused gaze becomes centered on the face of Christ. Our wandering in the wasteland is given new direction toward fullness and life. And God reveals to us in his plan, his agenda, his goals, his purpose for each of us—what we call our vocation.

Wasting time is at the heart of vocational discernment, because in order to hear the voice of God calling us to follow him, we have to spend time with him in a way that filters out the other voices and noises that compete for our attention.

The first call—the first vocation—is always to be a disciple. Then, the more we waste time with God, we can hear the second call—the second vocation—to the priesthood, marriage, consecrated life, diaconate or a sacred single life. It all starts and ends with prayer—wasting time with God. It’s the best way we can spend our time.

In the following articles in this annual Vocations Supplement, you’ll read the stories of men and women who have discovered their vocation through wasting time with God, and, through it all, come to an abiding joy-filled relationship with him that marks their ministry to his people.

Please enjoy these stories and allow yourself to waste time with God for your own good and the good of vocations discernment of the faithful across central and southern Indiana and beyond.†

† (Father Eric Augenstein is vocations director for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He may be contacted at eaugenstein@archindy.org)
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such as when he would work on the cars of his friends and loved ones. ‘He would never take money when he did someone’s brakes.’ Archbishop Thompson remembered. ‘He would say, ‘You do something for someone else.’ My dad taught me about doing for others and doing not to be paid.’

‘I think about how we teach kids in confirmation to do service hours. I was being taught service hours before I knew what was going on.’

His mother helped him learn about the faith, serving for a period as a volunteer catechist in their parish.

‘My mom knew the faith,’ Archbishop Thompson said. ‘She was about forming the mind and knowing the teachings of the Church. Dad was one who showed how you emotionally live it. But they did it together.’

They also did it with lots of other people—a large extended family who shared his faith in a rural central Kentucky community that was also largely Catholic.

‘There was a culture of Catholicism, of living the Catholic faith, that was I was engaged in,’ Archbishop Thompson recalled. ‘It’s like a fish. A fish doesn’t know it’s in the ocean. You know? I was in an ocean of Catholicism, and didn’t know what I was in. It was just my world.’

Priests in such a Catholic ocean were intriguing to Archbishop Thompson. As a child, he also saw them ‘somewhat on pedestals,’ and as ‘guys that were a breed all of their own.’

Becoming a seminarian

His views on the priesthood started to change when he was about 12 and another cousin of his became a seminarian. He is Father Dale Cieslik, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville.

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Archbishop Thompson said. ‘Anybody can do this.’

Around the same time that his cousin became a seminarian, Archbishop Thompson and his family moved to Louisville. He soon became a student at a high school that was marked by violence.

‘When all the violence and crazy stuff was going on, I recall thinking to myself, How does my life speak to this violence, how does my life speak to this?’

Archbishop Thompson recalled. ‘It was a time from that social justice perspective where I thought about the priesthood.’

A few years later, after his cousin a year older than him had died, Archbishop Thompson finally focused his thoughts on God’s call in his life. He talked about this with his cousin Father Cieslik, who was a transitional deacon at the time.

After graduating from Bellarmine in 1983, he became a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Louisville, receiving his priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

Looking back on his four years at the southern Indiana seminary, Archbishop Thompson remembers learning so much more about the faith that he had never known.

But his experience of priestly formation was much more than taking classes. He’s grateful for the way in which his time as a seminarian deepened his ‘appreciation of prayer as the center of our lives, of listening to the word of God, reflecting on it in adoration, applying it to our lives, being shaped and molded by the liturgy.’

‘God’s got me here for a reason’

Archbishop Thompson was ordained a priest for the Louisville Archdiocese on May 30, 1987.

Entering into parish ministry, he soon learned that the formation he received in seminary continued after ordination. He had to make adjustments in his life.

For example, instead of living with a whole community of men in priestly formation around his own age, he now lived with one other priest who was much older than him. Later, he lived on his own.

‘One of the things that you have to get used to is living alone, the solitude,’ Archbishop Thompson said.

He also had to change his time for personal prayer. In the seminary, he would do that in the evening. In parishes, that time was filled with many meetings each night.

‘That took a little struggle for me to give that up. ’Archbishop Thompson said. ‘I had to switch it around, and mornings became my time for prayer. All of my entire priesthood since, morning has usually been my best time for prayer. I get up early to make sure I get that prayer in and sometimes exercise in the morning also.’

And while prayer in the seminary naturally was focused much on himself and discerning God’s call in his life, prayer in parishes took on a wider scope.

‘You’re not just praying for yourself,’ Archbishop Thompson reflected. ‘You’re praying for all of those things that you’re carrying with you, the people and the issues, the hopes and dreams that you’re carrying with you. They’re in that prayer with you.’

Over the course of his 30 years of ordained life and ministry, Archbishop Thompson has been called to serve in a wide variety of contexts: parishes, high schools, canon law and diocesan administration.

‘One of the things that’s fascinating about being a priest is that I don’t know of another way of life … in which you have such a diverse array of ways to live out your vocation,’ he said. ‘There are almost endless opportunities of different ways you can be a priest.’

Those different ways that he’s lived out have helped him grow in ways he never would have expected.

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One of the particular roles I’ve had—as vicar judicial, vicar general or bishop or high school chaplain or pastor—brought forth gifts that, had I not been in that position, I would have never known was within me to do,’ Archbishop Thompson said. ‘I would have never dreamed I had the capability to be an archbishop. And I’m not convinced yet. But I trust that God’s got me here for a reason.’

Archbishop offers advice on discerning, promoting vocations

Discerning and promoting priestly and religious vocations is something in which all the faithful should be involved, said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson in a recent interview with The Criterion.

He also had encouragement for people considering God’s call, advice for their friends and loved ones and thoughts on the how contemporary culture presents challenges and opportunities to the Church in regard to vocations.

He spoke of the “essential need for prayer” in discerning a vocation.

“Do how we have a relationship with God?” he asked. “That prayer has to be both personal and communal if we’re really going to have an appreciation for the notion of vocation in general and my own particular vocation.”

Archbishop Thompson also noted the close relationship between a vocation, baptism and the Eucharist.

“It’s through baptism that we are called,” he said. “And it’s the Eucharist that sustains that call. If we’re severing our identity from either one of those, it has a great effect on vocations.”

He recalled how sharing supper with his family daily helped him ultimately appreciate the Eucharist more.

“There was storytelling, dialogue and sharing of the meal—very much eucharistic, like the Mass,” Archbishop Thompson said. “Today, how many families ever sit down for a meal together?”

