Called!

‘Young Church’ responds with resounding joy!

Above, National Catholic Youth Conference participants do a line dance after the closing Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 18. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

Right, Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson offers Communion to a National Catholic Youth Conference participant during the closing Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 18.

For full coverage of the 2017 National Catholic Youth Conference, see inside this special keepsake issue of The Criterion.
Want proof ‘that the young Church is alive’? NCYC offers it

It’s not very often that you get more than 20,000 teenagers on a unique journey of faith in downtown Indianapolis. If we’re being honest, we know it doesn’t happen a lot around the world.

But the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is not about statistics or comparing young people from America, Europe or anywhere else on the globe: it is a pilgrimage of faith for its participants.

And what planners from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, local organizers and representatives of the city of Indianapolis have learned during the past several years is that the “Crossroads of America”—specifically the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium—is a great place to host a three-day retreat for young people eager to meet like-minded teenagers hoping to grow in their lives of faith.

Not surprisingly, many of the young people make new, lifelong friends and have fun in the process, too.

NCYC has been a staple of our downtown landscape every two years since 2011, and the current plan is to continue hosting it here into the foreseeable future.

Scott Williams, the director of youth ministry for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, has witnessed firsthand the joy and excitement this biennial gathering leads to for thousands of teenagers.

“Young people are flooding into a single place to experience community in their Catholic faith,” he said in a recent interview. “It reminds me that the young Church is alive, and young people are excited to participate in the faith community and to share in that faith with others.”

That faith, and the energy and excitement that result from it, offers so much promise for the present and the future of the Church. This year’s theme, “Called (‘Llamados’),” encouraged teens to slow down and listen to where God wants to lead them as missionary disciples.

We hope the stories and photos featured on pages 1A-12A in this week’s special keepsake issue of The Criterion paint a portrait of a young Church that is serving as a beacon of light in a troubled world. The regular Nov. 24 issue is included as the center 12 pages of this keepsake edition. Although they are in the center, the pages are designed to be pulled out. The regular section is labeled page 1B to 12B.

Our regular features are included there: Archbishop Charles C. Thompson’s column, Faith Alive!, Calendar of Events, Opinion and Obituaries and other local news.

As Williams said, “NCYC is a place to prayerfully celebrate the community as a young Church.”

In this special issue, we celebrate our Catholic youths from across the country and their desire to draw closer to God. We hope you enjoy their stories, their enthusiasm and their passion for our shared faith.

—Mike Krokos, editor

Archdiocese and Indianapolis rise again to welcome 20,000 Catholic youths

By John Shaughnessy

For the fourth straight time, the archdiocese and the city of Indianapolis hosted the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 16-18, welcoming 20,000 teenagers from across the country who hoped to deepen their faith and their relationship with God.

So how has the archdiocese and the city continued to be the host for this defining Catholic experience for young people?

Start with the fact that the biennial gathering has usually been blessed with the commitment of nearly 1,000 volunteers from across the archdiocese and extensive planning from the archdiocesan staff that coordinates the local elements of the event.

“There is something about our archdiocese and the volunteer base that we have,” says Scott Williams, the director of youth ministry for the archdiocese who also leads the local steering committee for NCYC.

“We deploy over 1,000 volunteers, and people love it. Our vocations office, our liturgy office and our youth ministry office have all worked on this seamlessly for the past several years. And we’ve had the same people in leadership roles, for the most part, implementing the key areas that we develop. It’s not something we just do; it’s something that we’re really passionate about.”

Geography and “the flow” of the city’s downtown area also make Indianapolis a desirable destination for the conference, according to Williams.

He notes that 75 percent of the country can travel to Indianapolis by bus within a day—a reality that helps cut down the travel costs of large groups of youths attending NCYC.

Downtown Indianapolis is also “one of the most walkable cities in the world,” he notes, and that attribute is enhanced by the largeness and the closeness of two first-class facilities that are the hubs for the conference—the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium.

The stadium served as the gathering space for all the conference participants during general sessions and the closing Mass. The convention center was the conference’s meeting place for workshop sessions, reconciliation, eucharistic adoration and a huge “Thematic Village” where the youths enjoyed music, games, comedy shows and opportunities for service projects.

Add all the ingredients together, and it made for another memorable, faith-filled weekend for the more than 20,000 youths, including about 1,600 teenagers from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

“Serving the young Church is something that we as an archdiocese are committed to,” Williams says. “It’s something that Archbishop Emeritus [Daniel M.] Buechlein initially championed. The first time Indianapolis hosted NCYC was in 2001. It came back in ‘11, and then for ‘13 and ‘15, and this year.

‘The conference is truly remarkable. We talk in youth ministry that we don’t always see the fruits of our labor. And we are planting a lot of seeds this week. But we also see some incredible fruit that grows in these three high-intensity days.’

Scott Williams, archdiocesan director of youth ministry, prepares on Nov. 17 to take part in another NCYC session in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)
By John Shaughnessy

One of the most poignant realities of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is that many of the 20,000 youths who participate are searching for something deeper in their lives: a connection with other teenagers who share their faith, a bond with adults they trust and respect, and a closer relationship with God.

Their search for faith, connection and meaning came through in the conversations that The Criterion had with a number of youths at the conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18.

Several of the youths' stories are shared here. Read on to learn what their Catholic faith means to them during this defining stage of their lives.

Payton Dethy saw the pain that was crushing her friend and knew she had to do something. “I recently had a family friend die who was in high school,” recalls Payton, a member of St. John Paul II Parish in Sellersburg. “His sister was having a tough time with it and fell away from the faith. I talked to her and had teachers from my youth class talk to her—to let her know we were there for her.

“She goes to church regularly now. It’s helped her have the faith she needs—that there’s something greater in store than the event that happened.”

Payton’s efforts to reach out to a friend in need of support and faith flow from her own experiences of needing support for her faith—a support she’s found in attending the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis with about 20,000 Catholic youths in 2015 and 2017.

During the 2015 conference, she was in her first year of high school at a place that was different from the Catholic background in which she grew up. “There are maybe three families in the whole school who are Catholic,” she says. “Going to NCYC let me reach out to people that had that background in a strong Catholic community. A lot of them are from Indianapolis. I talk to them on the phone and text them about things that are happening in my life. I think I will be a confusing and challenging time. “I’m nervous. I hope God gives me the power to persevere through the tough times. And I hope he helps me understand he has a plan for me, because I want to follow his plan.”

Still, there was an even deeper connection that Mynas hoped to make during the conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18. “I want to get closer to the Lord because I haven’t been having a great relationship with him,” said the member of St. Rita Parish in Indianapolis. “I want to have a stronger bond with him because I believe that throughout my life, God will lead me to success.”

The conference was a start for him in that direction. “I can’t get to where God wants me to be without him.”

At 17, Sam Bleisch kept attracting people to his head to feet. “Our parish always has one person in the cow costume at NCYC,” said Sam, a member of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. “It gets passed down from someone who wore it at the last conference. The past cow watched at NCYC last time to see who was funny and outgoing.”

Sam milked the suit for all it was worth, but it couldn’t disguise the feelings of joy and love that he has for his Catholic faith. “It’s a great experience when you get to learn about your faith while having fun. And the chance to meet other Catholics from across the country is amazing.”

“My Catholic faith has really been great to me. The people I’ve met through my Church and the bonds I’ve formed have been life-changing. I wouldn’t be the same person I am without my Church and my faith.”

For Emma Land, there was a time of change in her life. She grew up in a Catholic family, and attended a Catholic school for her first eight years of education. Then the changes and challenges came when she became a student at a public high school.

“I didn’t see the Catholic faith every day in my life. It was a shock to me,” says Emma, a 16-year-old sophomore. “I found it a struggle to stick to my faith.”

Yet change has come again as the member of St. Patrick Parish in Terre Haute has become more involved in the youth group for the Terre Haute Deanery.

“Going to youth group and retreats really helps me realize there are a bunch of other people in the same situation. There have been times when my friends in high school don’t share the same values I do, and I’ve had to stand my ground to keep my Catholic values. It’s kept me grounded, and I’m thankful for that.”

Coming to the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) marked another step for Emma in her journey of faith. “I’m still trying to figure out what God wants me to do with my life. It’s awesome coming here to NCYC to see 20,000 young people living their faith. You think you’re alone, but you’re really not. It’s great to see so many people supporting you in your Catholic journey. That means a lot to me.”

For Wil Zirk, his first experience at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis started with a desire to meet other Catholics from across the country—and to make trades for some of the crazy hats that have become a staple of the conference. The past cow watched at NCYC last time to see who was fun. And the chance to meet other Catholics from across the country is amazing. “I can’t get to where God wants me to be without him.”
‘Have fun, enjoy, keep Christ at the center’ of NCYC, Archbishop Thompson tells youths

By Natalie Hoefer

The call and response echoed back and forth. “NC!” “YC!”

It’s a chant familiar during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), but not one typically heard within the confines of a church.

But it’s how Father Patrick Beidelman, executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Worship and Evangelization, helped the more than 1,100 youths from across central and southern Indiana kick off the opening of NCYC after Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis.

“We’re going to get really loud and really rowdy!” he told the congregation. “But then we’re going to get very quiet and very prayerful as we take the eucharistic presence of Christ into the streets of Indiana.

And so after the calling of the chant—the right side of the church calling out “NC!”—followed by the left side responding with “YC!”—the 1,100 youths, chaperones and parents then reverently knelt as the Blessed Sacrament was placed in a monstrance and incensed before being processed across the street to the Indiana Convention Center.

The chanting and procession were the culmination of a special Mass for archdiocesan NCYC participants celebrated at St. John on Nov. 16. The Mass was concelebrated by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and 17 priests of the archdiocese in the afternoon prior to the first general session of NCYC.

In his homily, Archbishop Thompson told the youths that the NCYC experience is “about keeping God at the center.”

“We seek to be motivated by God’s Spirit,” he said. “When we fall away from God, that’s when we get chaos.”

He then spoke of wisdom, referring to the day’s first reading from the Book of Wisdom.

“Wisdom comes on God’s time,” the archbishop said. “That’s why we have to be people of prayer.

He noted that true wisdom does not follow the wisdom of the world.

“Remember who we follow—one who was humiliated, rejected, killed, despised. That’s our leader.

