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As the writer of the new musical, *Providence: A Love Story*, Marcia Murphy, right, shares the stage with Lilah Cruz, who plays St. Theodore Guérin in the production that will be performed on March 6, 7, 13 and 14 at St. Theodore Guerin High School in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

New musical celebrates St. Theodore Guérin's life as a love story for the ages

By John Shaughnessy

As Marcia Murphy brings her new musical to the stage for the first time, she views the love story as a thank you—a thank you to the woman she turned to during the most heartbreaking time of her life.

"My oldest son was diagnosed with leukemia. This was my worst nightmare," recalls Murphy, a mother of seven. "I don't think I would have endured without this woman. She also turned me toward Christ."

Xavier Murphy was diagnosed in September of 2011, when he was 22 and a senior at the University of Notre Dame.

As the news rocked him, his mother and his father David, Marcia turned to words of wisdom from St. Theodore Guérin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and a co-patron saint of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who is the inspiration for the musical.

Two quotes from the saint have always especially touched Murphy: "Place yourself gently in the hands of Providence," and "Lean with all your weight on Providence, and you will be well cared for."

"When my husband and I were with Xavier as we received this news, these quotes were the words running through my

See **GUÉRIN**, page 8

Lawmakers tighten social media access for teens as legislative session ends

By Victoria Arthur

Long-sought-after legislation to protect young people from online harm is among the successes for the Indiana Catholic



Conference (ICC) and other advocates at the conclusion of this year's short legislative session.

In the session's final hours on Feb. 27, lawmakers voted to give Indiana parents greater control over their children's access to social media and their activities online. This action followed an emotional plea earlier in the month from the family of Fishers teenager Hailey Buzbee, who was found dead in Ohio in January after allegedly leaving home with a 39-year-old man she had been communicating with online for more than a year.

"We have long advocated for providing parents with additional tools to protect their children from the dangers posed by social media and digital technology," said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Youths are particularly vulnerable to harm and exploitation online, and we commend Indiana lawmakers for taking this important step toward their safety and protection."

The new restrictions will require social media providers to verify the age of their users and prohibit anyone younger than 16 years old from setting up an account without a parent's or guardian's permission. Parents also will be able to set limits on whom their children can interact with online.

Other provisions in the legislation—which originated in Senate Bill 199 but ultimately passed as a last-minute addition to House Bill 1408—include restricting

See **LEGISLATION**, page 2

Sorrow, shock, prayer fill the Middle East as U.S. and Israel strike Iran, igniting war

(OSV News)—Catholics across the Middle East are reeling with shock and sorrow, and responding with prayer, amid joint strikes that Israeli and U.S. forces launched on Iran on Feb. 28, plunging the region into war.

The U.S. and Israel revealed that Iran's supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is among the country's senior leaders killed in the initial assault, which targeted Tehran and cities across Iran. Following initial

See **IRAN**, page 9

Emergency personnel work at the site of an Iranian strike on March 1 in Beit Shemesh, Israel, after Iran launched missile barrages following attacks by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28.

(OSV News photo/Ammar Awad, Reuters)





'We had a lot of good dialogue on the issue of the death penalty in general as we strongly opposed expanding the methods used to carry out capital punishment in Indiana. Fortunately, this legislation didn't progress past the first half of session, which was a win for us.'

—Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC

LEGISLATION

continued from page 1

social media companies from using algorithms on children's accounts that can fuel addiction to the online platforms.

As in every legislative session, the ICC advocated for or against bills based on the long and rich history of Catholic social teaching. Among the other measures the ICC supported was Senate Bill 236, which would have paved the way for plaintiffs to sue out-of-state doctors and companies prescribing, manufacturing and mailing abortion-inducing drugs to patients in Indiana.

"These drugs aren't safe to be mailed across Indiana," Sen. Tyler Johnson (R-Leo)—the bill's author and an emergency room physician—told lawmakers in January. "They're not safe to be given over telehealth [calls]. They're not safe to just randomly prescribe through an internet website."

The measure passed the Senate but never received a hearing in the House.

"I think the controversy around this bill was how it would be applied and then enforced," Mingus said. "As other states take this approach and we see what happens in this laboratory of policy, Indiana may be more likely to pass this type of legislation in the coming years. This is something we will continue to follow and work on."

Another measure the ICC had supported was signed into law on Feb. 26 by Gov. Mike Braun. House Bill 1389, authored by Rep. Shane Lindauer (R-Jasper), will prohibit religious discrimination in adoption and foster care services.

"This legislation will prevent scenarios we've seen in other parts of the country of religious-based providers of adoption and foster care services having a conflict with the state solely based on their religious beliefs," Mingus said. "This will also apply to individuals seeking to adopt or foster a child. We were happy to see this bill cross the finish line and head to the governor's desk."

Another success for the ICC was the rejection of a measure to introduce execution by firing squad as an additional means of capital punishment. Currently, only lethal injection is allowed by law to carry out the death penalty in Indiana, although lawmakers backing House Bill 1119 argued that the high cost of the drugs involved as well as supply issues have created the need for alternate methods.

Following impassioned debate on the House floor, the bill was defeated in a close vote. Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), a Catholic lawmaker who

last year introduced legislation to abolish the death penalty altogether, was among those appealing to his colleagues to vote "no."

"I'm against every means of capital punishment until this body can debate it," Morris told his fellow House members. "Stand here and tell me the best way to execute a life. I'm a pro-life legislator, and I know many of you are as well. Vote this down, and let's start the discussion on capital punishment."

In engaging with lawmakers on this bill and similar legislation, the ICC also encouraged a broader discussion about the death penalty, which the Catholic Church opposes in any form.

"We had a lot of good dialogue on the issue of the death penalty in general as we strongly opposed expanding the methods used to carry out capital punishment in Indiana," said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC. "Fortunately, this legislation didn't progress past the first half of session, which was a win for us."

But the 2026 legislative session also held disappointments for the ICC and other advocates.

Senate Bill 76, a sweeping immigration measure that the ICC had opposed, passed the General Assembly on Feb. 25 and was awaiting the governor's signature at press time. The measure aims to tighten the enforcement of federal immigration laws at the local level in Indiana, mandating cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by state and local law enforcement, employers and other entities.

Concerns over the measure had prompted the ICC to submit a letter to lawmakers cautioning against "a one-sided approach to immigration policy that is only focused on enforcement."

The letter noted that Indiana is home to 137,000 unauthorized immigrants, more than 60% of whom have lived in the state at least a decade.

"The Indiana Catholic Conference argues that the humane solution for many of these longtime residents is not deportation but, rather, earned pathways to citizenship," the letter stated. "This is not an endorsement of open borders or illegal entry, but rather, a prudential moral judgment applied to the challenges of today."

The ICC's letter echoed similar statements from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and several of Indiana's bishops over their growing concerns about the country's immigration policies and practices.

Following the General Assembly's passage of Senate Bill 76, Mingus reflected on the "careful balancing" that must be attained between protecting a nation's borders while welcoming the



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

March 7–17, 2026

March 7 – 11 a.m.

Confirmation for the youths of St. Louis Parish, Batesville; St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Morris; St. Michael Parish, Brookville; St. Peter Parish, Franklin County; St. Lawrence Parish, Lawrenceburg; St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Aurora; St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, Bright; All Saints Parish, Dearborn County; St. Nicholas Parish, Ripley County; and St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Milan, at St. Mary Church, Greensburg

March 10-11

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Administrative Committee meeting in Washington, D.C.

March 11-12

Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors meeting in Baltimore, Md.

March 12 – noon

Virtual USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis meeting

March 14 – 10:30 a.m.

Mass and lunch for Permanent Deacon Formation at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, Indianapolis

March 15 – 11 a.m.

Mass at Korean Community Chapel, Indianapolis

March 15 – 5 p.m.