“We’re so fragmented today. There are so many things vying for our attention.”

Included among them are social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

On the one hand, Archbishop Thompson is concerned about how digital devices and various forms of social media contribute to this fragmentation.

“We can be in a group and everybody’s on their phone and really not with each other in the same room,” he said. “At the same time, he is active in social media in order to encourage faith and discernment in young people.

“That’s the sole reason I’m on there,” Archbishop Thompson said. “I use all three to get out and plant seeds. There’s no one form of media that can get to all people. You really have to do them all. You can’t leave any of them out. Social media is one tool among the tools that we use.”

In addition to prayer and the sacraments, Archbishop Thompson suggested being open to the many ways God speaks to people about their vocation.

“Pay attention to what other people are saying to you,” he said. “So often, people will recognize qualities and gifts in us that we don’t see in ourselves. A lot of time, listening to those people will give us some direction in how God’s calling us.

“God speaks to us through silence, through music, through other persons, through the Bible. There are so many ways that God speaks to us.”

Archbishop Thompson also encouraged parents of people discerning God’s call to be present to their children, but also to give them the space they need to consider their vocation fully.

“Pope Francis talks about the need for accompaniment, where we meet people where they’re at,” he said. “This is a wonderful place where parents can practice that. Walk with your son or daughter who’s discerning a vocation.

“It’s OK to share your concerns. Be honest. But at the same time, don’t project your anxiety or agenda onto your child.”

‘In the end, all of the faithful need to do their part in promoting vocations,’ Archbishop Thompson said.

“Nobody gets ordained or professes the religious life without having had a lot of people being a part of that process,” he said. “All of us need to recognize how we’re to participate in the process of calling.”

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Vocations Supplement

For Sisters of St. Benedict, prayer is ‘our main work’

By Natalie Hoefer

“Our daily prayers,” says Benedictine Sister Marie Therese Racine. As the liturgist for the community, she coordinates all liturgical worship at the monastery, including Masses, the twice-daily communal Liturgy of the Hours, special events and rituals. She also plays the organ and leads the monastery’s schola cantorum (ecclesiastical choir), hand bell choir and other musical groups.

“Each day is a new opportunity,” says Benedictine Sister Marie Therese Racine. “As we gather for the hours of prayer daily, we are offered an opportunity to grow in faith, to grow closer to God.”

“The Liturgy of the Hours,” she explains, “is the official set of prayers marking the beginning and end of each day with prayer.”

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is an age-old custom of prayer in the Church, described by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as the official set of prayers “marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer.”

The prayer consists of psalms, hymns, Scripture and antiphons.

In the morning and evening, the sisters gather to share in this prayer as a community.

“We try to pray as one”

Communal prayer “is of utmost importance,” says Benedictine Sister Marie Therese Racine. As the liturgist for the community, she coordinates all liturgical worship at the monastery, including Masses, the twice-daily communal Liturgy of the Hours, special events and rituals. She also plays the organ and leads the monastery’s schola cantorum (ecclesiastical choir), hand bell choir and other musical groups.

“Our main work as Benedictines is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, to pray together for the Church and the world,” she continues. “Our community prayer is what provides the framework for our day, so we have a rhythm between prayer and work.”

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In the morning and evening, the sisters gather to share in this prayer as a community.

“As we gather for the hours of prayer as the Liturgy of the Evangethach each day, we present the gift of ourselves to God at that moment,” says Sister Marie Therese, who at 57 has been a professed sister for 14 years. “And our presence at these liturgies is also a gift to one another, as we support each other in our seeking God both individually and communally in this monastic life.”

Praying the Liturgy of the Hours is crucial to the Benedictine way of life, she explains. Indeed, chapter 43 of the Rule of St. Benedict states that, “On hearing the signal for an hour of the Divine Office, the [Benedictine] will immediately set aside whatever [is] in hand and go with utmost speed … for indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the work of God.”

Through these sanctifying prayers, says Sister Marie Therese, “We can become more and more who we were created to be, more and more the body of Christ. We’re all on a path of conversion, so our time together in prayer helps us in that transformation.”

That time in prayer is not just for the benefit of the sisters. All are invited to join them daily for morning and evening prayer, as well as for Mass. (See related article.)

Even those who cannot be present physically can still be part of the sisters’ community prayer.

“Many people ask us to pray for them, people we minister to or people we know,” says Sister Marie Therese. “We bring intentions on our hearts, that as we pray the Psalms, those are added to our prayer.”

Prayer is not reserved for those in the religious life, she says.

“One thing I’ve come to understand—our Christian life is centered in God, but God plants desire for union with him in our hearts,” she notes. “Our deepest desire, whether we know it or not, is to seek union with God.”

Sister Marie Therese

“Where God talks to me”

Such union with God through prayer is not limited to communal experiences in the Benedictine life. Individual prayer is equally important.

“To me, individual and communal prayer fuel each other,” says Sister Harriet Woehler, 86, who has been a Benedictine sister for 66 years and was one of the founding members of the monastery in Beech Grove in 1955. “It’s that spark that comes from being just ‘me and Jesus.’ That’s the individual prayer for me—the time when God lights our fire, the Holy Spirit lights our fire.”

Sister Harriet talks of praying her way through the morning. She rises early for individual prayer, then moves to the oratory (“the little room with the big crucifix”), she explains; for quiet meditation with a few other sisters, then joins with all of the sisters for the Morning Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.

“I love the morning darkness, the time before dawn when you can just see the light, and everything is shadow and silhouette,” says Sister Harriet of her individual prayer time in her room at the beginning of the day.

She likes to start her day with a form of prayer called “lectio divina” or “divine reading”—reading a Scripture passage and then reflecting and meditating upon the text.

“I mark mine up something fierce,” she says of the booklet she uses that contains the current month’s daily Mass readings. “That’s where God talks to me. God drills it [the Scripture] into my memory. And that energy gives me the fuel for when I go down for Mass or for the [Liturgy of the] Hours.”

In the oratory before the Divine Office, she participates in centering prayer with a few fellow sisters.

“We sit for 20 minutes in silence and just look at the crucifix, and just rest and let [the morning prayer] soak in,” she explains.

There is even individual time built into the Liturgy of the Hours, “a minute or two of silence between each psalm” to reflect upon what you just said,” says Sister Harriet, who once served as the community’s liturgist. “It’s like time for the psalm to wash over you, time to sit in the peace of it all without rushing on.”