To the world’s wisdom, that makes no sense. But to true wisdom, that’s where happiness is to be found—by embracing the sufferings of Jesus.”

Archbishop Thompson outlined six ways to embrace true wisdom: by employing faith, trust, hope, confidence, love and a Christian attitude.

“This weekend, let us allow the truth of God to permeate our hearts as we witness those six ways. [...] Then we can achieve what Pope Francis calls for: to continue to cultivate a culture of encounter, of accompaniment.

“Have fun, enjoy, but keep Christ at the center and take the wisdom of a Christ centered life back to your homes, your churches, your schools. Christ has called us here because he believes in us to bring about the Kingdom of God.”

The opening Mass set the right tone for the conference, said Stephen Darda, a youth from St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

“It was good to start NCYC with the Mass because it brings everyone together,” Stephen said. “We’ll end with it, too, so it’s great to start and end with everyone coming together.”

And as for the chanting?

“You never yell in a church like that, so it was cool,” he said with a grin.

Youths fill Lucas Oil Stadium and the halls and conference rooms of the Indiana Convention Center could be seen wearing colorful stickers that read, “I’m forgiven,” which they received after leaving the large room in which dozens of priests and bishops heard confession for several hours during the conference.

“This is important for me, because I felt that a lot of my sins were weighing me down and keeping me away from God,” said Fatima Agredano, a Catholic youth from Elgin, S.C., in the Diocese of Charleston. “Having the sacrament of penance helped relieve that. Having so many priests there for us helps me realize that I’m not the only one and makes me feel more welcome.”

Fatima comes from a state where Catholics are a distinct minority, making up only about 3 percent of its population. She said coming to NCYC in Indianapolis two years ago was a starting point for embracing her faith through her own choice.

“That’s where it all started,” she said. “So I just wanted to come back, renounce that and grow in faith more. My Catholic faith is the center of my life. I at least try my hardest to keep it that way. It’s really important to me and has been for a while now.”

Cole Kreinbring experienced the sacrament of penance at NCYC for only the second time since he and his family were received into the full communion of the Church earlier this year in his hometown of Davenport, Iowa.

“It was a big deal for me to kind of clean myself,” said Cole as he left the room where the sacrament of penance was celebrated.

Coming to NCYC as a newcomer to the Church, Cole experienced the conference as a great boost to his faith.

“It’s truly incredible,” he said. “I can’t really explain the experience. It’s amazing to feel like you’re part of something much, much bigger. It’s a great point in my life. I have it hard before that, so it’s really mind-blowing to me. I feel like it’s going to improve my relationship with God very dramatically.”

Coming out of the room a little later was Bishop Joseph G. Hanefeldt of Grand Island, Neb. He was attending NCYC for the first time, and was impressed by the number of youths who were attending and taking the opportunity to experience God’s mercy in the sacrament of penance.

“How beautiful this is and how powerful God is to not just forgive the past sins of the youths and all those who come, but also in how much grace is being poured out for their days to come,” he said. “It’s exciting. There’s so much good out there. In the news, we always hear about the bad and tragic. I wish the average person at home could see how there is so much good in the young people here and see how kids who really want to live their faith.”

Karen Romero is a high school senior in Perry, Iowa, attending her first NCYC. She chose to go to confession in part to prepare herself for the closing Mass of the conference celebrated on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium.

“It’s really important for me to go to confession with a clean soul,” Karen said. “As teenagers, it’s so hard. We’re surrounded by sin. We love God and we show that love by having clean souls.

“All these people share the same faith that I have. It makes me want to go to confession even more, because I know that I’m not alone in this. I’ve gone through some struggles in my life and the only thing that has kept me going in a good, positive attitude is God.”

Carlan Murphy from Ihcaca, N.Y., was attending her first NCYC. She said celebrating the sacrament of penance would help her focus more on the good she was experiencing in the conference.

“You may go through things that are difficult. It will definitely make it easier to remember the highlights of the trip and the things that really spoke to me, because I’m not worrying about all the other stuff that’s been weighing me down,” she said. “I can then go back and share that with everyone else in my parish and town.

“I have more time to think about that and do something about that instead of worrying about stuff that I brought with me here. I’ll leave it here, and go back and talk about what I learned.”

Photo by Sean Gallagher

By Sean Gallagher

The opportunities seemed endless. The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held on Nov. 16-18 in Indianapolis offered 20,000 youths from across the country a host of speakers to be inspired by, games to play, musical artists to hear, service projects to take part in and booths of exhibitors to visit.

Among this broad array of opportunities, though, many youths made it a priority to experience God’s mercy in the sacrament of penance.

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Photo by Natalie Hoefer

Bishop Charles C. Thompson, left, prays the eucharistic prayer during a Mass for archdiocesan participants at the National Catholic Youth Conference at St. John the Evangelist Church on Nov. 16. He was assisted by 17 priests of the archdiocese. Shown in this photo are kneeling, Father Patrick Beidelman, left, executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Worship and Evangelization, Fathers Joseph Rautenberg, Douglas Hunter, Jonathan Meyer, Kyle Redden and Eric Augustinelli. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)
The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis offered two days of faith-related workshops for the 20,000 youths from across the country to attend. Here is a selection of some of the 100 workshops and the descriptions from the conference schedule:

**Church Isn’t Boring, You Are!**

“As a teen, Paul Kim went to church for two reasons: girls and donuts. Through a miraculous intervention, God revealed to him that the Catholic faith offered more than he could ever hope.”

**When God Wrecks Your Romance**

“Discover how God wants to work everything for good in our lives, even relationships that are broken, and how sometimes the best blessings come through the worst heartache.”

**Love Yourself**

“The biggest lie today, which underlies so many bad decisions, sins and dysfunctions is that we’re only lovable IF... The Gospel shows us we’re lovable BECAUSE...”

**An Attitude of Gratitude: Exploring the Spiritual Practice of Being Grateful**

“It’s easy to get caught up with having the newest and best material things: phones, shoes, cars and the like. Sadly, many times these things don’t satisfy our desires. They hold us only until the next newest and best things are available. Let’s take a look at the spiritual practice of gratitude. It’s a simple yet profound practice that can change our world and our relationship with God.”

**PB&J: Patience, Balance and Joy**

“At every Mass, we are being fed in our lives. If we allow God to feed us, we are supposed to become what we eat.”

**Real Love is For Real**

“God’s love! Our confusion and/or obsession with the sexual part of who we are, and its perceived power over us, has made it difficult to find or to believe in real love. We will be better at loving God, ourselves and others when we grow in the virtue of chastity.”

**Real Life Catholic**

“Compiled by John Shaughnessy

Real Life Catholic, used humor and life experiences to speak about the reality of who we are and of God’s love for each person. He spoke of the “love story” upon which the Catholic faith is founded.

“For you remove the love story, what are you left with?” he asked. “Rules that we have to follow. Rituals that we’re not sure why we keep them alive but they take a lot of time. Decisions that have nothing to do with your life. That’s how the world has come to see Catholicism... The world has forgotten the love story, and so often we’ve forgotten the love story.”

That story, he said, “begins very simply with the words [I believe in one God].”

So many youths today chose not to believe, he said, including an atheist who once told him that belief that God created the universe “is as stupid as a kid coming down on Christmas morning and, seeing presents under the tree, thinks, ‘There are presents, therefore there must be a Santa.’”

“You say there’s no God?” Stefanick asked. “That’s like a flea not believing in the dog. That’s like a kid coming down on Christmas morning and seeing presents under the tree and saying, ‘Oh, huh? Presents! They must have exploded themselves here!’ Just so, the universe did not put itself here, and the more we learn about the universe, the more it shouts to us about the existence of God.”

And because God’s love created us, he said, no other form of love will satisfy.

“We feel so small in this world,” he told the crowd that came from as far away as Hawaii and Alaska. “We feel so insignificant in this universe.

“I think God looks down from heaven and says, ‘You’re huge next to all this.’ As big as a mountain is, can it know someone? As big as the ocean is, can it make a choice? As big as a galaxy is, can it choose to love? No, but you can. You’re huge next to all of this.”

But because of human rejection of God, Stefanick continued, sin and brokenness entered the world. To overcome this, he spoke, and shouts of “Amen!” he modified the words of John 3:16 to note that therefore, “God so loved you that he gave his only Son.”

“Whoo!”

“This love story— which continues in the sacraments. Stefanick noted—”doesn’t just show you who God is. It shows you who you are.”

“Who am I?” he exclaimed.

“‘Who am I?’” He asked.

“‘What am I worth?’” He asked.

“I’m somebody’s. I’m precious and I’m worth more than 20,000 present through a period of silent prayer to choose. He suggested using the word “pray” as an acronym to guide their prayer—“P” for praising God, “R” for repenting of sins, “A” for asking God for needs rather than wants, and “Y” for yielding to his will.

“It was this prayer time more than any other moment that impacted me a lot. I’m so grateful to God for giving me that.”

Father Joseph Espaillat II, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, was one of the evening’s emcees, led the more than 20,000 present through a period of silent prayer to choose. He suggested using the word “pray” as an acronym to guide their prayer— “P” for praising God, “R” for repenting of sins, “A” for asking God for needs rather than wants, and “Y” for yielding to his will.

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While Abby has attended NCYC before, Garrett Randel of Seneca, Kan., was exuberant with the joy of one experiencing the event for the first time.

“I thought it was really cool,” he said of the opening session. “The speaker was really inspiring. I thought it was one of the best experiences I’ve had in my Catholic faith.”

Caitlin Densbury of the Diocese of Lansing, Mich., couldn’t agree more. The NCYC first-timer’s eyes lit up and a smile brightened her face when she spoke of her experience that evening.

“I really like it so far,” she said. “It’s impacted me a lot. I think it’s impacting me a lot. It’s making me think about what I believe.”

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Called! Scenes from 2017 NCYC

Above, Eric Santos works on the caricature of Emily Warnimond of the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, in NCYC’s Thematic Village in the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 18. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

Above, priests, including many from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, process into the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 18. Archdiocesan priests include Fathers Eric Augenstein, left, Matthew Tucci, third from left, and Douglas Hunter, far right. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Above, youths, youth ministers and chaperones pray the rosary aloud together during NCYC in the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 17. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Left, Osyon Jones of the Orlando, Fla., Diocese receives Communion during the NCYC closing Mass on Nov. 18 in Lucas Oil Stadium. (Courtesy of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, www.nfcym.org.)