Priesthood Promises in Blessed Sacrament Chapel at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis

March 17 – 7 a.m.

Dad's Day Breakfast at Bishop Chatard High School, Indianapolis

March 17 – 8:50 a.m.

Mass for the students of Bishop Chatard High School, Indianapolis, at Bishop Chatard High School

March 17 – noon

Lunch gathering with archdiocesan priests, Indianapolis

stranger and helping those in need.

"We will continue to share this message that is coming neither from the political right or the left but from the heart of the Church," Mingus said. "We must explore potential solutions that honor our country while honoring the dignity of the human person."

That inherent human dignity, which is at the core of Catholic social teaching, was also the primary factor behind the ICC's stance on a bill involving the chronically homeless.

Senate Bill 285, which was awaiting the governor's signature at press time, prohibits sleeping or camping on public property. Supporters of the measure argued that it would provide a pathway for law enforcement officers to connect homeless people with shelters and other critical services.

But the ICC had serious concerns about the bill, particularly the provision that would result in a Class C misdemeanor for repeat violations.

"There were a lot of people with good intentions on both sides of this issue," LaCoursiere said. "We will still seek to find better solutions for our brothers and sisters who suffer

from chronic homelessness."

In their latest ICC podcast, LaCoursiere and Mingus reflected on the outcomes of this short legislative session while looking ahead.

"We want to continue to be a presence at the Statehouse on behalf of the Church," Mingus said. "My final invitation for everyone is to continue to pray for our lawmakers, who face a lot of difficult decisions and a lot of pressure."

He added that his hope is not only for legislators but for all citizens of Indiana to "continually draw closer to Christ in our daily walk," so that decisions and policies always aspire to the common good.

"That's our ultimate prayer, and we hope you join us in that."

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

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



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—Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC



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Former Hispanic Ministry head becomes Intercultural Ministry director ‘to serve larger Church’

By Natalie Hoefler

Three years ago, Felix Navarrete reflected on the next chapter of his life as the archdiocese’s new coordinator of Hispanic Ministry.

“I know God does everything perfectly and beautifully when we let him lead,



Felix Navarrete

and I want to do his will no matter what,” he said in a Jan. 20, 2023, article in *The Criterion*.

Navarrete has accomplished much in those three years. Now, that desire to do God’s will has led him to a new role as director of

the archdiocese’s Office of Intercultural Ministry. He began serving in that position on Feb. 2.

The office “provides guidance and promotes cultural events and activities that enhance ministry within the different cultural groups in our archdiocese,” Navarrete explains, including those from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Central and South America. The archdiocese’s Black Catholic and Hispanic ministries fall under the intercultural office’s umbrella.

“With so many good things going on in [the archdiocesan] Hispanic Ministry, I felt the call to do something for the rest of the cultural groups” in central and southern Indiana, says Navarrete.

Looking at the “many good things” he accomplished in the last three years, “the rest of the cultural groups” have much to anticipate.

‘A great impact in our community’

Some of Navarrete’s successes involve programs that existed when he became Hispanic Ministry coordinator, including the annual Hispanic Family Camp and its “very intentional focus on spiritual enrichment,” he says.

The event takes place on the second weekend of September at the Catholic Youth Organization’s Camp Rancho Framasa in Brown County. Faith is a major component, including opportunities for confession, adoration and Mass.

“We were so blessed to have Archbishop [Charles C.] Thompson celebrate Mass with us for the first time in 2024,” says Navarrete. “And last year we were able to bring the National Eucharistic Congress monstration to the Family Camp, and we offered this new

experience of adoration under the stars.”

Another accomplishment he notes was a makeover of the existing Intercultural Pastoral Institute (IPI)—not of the program, but a physical makeover of the space where classes for the 2-year ministerial formation certificate program take place at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

Navarrete and his wife Paholla “worked really hard last summer to enhance every single room at the IPI,” he says.

A small gift shop, a conference room and a cafeteria were added, and the reception area was upgraded to include a front desk. Religious art and icons from Navarrete’s recent travels to France and England now decorate the space.

“We also added a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,” he says. “That’s the first thing you see when you arrive at the IPI facilities. The students have expressed that the place really looks like an institute now.”

Navarrete’s accomplishments as Hispanic Ministry coordinator include new endeavors as well. One is the creation of a Hispanic young adult program called *Pastoral Juvenil*.

“It is a tool for formation and spiritual growth—and fellowship, of course,” he explains. “In the last year, we were able to serve more than 200 young adults through our various programs,” including a three-day mental health-themed retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad attended by 35 young adults.

Another new endeavor was hiring a young adult intern for the Hispanic Ministry office.

“The job is focused on outreach to and developing programs for Hispanic and Latino young adults,” says Navarrete. “That is truly one of our greatest accomplishments because that has made a great impact in our community.”

While he accomplished much more as coordinator of Hispanic Ministry, the last success Navarrete notes was the inaugural Hispanic Ministry Gala, which took place last December and was attended by Archbishop Thompson.

Navarrete did more than move the Hispanic Ministry forward—he gained valuable experience that will assist him as the new director of the archdiocese’s Office of Intercultural Ministry.

‘They are all the people of God’

One useful insight Navarrete gained is “how important it is to be present and

close to our people,” he says. “To devote time, to get to know them and accompany them in their faith journey is part of our missionary spirit.”

Navarrete also learned about the power of collaboration, “that working in collaboration with other archdiocesan offices and departments will always bear good fruit.”

The same spirit of collaboration is true among the ministries that fall under the intercultural office’s umbrella, he says.

“Our team, we are serving the Church of Christ,” says Navarrete. “We serve different people from different backgrounds and different languages and cultures, but they are all the people of God. ... We want to promote that hospitality of the Church welcoming all her members to be part of the one body of Christ.”

Navarrete’s proven leadership and experience as Hispanic Ministry leader more than qualify him for his new role. But another experience makes him a particularly unique fit.

“Being myself an immigrant, people perhaps can relate to my own story, how I got here,” says Navarrete.

In 2018, he fled from Nicaragua with his wife and their four children to the United States as political refugees, settling near Paholla’s mother in Indianapolis. The couple and their children—now ages 25, 20, 15 and 10—are members of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis.

With Navarrete’s experience—both professional and personal—he says he now feels called “to serve the larger Church” as director of the Intercultural Ministry Office.

Deacon Thomas Hosty believes Navarrete has the gifts to answer that call. The Office of Intercultural Ministry and its sub-groups fall within the archdiocese’s Department of Pastoral Ministries, for which Deacon Hosty has served as director since February 2024.

“Felix has a great pastoral presence with people and is resourceful and very hard-working,” he says. “He is patient, kind and never loses his cool. He is devoted to our Church and to Jesus Christ, and is motivated to bring others closer to Christ, to have their own encounters with him. Felix just has a natural heart for working with the beautiful diversity of cultural communities in our archdiocese.”

Deacon Hosty adds that, with Navarrete’s master’s degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame, his three years of experience working for the archdiocese and his “strong administrative and pastoral skill sets, Felix is a natural fit to lead our Office of Intercultural Ministry.”

‘How diverse is the body of Christ’

Navarrete’s new role comes with specific responsibilities, including providing “direction in maintaining oversight of all ministerial activities associated with the Office of Intercultural Ministry,” he says.

His role also includes connecting international cultural community leaders in central and southern Indiana parishes and the priests who serve those communities to helpful ministerial resources.

Those community lay leaders are essential to the mission of the office, says Navarrete.

“A priority for this year is to reactivate an intercultural commission with members from the different cultural communities so we can work together, listen to what their hopes and dreams are and [discern] how the archdiocese can help make those hopes and dreams become real,” he says.

Navarrete also envisions bringing the diverse communities together on occasion.

“Sometimes we’re tempted to separate things, thinking that the best way of honoring the cultures is to keep people with their communities, like in their comfort zone,” he says. “Yes, we want to honor the different cultures, and we want to foster their communities.”