In addition to lectio divina and centering prayer, Sister Harriet likes to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the rosary.

But individual prayer can look different for each person, she notes.

“For instance, while Sister Harriet prefers her individual prayer time indoors, she notes that others ‘like to go outside for a walk—we have beautiful gardens.’ The monastery’s outdoor Stations of the Cross and cemetery—both of which are open to the public—also offer space for quiet prayer.”

The monastery’s adjoining Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center is a natural place for people to get away to pray, she adds—and not just during a retreat.

“The path through the peace and nature garden [at the retreat center] is just lovely,” she says. “And people are often seen quietly praying on the center’s labyrinth, a replica of the one created circa 1220 in the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral in France.”

Whether the rosary or lectio divina, inside or outside, individually or in community, prayer is something Sister Harriet says is a “hunger” in today’s world.

“There are some people so hungry for it,” she says. “I know a lot of good people that really do want to come to prayer and are intent on it, but really take the time to pray.”

Not so for the Sisters of St. Benedict.

“It’s our light that we live by, it glowst out from us—it just has to,” says Sister Harriet. “It’s what ignites us.”

(To learn more about the Sisters of St. Benedict of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, go to www.benedictine.org.)

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, in Beech Grove, pray in silence in the monastery’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel in this June 1, 2015, photo. (File photo by Natalie Hoefer)
Hand of God’ guides seminarian on journey to becoming a priest

By John Shaughnessy

Timothy DeCrane’s path to the priesthood has been marked by major moments of doubt, like the time a counselor told him that the results of his career test strongly indicated he should become a lawyer—and DeCrane imagined himself going to law school, joining a firm and having a wife, children and a dog.

“And don’t forget the house with a white picket fence,” the 25-year-old seminarian says with a laugh.

But God has kept putting defining, doubt-removing moments along the path, he says, including the time he rode along with Father Wilfred “Sonny” Day as the pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Starlight drove to the scene of a fatal farming accident in southern Indiana.

“It’s one thing to hear how priests see life and death in a single day. It’s totally different to witness it for yourself,” says DeCrane, who had just finished his first year at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Beech Grove. “Is this what I really wanted?”

Then came the news that he was assigned to spend the summer following his second year at Saint Meinrad as a student chaplain at St. Vincent Indianapolis hospital—in the emergency room and the intensive care unit—one of the last places the self-described “germophobe and hypochondriac” wanted to be.

“It shows that God has an ironic sense of humor,” he says with a laugh.

“Turning serious, he notes, “When I left seminary for the hospital, it was 50-50 that I would be back.”

God was there to walk him through again, he says. Working with some non-Catholics, DeCrane found the confidence to share his story and his faith “in a way I hadn’t before.” He also found the strength to put aside his fears and focus on the patients he met face to face.

“Being in the ICU and the emergency room, you see victims of gun violence, child abuse, domestic abuse, drug overdoses and auto accidents. It reminded me of the summer before, working in those moments when you see life and death. But it also makes you see the depth of spirituality and the depth of the impact you can have on people. “There’s just a ministry in presence. Sometimes, you can’t say anything, but sometimes being there is just enough. It showed me ministry in its messiest forms. That experience gave me the opportunity to see those gifts in myself for the first time. It let me see what family members and friends have told me in my journey of formation.”

A ‘big wake-up call’

His confidence and his belief in God’s direction for his life grew even more during his pastoral internship experience at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus from September of 2016 through May of 2017.

“During those nine months, DeCrane led a confirmation class, headed prayer services at nursing homes, was an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at hospitals, served as a substitute teacher in the parish school, and guided candidates in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program who wanted to be received into the full communion of the Church.

“What was really profound for me was when I greeted people before and after Mass,” says DeCrane, the youngest of six children of Jim and Cathy DeCrane. People would say, ‘The joy you have when you approach Mass is contagious.’ “And seeing how the sacraments really brought people together really differentiated it all for me. I get to be present in the sacraments. That was a big wake-up call for me.”

His embracing of his calling was also noticed by others. During his time at St. Bartholomew, he shared an office with Kathy Davis-Shanks, the pastoral associate at the parish.

“He senses when people are struggling,” says Father Robeson, who has known DeCrane since Tim was about 10. “He’s the rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis when DeCrane spent four years there. “He has a big heart.”

Father Robeson knows the struggles that DeCrane has faced in his path to the priesthood.

“He went through a period of time when he mourned the possibility of being married and having children,” Father Robeson says. “The Lord helped him realize that there are good and beautiful elements of becoming a priest. He trusted in God that he was on the right path. And over time, that was confirmed.”

“For DeCrane, the doubts have faded. They’ve been replaced with a sense of joy and purpose in anticipating that he will be ordained as a transitional deacon in 2018 and ordained as a priest in 2019.”

“I thought to myself, ‘This is what priestly formation can do.’ It takes a young man who hears a call from God, helps him grow in personal discipleship and in ministerial skills, and works to mold him in the image of Jesus Christ. He will make a fine priest for our local Church.”

“I’ve now recognized that presence, that the sacraments are vehicles of salvation. And to know I am called to is tremendously humbling. It fits me. It fits the man I’ve become. It fits what God has called me to do.”

(Vocations Supplement image: Timothy DeCrane poses for a photo in the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel on the campus of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad. (Photo courtesy of Saint Meinrad Archabbey) Seminarian Timothy DeCrane carries a processional crucifix at the conclusion of the July 28 installation Mass of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)
Deacon experiences ‘awesome feeling’ in serving in parish, community

By Katie Rutter
Special to The Criterion

BATESVILLE—Like any proud father, Deacon Ronald Freyer looks with eagerness to the day when his eldest daughter, Melissa, will wed. But at the ceremony on Jan. 6, his role will be larger than the role of most parents. He will actually lead his daughter and her fiancé as they exchange their marriage vows.

“I’m gonna walk her up the aisle, then there’s gonna be a small pause while I go get vested,” Deacon Freyer explained. “I’m gonna try to do the homily if I can keep the tears from coming, but we’ll see how that works. I might not get through that,” he said with a laugh.

As a deacon in the church, Deacon Freyer has the spiritual authority to witness vows as lives are united in the sacrament of matrimony. Deacons can also baptize new members of the Church, preach at Masses and conduct funerals. Their role typically extends to numerous other ministries as well, especially those in service to people in need.

“It’s just an awesome feeling and an awesome privilege to be a deacon. I’m still in awe of that,” Deacon Freyer explained. “I don’t think I’ll ever get over that.”