Above, archdiocesan transitional Deacon Jeffrey Dufresne, left, seminarian Eamonn Daily, Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, Father Patrick Beidelman, transitional Deacon David Farrell of Louisville, Ky., and seminarian Michael Praksam take in the view of the congregation of more than 20,000 people at the beginning of the NCYC closing Mass in Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 18. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Above, youths from the Archdiocese of Atlanta kneel in prayer on Nov. 17 during eucharistic adoration in Lucas Oil Stadium. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Above, youths from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis help prepare prepackaged meals to be sent to Burkina Faso in West Africa as part of Catholic Relief Services’ Helping Hands project during NCYC in the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 18. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)

Left, Catholic singer and musician Matt Maher shakes the outstretched hands of youths during an NCYC general session on Nov. 17 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. (Courtesy of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, www.nfcym.org.)

Above, youths from the Archdiocese of Atlanta kneel in prayer on Nov. 17 during eucharistic adoration in Lucas Oil Stadium. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Left, members of the youth group from St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington share their smiles in the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 17. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Right, more than 20,000 NCYC participants and the lower levels of Lucas Oil Stadium fill during the closing Mass on Nov. 18. (Photo by Natalie Hoefer)
Blessed Solanus Casey lived out faith, hope, charity every day, says cardinal at beatification Mass

DETROIT (CNS)—Blessed Solanus Casey always said that “as long as there is a spark of faith” there can be no discouragement or sorrow, said Cardinal Angelo Amato, head of the Vatican’s Congregation for Saints’ Causes.

His words were accompanied by “the concrete practice of faith, hope and charity in his everyday life,” said the cardinal in his homily during the Nov. 18 beatification Mass for the beloved Capuchin Franciscan friar who was known for his cures and wise counsel.

“He came from an Irish family of profound Catholic convictions. Faith for him was a very precious inheritance for facing the difficulties of life,” Cardinal Amato said. “When the young Bernard [his given name] Casey, entered the Capuchins, he passed from one community of faith to another.”

Blessed Solanus “focused on the poor, the sick, the marginalized and the hopeless,” Cardinal Amato said. “He always fasted in order to give others their lunch. For hours upon hours, he patiently received, listened and counseled the ever-growing number of people who came to him.”

The friar saw people “as human beings, images of God. He didn’t pay attention to race, color or religious creed,” the cardinal said.

Expansion is ‘a huge, huge blessing’ for Lawrenceburg pregnancy care center

By Natalie Hoefer

LAWRENCEBURG—Two things are consistent as Kristi Potts shows off the expanded Pregnancy Care Center of Southeast Indiana facility: her beamring smile; and her praise of God.

“We’re in a unique situation here in southeastern Indiana,” says Potts, executive director of the Lawrenceburg organization which serves Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley and Switzerland counties. “We are the only medical pregnancy center for these five counties.

“In the last five to six years, we’ve had tremendous growth in size, in reach, in services and the number of clients we’ve been seeing.”

But, she says, with only 1,500 square feet, “we were very limited in space, which limited our number of services and the number of clients we could serve. … When the opportunity for the space next door came up, God just made it all happen.”

Reach more, serve more, save more lives

The 28-year-old organization had been in a commercial building for about 10 years. They were not looking to expand.

But in the spring of 2016 when the space adjoining the pregnancy care center became available, says Potts, their landlord hoped the organization would be able to lease it.

Their landlord is Don Townsend, owner of Townsend Properties, Inc., and a member of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora along with his wife, Carolyn. Both are supporters of the pregnancy care center.

“I can’t talk highly enough of them,” he says. “Where else can a young girl and her boyfriend or husband go [in the area] and seek counseling and get help for nothing? I’m very, very proud that they are a tenant of mine. It’s the biggest blessing we have in [the area].”

Potts, 35, said the board met, looked at their budget, prayed—and decided God was calling the center to expand.

The project was completed in January of this year.

“Donors and construction companies helped it all happen.”

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich

BISHOPS

U.S. bishops take on immigration, racism at fall assembly

BALTIMORE (CNS)—At the start of their annual fall assembly in Baltimore on Nov. 13, U.S. Catholic bishops faced some big issues—immigration and racism—straight on, and zeroed in on how to raise the national level of discussion on those topics starting in the church pews.

They acknowledged the current polarization in the country and divides within the Church, and stressed their responsibility as Church leaders to promote immigration reform, educate parishioners on justice issues and listen to those affected by “sins of racism.”

On immigration, Bishop Jose S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, who is chairman of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said there needs to be a “path to legalization and citizenship for the millions of our unauthorized brothers and sisters who are law-abiding, tax-paying and contributing to our society.”

The bishops responded with applause and an agreement by voice vote to issue a statement calling for comprehensive immigration reform.

The bishops were keenly aware that their defense of immigrants was not necessarily the view of the Church in the U.S. at large. For example, Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich spoke of the dangers of Catholics falling prey to and believing “poisoning rhetoric” about immigrants that demonizes them.

“There’s something wrong in our churches, where the Gospel is proclaimed, and yet people leave our worship services, our Masses on weekends, with that rhetoric still echoing in their hearts,” he said.

Several bishops also brought up the
from the area funded everything you now see,” says Potts, while providing a tour of the expansion. “It doubled our space. It was a huge, huge blessing. … Our whole motto for this expansion project was to reach more, serve more, which would equal more lives saved.”

An alternative to providers who offer abortion

Among the new features which will help accomplish the goal of saving lives are an additional counseling room that doubles the number of clients able to be seen, an extra bathroom for pregnancy testing, and a new conference room that allows for group-style classes and events with speakers.

And with the expansion, the center is able to offer two new services: testing for human papilloma virus, or HPV, which affects both men and women, and a men’s mentoring program.

“Our goal is to reach those women and men who are most at risk for an abortion, but it also helps address the sexual health concerns maybe before they even end that unplanned pregnancy,” says Potts. “We consider it not just, ‘Let’s just reduce your risk and give you condoms or birth control,’ but ‘Let’s eliminate that risk and say you’re worth it, and that God has a plan for your life, and that there is a better way out there.’

“We also know that providing relevant medical services, things that men and women in our community are really needing, they’re going to see us as a provider of those kinds of services and care instead of other providers that might be offering abortion services.”

As for the men’s mentoring program, says Potts, “We can’t forget how important that father is in that child’s life. If we only focus on the woman and her abortion decision and forget about him, then we just missed a big piece of that puzzle.”

That puzzle includes more than assisting pregnant women and mentoring men. The pregnancy care center also offers an abstinence education program in local middle schools and high schools, substance abuse education and referrals to community resources.

With the new space and the existing and new services, the pregnancy care center is growing. The number of clients seen so far this year exceeds the number of clients seen by this time last year.

“A lot of hopeful stories

Nestled within the five-county area the care center serves is All Saints Parish in Dearborn County. The faith community, like many others in the area, supports the organization. “The parish has just been imperative for us to do what we do, very influential and just great doers in the community,” says Potts.

Two women of the parish are particularly involved at Pregnancy Care Center of Southeast Indiana—client services director Jennie Chafin and board president Teresa Ward. “I just love this ministry,” says Ward, 62. “This is the most compassionate, 62. “This is the most compassionate, most caring organization that I have seen, an extra bathroom for pregnancy testing, and a new conference room that allows for group-style classes and events with speakers.

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The bishops who spoke on the floor didn’t buy that argument, and said Catholics can’t use it to push aside the need to care for immigrants. Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, who heads the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, said the Church must recognize “and frankly acknowledge” its failings. He said the issue has found a “troubling resurgence” in recent years, referring particularly to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., this year where he said racial hatred was “on full display.”

“Racism isn’t going to be conquered by speeches, but by actions,” said Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Vatican secretary of state, at a dinner celebrating the USCCB’s Encuentro, or “V Encuentro,” next September in Grapevine, Texas, and World Youth Day on Jan. 22-27, 2019, in Panama City.

The bishops also heard from the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, who addressed the bishops at the start of the meeting, and encouraged them to make time for prayer amid “burdens of the office.”

The cardinal told the bishops that the Church needs them today to “bring not only material assistance, but also the spiritual balm of healing, comfort and hope for the people to the Catholic faith.”

He also urged them to follow the pope’s call to accompany the modern Church.

The second public day of meetings did not tackle major societal issues, but approved a new translation of the rite of baptism. The bishops also discussed the review of catechetical materials and a pastoral plan for marriage and family life that will give Catholic couples and families resources to enable them to live out their vocation.

They also voted to move forward the sainthood cause of Nicholas W. Black Elk, a 19th-century Lakota catechist who is said to have introduced hundreds of Lakota people to the Catholic faith.

They highlighted past events such as the Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Fla., this summer and spoke about tapping into the energy that came from that national gathering at diocesan and parish levels.

They also identified key issues they are addressing with Congress, including health care, the federal budget and tax reform, and concluded their assembly by mentioning the impact of recent disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires.

BISHOPS

continued from page 1B

notion of prudential judgment—referring to the view Catholics could take on immigration that differs from the bishops—since it is not a specific matter of Church teaching.

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Bishop Curtis J. Guillory of Beaumont, Texas, a region hard hit by Hurricane Harvey, said often when tragedies occur, “you just feel very much alone and wonder how you are going to move forward.”

He thanked the bishops for their support, in prayers, phone calls and donations, which he described as a “wonderful sign of solidarity” and sign of unity of our faith. This will be a long and costly recovery, he noted, but added that “people have deep, deep faith.”

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POPE FRANCIS

#GIVINGTUESDAY

ONE ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU

John 15:12

United Catholic Appeal
Cult Our Hope

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POPE FRANCIS
Mike Krokos, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, This day and week are being sponsored Christians will be observed on Nov. 26, religious restrictions. And the U.S. State destroyed, and 772 forms of violence are Christians are killed for their faith, 214 to be today. The organization Open would be persecuted, and they continue in one town, flee to another” (Mt 10:22-23).