“But I really would like to see the Interculture Ministry promote unity among the diverse cultural communities, perhaps seeing all of them coming together at least one or two times a year to provide that sense of fostering community. That would be just beautiful to see how diverse is the body of Christ.”

Deacon Hosty notes that Navarrete has already “worked to bring different cultural groups together, for instance, [the archdiocese’s annual Mass] to celebrate the feast of St. Martin de Porres—himself a saint of mixed cultures—and a bilingual Pentecost Vigil service at [SS. Peter and Paul] Cathedral.”

It is such unity in the midst of diversity that differentiates “multicultural” from “intercultural,” says Navarrete.

“We can certainly speak in terms of multicultural with the presence of different cultures,” he explains. “But in the context of intercultural community, promoting that unity and building those bridges between them, to have that relationship and that communion—that is what we are called to as Catholics.”

(Felix Navarrete can be reached at fnavarrete@archindy.org or 317-236-7312. Applications are currently being sought to fill the role of archdiocesan Hispanic Ministry coordinator. For more information, go to tinyurl.com/ArchIndyHispanicCoordinator.) †

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

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

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

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

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Editorial

The hard work of immigration reform

The longer Washington waits, the worse the problem gets. Communities are strained and millions live in a constant state of uncertainty. This serves neither justice nor the common good. —St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda

The recent chaos in Minnesota has called attention to the fact that the immigration system in the United States of America is severely broken. This is no surprise to Catholics and other people of good will who have been urging immigration reform for decades now.

But as St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda argued in a recent *Wall Street Journal* column, “The longer Washington waits, the worse the problem gets.”

The Catholic Church in the United States is an immigrant Church with a long history of embracing diverse newcomers and providing assistance and pastoral care to immigrants, migrants, refugees and people on the move.

According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB): “In 2003, the Bishops of the United States, together with the Bishops of Mexico, in the pastoral statement, ‘Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope’/‘*Juntos en el Camino de la Esperanza Ya no Somos Extranjeros*,’ acknowledged that the current immigration system is badly in need of reform, and offered a comprehensive set of recommendations for changing U.S. laws and policies to bring about a more humane and just immigration system in the United States.”

Sadly, the recommendations from the Mexican and U.S. bishops have been largely ignored, and the result is the unprecedented chaos and violence that we recently witnessed in Minnesota and many other regions of our country.

“We had a chance in 2013,” Archbishop Hebda writes, “when a bipartisan bill passed the Senate. It was a strong bill that provided billions for border security and a 12-year path to citizenship for law-abiding undocumented immigrants. The House never took it up.”

How sad to be so close to a reasonable and fair approach to immigration policy only to have our national leaders—from both parties—succumb to blurred vision and bipartisan incompetence.

As Archbishop Hebda notes, there is plenty of blame on all sides: “Recent failures can’t be ignored. The nation was poorly served by those who threw the border open. The flood of migrants overwhelmed local communities, eroded public trust and weakened the rule of law. Compassion divorced from order isn’t compassion at all; it’s negligence.

“At the same time, it’s wrong to blame undocumented immigrants themselves, many of whom came here seeking safety, work or family reunification. Solidarity can’t be selective. We must stand with citizens and undocumented immigrants together as human beings created in God’s image.”



Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis delivers a homily as he celebrates an evening Mass for peace on Jan. 25 at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul. (OSV News photo/Dave Hrbacek, *The Catholic Spirit*)

The Catholic Church approaches the issue of immigration reform from a *both/and* perspective. On the one hand, our country has the right to control its borders and to regulate the flow of legal immigration. On the other hand, individuals and families who come to us seeking to become a legitimate part of our national community must be treated with human dignity and respect.

According to the USCCB: “The U.S. Catholic Bishops accept the legitimate role of the U.S. government in intercepting unauthorized migrants who attempt to travel to the United States, although are deeply concerned about indiscriminate enforcement that separates families and which uses migrant detention as a deterrence strategy. The bishops also believe that by increasing lawful means for migrants to enter, live and work in the United States, law enforcement will be better able to focus upon those who truly threaten public safety: drug and human traffickers, smugglers and would-be terrorists. Any enforcement measures must be targeted, proportional and humane.”

In this light, as Archbishop Hebda says, “it is right to respect the efforts of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers when they are fulfilling their mission to identify and detain serious criminals who have illegally entered the country. The removal of dangerous people serves the common good.”

However, we object to heavy-handed and indiscriminate measures that may be well-intentioned, but which end up doing more harm than good.

In the end, what’s required is a comprehensive, long-term solution that reflects reality rather than ideology.

As the U.S. bishops have argued for decades now, this solution must include the granting of a lawful status for those who have put down roots, contributed to their communities and lived here for years.

“A workable solution would also have to acknowledge that some people will be deported,” Archbishop Hebda writes. “Mercy doesn’t negate consequences, and compassion doesn’t mean wide-open borders.”

—Daniel Conway

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

Do you really believe God loves you?

If you’re like me, you were impressed by the athletes of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. In them, we witnessed both the rewards of hard work and the traumatizing effects of extreme expectation.



It’s hard to believe that most of these athletes were just teenagers and young adults.

As I watched them, I was brought back to the recent gathering of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), SEEK 26, in which I participated.

During the SEEK conference, I was struck by the pressures and anxieties experienced by young people today, and by the number of times the speakers tried to convince them to believe in God’s personal, unconditional love.

I started to wonder why this message was being repeated with such insistence. It seemed a little cheesy. Doesn’t God’s love go without saying?

Then I read the letter our superior general had just sent to all the Little Sisters around the world, establishing a spiritual orientation for us for 2026. In it, she proposed we spend a year of joyful confidence in God’s providence, and she asked, “Do we truly believe in God’s love for us?”

There was that question again! Whether a freshman in college or a consecrated person with a lifelong commitment to God through religious vows, this question is central to our lives!

So, I asked myself, why is it that so many of us find it so hard to believe in God’s love?

I decided to do a survey on this question, asking fellow Sisters, together with some friends and colleagues—anyone on my phone’s contact list—about why believing in God’s love is so difficult.

The responses I received fell broadly into three categories.

Some of those I surveyed suggested that the memory or shame of past sins deters many people from believing in God’s love. I’ll call these folks the St. Peter’s among us, for when Jesus called St. Peter to follow him, he immediately recoiled, protesting, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!” (Lk 5:8)

Another group seems to be victims of the prejudices and negative judgments of others, which crush their sense of self-worth. Even if unfounded, these

negative messages coming from outside ourselves can drown out the truth that God’s love is personal and unconditional.

Those who suffer from prejudices and negative judgments remind me of the Samaritan woman at the well in St. John’s Gospel. Painfully aware of her inferior social status in the eyes of the Jewish majority, she shies away from Jesus. “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (Jn 4:9)

The third set of responses suggested that some people find it difficult to believe simply because they have never seen God or experienced his love firsthand. “How can I believe in someone or something I can’t even see?” they ask.

These folks are like “doubting” Thomas, who, after the Resurrection protested, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (Jn 20:25).

The results of my survey—unscientific as it was—gave me much food for thought. There are so many St. Peter’s, doubting Thomases and women at the well, including ourselves.

What can we do to convince us that God really loves us, regardless of our sins and faults?

I believe that the simplest, most direct way to overcome our doubts about God’s personal and unconditional love is to prayerfully turn to the cross.

The image of Christ on the cross—whether it be a very large crucifix hanging in a grand cathedral or a simple one at the end of our rosary—speaks volumes about God’s love.

To those who distance themselves from God because others have convinced them that they are not worthy of love, Jesus stretches out his arms and says, “I love you so much that I would have died for you, even if you were the only person on Earth.”

And to those who say they will not believe without seeing, Jesus holds out his hands and says, “See my hands and my side, these wounds were really for you.”