Deacon Freyer was ordained a deacon on June 23, 2012. The men with whom he was ordained were only the second group of permanent deacons in the history of the Church in central and southern Indiana.

The Second Vatican Council, recalling the presence of deacons in Scripture and the early history of the Church, re-established the permanent diaconate and declared that married men could be ordained deacons.

Deacon Freyer has been married to his wife Mary Beth for 37 years, and they have proudly raised four adopted children.

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Deacon Ronald Freyer, left, listens to Franciscan Sister Francis Clements during a visit to St. Andrews Health Campus in Batesville on Oct. 22. Visiting the sick in hospitals and nursing homes in the southeastern Indiana town is part of Deacon Freyer’s ministry. (Submitted photos by Katie Rutter)
Priest seeks to make parish into ‘disciple-making machine’

By Sean Gallagher

SELLERSBURG—You might think that after being a pastor for 27 years, Father Thomas Clegg would have gotten it by now. But this self-described “self-improvement junkie” is driven to learn more about what it means to be a priest in the 21st century, even putting that into action at St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, where he serves as pastor.

“I think I’ve learned more about being a pastor in my last five years than in the 15-20 years before that,” said Father Clegg. “That’s exciting. It keeps it alive.”

A native of Indianapolis who grew up in St. Philip Neri Parish, Father Clegg was drawn to the priesthood as he grew up in the 1960s and 1970s through his love of teaching, of helping others as a firefighter and the prospect of preaching and leading others in worship. His embrace of priestly life and ministry today, though, is rooted in what he’s learned about the ultimate purpose of pastoral leadership in parishes. “I stay a priest, and specifically as a pastor,” he said, “because it’s an opportunity to mold a parish into what I think God calls a parish to be, which is a disciple-making machine.”

As driven as he is about priestly life and ministry, Father Clegg started his journey to it in a kind of meandering way. He enrolled at the Latin School of Indianapolis, the archdiocese’s former high school seminary, only after his pastor told him that, of all the boys in his eighth-grade class, he thought he could be a good priest.

As it turned out, the pastor convinced eight other boys in the class to enroll at the high school seminary in much the same way.

Father Clegg, the seventh of nine children, said that his family was “never overly religious.”

“Sunday Mass was certainly there,” he recalled. “But we weren’t a family that prayed the rosary every night or anything like that.”

He graduated from the Latin School in 1978, the same year that it closed, and went through a couple of seminaries in college and major seminary before being ordained in 1990. In the periods in between, Father Clegg worked as a teacher at St. Philip Nerl Parish and followed in his father’s footsteps by serving as a firefighter in the Indianapolis Fire Department.

“When someone has a toothache long enough, they go to a dentist,” Father Clegg said of the way the idea of the priesthood kept recurring to him. “It was just kind of gnawing at me for so long. I really had to check it out.”

He enrolled at St. John Vianney Seminary in St. Louis in 1990.

Over his 27 years as a priest, Father Clegg has served as chaplain at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis and in parishes in Indianapolis and the New Albany Deanery.

During much of that time, he has led parishes that have either had to merge with or collaborate more closely with a nearby faith community.

That trend started in 1992 when Father Clegg led the former St. Catherine of Siena and St. James parishes on Indianapolis’ south side to merge and become Good Shepherd Parish.

He later served as pastor of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes. It was the first time that the two Jeffersonville faith communities had to share a priest.

In 2013, Father Clegg was assigned as pastor of St. Joseph and St. Paul parishes, both in Sellersburg. A year later, the two faith communities merged to become St. John Paul II Parish.

In all of these cases, Father Clegg says, the parishioners drove the process of coming together.

“Just three of the complex pastoring situations I’ve been involved in, it’s been the parishioners who have made the decision,” he said. “It has never been my agenda to merge churches together.”

Tom Meier served as pastoral associate with Father Clegg at Good Shepherd Parish and had previously been a longtime member of St. James Parish.

As he observed his young pastor bring his home parish and St. Catherine together, he saw a priest “that was well beyond his years in terms of maturity.”

“He was fantastic,” said Meier, who later served as Good Shepherd’s parish life coordinator from 2000-04. “What impressed me most about [his] ability to bring the parishes together was his ability to follow a process and let that process unfold.

“Most people, myself included, would have gotten so frustrated and just said, ‘Let’s go ahead with this.’ But he was able to sit back and let the process happen, get input from the people.”

Sister Helen Mary-Buffaz said these same qualities in Father Clegg when she served as a pastoral associate at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville.

“I think he made a huge difference by modeling who Christ was for us, by being open to the power of the Spirit during that time of coming together,” she said. “He was good at trying to bring people together and to understand that, even though we were to be together, each parish would keep its own identity.”

Don Day, a member of St. John Paul II Parish and president of its pastoral council, says his pastor “is like the Energizer bunny.”

“He’s really made our parish come alive,” said Day. “There are a lot of things going on in different ministries. Our parish has really become more vibrant that way. He’s impressed me. He’s a real leader, very mission-oriented and makes things happen.”

For Father Clegg, the mission of the Church that Father Clegg ultimately says is at the heart of the process of bringing parishes together as one.

“I really think it’s a question of how we best facilitate the mission of the Church, which, in my mind, is the mission that Jesus gave us, the great commission of making disciples,” he said. “How do we best do that? If it’s best to do that with two small communities, then you stay with two smaller communities. But if you can do that by working together, then that’s the way to go.”

The mission to make disciples has also led Father Clegg to take 17 mission trips to Haiti, although he isn’t sure who is ministering to whom when he goes there.

“For me, when we do our mission trips, I almost like to call them a reverse mission,” he reflected. “We don’t build houses. We don’t paint buildings. We don’t want to take a job out of the hand of a Haitian.

“We just go to learn about them, their culture and their lives. I call a mission trip a success if anyone on our mission team can call 10 people by name, at the end of the trip, and 10 people can call them by name. It’s really about building relationships and learning about the culture.”

And for Father Clegg, relationships—with God and other people—is at the heart of being a priest.

“You’re led into people’s lives at times of great emotion, whether it’s going to a hospital to anoint someone who’s dying, or at a wedding,” he said. “People just invite you into their lives. And sometimes, it’s not because they know you. It’s because you’re a priest.”

Father Clegg encourages men considering the priesthood to nurture their relationship with God.

“It’s about an openness to God’s action in your life,” he said. “If God is calling you and you don’t close yourself off to that call, you’ll find the answer.”