Jesus predicted that his followers would be persecuted, and they continue to be today. The organization Open Doors reports that each month 522 Christians are killed for their faith, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, and 772 forms of violence are committed against Christians. The Pew Research Center says that more than 75 percent of the world’s populations live in areas with severe religious restrictions. And the U.S. State Department says that Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors. Therefore, it certainly is appropriate that a Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians will be observed on Nov. 26, with a Week of Awareness following it. This day and week are being sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in cooperation with the Knights of Columbus.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, USCCB president, said Nov. 9, “The solemnity of Christ the King is a fitting time to reflect on religious freedoms and persecution.”

The Open Doors World Watch List says that extreme persecution is taking place in North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Eritrea. In many of those countries, there is little that we Christians in the United States can do. However, there is some promise in Syria and Iraq now that the Islamic State (also known as ISIS and Daesh) has suffered many setbacks. This is an area of the world where Christianity can be traced back to the time of the Apostles. As recently as 2003, there were 1.5 million Christians in Iraq, but it is believed that now there are fewer than 200,000. We can recall video of Christians fleeing the country, doing what Christ said “when they persecute you in one town, flee to another” (Mt 10:23).

On the USCCB website a report titled “Persecuted and Forgotten?” says, “Governments in the West and the UN failed to offer Christians in countries such as Iraq and Syria the emergency help they needed as genocide got underway. If Christian organizations and other institutions had not filled the gap, the Christian presence could already have disappeared in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East.”

Now, at least in theory, Christian families can return to their homes in Iraq. However, as the Knights of Columbus’ supreme knight, Carl Anderson, wrote to the U.S. bishops, “In most cases, they lack the financial resources to do so.”

Anderson said that the Knights have pledged $2 million to move families back to their homes in Karamles, a town on the Nineveh Plain, which was captured by the traditional Christian homeland in Iraq. He said that the Knights hope to be able to assist other towns as well.

Furthermore, the Knights are asking its councils to contribute $2,000 as an initial goal to help families return. Anderson urged that other Catholic groups join this drive. He wrote, “If just half of America’s 17.651 parishes contributed $2,000, it would produce more than $17 million—roughly the same amount the Knights has pledged so far.”

This is an effort that those who don’t want Iraqi and Syrian refugees coming to our country could support. Archbishop William L. Lori of Baltimore has written this Prayer for Persecuted Christians: “O God of all nations, the One God who is and was and always will be, in your providence you willed that your Church be united to the suffering of your Son. Look with mercy on your servants who are persecuted for their faith in you. Grant them perseverance and courage to be worthy imitators of Christ. Bring your wisdom upon leaders of nations to work for peace among all peoples. May your Spirit open conversion for those who contradict your will, that we may live in harmony. Give us the grace to be united in truth and freedom, and to always seek your will in our lives.”

—John F. Finn

Syrian refugee children scream as they sit in front of Macedonian riot police at the Greek-Macedonian border near the village of Idomeni, Greece, on Aug. 21. A Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians will be observed on Nov. 26, with a Week of Awareness following it. (AP Photo/Darko Bandic, File)

Be Our Guest/ St. Constance Veit, L.S.P.

Are you ready to be a child again?

This time of year always brings me back to my childhood. With fond nostalgia, I remember the pinecone turkeys we made in Girl Scouts, the pilgrim costumes my mother painstakingly sewed, and the necklaces made of painted pasta that my sisters and I made—pulled apart, scattering raw macaroni all over the back seat of the car on our way to grandmother’s house for Thanksgiving.

Once the holiday arrived, we would spend all day watching the Thanksgiving Day parades. After dinner, we’d gather around the television again to enjoy one of our favorite Christmas specials. With Black Friday just hours away, we knew that Thanksgiving meant that even better things were to come!

Oh to be a child again, especially as we journey toward Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas! Still, we can return to the simplicity of childhood—at least spiritually.

Caryll Houselander, a popular 20th-century spiritual author and poet, wrote, “To become a child is a challenge to our courage. It demands, first of all, that we dare to grow up, to give ourselves to life, to accept life as it is—and above all, to accept ourselves as we are.”

Houselander suggested that going back to childhood means rediscovering “true values, instead of those that are based on materialism, public opinion and snobbery; that we must regain simplicity and humility … and, above all, we must learn the content of the life that is purely a boundless zest for living and partly an unquestioning trust in an all-powerful God.”

Although these words were penned in 1949, they could have been written today. So much in our lives is driven by materialism and public opinion. Our attention is fragmented by constant multi-tasking and the incessant flow of information, which prevent us from fully experiencing the activities in which we are engaged at any given moment. This is especially true in the holiday season that begins with Thanksgiving.

According to a national survey provided by New Dream, an organization that promotes simplicity, more than 75 percent of Americans wish the holidays were less materialistic. Nearly nine in 10 believe that holidays should be more about family and caring for others than exchanging gifts.

Recent studies in social neuroscience have found that loneliness causes serious health risks, more than 75 percent of U.S. senior citizens experience frequent or intense loneliness, and 94 percent of people with disabilities feel that they lack meaningful community participation.

New research suggests that we create holiday traditions “that instill more meaning into the season and encourage more creativity, co-operation, and personal renewal,” rather than the accumulation of material goods and credit card debt.

For adults like you and me, our childhood holidays are often our most precious memories. Yet many of us get caught up in the frenzy of materialism, rushing around so much that we never really appreciate the heart and soul of Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas.

While we still have time, let’s resolve to become children again. Let’s rediscover true values of faith and family, the love of humble things and simple pleasures, gratitude and a commitment to nurturing relationships—especially with those who are at risk of being marginalized or who are in need of special attention.

Let’s ask for the grace to recover the ability to live in the present moment and to fully experience whatever we are doing, a boundless zest for living and an unquestioning trust in an all-powerful God. We can also count on two of the Church’s newest saints, Jacinta and Francisco of Fatima, who were just young children when God called them to a vocation of historic proportions for the Church and the modern world.

Finally, in our journey back to childhood we are always accompanied by God, who, being little children of the gift of God, and who constantly sang of her gratitude and her sense of wonder at the privilege of accomplishing in her. She is eager to help us to become, anew, children of a loving God.

(Little Sisters of the Poor Sister Constance Carolyn Veit is director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States.)

Letters to the Editor

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” (Comunicatio in Unitate, 116). Letters from readers are welcome and every effort will be made to include letters from as many people and representing as many viewpoints as possible. Letters should be informed, relevant, well-expressed and temperate in tone. They must reflect a basic sense of courtesy and respect.

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

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

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

Letters may be submitted online by logging on to www.CriterionOnline.com, click on “Send Us Information on the left side, then choosing “Letters to the Editor.”

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‘We Catholics celebrate the holy Eucharist, the source of and our instrument of unity and healing, to ‘go to the peripheries’ where the poor, the strangers and the outcasts dwell. The peripheries are generally not physical places. They are made up of states of mind. We too often choose to stay in our own “neighborhoods” (the pope calls them our “comfort zones”). These “neighborhoods” are sometimes psychological and sometimes geographical or communities where we feel safe because we are surrounded by our own kind.

Pope Francis urges us to break down these barriers and “build bridges.” He challenges us—all in a loving way—to accept our Lord’s invitation to “Go, sell what you have, give it to the poor, and come follow me” (Mt 19:21). Like the rich young man in the Gospel, we hesitate—especially those of us who have “much.”

The Thanksgiving holiday reminds all Americans regardless of race, creed, economic status or standing that we are a blessed people. We have been given many gifts, including political freedom, economic opportunity and religious liberty. We dare not take these gifts for granted or abuse them in direct or through arrogant selfishness toward those who are less fortunate than we are. We must always be grateful for our blessings and keep our perspective. Our material and spiritual blessings aren’t owned by us. They are gifts we are called to take care of and share as responsible stewards of God’s generosity.

Baptism is one of the invaluable gifts we have been given. The privilege of membership in the Body of Christ, the Church, carries with it serious obligations. We are called to “be Christ” for others, to spread the good news of his kingdom and to love our neighbors—even our enemies—with a generous and grateful spirit.

The gift of baptism compels us to be missionary disciples, not in a grudging or halfhearted way, but as eager, zealous followers of Jesus Christ, the greatest missionary who ever lived. If we walk in Christ’s footsteps with a grateful heart, we will be like our Blessed Mother Mary and all the saints. We will recognize even strangers and enemies as brothers and sisters in the one family of God. We will want to be instruments of unity and healing in a broken, wounded world. The Eucharist is the source of Christian thanksgiving. It is the great privilege of those who celebrate in word and sacrament God’s gifts of creation, redemption and sanctification. Every day that Mass is celebrated is a day of thanksgiving.

And every time we participate actively in the eucharistic banquet, we give the greatest possible thanks for God’s abundant blessings in our lives.

In truth, there is only one “Black Friday.” It’s the one day in the year that Mass is not celebrated, the day we commemorate Jesus’ passion and death. But we don’t call this day “Black Friday.” We call it “Good Friday” because we acknowledge that even in humanity’s darkest hour, the light of Christ shone brightly, transforming the blackness of sin into the brightness of God’s love and mercy.

That is certainly something to be thankful for as we enter into the Advent and Christmas seasons. We give and receive many gifts during this time of year. Some are material gifts and others—like being with people we love and serving the needs of others—are spiritual gifts that are important, and both should be given and received with a deep sense of gratitude.

Happy Thanksgiving! ¶

**The Criterion  Friday, November 24, 2017**

**El Día de Acción de Gracias nos recuerda que somos un pueblo bendecido**

*Los católicos celebramos la Santa Eucaristía (nombre que se deriva de la palabra griega ‘agradecimiento’) todos los días, pero en este particular, el Día de Acción de Gracias, les agradecemos especialmente a Dios por sus abundantes bendiciones. Esto incluye el don de la vida misma; nuestros padres y familiares, el amor que compartimos con cónyuges e hijos, nuestros amigos, nuestra libertad como estadounidenses, nuestras vocaciones como discípulos de Jesús, nuestras posiciones materiales, nuestras dones y talentos intelectuales, y mucho, mucho más.*

—Cardenal Joseph W. Tobin, Día de Acción de Gracias 2016

La fecha de publicación de esta columna es el 24 de noviembre, el día después del Día de Acción de Gracias. Desafortunadamente, este día se lo conoce como “viernes negro,” un día en que el consumismo y la codicia amasan con espíritu de egoísmo y los buenos sentimientos que reina en el día anterior.