During this Lent, I pray that we will all turn to the cross and find there the undeniable proof of God’s personal, unconditional love. Then, through our kindness and love, may we convince others that they too are worthy of God’s love.

(*Little Sisters of the Poor Sister Constance Veit is director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.*) †

Letters to the Editor

Reader: Use Lenten season to strip away what clutters the soul

Lent is a good time to engage in social media detoxification, while in preparation, purification and reflection on the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

When we disconnect from social media, we are not merely “logging off.” We are reclaiming attention—and attention is a form of love.

We are not disconnecting from people; we are reconnecting with Presence.

Social media can often pull us toward distraction, comparison, vanity and noise—the very things Lent invites us to step away from. Just as fasting from food sharpens spiritual hunger, fasting from social media can create quiet space for prayer, Scripture reading and genuine reflection on Christ’s

sacrifice and resurrection.

Lent has always been about stripping away what clutters the soul—whether that’s food, entertainment or, in our modern age, the endless feed of digital content. The 40 days mirror Christ’s own withdrawal into the desert, a season of focused, undistracted encounter with God.

By Easter Sunday, many people may find that the detox not only deepened their faith but also reset their relationship with technology in a healthier, more intentional way.

Kirth N. Roach
Order of Carmelite Discalced Secular
Indianapolis

Camino stories show ‘our faith is a beautiful thing,’ *Criterion* reader shares

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading all the stories of the people who walked the *Camino* pilgrimage route.

There were so many good things and challenges, it made you feel

like you were there.

Our faith is a beautiful thing.
Thank you for printing them.

Susie Springer
Indianapolis

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

The humility of a thirsty God

We see God begging for a drink of water from a human being, and a sinful one at that. ... How could it be that God is needy? ... In Christ the one who by nature has need of nothing outside himself has nonetheless voluntarily made himself needy, but only in order to communicate to us the life that is his. This action of making himself needy out of love may well be the greatest and most astounding work of his omnipotence. (Father Simeon, O.S.C.O.)

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent (Jn 4:5-42) tells the story of the Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus at Jacob's well. Jesus is tired and thirsty. He says to the woman, "Give me a drink" (Jn 4:7), and this simple request causes a double scandal: a man speaking to a woman, and a Jew interacting with a Samaritan.

Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis, a Trappist monk at Saint Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Mass., whose religious name is Father Simeon, has pointed out an even more profound scandal. Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, has become a man.

As a result, he shares all our human weaknesses, except sin. When he fasts 40 days in the desert, he is hungry, lonely and physically weak. When he walks long distances as in this Gospel account, he becomes exhausted and dehydrated.

The scandal is that God, who is omnipotent, freely admits his weakness. He is powerless over the physical demands of his humanity, and he needs the help of others, in this case a sinful Samaritan woman. It's true that this state of neediness is freely chosen by God's only Son, but the paradoxical fact remains that he who shares the absolute power of Divinity with his Father and the Holy Spirit must now humble himself by begging for a drink of water from someone who is in no way his equal.

The woman's response to Jesus reinforces the double bias of her time: "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir,

you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" (Jn 4:9-12)

When the woman asks Jesus if he is greater than Jacob, she unwittingly calls attention to the paradox of Jesus' identity. Yes, he is greater than Jacob (and every other human being), but he has deliberately chosen to humble himself. Instead of ordinary water, he calls her attention to the spiritual nourishment that is available to her through the "living water" that he alone can give.

Jesus says to the woman at the well, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:13-14).

The woman does not understand this. She says to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water" (Jn 4:15). While Jesus is speaking of spiritual nourishment, and the gift of his own

life, the women can only think of her physical needs.

In the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, we learn about the woman's personal history:

Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband." (Jn 4:16-18)

Jesus' ability to see into the woman's soul and to determine the truth about her marital status convinces her that he is no ordinary man. She recognizes him as the Messiah and begins to tell everyone in the town about his power.

The hidden truth is that Jesus is both God and man. His humanity makes him accessible to us. His divinity allows him to penetrate to our heart of hearts and become one with us. "Many more began to believe in him" (Jn 4:41), St. John says. And they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world" (Jn 4:42). †



Cristo, la piedra angular

La humildad de un Dios sediento

Vemos que Dios le pide de beber a un ser humano, una mujer pecadora, por cierto. ... ¿Cómo puede ser que Dios esté necesitado? ... Sin embargo, Cristo—el que por naturaleza no tiene necesidad de nada fuera de sí mismo—se ha hecho necesitado por voluntad propia, únicamente para mostrarnos que a él le pertenece la vida. Esta acción de hacerse menesteroso por amor bien puede ser la mayor y más asombrosa obra de su omnipotencia. (Padre Simeón, O.S.C.O.)

La lectura del Evangelio del tercer domingo de Cuaresma (Jn 4:5-42) narra la historia del encuentro de Jesús con la samaritana en el pozo de Jacob. Jesús está cansado y sediento, y le dice a la mujer: "Dame de beber" (Jn 4:7), y esta simple petición provoca un doble escándalo: un hombre que habla con una mujer, y un judío que interactúa con una samaritana.

Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis, monje trapense de la abadía de San José de Spencer (Massachusetts), cuyo nombre religioso es padre Simeón, ha señalado un escándalo aún más profundo. Jesús, la Segunda Persona

de la Trinidad, se ha hecho hombre.

En consecuencia, comparte todas nuestras debilidades humanas, excepto el pecado. Cuando ayuna 40 días en el desierto, está hambriento, se siente solo y físicamente débil. Luego de caminar largas distancias, como en este relato del Evangelio, queda exhausto y deshidratado.

El escándalo es que Dios, que es omnipotente, admite libremente su debilidad; se muestra vulnerable ante las exigencias físicas de su humanidad y necesita la ayuda de los demás, en este caso, de una samaritana pecadora. Es cierto que este estado de necesidad es elegido libremente por el Hijo único de Dios, pero no deja de ser paradójico que quien comparte el poder absoluto de la Divinidad con su Padre y el Espíritu Santo deba ahora humillarse pidiendo un vaso de agua a alguien que no es en modo alguno su igual.

La respuesta de la mujer a Jesús refuerza el doble sesgo de su época:

"¿Cómo tú, siendo judío, me pides de beber a mí, que soy una mujer de Samaría?" [Es que los judíos no se tratan con los samaritanos.] Jesús le respondió: "Si conocieras el don de Dios y supieras quién es el que te

dice 'Dame de beber,' tú se lo habrías pedido a él, y él te habría dado agua viva." Contestó la mujer: "Señor, el pozo es hondo y no tienes con qué sacarla; ¿cómo es que tienes esa agua viva? ¿Te crees más que nuestro padre Jacob, que nos dio el pozo, del que bebieron él, sus hijos y sus ganados?" (Jn 4:9-12)

Cuando la mujer pregunta a Jesús si se cree más que Jacob, sin querer pone de manifiesto la paradoja de la identidad de Jesús. Sí, es más grande que Jacob (y que cualquier otro ser humano), pero ha elegido deliberadamente humillarse. En lugar del agua ordinaria, él le menciona el alimento espiritual que está a su disposición a través del "agua viva" que sólo Él puede dar.

Jesús le responde a la mujer en el pozo: "Todo el que beba de esta agua volverá a tener sed; pero el que beba del agua que yo le dé no tendrá sed jamás, pues el agua que yo le dé se convertirá en él en fuente de agua que brota para vida eterna" (Jn 4:13-14).

La mujer no lo entiende y le dice a Jesús: "Señor, dame de esa agua, para no volver a tener sed y no tener que venir aquí a sacarla" (Jn 4:15). Mientras Jesús habla de alimento

espiritual y del don de su propia vida, la mujer piensa únicamente en sus necesidades físicas.