(To learn more about a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit HeartGodsCall.com | †

Father Thomas Clegg, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, preaches a homily during a Sept. 27 Mass with students of the New Albany Deanery faith community’s school at St. Paul Church in Sellersburg. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Father Thomas Clegg, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, distributes Communion to the parishioners who have made the process of merging churches together.

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Father Thomas Clegg, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg, preaches a homily during a Sept. 27 Mass with students of the New Albany Deanery faith community’s school at St. Paul Church in Sellersburg. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)
Young monks use podcasts to shed mystery and show the joy of monastic life

By John Shawhnessey

It’s a story touched with humor, a story that sheds light on what the Benedictine monks who call Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad their home. One of the long-standing traditions of the archabbey in southern Indiana involves the community’s monks photographing the monastic reflections of theambio at the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.

Sister Emily TeKolste, sitting in the quiet space of the architecture programs in the Archabbey, said, “It’s a way to show people who they are, who they were, who they will be.”

“It’s a way to show people what the monks are like by hearing their voices,” Brother Joel says. “We’re hoping to give you a chance to listen to their stories and to learn more about who they are and what they do.”

The connection was so good that they felt the monks’ story was a good fit for their podcast. Saint Meinrad Archabbey is a monastery in the 21st century. We have monks from all different kinds of backgrounds. We’re monks of Saint Meinrad—a way of life that feeds our lives of prayer and community that is similar to most Christians in that they face the search for God.

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God created human beings to love and be loved, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—God’s “dream” for human beings is that they would know they are loved by him and would love him in return and that they would love one another, Pope Francis said.

“In fact, we were created to love and be loved,” the pope said on Oct. 29 before reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square.

Pope Francis focused his remarks on the Sunday Gospel reading from Matthew, in which Jesus tells the Pharisees that the greatest commandments are “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39).

Jesus lived according to those two commandments, the pope said. His preaching and actions were all motivated by what was essential, “that is, love.”

“Love gives energy and fruitfulness to life and to the journey of faith,” he said. “Without love, both life and faith remain sterile.”

True fidelity to God involves loving God and loving the other people, he created, the pope said. “You can do many good things, fulfill many precepts, good things, but if you do not love other people, they are useless.”

The ideal of love Jesus offers in the Gospel passage, he said, also corresponds to “the most authentic desire of our hearts.”

Jesus gave himself in the Eucharist precisely to fulfill that desire and to give people the grace they need to love others like he loves them, the pope said. †
Saul Llacsa recalls the defining moment in his life with a quiet, reverent voice. “I was 14 years old,” he says. “I saw my sister crying in the back yard, kneeling down and crying.”

“I asked her, ‘Why are you crying?’ And she told me, ‘I have to bring every day food to our table.’”

“I saw her an example of Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us. At that point I said to myself, ‘Why can I not lay down my life so that others can live?’”

Since that day in his hometown of Tarja, Bolivia, in South America, Llacsa, now 31, has felt “called” to do more—more than just helping others—to follow him.

To earn a law degree, “then you can do more things—more than just helping others—to follow him.”

Ten years ago, [archdiocesan religious education] was more focused on pastoral ministry as they were adapting to the culture, Castellanos explains. “We were trying to provide the basic needs for sacramental preparation.

But it was becoming like a mini-diocese—providing services, but somehow disconnected with the greater Church.

“Now I see how [the archdiocesan role] is shifting more toward someone who can direct parish Hispanic ministries to the other offices. We’re trying to collaborate.”

“ endings without its challenges. There are cultural differences between Latinos, Llacsa notes. “Latinos from South America are not all the same, and they are different from [Latinos from] North or Central America. Different communities have different needs, but we’re open to working with all of them.”

Regardless of the country, Llacsa exhales from the archdiocese, Llacsa hopes “to help them to be more integrated and more useful in society, and to really also show the gifts and the beauty of the Latino people in the United States—but always keeping our focus on Jesus Christ.”

And when he’s not doing that, Llacsa likes to spend time in a few other places: in Naperville visiting family, on the road running, and in the kitchen baking.

Growing up with three sisters and being the youngest [of seven], in some ways I was forced into the kitchen,” he says with a laugh.

His talent has not gone unnoticed. “He’s already taking orders” for baked goods from his co-workers, says Castellanos.

More importantly, he says, Llacsa’s adaptability and his passion for the faith also stand out.

“We were looking for someone who had experience, yet [was] open to working in a situation that’s very unique, with transitioning to the new archbishop, with an office that is also transitioning,” says Castellanos, who has served less than a year in his own role.

“When we met Saul and had the interview, that was something we immediately noticed,” he says. “He was willing to say, ‘This is what I bring to the table, but I’m here to learn.’…”

“And number one is his passion when he talks about his faith. Every time I had the opportunity to talk on the phone or e-mail, I noticed his passion.”

That passion exudes from Llacsa. “I love my Church so much,” he says. “My hope is in my God and my Church. That is what keeps me moving forward.”
Ecumenical dialogue fosters unity now and in the future

By David Gibson

Something virtually unthinkable happened during the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. Numerous Christians who were not Catholic were invited to serve as formal observers of the council proceedings at the Vatican.

These observers’ surprising presence at the council confirmed that a century-long political era of disputes and contention, a time when divided Christians basically turned their backs to each other, was undergoing a profound transformation.

The council offered the world’s Catholic bishops and its official observers many opportunities to turn toward each other in conversation and friendship. The observers included Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, representatives of the world’s Orthodox Churches and others.

Simply put, the council enabled the bishops and the observers to get to know each other and sometimes, no doubt, to better understand each other’s faith convictions. Did more unite divided Christians than separated them? The realization that this was the case would take deeper and deeper root in the decades that followed.

No longer, for example, would conflicts of Reformation and Counter-Reformation times be allowed easily to devour the relationships of divided Christians.

One U.S. council observer was the Rev. Albert Outler, a United Methodist theologian. In a 1986 speech, he told how Vatican II opened “a new era of cordial coexistence between Roman Catholics and other Christians,” and “moved us beyond grudging ‘tolerance’ toward truly mutual love.”

George Lindbeck, then a theologian at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., was a Lutheran observer. Seven years after the council, he spoke of the “remarkable amount” of agreement being witnessed on official levels in the faith traditions regarding the values a Christian must share—issues as diverse as human rights, family planning, and the environment.