*Como cristianos, no debemos sufrir a la tentación de pasar este día buscando las mejores ofertas, luchando codo a codo con los consumistas en busca de un regalo de compra, si así lo desea, hoy o cualquier otro día, pero con un profundo sentido de gratitud y bondad, el espíritu con el que celebramos el Día de Acción de gracias. Mientras buscamos*
November 27
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5333 E. 106th St., Indianapolis. Serra Club Dinner Meeting. Father Anthony Hollowell presenting on his vocation journey, 5-40 p.m., rosary, followed by dinner. Information: 317-748-1478 or mbrand@holypspir.org.

November 30
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3154 E. 30th St., Indianapolis. Monthly Ecumenical Taize Prayer Service, singing, meditation and readings. 7-8 p.m. Information: 317- 998-2439 or santamichaelindy.org.

December 1

St. Peter and Paul Catholic chapel, 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Friday Night Christmas Sale, 6:30 a.m. Mass, 7:15-8:30 a.m. breakfast at Lincoln Square Pancake Haus, 2330 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Information: 317-435-3447 or humen@deus.com.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. First Friday celebration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mass, 5-45 p.m., exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, following Mass until 9 p.m., sacramental reparation. Information: 317-888-2861 or info@greenwood.org.

St. Lawrence Church, 6944 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. First Friday charismatique Renewal Prayer and Mass, 7 p.m. Information: 317-736-7328, mkeyes@indy3r.com.

St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Church, 5719 S. Marys Road, Floyd County, Indiana. The Vigil Project “To Save Us All” (new): With New Albany Deanery Catholic Youth Ministries, all-Catholic musicians focusing on prayer, reflection and community through music and media, all ages welcome, no admission, free will offering, reception in Assumption Hall afterward. Information: Sandy Winsted, 812-923-8355, sathy@indyouth.org or www.benedictinn.org.

December 2
St. Michael the Archangel Church, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. Advent (an “FBI” program: Faith Building Institutes), in partnership with Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, archdiocesan director of catechesis Ken Ogorkiewicz presenting. Join the sisters for evening prayer followed by dinner, presentation and discussion, 5-55 p.m., $35 Information and registration: 317-545-7687, ext. 107 or www.archindy.org/fatima.

December 4

December 9

December 10
St. Agnes Academy Class of 1968 looking forward to Bloomington Planned Parenthood Tour on Dec. 16. For more information, call 317-379-9353 or e-mail dolack@stbparish.net.

Sister of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, will host Christmas at the Woods from 1-4 p.m. on Dec. 9. The doors will open at 12:30 p.m.

The event will feature rides by carriage, bus, wagon and trolley; a display of Nativity sets, a Christmas doll house and village; a cookie dough station; and face painting. Christmas sing-a-longs, holiday music and the opportunity to visit Santa at the White Violet Center for Eco-E Justice. Tours of the Saint Mother Theodore Guerin Shrine will also be available throughout the day.

This is a $5 per person, and free for children 3 years and younger. Pre-registration is not required. For more information, call 812-535-2982 or e-mail friends@spwm.org.

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events
Thanksgiving can be marked by holiness, unity and gratitude

By Fr. Herbert Weber

Michael celebrated his first Thanksgiving as a married man at the home of his wife Maria’s parents. Gathered for the huge midday meal were her parents and Maria’s siblings with their spouses. All the traditional foods were served and the conversation was good. After the meal, Michael went into his in-laws’ living room, turned on the television to watch football games. He was just settling in when Maria came into the room and asked what he was doing.

His answer was that he was planning to spend the afternoon watching games or alternating the turkey-induced hypothermia to bring on a nap. In defense, Michael said that what his dad and brothers had always done at their house after the Thanksgiving Day meal.

Maria’s quick answer was, “Well, we don’t do that in our family.” Then she added that everyone helps clean up so they can all relax.

Michael shared his faults in Maria’s presence, and both of them assured me that they would continue to learn from each other.

With perhaps the exception of Christmas, it seems no holiday has as much tradition as Thanksgiving. But it soon becomes clear that those traditions vary from house to house.

One family may have unique ethnic foods at their meal, while another has an afternoon game of touch football. One family I know always starts with a 5K run. In my previous parish where we offered a free community meal, many parishioners volunteered to serve the food first before going to their own homes to celebrate.

Thanksgiving Day holds a special place for pastors. I have come to find this is a legal holiday that can also be experienced as a holy day. I this is a legal holiday that can also be experienced as a holy day. I have come to find that they would continue to learn from each other.

Celebrating the Eucharist itself makes sense on this day. Giving thanks is at the heart of the Mass. Thanksgiving Day Mass flows from a faith that is filled with gratitude, connecting with every Mass celebrated throughout the year. Giving thanks becomes a prayer of admission of our dependence on a gracious and loving God, a major step of spirituality.

The act of prayerfully giving thanks also helps us celebrate unity. Although private prayer is good, communal prayer is helpful. Church or at the dinner table draws people together. We not only thank God for each other, we thank God with each other.

When we start this parish some 12 years ago without property or building, a small Lutheran Church allowed us use of their worship space on a regular basis, a kindness for which I remain grateful.

When the first Thanksgiving was nearing, the pastor asked me what my thoughts were. I knew I wanted to have a parish gathering for prayer. He said his congregation desired to invite us to join them on the Wednesday evening before the holiday for a joint prayer service.

And to sweeten the offer, he said they have a tradition of “having all things pumpkin” to share afterward—pumpkin pies, cakes, breads and more. That evening’s gathering reminded me of the traditional image of Pilgrims and Native Americans feasting in unity.

Finally, the tradition of Thanksgiving Day for many people is to reach out to others, sharing and including those alone or overlooked. Sharing is always an expression of gratitude for what we have. Besides serving free meals at a parish or community center, many have found other ways to share.

Over the years, I have brought refugees from other countries to my family’s Thanksgiving meal. Exchange students have been present as well. And an elderly neighbor of my brother was always a special guest. All were graciously included.

By expressing gratitude in prayer, by finding expressions of unity and by sharing with and including others, we can help people create new traditions as we find this holiday becomes even more holy to us.

(Father Herbert Weber is the founding pastor of St. John XXIII Parish in Perrysburg, Ohio.)

The psalms teach ways to be grateful to God in both good times and bad

By Nancy de Flon

A wise person once observed that “gratitude is the aristocrat of attitudes.” Gratitude not only shows consideration for the one who gave a gift or a favor—it also promotes mental health if we cultivate the habit of gratefulness for things great and small. In giving thanks, we mustn’t overlook God! Gratefulness to God is at the heart of this attitude, for God has created everything for which we are grateful.

Several psalms offer invaluable guidance for cultivating this “aristocratic attitude.” In modeling how to express our gratitude in prayer, the psalms suggest two major reasons for doing so. First, in several psalms of petition the psalmist promises to tell others of the favors received—to thank the Lord “before the assembly.” In voicing our thanks to God for his goodness, we evangelize others.

Throughout the psalms, Christians have reflected on Christ’s passion with Psalm 69, which is a cry from the depths of distress. In it, the psalmist promises to praise God in song and adds, “The poor when they see it will be glad and God-seeking hearts will revive” (Ps 69:33). The author of Psalm 142, begging for rescue from perilous friends, says: “Around me the just will assemble because of your goodness to me” (Ps 142:8). The theme is reflected in a reading from St. Mark’s Gospel. The man from whom Jesus had driven many demons begs to be allowed to follow him. Instead Jesus, who prayed to God and adds, “The poor when they see it will be glad and God-seeking hearts will revive” (Ps 69:33). The author of Psalm 142, begging for rescue from perilous friends, says: “Around me the just will assemble because of your goodness to me” (Ps 142:8).

This theme is repeated in the first days of Thanksgiving offerings to God at the Holy Cross Church in Rochester, N.Y. The Book of Psalms shows ways to thank God in many of life’s circumstances. (DIN photos/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)

From the Editor/Emeritus/John F. Fink

Bill Buckley: The most important Catholic conservative

Whether or not you agree with his politics, William Francis Buckley Jr. was an amazing multi-faceted man who lived his life during the second half of the 20th century. University of Notre Dame changed; yet there were no changes in the Roosevelt policy. The doctor paused and continued. “I have to be a little careful here, because I know you have a very difficult situation.” He then proceeded to explain the medical condition of the patient, the possible treatments, and the potential outcomes. Finally, he advised the patient and her family on how to proceed with their care.

I'm thankful for this visit because it has allowed me to reflect on the importance of doctors in our lives and the challenges they face in providing care. Most doctors are dedicated professionals who strive to provide the best possible care for their patients. However, the medical system can be bureaucratic and difficult to navigate. Doctors often find themselves juggling the needs of many patients, and it can be challenging to provide the individualized care that each patient deserves.

The doctor's visit was a reminder of the importance of doctors in our lives. They are essential members of our health care system, and we should be grateful for their dedication and hard work. It is important to support our doctors and the medical profession in order to ensure that they have the resources and support they need to provide the best possible care for their patients.

Thank you to all the doctors and medical professionals out there who work tirelessly to keep us healthy and happy. You make a difference in our lives every day.

Faith and Family

Scan Gallagher

Make your home a kingdom of 'justice, love and peace'

It is understandable that Americans might not fully appreciate the significance of this event. After all, the Pilgrims knew that they should thank God, and we continued to do so up until the 19th century when the Pilgrims knew that they should thank God for their blessings. It's that time again when Americans gather to thank God for their blessings. Even though atheists and agnostics might not be sure who to thank, the Pilgrims knew that they should thank God, and we continue to do so today. Thanksgiving was declared a national holiday in 1863. Most of us are thankful for the same things: food, family, friends, and good health. Some are thankful for a job and enough to eat. Some can be thankful for children who behave and who know what to do in school. And some are thankful for good health, a happy marriage, or lots of friends. In any case, most of us are thankful for something or other.

Of course I am thankful for these things, but there are many more that I try to include in my thanksgiving list. I was surprised when common sense was used in my medical history, the ongoing cancer treatments, and the awful debilitation. My eyes widened. I cocked my head. “This isn’t where I want to be,” I grumbled. “I’ve never been to the hospital before,” I said, with a one simple question for him, and it doesn’t matter how many times people are in the hospital. But all of this presumes that Christ's kingship and those of parents, which are derived from his, are like the kings of the past and the tyrants of the present. In the words of Jesus, “lord it over them,” and instead serve them in love as Jesus said and witnessed in their families. Our Jesus is the one who said, “You shall be your slave” (Mt 20:26-27).