A través del diálogo entre Jesús y la samaritana, conocemos la historia personal de la mujer:

Él le contestó: "Vete, llama a tu marido y vuelve acá." La mujer le dijo: "No tengo marido." Jesús le respondió: "Bien has dicho que no tienes marido, porque has tenido cinco, y el que ahora tienes no es marido tuyo." (Jn 4:16-18)

La capacidad de Jesús para ver en el alma de la mujer y determinar la verdad sobre su estado civil la convence de que no es un hombre corriente. Ella lo reconoce como el Mesías y comienza a hablar a todos en el pueblo sobre su poder.

La verdad oculta es que Jesús es Dios y hombre. Su humanidad lo hace accesible para nosotros. Mediante su divinidad es capaz de penetrar hasta el fondo de nuestro corazón y hacerse uno con nosotros. "Fueron muchos más los que creyeron por sus palabras" (Jn 4:41), dice san Juan. Y le dijeron a la mujer: "Ya no creemos por tus palabras, pues nosotros mismos hemos oído y sabemos que éste es verdaderamente el Salvador del mundo" (Jn 4:42). †

Events Calendar

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

Every Wednesday:

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

March 12-13

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

March 13-15

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

March 15

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

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Union St., Indianapolis. **Indianapolis Symphony Sphinx Series Chamber Music Concert**, 2-4 p.m., brass program featuring works by Giovanni Gabrieli, J.S. Bach, Francis Poulenc, Juan Pablo Moncayo, Irving Berlin and Alice Gomez, free. Information: 317-902-3006, judithessex@icloud.com.

March 16, April 20

Virtual Sister Thea Bowman Black Catholic Women's Prayer Group, 7 p.m., meets online monthly on

third Monday, sponsored by archdiocesan Black Catholic Ministry, all women welcome. Meeting: tinyurl.com/SrTheaPrayerGrp. Information: iowhosomaddox@archindy.org, 317-261-3381.

March 20

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following. Dama Foundation President Shawn Collinsworth presents "Building Better Futures for Children and Adults Facing Life's Greatest Developmental and Behavioral Challenges." \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. March 17. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

March 27-March 28

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

March 27-29

Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Come and See**

Retreat, 4 p.m. Fri.-2 p.m. Sun., for single Catholic women ages 18-42 wanting to explore religious life, free, meals and housing provided. Information, registration: 361-500-9505, jluna@swsmw.org, ComeandSee.SistersofProvidence.org.

March 28

St. Felix Catholic Center, 1280 Hitzfield St., Huntington (Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend). **Ava's Grace Healing Retreat**, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., for couples and individuals who have suffered miscarriage, stillbirth or infant loss, witness talks, couple conversation, small group discussion, eucharistic adoration, pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady on the retreat center grounds, lunch, free. Information: leverett@diocesefwsb.org. Registration: diocesefwsb.org/avas-grace.

March 30

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Leave the Light On**, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., sacrament of reconciliation, no appointment needed. Information: 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

April 11

Avon United Methodist Church, 6850 E US Highway 36, Avon.

Stephen Ministries 50th Anniversary Celebration and Learning Event, 8-4 p.m., \$15 includes light breakfast and snacks, additional box lunch is \$12. Information, registration: stephenministries.org/celebrateIND.

April 16

The Galt House, 140 N 4th St, Louisville, Ky. **St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities of New Albany "Giving Hope-Changing Lives" Annual Gala Fundraiser**, 5:30 p.m. doors open, dinner 7 p.m., client testimonials, live auction. Information, RSVP: 812-949-7305, info@stehcharities.org.

April 17

Liter House, 5301 Winthrop Ave. Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange**, rosary 6:35 a.m., Mass 7 a.m., buffet breakfast and program following, presenter TBD. \$20 members, \$25 non-members. Register by 4 p.m. April 14. Information, registration: cutt.ly/CBE-Reg.

April 18

Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. **Called to Community Women's Breakfast**, 7:30-11 a.m.,

sponsored by Confraternity of Christian Mothers, Mass at 7:30 a.m. followed by hot catered breakfast and full espresso bar, speaker and craft activity, \$15, register by April 4. Information, registration: 317-752-5172.

April 23

St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish Hall, 1870 W. Oak St., Zionsville, Ind. (Diocese of Lafayette). **Boone County Right to Life Banquet**, 6:30 p.m., dinner, speaker will address issues and ethics of IVF and embryo adoption, \$40, free tickets for student groups available, register online or mail check by April 10. Information, registration: boonecountyrighttolife.org, postmaster@boonecountyrighttolife.org. Mail checks to: PO Box 264, Lebanon, IN 46052.

April 24-26

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Worldwide Marriage Encounter in Spanish**, \$75 non-refundable application fee. Registration: www.wwme.org. Information: Ken and Ann Butt, 317-863-5680. †

Retreats and Programs

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

March 20-22

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Road 48, Bloomington. **The Gift of the Church & the Magisterium**, 6 p.m. Fri.-10 a.m. Sun., Catholic Answers apologist Tim Staples presenting, \$290

for single, \$480 double, \$670 triple, \$860 quadruple includes four meals and room for two nights, commuter \$90 includes lunches. Information, registration: 812-825-4642, ext. 1, motheroftheredeemer.com.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **The Lord's Prayer: Praying the Prayer Jesus Taught Us**, 6 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun, Father James Farrell presenting, \$250, includes room and meals. Registration:

ftm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

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

March 27, April 17

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual

direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 28

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **The Place that Holds You—Lenten Day Retreat**, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., led by Father Jeffrey Godecker and Mary Schaffner, \$55, includes room, lunch, Mass and use of common areas and grounds. Registration: 317-545-7681, ftm.retreatportal.com/events, lcoons@archindy.org.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Dying and Rising: Finding Your True Self Within**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 27-29

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

March 31, April 1, 2

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

Ritter items on 'indefinite loan'



Eric Fair, archivist for the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, left; David Hock, founding chairman of the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation Inc. (CRBFI) in New Albany; and CRBFI archivist Ray Day pose at the nonprofit organization's headquarters on Feb. 13 with items of Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter. The items are a few of the 35 pieces "on indefinite loan" to CRBFI from the archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis "with the blessing of Archbishop [Mitchell T.] Rozanski" of St. Louis, says Day. New Albany native Cardinal Ritter served as bishop of the Diocese of Indianapolis from 1934-44, becoming archbishop when the diocese was elevated to the level of archdiocese in 1944. He served as archbishop of St. Louis from 1946 until his death in 1967, six years after being named a cardinal in 1961. For more information on CRBFI's Ritter Museum, Neighborhood Resource Center, programs and more, go to cardinalritterhouse.org.

Simple Soup and Bread fundraiser benefitting archdiocesan Crisis Office set for April 2

The annual Simple Soup and Bread Luncheon to support the archdiocesan Crisis Office will take place in Assembly Hall at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, from 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. on April 2. Doors open at 11:30 a.m., a short prayer service will take place at 11:45 a.m., and lunch will be served at 11:55 a.m.

The Crisis Office offers assistance to low-income persons residing in Marion County unable to provide for basic necessities such as shelter, food and clothing. Services include linking clients with existing community resources, access to a food pantry and clothing room, bus tickets for job

transportation, medication prescription assistance and limited rental assistance.

To help the Crisis Office assist nearly 70,000 people this year, the goal for the luncheon is to raise \$15,000.

The cost for the lunch is \$15, with an online registration option of a table of eight for \$100.

Advance registration is preferred for planning purposes, but walk-ups will be accepted. Advanced registration is available at tinyurl.com/ccsoupbread26.

If you are unable to attend but wish to support Catholic Charities Indianapolis which offers the Crisis Office, go to helpcreatehope.org/donate.