One October evening in 1963, Blessed Paul VI met in his private library with the Vatican II observers. “What could be simpler, more natural or morehuman, this pope asked, than to speak to one another and to get to know one another?”

But “there is more,” he remarked. The council provided opportunities “to listen to each other, to pray for each other and, after such long years of separation and after such cruel polemics, to begin again to love each other.”

He shared his assurance that “we are turning toward a new thing to be born, a dream to be realized.”

It was time, Blessed Paul proposed, for divided Christians “not to look to the past but toward the present, and above all toward the future.” Remaining fixed on the past meant running the risk of “getting lost in the maze of history and undoubtedly reopening old wounds which have never completely healed.”

The pope did not spell out which “old wounds” he meant. But among them, surely, were points vigorously disputed in the 16th century when dividing lines between communities of Western Christians were drawn and so much that they shared in terms of faith began to recede from view.

One line of division involved the doctrine of justification. “Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were in the 16th century a principal cause of the division of the Western Church,” says the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” signed in 1999 by leading representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion.

At issue was Martin Luther’s insistence, central to his theology, that Christians do not earn salvation through good works, but are saved through faith.

If the presence at Vatican II of observers who were not Catholic had been nearly unimaginable, given the realities of past times, the degree of agreement on the doctrine of justification reached on the eve of the 21st century by Lutherans and Catholics was earthshaking!

Yet, Lutherans and Catholics confessed together in the 1999 declaration that “by grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renewes our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.”

Much later, in a 2016 statement, Pope Francis and Bishop Munib Younan, president of the Lutheran World Federation, agreed that divided Christians seeking greater unity must not yet get detained by past conflicts.

Instead, they should look to the present moment and to the future. That statement anticipated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation being observed in 2017.

“We emphatically reject all hatred and violence, past and present,” the two leaders stressed. They prayed for the healing “of memories that cloud our view of one another.”

They recommended that at this time Catholics and Lutherans should work together for “dignity, justice, peace and reconciliation” in the world, welcoming the stranger, coming to the aid of those forced to flee their homelands and defending refugees’ rights.

Scholars still will study the important points of faith that erected walls between Christians in the 16th century and afterward. But, as Pope Francis and Bishop Younan said, “what unites us is greater than what divides us.”

Instead of “conflicts of the past,” their advice now is to allow “God’s gift of unity among us” to “guide cooperation and deepen our solidarity.”

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The Rev. Ishmael Noko, left, then-general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, and Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, archbishop of Atlanta dip their hands in holy water at the start of an Oct. 1, 2009, Vespers service marking the 50th anniversary of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” at Old St. Patrick’s Church in Chicago. (CNS photo/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World)

Pope Francis talks with the Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, during an ecumenical event at the Malmo Arena in Malmo, Sweden on Oct. 31, 2016, that launched a yearlong observance of the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. Ecumenical dialogue over the past half century is aimed at fostering great Christian unity now and in the future. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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Doctrine of justification no longer divides Catholics and most Lutherans

By Samuel Wagner

On Oct. 31, 1999, leading representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church signed the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.” What is this? Today, the doctrine of justification isn’t usually a common theme on Sunday mornings in Catholic or Lutheran parishes.

Moreover, understanding the means of justification (“by faith and through grace”) might seem like an exercise in mental gymnastics rather than anything of real practical value in our day-to-day lives. Yet, these were Church-dividing issues for nearly five centuries.

Awareness of Martin Luther’s historical context can be helpful in understanding the joint declaration. Luther, though typically remembered as the quintessential rebel, believed himself to be a faithful servant of the Church until his death in 1546. As modern scholarship, both Lutheran and Catholic, has made clear, Luther never intended to divide the Church.

In the spring of 1517, the stage was set for a perfect storm. Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar, was in Germany under papal order to raise funds for the building of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The strategy was the sale of indulgences. For a fee, the Church would intercede and shorten the length of purgatory for loved ones. It was an effective and popular scheme among the townspeople.

However, the practice troubled Luther, then an Augustinian friar and professor of theology in Wittenberg. He had a simple question: How is a sinner justified? That is, who, or what does forgiveness refer to? Is it something we do?

Further, as the sale of indulgences implied, could the Church, or the pope, mediate forgiveness and salvation? Luther had his “aha” moment in reading St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans. He arrived at the understanding that Christ alone mediates forgiveness of sins and grants salvation; salvation is a gift of God’s grace through faith. Luther’s writings around this insight, in addition to his “95 Theses,” didn’t spark the fruitful theological exchange within the Church he had intended.

Instead, it began a rupture in the Church. In 1521, Luther was excommunicated for his insistence on hostility and an unwillingness to dialogue on both sides. For the reformers, justification by faith alone became the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls, a view held in opposition to so-called “works of righteousness.”

Caricatures of this issue (“Catholics believe they are saved by good works,” or “Lutherans don’t believe good works are important”) were common for several centuries. It was not until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that a genuine theological discussion between Catholics and Lutherans became possible.

To date, the great achievement of those conversations is a joint understanding that we are justified, or saved, by our faith through God’s grace, and that good works are a natural result of a life lived in Christ. Christian living is not a choice between good works or faith, but an interconnectedness of the two.

The “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” is a milestone in Catholic-Lutheran dialogue. The document expresses, in theological language, that Catholics and Lutherans of the World Lutheran Federation agree that salvation is mediated by Christ, by faith, through God’s grace, and that this necessarily leads to good works that further God’s kingdom.

(Samuel Wagner is director of Dialogue and Catholic Identity at Georgetown University in Washington.)
Instead of subscribing to what the world values, live by God's standards

Recently, I had the opportunity to listen to some gifted guest speakers at an event. The speakers were thoughtful, articulate and had lots of stories behind their names. Two of my favorites had such impressive degrees and titles that their academic credentials barely fit on their allotted space for the program.

One speaker was a renowned medical doctor, entrepreneur and family member at a local university. He shared stories that brought listeners to tears.

Another was an attorney who practiced in the court and had letters behind his name. Two of my favorites had such impressive degrees and titles that their academic credentials barely fit on their allotted space for the program.

He explained that she recently returned from a sabbatical, where she spent all of her time with family, reflecting on her faith and reading voraciously. She mentioned reading the works of author Parker Palmer and shared one of his nuggets of wisdom: the idea that we may not be able to change the whole world, but we can change the world three feet around us. Simply by how we live our daily lives, we have great power to create positive change.

I was amazed. I was moved. I was left with the feeling of being overwhelmed and grateful. I wasn't prepared for rain.