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Thank you to all the doctors and medical professionals out there who work tirelessly to keep us healthy and happy. You make a difference in our lives every day.
The Sunday Readings

November 26, 2017

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
Matthew 25:31-46

On this weekend, the Church concludes its liturgical year. Next week, a new year will begin with the First Sunday of Advent.

This weekend the Church closes the year with an excited and fervent proclamation of Christ as the king of the universe.

The first reading for this great feast comes from Ezekiel. In this reading, God speaks in the first person, promising protection of the flock, in other words, the people of God. He is the shepherd, seeking the lost, caring for the injured, rescuing the imperiled.

God will also distinguish between the sheep and those who will rise to everlasting life. God will triumph over all evil. No one bound to death will ever be set free. The power and life of God will endure. God is omnipotent. In and through Jesus, the concept of eternal life and strength (1 Cor 15:23).

In the epistle, Paul frankly admits in this reading from Corinthians, that he cannot be dismissed as insignificant or of no importance at all. Those who have received from the Lord the gift of grace, have admitted God, through Jesus, into their lives, and who have received that power, will give service to their belief in God, but those who, following the model of Jesus, give themselves totally to the will of God.

Reflection

A popular motion picture a few years ago, and a true story at that, was “The King’s Speech.” It was about Britain’s King George VI (1895-1952), on the throne from 1936 until his death, focusing on his determined efforts to overcome a serious speech impediment.

The king and his wife, known for decades until her own death in 2002 as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, were great figures as the British struggled against enormous odds in the Second World War. At the height of the war, with the German blitz or bombing relentlessly tearing British life apart, the rumor spread that the royal family, as well as the government, would flee the country.

One day, arriving on the scene of a horrendous bombing attack, Queen Elizabeth was confronted with the question of whether or not she and her husband would send their young daughters to Canada. Indeed, would she and the king flee?

The queen answered, “My daughters will not leave without me. I shall not leave without the king, and, the king will never ever leave you!”

For us Christians, our king will never, ever leave us. He is with us now and always, guiding, healing and strengthening us.

The Church does careful research in evaluating possible sainthood causes. Does it make sense to pray for salvation for Judas Iscariot, the Apostle who betrayed Jesus? It seems that throughout the history of Christianity, he has been vilified and no one has mentioned that, hopefully, he could have been forgiven for his sin. (Indiana)

It does no harm to pray for salvation for Judas Iscariot, and I admire your compassion. The Church has never said definitely that any particular person is now in hell. It is possible, I suppose, that Judas repented for his sin and, in the silence of his heart, sought God’s forgiveness.

Matthew’s Gospel says, in fact, that following the betrayal, Judas, “deeply regretted what he had done,” and returned the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests, saying “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood” (Mt 27:3-4). Of course, he then “went off and hanged himself” (Mt 27:5), but even that does not translate automatically to the loss of eternal salvation.

Note that the Church now offers a funeral Mass for a suicide victim—on the possibility that the person’s desperate state of mind may have precluded full responsibility.

The problem, though, with Judas is that Jesus did say of him (both in Mt 26:24 and Mk 14:21) that “it would be better for that man if he had never been born”—which suggests to me that Judas never did achieve eternal happiness. I believe, though, that prayers are never wasted—and if the Lord cannot apply your prayers to Judas Iscariot, he will surely find someone else who will be grateful for your efforts.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.
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SOLANUS
continued from page 10

A congregation of more than 60,000 filled Ford Field, home of the NFL’s Detroit Lions, which was transformed for the Mass. The altar, placed at midfield, was created originally for St. John Paul II’s visit to the Pontiac Silverdome in 1987. To the right of the altar was a huge painting of Blessed Solanus. It was unveiled after the beatification rite, which took place at the beginning of the Mass.

Dozens of bishops, priests and deacons processed into the stadium for the start of the Mass, which was celebrated by Cardinal Amato, the principal celebrant, joined at the altar by Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, Detroit Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, himself a Capuchin Franciscan, and Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., a Detroit native who also previously served as shepherd of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

In conclusion, Father Solanus was beatified on Sept. 23 in Oklahoma City. “A woman with an incurable genetic skin disease, Paula Medina Zarate of Panama, unexplained by medicine or science—of a skin disease on July 31, 1957. He spent his life in the service of people, healing. For decades, countless faithful have prayed for others’ intentions. After her prayers, she felt the strong urging to ask for the friar’s intercession for herself, too, and received an instant and visible healing.

The miraculous nature of her cure in 2012 was verified by doctors in her home country, in Detroit and in Rome, all of whom confirmed there was no scientific explanation. Father Solanus himself died of a skin disease on July 31, 1957. Born on Nov. 25, 1870, in Oak Grove, Wisconsin, Bernard Francis Casey was the sixth of 16 children born to Irish immigrants, John and Ellen Murphy. He was educated at St. Francis High School Seminary near Milwaukee in 1891 to study for the diocesan priesthood. But because of academic limitations, he was advised to consider joining a religious order instead.

He went to Detroit to join the Capuchin order in 1897. He was given the religious name Solanus. He continued to struggle academically but was finally ordained in 1941 as a “simplex priest,” meaning he could celebrate Mass but could not preach doctrinal sermons or hear confessions.

He went to New York and served for two decades in friaries and churches there and was transferred back to Detroit in 1924, where he began working as the porter, or doorkeeper, of St. Bonaventure Monastery.

He went to New York and served for two decades in friaries and churches there and was transferred back to Detroit in 1924, where he began working as the porter, or doorkeeper, of St. Bonaventure Monastery.

Father Solanus co-founded the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in 1929, and today it serves the Detroit metro area by providing food, clothing and human development programs to the people of the community. In preparing and serving up to 2,000 meals a day, the facility has an emergency food pantry, service center and a tutoring program for children.

He spent his life in the service of people, ending himself to thousands who would seek his counsel. From 1946 to 1956, he was at the Capuchin novitiate at St. Felix in Huntington, Ind., then was transferred back to Detroit for what was the last year of his life.

An Indian Christian woman prays on Nov. 2, All Souls’ Day, at a cemetery in Bhopal. November is traditionally a month in which Catholics honor the dead and pray for the repose of their souls. (AP Photo/Anshuman Daga)
‘Invest in love,’ pope says on first World Day of the Poor

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—People have a basic choice in the way they live: either striving to build up treasures on Earth or giving to others in order to gain heaven, Pope Francis said.

“God will not ask us if we felt righteous indignation,” he said, “but whether we did some good.”

People please God by giving to others in order to gain heaven, he said.

“The heart tells us that giving is good and just,” the pope said. “But to do so we haven’t done anything wrong, and so we haven’t done anything wrong, and so

Pope Francis’ homily on Nov. 19 was focused on the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30).

“Jesus told the story of the servant in the story who was given a talent,” the pope said.

The servant in the story who was given a talent, he said, was asked to invest that talent and return it plus more. The servant who returned the money was rewarded, while the other servant who invested the money in a large bowl of bread, while the other special guests were served at the Pontifical North American College—the U.S. seminary in Rome—and other seminaries and Catholic-run soup kitchens nearby.

Before joining his guests for lunch, Pope Francis recited the Angelus prayer with thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square.

The previous day in Detroit, he told the people, Capuchin Father Solanus Casey was beatified. “A humble and faithful disciple of Christ, he was known for his untiring service to the poor. May his witness help priests, religious, and lay people live with joy the bond between the proclamation of the Gospel and love for the poor,” he said.

Pope Francis told the crowd that he hoped “the pope would be at the center of one community not only at times like this, but always, because they are at the heart of the Gospel. In them, we encounter Jesus who speaks to us and calls us through their suffering and their needs.”

Offering special prayers for people living in poverty because of war and conflict, the pope asked the international community to make special efforts to bring peace to those areas, especially the Middle East.

Pope Francis made a specific plea for stability in Lebanon, which is in the middle of a political crisis after its prime minister announced his resignation. He prayed the country would “continue to be a ‘message’ of respect and coexistence throughout the region and for the whole world.”

 Classified Directory

For Information about rates for classified advertising, call (317) 236-1454

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Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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

Batesville Deanery
Dec. 1, 8-10 p.m. at All Saints, Dearborn County, at St. Martin Campus
Dec. 6, 6 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millihausen
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greenburg
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. for St. Catherine of Siena, Decatur County, at St. John the Evangelist Church, Enochburg
Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
Dec. 15, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at All Saints, Dearborn County, at St. Martin Campus
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at Holy Family, Oldenburg
Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora
Dec. 19, 6 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville
Dec. 20, 6:30 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Louis, Batesville

Bloomington Deanery
Dec. 6, 7 p.m.-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. for St. Mary, Mitchell, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, at St. Vincent de Paul
Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
Dec. 14, 6 p.m. at Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, Paoli
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinville
Dec. 20, 8:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
Dec. 21, 6 p.m. at Our Lady of the Springs, French Lick
Dec. 21, 6 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Anne, New Castle
Dec. 13, 6 p.m. Mass, 6:30 p.m. confession, at St. Gabriel, Connersville
Dec. 14, 6 p.m. Mass, 6:30 p.m. confession, at St. Mary, Rushville
Dec. 19, 6 p.m. for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, at St. Mary Campus

Indianapolis East Deanery
Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at Our Lady of Lourdes
Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. at St. Philip Neri
Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville
Dec. 18, 7 p.m. for St. Rita and Holy Angels (West Deanery) at St. Rita
Dec. 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Greencastle

Indianapolis North Deanery
Dec. 10, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Pius X
Dec. 11, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Pius X
Dec. 12, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Pius X

Indianapolis South Deanery
Dec. 5, 6-7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
Dec. 9, 8-9 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
Dec. 12, 7-8 p.m. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and the Catholic Community Foundation invite you to

An Evening of Lights
Archdiocesan Christmas Tree Lighting & Prayer Service
Thursday, December 7, 2017 • Catholic Center Assembly Hall
1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202
Prayer service begins at 6 p.m. • Doors will open at 5:30 p.m.
Reception to follow.

Just as the Vatican in early December lights the Christmas tree in St. Peter’s Square and the Holy Father reflects on the Nativity, so too, will Archbishop Thompson lead an Archdiocesan Christmas tree lighting and prayer service.