For more information, contact Cheri Bush at 317-236-1411 or cbush@archindy.org. †

Notre Dame professor declines appointment; respect life march becomes prayer of thanksgiving

NOTRE DAME, Ind. (OSV News)—About 100 people gathered on the campus of the University of Notre Dame on Feb. 27 for an early evening event that organizers had been calling their “March on the Dome” just the day before.

The student-led march had been in the works for a few weeks, conceived originally as a protest following the Jan. 8 appointment of Susan Ostermann, associate professor in Notre Dame’s Keough School of Global Affairs, as director of its Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies.

Ostermann’s appointment angered many in the Notre Dame community and beyond given her prominent advocacy for legal abortion in contradiction to the Catholic university’s mission and identity and her frequent sharp criticism of the pro-life movement. After weeks of outcry, including from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, shepherd of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in which the university is located, Ostermann declined her appointment to the role on Feb. 26.

Bishops Rhoades, who had joined students two days earlier praying for Notre Dame at its Marian grotto, welcomed the outcome, explaining “the appointment of persons to leadership positions at a Catholic university is an act of institutional witness, a mission-governance issue.

“This is not an issue about academic freedom or scholarly engagement,” he said in a Feb. 26 statement. “Academic freedom protects inquiry. It does not require institutional self-contradiction.”

As a result of the news of Ostermann’s withdrawal from the appointment, Notre Dame sophomore Luke Woodyard told OSV News that the carefully planned “March on the Dome” protest for Feb. 27 had to be reconsidered at the last minute.

He and other campus organizers from Notre Dame Right to Life, Children of Mary, the Knights of Columbus and the Militia of the Immaculata decided that, rather than cancel the event, it should become a prayerful gathering of thanksgiving.

“This is no longer a protest event,” Woodyard told the crowd of students and Catholics from local parishes gathering on campus for the Friday evening march.

“Instead, it’s an occasion of gratitude to God and to Our Lady. What started as

a protest against an appointment of Professor Ostermann as head of the Liu Institute has become a gathering of thanksgiving and hope for greater respect for life here on campus.

“Look at all the students who came here today to pray for Our Lady’s university,” Woodyard added. “With your support, we can hold Notre Dame accountable.”

The University of Notre Dame acknowledged the student-led march in a Feb. 24 message to OSV News and said, “We respect the perspectives of our students and their desire to be heard.”

The university’s message in response to Ostermann’s appointment said she was chosen to head the Liu Institute “for her expertise in Asian studies,” and maintained that “she respects the university’s position on the sanctity of life” and knew “her role is to support the diverse research of the Institute’s scholars and students, not advance a personal political agenda.”

Woodyard emphasized that the appointment “was blatantly indefensible.”

“You can’t promote someone to a position of power who espouses things that blatantly contradict the truth that we hold as a Catholic university and should be cultivating within our students,” he said. “We’re going to take this moment to show how we love this university, but loving sometimes means giving constructive criticism.”

Bishop Rhoades welcomed the news that Ostermann withdrew her acceptance of the position, following weeks of outcry from students, staff and many



Holy Cross Father Bill Miscamble, a retired Notre Dame history professor, gives a blessing as student leaders and others from groups across campus take part in a prayer service on Feb. 27 on Notre Dame’s campus, following an announcement that Susan Ostermann, an advocate of legal abortion, had declined her appointment as director of the university’s Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies. (OSV News photo/James Whitaker)

U.S. Catholic bishops over her prominent advocacy for abortion.

“I am very grateful to all the members of the Notre Dame community and beyond who, out of love for Notre Dame, expressed their opposition to the appointment,” Bishops Rhoades said in a Feb. 26 statement.

Earlier that day, Dean Mary Gallagher of Notre Dame’s Keough School of Global Affairs announced in an e-mail that Ostermann had “decided not to move forward” as director of its Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies.

Ostermann—who specializes in the study of regulatory compliance, comparative politics and environmental regulation, with a focus on South Asia—will remain a member of the Keough School’s faculty.

Gallagher said she was “grateful” for Ostermann’s “willingness to serve and for the thoughtfulness with which she approached this decision” to decline the directorship.

Two days prior to her withdrawal, Bishop Rhoades joined some 50 students, faculty and staff gathered at the university’s Marian grotto to “pray together for the cause of life and respect for all human life.”

In his Feb. 26 statement, Bishop Rhoades acknowledged a Notre Dame spokesperson’s public statement that the university maintains an “unwavering” commitment to “upholding the inherent dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life at every stage.”

“Clearly Notre Dame is reaffirming its fidelity to a core truth of Catholic social teaching that is central to the Church’s commitment to integral human development,” he said.

But he emphasized, “That mission commitment is compromised when a Catholic university appoints leaders or bestows honors on those who act or speak against fundamental teachings of the Church.” †

Lenten penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

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

Batesville Deanery

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

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery:

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

Bloomington Deanery

March 9, 6:30 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
 March 17, 7-9 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
 March 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude the Apostle, Spencer
 March 26, 6-7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville

April 1, 6-9 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Apostle and St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington, at St. Paul Catholic Center

Connersville Deanery

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

Indianapolis East Deanery

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

Indianapolis North Deanery

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

Indianapolis South Deanery

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

Indianapolis West Deanery

March 10, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
 March 12, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony
 March 24, 7 p.m. at St. Christopher

New Albany Deanery

March 11, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
 March 12, 6 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany (confession available in English and Spanish)
 March 23, 7 p.m. for St. John the Baptist, Starlight, and St. Mary, Navilleton, at St. John the Baptist
 March 25, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
 March 25, 7 p.m. for St. Michael, Charlestown, and St. Francis Xavier, Henryville, at St. Michael (confession available in English and Spanish)
 March 26, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Seymour Deanery

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

Tell City Deanery

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

Terre Haute Deanery

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

GUÉRIN

continued from page 1

head,” Murphy says. “They were a great reminder to focus on what I/we could control and what I/we couldn’t. Instead of being filled with anxiety, I could be present with Xavier.

“When I remember that time, I am not filled with sadness, but with great joy. I was able to read, pray and laugh with Xavier—and witness his deep longing for the sacraments.”

She kept that approach in the days leading up to Xavier’s death on Oct. 11, 2011. She also kept her reliance on St. Theodore during that time.

“When I was alone, I would always ask Mother Guérin for her prayers for courage for my family and me,” Murphy recalls.

“There was an evening two days before he passed that was very hard, because I saw Xavier’s deep suffering. That night, I called on Mary, Joseph and St. Michael to get us through the night. That was the night that Mother Guérin and I became great friends. I felt like she was right beside me, reminding me to place myself gently in the hands of Providence.

“She’s my girl. She changed me. Rather than fearing suffering, she helped me see God’s love for me, even in the moments that have brought me to my knees.”

Fifteen years have passed since that moment. Now, it has led to the love story that Murphy has written as a thank you to the woman she calls “Mother Guérin.”

Her thank you is in the form of a new musical called *Providence: A Love Story*. The musical will be performed on March 6, 7, 13 and 14 at St. Theodore Guérin High School in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, where Murphy is the director of fine arts.

The musical is the first major production to be showcased in the school’s new auditorium, Murphy notes.

“It seemed like the right thing to do in our new space—to thank her for her prayers.”

The desires of the heart

While St. Theodore and the Sisters of Providence continue to have a profound influence on the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, two people with archdiocesan roots have been influential in this musical tribute to Indiana’s first saint.

“While we want every musical we put on to be a success, this one feels really important,” says Angie Goćur, Guérin’s assistant director of fine arts who graduated from St. Roch School in Indianapolis in 2005 and Roncalli High School in Indianapolis in 2009.

“From the time this musical was just an idea, we have talked about our desire for the audience to know St. Theodore Guérin better, to be inspired by her love of Christ, and ultimately to help all of us grow in our love of God and desire to become saints.”

The saint’s life has had that impact on Sarah May, a music teacher at Guérin who wrote all the songs for the show.