When we lose someone we love, I believe that when the ripples formed, they felt this, or understand it fully, I believe so.

I am included in an unending rhythm of love and loss. I had just left the funeral of my aunt. I will ever know. Just like the ripples of life impacted so many people—more than those who knew her.

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The Sunday Readings

Sunday, November 5, 2017

- 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13
- Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

The Book of Malachi provides the final reading for this weekend’s Mass. The prophet’s name, Malachi, reveals his role. In Hebrew it means “messenger of Yahweh.” As a prophet, he brought God’s message to the people.

Malachi wrote in prophetic writings, as in this weekend’s reading, the prophets wrote in a way in which God spoke in the first person. The prophets presented themselves merely as earthly instruments through whom God spoke, but the actual communicator was God.

Malachi did not write at a time of crisis for God’s people, as was the case for other prophets, or when life was filled with peril and destruction. Malachi, nevertheless, shared with all the prophets the opinion that when the people were sluggish in their religious observance, or when they had altogether rejected God, they risked their own well-being.

Lack of fervor, in the estimation of the prophets, was the height of ingratitude. By contrast, God always was merciful, always faithful to the covenant.

This weekend’s reading, again with God’s words given in first person, accuses the people of sinning. They were sluggish in their religious observance, or when they had altogether rejected God, they risked their own well-being.

Reflection
For weeks in these readings from St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus has assumed the role of the final authority, of the ultimate judge. Jesus pronounces on the most supreme of all laws, the law of Moses.

For Matthew, Jesus judges as the Son of God, in a position to pronounce on anything and everything.

Matthew depicts Jesus always presenting the wisest and most reasonable of judgments on matters that usually perplex others.

In this weekend’s Gospel reading, Jesus directly addresses the most basic of human inadequacies, the deep fear within all of us that, even unwittingly, will make mistakes and pay the price.

Be strong, the Lord admonishes, there is nothing to fear. Be sincere. Follow the Lord in confidence.

Supporting this view are the readings from First Thessalonians and Malachi. God is always with us in mercy, love, guidance and protection. He sent us the prophets, the Apostles and, of course, Jesus.

Still, God does not overrule us. We must voluntarily turn to God. We must hear and love God. Always crippling us will be our own fears and defenses, but in conquering self, we do not leave ourselves at risk. God strengthens us. †

**Daily Readings**

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**Question Corner**

**Fr. Kenneth Doyle**

**Annulments can be sought in dioceses where a petitioner currently lives**

**Q** Have been divorced for three years and need to proceed with getting an annulment. My ex-husband is getting remarried next month, and I am getting married again next spring (eight months from now).

**A** I did not pursue this before because I had been led to believe that my ex-husband would have to be involved in the process, and I knew that he would not want to do that. Now, from a recent column of yours, I understand this is not so and that is such a relief.

But I do have a few questions. I no longer live in the diocese where I got married: Can I just go to the priest in my current parish and get the application forms for the process? And how long does the annulment process take? (Virginia)

**A** You may file for a declaration of nullity of your previous marriage, commonly known as an annulment, in the diocese in which the marriage took place, in the diocese in which you now reside or in the diocese in which your ex-husband now resides. Please note that while your ex-husband is not required to participate in the process, he must be informed of the process by the Tribunal and given the opportunity to participate.

You would be well-advised to consult your parish priest right away and ask him which of the dioceses he thinks might be able to process the case more quickly.

There is some variation on this, depending on the size of the marriage tribunal staff and the number of cases that are pending. In many dioceses, once the paperwork is accepted, it could take upward of 12-18 months for the testimony to be evaluated (including that of the witnesses), any legal follow-up questions to be asked and a decision to be rendered.

So your time frame already may be a bit ambitious if your hope is to get married in a Catholic ceremony. And parishes are generally not permitted to schedule a wedding until a declaration of nullity has been granted.

Ask your parish priest for the necessary forms. He will either have them or ask the diocese to send them to you.

Finally, as to the legitimacy of your children, one of worry—the Church’s Code of Canon Law speaks to this: canon 1137 says that “children conceived or born in putative marriage are legitimate,” and canon 1061.3 explains that a “putative” marriage is one that had been entered into in good faith by at least one of the parties.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyles@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12201.)

**Martin de Porres**

**1579 - 1639**

**feast - November 3**

This illegitimate son of a freed Panamanian slave and a Spanish knight became a hero to the people of Lima, Peru, his birthplace, for his compassionate care of the sick and poor. Apprenticed at age 12 to a barber-surgeon, Martin also learned herbal medicine from his mother. After working for several years at a Dominican girls’ orphanage, he was ordained a priest. In 1603, Martin founded an orphanage and foundling hospital, ministered to African slaves, practiced great penances and experienced mystical gifts. Martin was carried to his grave by prelates and noblemen and all Peruvians acclaimed him as their most beloved saint. He is the patron of hairdressers and inter racial justice.
Las Marianas, Puerto Rico (CNS) — By joining forces to create coalitions on behalf of those who are suffering in the wake of Hurricane Maria, the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico has been fulfilling Pope Francis’ expressed wish to see “a Church that walks with the poor.”

At the parish level, that cooperation has been notable at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church that walks with the poor.”

Pope Francis’ expressed wish to see “a Church that walks with the poor.”

The criterion

Obituaries of archdiocesan

page.

The last round of donations received by the coalition included $5,000 from the Diocese of Arecibo for food items, hundreds of clothing items from the Pentecostals, as well as 200 water filters and hundreds of solar-powered lightbulbs from Samaritan’s Purse.

One of the parish volunteers working with the Church relief operation was Martha Vega. Before the hurricane, the young mother had been separated from her husband, her son and her daughter. Both men were incarcerated, and the girl has been placed under child protective services.

Hurricane Maria took all Vega had left her home in a nearby wooded area and her personal property.

I have lost everything. My house was torn apart. It took me four days to make it to my house walking by way of trails because the road was impassible,” said Vega. She was temporarily staying with a friend. “The only thing I can do now is start over,” she told CNS. “I’m motivated because I’m here, helping others, and because all help that I have requested, I have received it here.”

Luz Lamboy, 82, who has Alzheimer’s, was one of the last recipients of aid in Plato Indio. Cheerful and happy to have company, she was grateful for the items received.

When Father Carlos identified himself to her as a priest, she answered with a big smile: “I don’t care who you are, as long as you bring me the gift of God’s word.”