At this special event, we will prepare our hearts for Jesus’ coming as the Light of the World and celebrate those who have shared their own light by establishing memorial endowments in the names of loved ones.

For a donation of $10 or more, you can dedicate a luminaria in memory of a loved one, which will be lit at the prayer service. Their legacy will live on as the gifts will be invested in the Catholic Community Foundation to support the growth of parish, school, and agency ministries.

To RSVP by Wednesday, November 29, and/or to make a donation, please visit www.archindy.org/CCF/EveningOfLights
Early on the evening of Nov. 17, Lucas Oil Stadium thrrobbed with the music of popular Catholic bands. A steady rain pattered atop the thousands gathered inside the cavernous stadium. Never mind the drizzle, the NCYC participants in One Bread One Cup youth liturgical leadership program gathered at the Liturgy of the Eucharist, a liturgy which is the climax of the NCYC, in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

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—Nolan Snyder, a high school senior and member of St. Boniface Parish in Fulda

That prayer was answered for Noah Tyler, 17, an NCYC participant from Lake Charles, La., who said that the time of adoration was “the climax” of the conference for him.

“It’s where you can fully open your heart to God, to be fully present with him,” said Noah. “It’s just an awesome feeling to see him right in front of you, so vulnerable and so raw. It’s amazing.”

National Catholic Youth Conference participants kneel in prayer during eucharistic adoration in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 17.

Father Joseph Espalatte II blesses thousands in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 17 in solemn BenEDIcTion during a general session of the National Catholic Youth Conference held in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18. Kneeling in prayer on the stage during the liturgy are monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad and youth participants in its One Bread One Cup youth liturgical leadership program. They joined more than 20,000 other conference participants in prayer.

(Photos by Sean Gallagher)

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NCYC

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Youths, religious, priests encourage each other at conference

By Sean Gallagher

The theme of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 16-18 in Indianapolis was “Called.” So it was appropriate that the more than 20,000 Catholic youths from across the country gave a bit more attention to the many priests and men and women religious who prayed with them, listened to inspiring presentations with them and had fun with them during the conference. Maybe God was using that interaction to call the youths to give prayerful reflection to a religious vocation.

“Our mission is to lead people to Christ, and one way of doing that is to encourage people to consider a religious vocation,” said Salesian Father John Bamman, the vocations director for the Congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco, whose province includes the Diocese of Evansville, Ind. “We’re there to encourage them to talk to their religious superiors and consider a religious vocation. It’s not the end of the story. Jesus is already waiting for you. He’s waiting for you in the heart of Christ.”

The priests and religious present at NCYC also represented more dioceses and religious communities than any of the young participants could know in their home towns.

“There’s a lot of not knowing what’s out there,” said Oliver Severance of the Archdiocese of Anchorage, Alaska. “Coming to a place like this, you get to realize that they’re not super far away, stuck up in an abbey somewhere. It makes them more accessible. Once you get that realization, it’s easier to go from not knowing what your vocation is to starting to discern and then choose one.”

Salesian Brother Damien Ho of Orange, N.J., agreed.

“A lot of young people don’t recognize that they have a vocation or might not even want to know what it is unless they get exposed to different religious groups or missionary groups,” he said. “People here are willing to share about their vocations. The best way to get more vocations is to share about each other’s vocations.”

“It’s encouraging, because, as Salesians, we work with young people. So when we see young people see that they have a potential to be better, to become saints, then that’s when our mission gets fulfilled.”

Other religious at NCYC shared the encouragement experienced by Brother Damien.

“Young people today are so open to their faith and seem to have a passion for living it, not only in the Church, but also in service,” said Daughter of Charity Sister Jean Rhoads, who lives in Evansville, Ind., and serves as a vocations director for her order. “I am hope-filled and encouraged by that. It’s only too many exciting things in the Church today!”

Conventional Franciscan Father John Bamman also came to the conference from Mount St. Francis, where he serves as the vocations director for his order, the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady of Consolation Province.

He reflected on how the encouragement he gives youths at NCYC to consider a religious vocation often happens simply through being present to them during the conference.

“You never know the effect you have,” said Father John. “I see this as planting seeds. We’re kind of throwing seeds into the wind, and see where they’ll settle. There’s a lot of soil here. For them to see a joyful friar, that’s perfect. That’s enough.”

Seminarian Liam Hasty can speak to the effect that NCYC can have on young people trying to hear God’s call in their lives.

He attended two of the conferences while a student at Roncalli High School in Indianapolis. At the time, he was thinking that God might be calling him to the priesthood, but he wasn’t sure about it.

“I told a couple of priests at NCYC that I was thinking about going to seminary,” he said. “I expected then, ‘not really, it’s just a conversation.’ They didn’t. The answer was, ‘Yes, you think you’d be a great fit.’ It definitely ramped up my faith. It was absolutely incredible to witness 20,000 youths on fire from all across the country, seeing amazing speakers and having the sacraments available.”

As a seminarian, he participated in his third straight NCYC, but this time as a volunteer, assisting at liturgies and in the room in the Indiana Convention Center where dozens of priests and bishops placed different saints, then that’s when our mission gets fulfilled.”

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Service project helps ‘impact a country in Africa from Indiana’

By Natalie Hoefer

Eric DeVine stood in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis carefully measuring scoops of rice for pre-packaged meals.

Someday, more than 5,300 miles away in Burkina Faso, someone will not starve because of the meals he helped prepare.

“I think it’s really cool that we can impact a country in Africa from where we are in Indiana,” said the teen of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis.

“We’ll probably never be able to see them, but we’ll be able to know that we were able to help.”

He and other members of his parish’s youth group were among the 3,000 youths, chapernones and youth ministry leaders who participated in Helping Hands—formed as a partnership between Catholic Relief Services and Rise Against Hunger—during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18.

By the end of NCYC’s 100,000 meals were prepared to send to the West African country.

Why Burkina Faso?

“It’s very arid there, so people trying to grow food there, it makes it really difficult,” said Rachael Holmes, program manager for Helping Hands. “So we try to send relief, which is the meals that people are packaging … and that’s going to directly impact the people in Burkina Faso.”

But the assistance doesn’t stop with sending meals.

“We’re doing long-term development projects, so hopefully they’ll have a future free from hunger,” Holmes explained. “We want them to be sustainable on their own.”

The funds are used for purchasing seeds and water infrastructure for irrigating fields. Helping Hands also offers job skill training such as sewing, raising livestock and how to grind grain—“ways that they can make money on their own,” says Holmes.

An example she cites is a project the program initiated in a town in Burkina Faso.

“We got a group of 120 farmers—men and women—and taught them how to plant a crop that was better during the dry season, and that was actually onions,” she said. “We worked with them to bring in a water pump and piping so they could pipe the water into their land. The first crop was like four tons of onions they were able to harvest.”

“From the funds that came from the U.S., all the people we were able to work with had an impact on this whole community. They’re sending all their kids to be educated, and that impacts their future.”

Participants at NCYC took to the concept of making a difference as they gathered around bag-filling and –sealing stations in 45-minute shifts, including 10 minutes of education about the project, whom it serves, why and how.

“It was a really great opportunity to help people out,” said Mary Snyder of the Diocese of Trenton, N.J. “This service project is helping other people, not just giving them food … so it’s like the whole ‘teach a man to fish’ versus ‘give a man a fish’ thing.”

Julia Galate of the Diocese of Orlando, Fla., said she participated in a service project recently, “and I fell in love with the idea of being able to be hands-on and do some work, not just talking about doing good. This was a great opportunity to do so.”

Jessica Watson of the Archdiocese of Washington couldn’t agree more.

“I get to do something good—I love it!” she said enthusiastically. “I really love doing something for the community, and knowing that I’m helping people outside my small community is the best feeling!”

Comments like these are rewarding to Holmes.

“We love to hear that response!” she said. “We hope they leave thinking about the people in Burkina [Faso], and the fact that they don’t have food every day.”

“It’s a fun energetic thing, and it shows just how much service you can give in a little amount of time.”

(Frmore information on the Helping Hands project or how to conduct one in your school or parish, go to helpinghands.crs.org.)

Bishops find a reason to believe and hope in faith, gifts of young Church

By John Shaughnessy

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson smiled as he considered the energy and gifts of young Church. It just shows a sense of purpose in their lives,” the archbishop said as he stood amid the whirlwind of the Indiana Convention Center, one of the main sites of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 16-18.

“Coming here shows that young people are looking to where true happiness is, and that’s in relationship to God. It just shows that people are realizing we belong to something greater than ourselves. Young people are finding it in Christ and in this Church. It just shows a sense of hope and vibrancy for our Church for today and for tomorrow.”

The Church needs “the giftlessness of young people, their energy and their wonderful insights,” the archbishop said. “They’re essential to our Church and to who we are as people of God.”

Archbishop Thompson was one of about 30 bishops who attended the conference in Indianapolis, after a busy few days of meetings with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops earlier in the week in Baltimore.

The extra effort to be in Indianapolis was more than worthwhile to Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Anchorage, Alaska.

“I want to do all that I can to build a relationship with our youths so they know of my support for them,” said Archbishop Etienne, a former priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who also served as the bishop of Cheyenne, Wyo.

“I travel around to all of the parishes to confirm them, and I’ve been meeting with the young adults as well. I want to know what their story is, and I want to know how they relate to God, how they relate to Christ and how I can do a better job as a shepherd relating the message of the Gospel and the Good News to them.”

Archbishop Etienne shared his comments shortly after witnessing the enthusiasm of the 20,000 youths in an early morning faith gathering at Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 17.

“It’s inspiring,” he said. “We hear how we’re losing this generation. This tells me there’s hope: we’re not.”

Hope also drew Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of the Diocese of Burlington, Vt. He noted that this was the first time that a group of youths had come from Vermont for the national conference.

“A lot of our young people are kind of adrift,” said Bishop Coyne, former auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. “So anything that can get them active in a good way within the faith and within the Church is good. And NCYC sure can do that. You’re with so many other young people and adult chapernones and people with beliefs, and you hear great talks and wonderful music.”

“When they come to an event like this, they leave with an experience of the Church that’s much greater than their little parish. And hopefully they leave more committed to being a member of the Catholic Church and also maybe to inviting others to be part of it.”