“I didn’t know much about her before coming to teach here, but two years ago I started reading a collection of her letters,” says May, a former parishioner, cantor and substitute organist at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “I was struck by how vibrant and personal her writing voice was.

“She was very human. She was smart, hardworking, determined and profoundly

relatable. I find her to be an outstanding role model. She dealt with hardships but approached life with grace and courage.”

So, when Murphy approached May last year to see if she was interested in writing the music for the show, May didn’t hesitate.

“I simply had to say ‘yes.’ It was a daunting task—it’s a lot of music—but the chance to be part of someone’s passion project and to celebrate a saint whose life I admire so greatly was too good to turn down.”

Asked to share some of her favorite songs that she wrote, May focuses on “Only You.”

“The show begins with Anne-Therese Guérin as a young girl in France, and we meet her as she sings about her heart’s desire. This was the first thing I wrote, and it was a wonderful chance to get to know the character and explore what might have been in her heart.

“She grew up seeing great natural beauty around her, despite the social and political instability of the time. And the beauty she saw drew her to want nothing more than to give her life over to the Creator of all beauty.”

An unusual, touching view of friendship

In writing *Providence: A Love Story*, Murphy thought it would be “boring” to present a musical version of St. Theodore’s life in a direct timeline.

Instead, she unfolds the musical as the story of St. Theodore and Providence Sister Theodosia Mug, who was the official biographer of the saint and the recipient in 1908 of the first documented miracle attributed to the saint.

Murphy connects their stories, even though the two women weren’t alive at the same time. St. Theodore lived from 1798 to 1856 while Sister Theodosia lived from 1860 to 1943.

“Though they never met during their lifetimes, they were deeply connected through their shared love of God,” says Murphy, who often turned to God during eucharistic adoration for inspiration in writing the musical.

“Throughout the musical, audiences witness the challenges both women faced and how they continually chose to trust in Providence.”

That relationship and that shared faith mirror the connections that Murphy shares with Mother Guérin.

“Using Sister Theodosia also allowed me to tell my own story,” Murphy says. “I wanted to demonstrate that a great friendship can happen, even when one of the friends is no longer alive.”

‘I love her soul’

The friendship that’s envisioned between Mother Theodore and Sister Theodosia comes to life in the musical through the two talented teenagers who portray these women—Lilah Cruz as St. Theodore and MJ Becker as Sister Theodosia.

Their chemistry on stage reflects their closeness in life.

“I love Lilah so much,” says a beaming MJ, who is 17 and a senior at Guérin. “She’s such a ball of joy every day. If I’m ever complaining about something, she always gives me the positive side in it. She’s such a good friend who I can turn to when I really need a good influence or a positive light.”

Lilah glows too as she says, “We really make each other laugh just by looking at each other. We can talk about serious things, too. We’ve especially done that in this show since we both have big roles.



Angie Goćur, left, Sarah May and Marcia Murphy have combined their theatrical talents as educators at St. Theodore Guérin High School in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, for the premiere of Murphy’s new musical, *Providence: A Love Story*. (Photos by John Shaughnessy)

I love her soul and just everything about her.”

Lilah sees that same connection between St. Theodore and Sister Theodosia.

“They have one of the deepest types of friendship because it’s brought together in prayer, and it’s rooted in Jesus,” says Lilah, who is 17 and a junior at Guérin.

“Being that they’ve had a lot of similar life experiences, I feel they’re so close they’re almost like the same soul. I think when Sister Theodosia prays, Mother Theodore carries her prayers to God.”

Playing St. Theodore has also given Lilah a richer understanding of the saint.

“She was funny, enigmatic and very driven. She was very opinionated and independent. I also learned she was afraid a lot of the time.

“So that gave me the perception of her roundness of character—that she was a real person and not just a sister who everyone thinks of as a stereotypical nun. That’s going to help me portray her better because it’s realistic.”

Both actresses believe their roles in the musical have deepened their faith.

“The songs are another way to proclaim God’s word,” MJ says. “Some are strictly based on the plot, but there are songs that are giving glory to God. For me, doing theater is also a way to glorify God.”

Lilah notes, “Before I go to bed, I pray. And sometimes I think of Mother Theodore. It’s interesting to me that I can play her as a character, but she’s also in heaven now, and I can talk to her in reality. It’s brought into focus that there are people in heaven I can speak to and who understand real life experiences.”

‘An evening of beauty can change our hearts’

One of the great gifts of any musical performed by high school students is seeing how young people embrace the challenge of bringing a story to life. They use the talents they have and love—and sometimes are just discovering—to share an evening of joy with audiences.

That gift and those talents shined through during a rehearsal of *Providence: A Love Story*.

“I’m really proud of how our students are working to tell the story to the best of their abilities,” says Goćur, as opening night of the musical nears.

Beyond the display of talent and the joy to be shared, there’s a greater hope for this musical that has also benefitted from the gifts of Mike Panasuk, the



MJ Becker, left, and Lilah Cruz have made a habit of being there for each other as they prepare for their respective roles as Providence Sister Theodosia Mug and St. Theodore Guérin in the new musical, *Providence: A Love Story*.

school’s theater teacher and auditorium manager.

“I believe an evening of beauty can change our hearts,” Goćur says. “I hope our story sparks a renewed interest in Mother Guérin for many. I love that she was a strong woman who led with conviction but also operated with immense humility and obedience. I feel the world tells us we have to choose one or the other, but she’s a clear example that you can be strong and soft at the same time.

“I also hope it will help audiences to imagine heaven and realize that those who have died are interceding for us on Earth in a real way.”

Murphy lives that belief, drawing strength from knowing that St. Theodore and her son Xavier are with her always.

“So many people are suffering from something,” Murphy says. “I hope that seeing Mother Guérin’s story will help them embrace their suffering and ‘lean with all their weight on Providence.’”

All those hopes and aspirations come together in the finale when the stage fills with everyone in the musical.

“Like the show itself, it’s a celebration of Mother Guérin’s life, as well as the lives and voices of those whose lives she touched,” May says.

“She was a remarkable woman, and she made the world around her a better place, no matter what problems and trials she encountered. Her legacy was built one muddy footprint, one cold night, one prayer at a time, and it still affects us today.”

(To view the cast of *Providence: A Love Story* rehearsing one of the songs from the musical, scan the QR code at right or go to youtu.be/1bsxgnZpCik) †



A musical tribute to St. Theodore

The musical, *Providence: A Love Story*, celebrating the life of St. Theodore Guérin, will be the first major performance in the new auditorium at St. Theodore Guérin High School in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese.

The musical will take place in Our Lady of Champion Fine Arts Center, starting at 7 p.m. on March 6, 7, 13 and 14. Matinee shows will also start at 2 p.m. on March 7 and 14.

Tickets are available at GuerinCatholic.org/fine-arts-events. †

POPE LEO'S PRAYER TO ST. FRANCIS

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace, intercede for us before the Lord.