Puerto Rico recovery effort shows ‘a Church that walks with the poor’
Pope asks U.S. to welcome migrants, urges migrants to respect laws

ROME (CNS)—Pope Francis called on the people of the United States to welcome migrants, and urged those who are welcomed to respect the laws of the country.

To all people of the U.S., I ask: take care of the migrant who is a promise of life for the future. To migrants: take care of the country that welcomes you; accept and respect its laws and walk together along the path of love,” the pope said on Oct. 26 during a live video conversation with teenagers from around the world.

Pope Francis was speaking with teens participating in a program of the international network of “Scholas Occurrentes.”

At the event, broadcast by the U.S. Spanish-language network Telemundo, the host asked the pope for a message to immigrants in the United States.

Many face difficulties after the Trump administration’s recent call to tighten immigration laws, by raising the standard of proof for asylum seekers and limiting family members of current immigrants who can enter the country.

Other proposals include: constructing a wall on the southern border; cracking down on the entry of young who can enter the country.

Members of current immigrants the standard of proof for asylum the Trump administration’s immigrants in the United States.

President Donald J. Trump has said that in any bill to legalize DACA, Congress must include funding for a U.S.-Mexico border wall and more Border Patrol agents—as laid out in his policy proposals—or he won’t sign such a measure.

Pope Francis called on the Dreamers, “The first thing I want to say is that I’m praying for you, and I am close to you. Secondly, continue dreaming. And lastly, be close to people who can help you and defend you at this juncture.”

“Do not hate anyone, look for help from those who can defend you. I am praying for you.”

Pope Francis also urged Europeans to welcome migrants and refugees who arrive on the continent seeking a better life, and he reminded Europeans that they are also “migrants” (“mixed race”) from “the great migrations of the barbarians and the Vikings.”

“This isn’t the time to pretend this is a sterilized laboratory,” the pope said. “This is the moment to receive, to embrace and—to those who arrive—to respect the rules of the country that welcomes you.”

“To the migrants who suffer,” the pope added, “know that the pope is very close to you. I accompany you and I am praying for you.”

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Home Improvement
Pope says space station crew like a ‘tiny U.N.’ with peaceful diversity

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—One perk that comes with floating aboard the International Space Station (ISS) is that comes with floating aboard the

NASA arranges for occasional calls with the International Space Station (ISS), Vande Hei said it was how astronauts could feel. “We see the peace and serenity of our planet as it goes around 10 kilometers [six miles] a second, and there are no borders, there is no conflict, it's just peaceful.” Pope Francis asked five questions about how the ISS, Vande Hei said it was how individuals, but what is needed is collaboration, the pope asked them how the ISS is an example of that collaboration.Flight engineer Joseph Acaba of Inglewood, Calif., said it is the diversity of each individual that makes the team stronger. “We need to embrace who we are as individuals and respect those around us, and by working together we can do things much greater than we could do as individuals,” he told the pope.
Pope Francis said they were like a tiny United Nations, in which the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Thanking them for their work, he said they were “representatives of the whole human family” working on such an important project in space.

When the pope asked what brought them joy during their long mission, Commander Randolph Bresnik from Fort Knox, Ky., told the pope that it was being able to see every day “God’s creation may be a little bit from his perspective.”

Bresnik, a Baptist, said, “People cannot come up here and see the indescribable beauty of our Earth and not be touched in their souls.” His fellow crew members were also Christians: two Russian Orthodox and three Catholics.

“We see the peace and serenity of our planet as it goes around 10 kilometers [six miles] a second, and there are no borders, there is no conflict, it’s just peaceful,” Bresnik said. “And you see the thinness of the atmosphere, and it makes you realize how fragile our existence here is.”

The commander said he hoped the beautiful images they capture from space and their example as international crew members successfully working together would be an inspiration and a model for the rest of the world.

The pope said he was struck by Bresnik’s awareness of the fragility of the Earth and humanity’s capacity to destroy it, but also the hope and inspiration the astronauts could feel. When asked by the pope what has surprised them most about living in the ISS, Vande Hei said it was how differently things looked from such a unique perspective. He said it was also “unsettling” to be in constant rotation and have to orient himself by deciding himself what was “up” or “down.”

“This is truly a human thing—the ability to decide,” the pope replied. When asked what made them want to become astronauts, Russian flight engineer Sergey Ryazanskiy said his thoughts about Dante Alighieri’s verse in the Divine Comedy that love was the force that “moves the sun and the stars,” Russian flight engineer Alexander Misurkin said only love gives you the strength to give yourself for others.

ITALIAN astronaut Paolo Nespoli said he hoped that someday people like the pope, “not just engineers, physicists,” but poets, theologians, philosophers and writers “can come here to space, which will certainly fly away, in the future I would like for them to be able to come here to explore what it means to have a human being in space.”

It was the second time a pope has called and spoken with 12 astronauts in 2011, praising them for their courage and commitment to the pursuit of peace and the protection of a fragile planet.

Nespoli was present on the ISS for 26. The pope connected for about 25 minutes to astronauts 250 miles above the earth.

On contraception, Church must continue to defend life, cardinal says

ROME (CNS)—The acceptance of artificial contraception by some Christian communities beginning in the 1930s has led “to the monstrousity of what is today known as procreative natural methods of avoiding fertility. Birth control, he said, causes an “artificial separation” of the unitive and procreative aspects of married love.

In his speech at the Rome conference, Cardinal Brandmuller said that after the Second Vatican Council, the Church faced significant pressure—including from within its own ranks—to endorse contraception as “morally justifiable” just as the Anglican Church had done at the 1930 Lambeth Conference and the U.S. Federal Council of Churches, the precursor of the National Council of Churches, did in 1961.

Nevertheless, he added, Blessed Paul defended the sanctity of life and brought “temporary closure to a series of doctrinal affirmations on the matter of contraception.” “Humanae Vitae” proves that ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that guides the process of “paradoxa,” or teaching based on Church tradition, and “ensures that the faith of the Church develops in the course of time,” while remaining faithful to Christ’s teachings, Cardinal Brandmuller said.

He prayed that the document would continue to “irradiate the ‘splendor veritatis’ [the splendor of the truth], capable of illuminating the current darkness of minds and hearts.”

Cardinal Walter Brandmuller

We see the peace and serenity of our planet as it goes around 10 kilometers [six miles] a second, and there are no borders, there is no conflict, it's just peaceful. And you see the thinness of the atmosphere, and it makes you realize how fragile our existence here is.'

Astronaut Randolph Bresnik