Simple math and an opportunity for connection led to the presence of Bishop William F. Medley of Owensboro, Ky., at the conference.

“If I get 300 youths together in one place, I ought to be there as their shepherd.” Bishop Medley said on Nov. 17. “The theme this morning was about holiness and wanting to become saints. I want them to know I’m trying to speak to them as well.”

He was also energized by what he witnessed, calling the faith gathering of 20,000 youths as “countercultural.”

“The Spirit is moving,” Bishop Medley said. “Twenty thousand is a lot of youth. They’ve chosen to be here, to see the vitality of the Church and participate in eschatonic adoration and the Mass. I still run into adults who came here two, four, six, eight years ago. I know good seeds are being planted for a bountiful harvest.”
Church’s future ‘in good hands,’ declares Archbishop Gomez during NCYC closing Mass

By Natalie Hoefer

He proceeded to receive shouts and standing ovations when he thanked the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers, and then when he thanked the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and then when he thanked all of the religious, deacons, priests and bishops who helped with NCYC… and then when he wished everyone safe travels.

He just shook his head and laughed. ‘A guy going to a Catholic wedding told me he didn’t know if he should wear a dress suit or a warmup suit because Catholics stand up and sit down so much!’ he joked. And that line too received a thunderous standing ovation.

It was the kind of spirited joy that only 20,000 youths could exude at the end of the three-day NCYC gathering.

Not long before the revelry, the very same youths had knelt in solemn prayer after receiving the most holy Eucharist during the convention’s closing Mass in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Thirteen bishops, including Archbishop Thompson, concelebrated the Mass with its primary celebrant, Archbishop Gomez, who wove into his homily another auspicious Catholic event that happened earlier that day.

‘Blessed Solanus Casey was just beatified today in Detroit …,’ he said. ‘[God] gave him many gifts. He was a good listener, and he had a deep faith and deep heart for Jesus. He wanted above all to serve God.’

But that is not why the Capuchin Franciscan was beatified, said the archbishop. Rather, he was beatified ‘because he tried to serve God in every moment … He used his gifts to help others.

‘This is how God wants us to live, to make your whole life a life of giving … Try to do little things for God. Try to be a little miracle in someone’s life. Give hope. … Yes, we can strive for holiness because it is … doing God’s will in the little things of daily life.’

Such was the message of the day’s Gospel reading from Matthew, he said of the parable of the servants and the talents.

‘The parable of the talents is a plan for life,’ Archbishop Gomez said. ‘Jesus is talking to us about our relationship with God. How are we using the gifts God gives us?’

‘The words we hear in the Gospel from Matthew is what God wants for each of us: “Well done, my good and faithful servant. … Come, share your master’s joy.” The archbishop gave specific advice to help the youths do God’s will and to become holy: “The most important thing … is to pray,” he said.

“When I was your age, I made a decision … to spend some time in prayer daily, and it has made an extra difference in my life. “If you make time for prayer every day, you will see a difference. … Listen to [Jesus], even for just a few minutes … Be consistent. Do it every day. I promise you, if you spend time in prayer every day … you will start to see that Jesus is with you and how much he loves you” Elizabeth Murillo of the Diocese of Dallas, who attended NCYC for the first time, experienced such a moment earlier during the conference.

“One of the things that stood out to me is that someone said to let God speak to me, and [God] said to me, ‘You’re not alone, you have me. You can count on me anytime you want,’ ” she recalled.

Several youths cited the time adoring the Blessed Sacrament as a group of 20,000 teens on Nov. 17 in the stadium as the most impactful moment of NCYC.

“I’ve been to adoration before many times at different retreats,” said Elisha Mix of the Orlando Diocese. “But to see [20,000] youths adoring the Lord is something amazing.”

Daniel Linn of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis agreed.

“I’ve never celebrated it that way before, with so many people being so sacred,” he said.

Overall, said Daniel, NCYC was “just mind blowing. It was very powerful to see all these people come together and celebrate their faith together. The Church is a lot stronger than it seems in the world.”

Based on a comment he made in his homily, it would seem that Archbishop Gomez agrees.

“You inspire us bishops,” he told the 20,000 youths. “You give us hope. The future of the Church is in good hands with you.”
Chaperones, youth ministers are energized by young people’s faith

By Mike Krokos and Natalie Hoefer

While the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) focuses on giving 20,000 teenagers the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God, it’s a focus that youth ministers—and many adults—strive for all the time.

Knowing that commitment, The Criterion asked adult chaperones and youth ministers at the conference why they attended, and what they hoped the teenagers gained from their pilgrimage of faith to Indianapolis.

Jeff Scott, a chaperone from St. Malachy Parish in Brownsburg, attending with his son and daughter.

“It shows these guys there are other kids here celebrating their faith at the same time, and making it fun . . . There’s incredible energy.”

“I hope the kids come away understanding the message that they’re trying to share—that they’re called, that they’re chosen, that God’s in them, and that they too need to live up to that higher purpose.”

Joi Hunter, St. Charles Lwanga Parish in Detroit, in the Archdiocese of Detroit. She is a youth minister, and she first attended NCYC in Indianapolis as a chaperone in 2001.

“Now that I’m a youth minister myself and we have a pretty large youth group at our parish, I thought, ‘They have to experience this.’

“I hope the kids come away with a bigger sense of the Church, that it’s not just us alone in our little urban parish, that it increases their faith.”

Jo Hunter’s daughter and she came, and we were so inspired and moved by the whole process, that it just ignited us that we couldn’t stop—not just us alone in our little urban parish, that it increases their faith.

Sarah Medford, 7-12th-grade youth leader at her church, St. Pius X Parish in Moberly, Mo., in the Diocese of Jefferson City, Mo. She attended with her younger daughter.

“Two years ago, my oldest daughter and I came, and we were so inspired and moved by the whole process, that it just ignited us that we had to come back.

“It’s very powerful to see this many Catholics worshipping together. It really drives home the fact that we’re part of something bigger than ourselves. We come together, and we all believe the same thing, and there’s so much power in that.

“I hope the kids get the sense that they are loved, that they truly are called, if nothing more than just called to be a child of God.”

Daniel Gaskill, St. Francis Borgia Parish in Blair, Neb., in the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb. He attended with his 15-year-old son.

“It’s just incredible. It’s been very moving, very emotional. It might start crying right now. Just to see the youths and the way they’re absorbing these different events is something I’ve never witnessed at this magnitude in my entire life.

“I think our deacon, Jeff Zurek, and our priest, Father James [Netusil], said it best: ‘We’re coming here to absorb and learn about Jesus, and take it back home to our families and friends and our community, and that’s what I hope the kids do.’ From what I’ve seen, I think they will.”


“There are so many things in their lives pulling them away from the Church, I think that anytime they can see other youths their ages and them being able to express their faith, that it gives them an opportunity to do the same thing. We can definitely see from coming to NCYC before that when we come back they’re more involved in the Church, taking on more projects . . . You can see their faith starting to develop and grow as they come to NCYC.”

Todd Levitas, a youth minister for the Archdiocese of Washington, at NCYC for the first time.

“Just in private conversations, some of these youths are saying they’re growing in their faith—not just emotionally growing but doctrine-wise, knowledge-wise. They said they’re getting a lot out of the talks, a lot about gratitude and a lot about growing in self-knowledge. That’s the best.”

(To see photo galleries from NCYC, go to criteriononline.com.)†

NCYC participant Nick Nachreiner of the Diocese of Winona, Minn., wears his sporty headgear in the Indiana Catholic Convention Center on Nov. 16. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Sarah Mefford

“I like spending time with people who value their faith”

Nearly everywhere she turned, 16-year-old Minh-Tam Le glowed as she took in all the sights of the festive atmosphere at the Thematic Village of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). She laughed as she watched two of her friends from the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif., compete in a giant version of the elementary school game, Connect-Four.

She smiled as she watched other teenagers from across the country wear funny and funky hair that ranged from pizzas to cornstalks and from halos to birthday cakes complete with lit candles.

“This energizes my faith,” Minh-Tam said, flashing another smile. “I get to be around people I love, and connect with other teens of my faith. I like spending time with people who value their faith as much as I do.

“They’re exactly the qualities that make her Catholic faith so important to her. “My Catholic faith means love and unity and sacrifice. It shapes my life and my values.”

‘I know I will have God to be there with me’

At 18, Makenna Kolnner-Thesing has made it a point to try to talk to God as much as possible during her four years of high school. She especially needed to talk with him as she prepared for her final exams at the end of her junior year.

“I was extremely stressed, and didn’t know where to turn,” recalls the high school senior from the Diocese of Winona, Minn. “I talked to God about my worries and fears, and asked him to strengthen me during those times.”

The approach worked, but Makenna has embraced a different plan in her senior year.

“Late last year, I’ve been backing off from doing the talking. I’m letting him do the talking and the guiding—to let me know what he wants. I’m just trying to continue trusting in him and allowing him to work in my life in ways I might not expect.”

For Makenna, it all adds up to how significant her Catholic faith is for her: “It guides my everyday life.” Still, she came to NCYC wanting to go even deeper.

“I want to expand my relationship with God, and hopefully meet people who will strengthen my faith in him. When I go away to college next year, one of the hardest things will be leaving my family, but I know I will have God to be there with me.

“It’s comforting to know that through talking with God, I’ll feel closer to my family even though we’re miles apart.”

‘My parents would agree it was a big, life-changing experience for me’

Noah Streit thought it was more than cool when someone at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) noticed his youth group from the Archdiocese of Anchorage, Alaska, and dubbed the group “The Frozen Chosen.”

That moment of fun and faith reminded Noah of the heart-warming and soul-stirring experience that he had two years ago at NCYC—an experience that made him want to return to Indianapolis for the conference on Nov. 16-18.

“It was a life-changing experience for me,” said Noah, who is 18. “I wasn’t as huge into the Church when I came here two years ago. But after that, I started to go to church a lot more. I was part of the youth group a lot more, and I helped with service projects and Sunday school.

“It was awesome. My parents would agree it was a big, life-changing experience for me. I wanted to come back to re-energize my faith.

“I love the Catholic faith. I love church. I love God. And I like to do things like this. I definitely feel I’m a lot more into the Church and my faith.”

To see photo galleries from NCYC, go to criteriononline.com.†

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