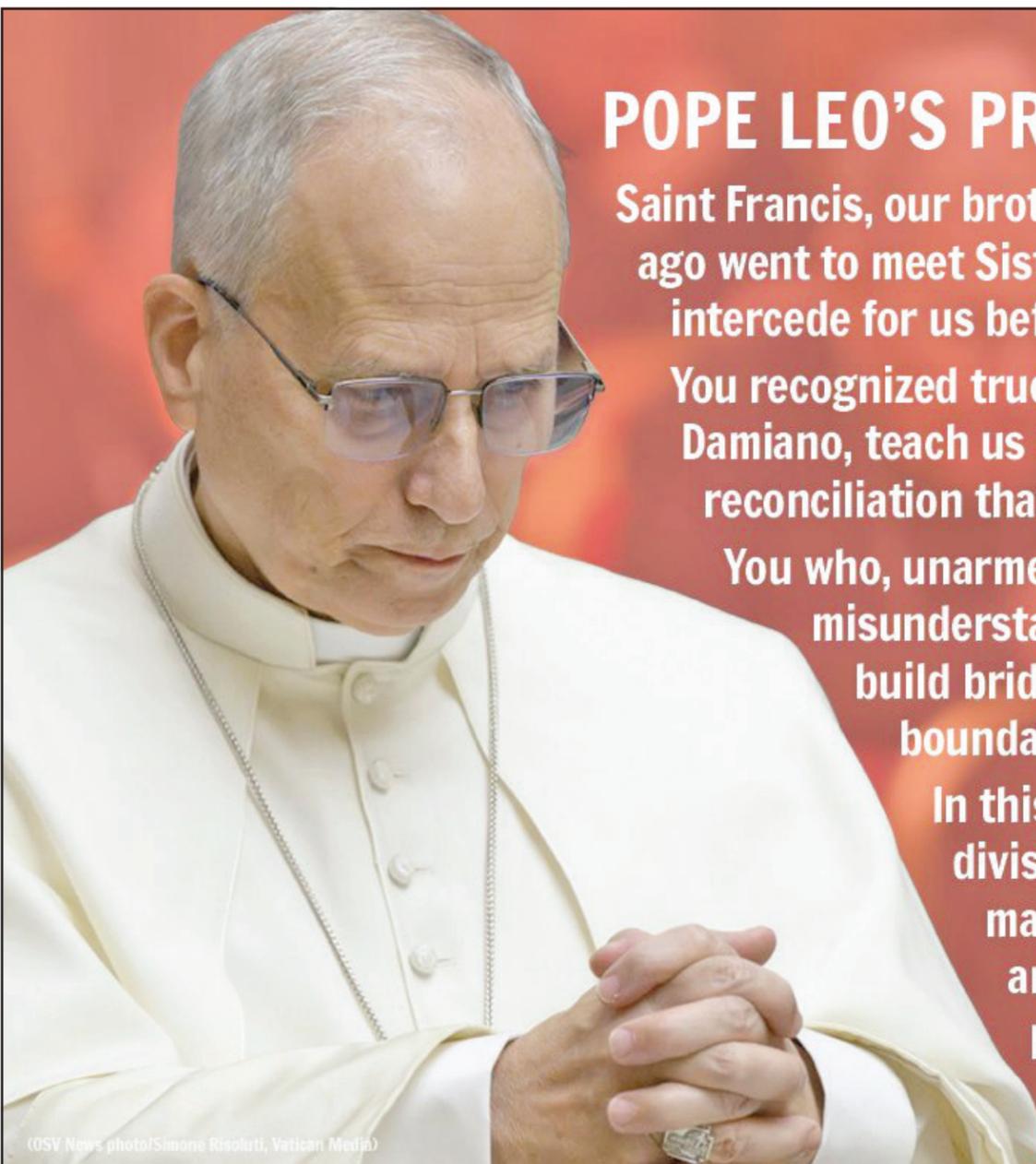
You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding, give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen.

OSV news



(OSV News photo/Simona Risolatti, Vatican Media)

As tensions escalate following the Feb. 28 U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran, we share the above prayer to St. Francis of Assisi—a timeless intercessor for peace—which Pope Leo XIV shared in January 2026 with leaders of the Franciscan order on the beginning of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' death. (OSV News)

IRAN

continued from page 1

denials, Iranian state television authorities confirmed Khamenei's death.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump described the attacks as part of "major combat operations" to overthrow Iran's regime in order to "defend the American people" from Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons and its sponsorship of terrorism across the region.

Trump, who gave an 8-minute statement from his Mar-a-Lago residence, warned that "the lives of courageous American heroes may be lost, and we may have casualties."

By the time *The Criterion* went to press on March 3, U.S. officials confirmed at least six U.S. soldiers had died and several more were seriously wounded in the military operation.

Separately, Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz announced the Feb. 28 "pre-emptive strike" against Iran, with a state of emergency declared across Israel.

The strikes follow a June 2025 attack by the U.S. that saw precision strikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities—Fordo, Natanz and Isfahan—which Trump at the time said were aimed at destroying Iran's nuclear enrichment capacity.

Iran has retaliated with counterstrikes, targeting Israel and several U.S.-interest locations across a number of Middle East nations, including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. Flights across the Middle East have been disrupted.

Casualties on all sides—including countries caught in the crossfire—are still being assessed amid the ongoing exchanges.

Iran's foreign minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, claimed on the X social media platform that a girls' school in Minab was bombed in the U.S.-Israeli air assault and showed a photo.

"Dozens of innocent children have been murdered at this site alone," he said. "These crimes against the Iranian people will not go unanswered."

By March 2, Iranian media updated the death toll to at least 175 people, mostly children, killed from the strike.

Iran's Red Crescent organization (part of the Red Cross global humanitarian network) reported more than 550 killed in Iran by the U.S.-Israel strikes as of March 2.

The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency session on Feb. 28 in response to the attacks.

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres begged "all parties to return immediately to the negotiating table, notably on the Iran nuclear program," warning "the alternative is a potential wider conflict with grave consequences for civilians and regional stability."

On March 1, Pope Leo XVI spoke out in the Sunday *Angelus* at St. Peter's Square telling the warring parties they had a "moral responsibility" to end the fighting and return to diplomacy before the violence led to an "irreparable abyss."

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement shortly after echoing the pope's words and warned, "We are faced with the possibility of a tragedy of immense proportions."

The war has expanded to Lebanon, where Israeli warplanes on March 2 struck Hezbollah militants who fired rockets into Israel in support of its ally Iran.

In the U.S., the New York Police Department announced it was monitoring the situation and would be "enhancing patrols to sensitive locations throughout the city, including diplomatic, cultural, religious and other relevant sites," citing "an abundance of caution."

The FBI is investigating a mass shooting that took place early on March 1 at a bar in Austin, Texas, for a nexus to terrorism that left three people dead, including the shooter, and 14 injured.

Bishop Aldo Berardi, apostolic vicar of northern Arabia—who shepherds the estimated 2.2 million Catholics there, most of them migrant workers from other nations, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia—issued a Feb. 28 statement on Facebook, urging the faithful "to remain calm, united in prayer, and attentive to the safety of everyone."

"Please follow carefully the instructions of civil authorities and take all necessary precautions in your homes, workplaces and parishes," said Bishop Berardi.

He also directed "all parish priests and rectors to take appropriate action and to make the necessary decisions, with prudence and responsibility, to ensure the safety of the faithful entrusted to their care."

"Let us remain united in faith and charity, caring especially for the elderly, the sick and the vulnerable," added Bishop Berardi. "May the Lord protect you and your families, and may Our Lady of Arabia, our mother, watch over us all."

In Doha, Qatar, Our Lady of the Rosary Parish announced on its website that it would "remain closed until further notice," given "recent events in Qatar" and "the advisory issued by the ministry."

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar M. Warda of Irbil, Iraq, told OSV News on March 2 he "could see the whole scene" of nearby missile attacks by Iran on a U.S. military base near the Irbil airport.

"The missiles, the anti-missiles, the noise and the bombing—we can see it," he said. "You can imagine the fear and horror."

In a message to OSV News two days earlier, he shared that schools in the area—including the Catholic University of Irbil, which he established in

2012 and formally opened in 2015—were closed "for the time being." Archbishop Warda added that the faithful in the Irbil region were "really holding strong."

"Prayer is the only hope we have," he said, while also asking for prayers, noting that the faithful had been marking Lent as "a very blessed season for the community."

In Israel, Benedictine Father Nikodemus Schnabel—abbot of Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion in the heart of Jerusalem and of Tabgha, the community's priory on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee—sheltered with some 60 pilgrims at Tabgha, the traditionally revered site of Jesus Christ's multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

Father Nikodemus, who was at Tabgha since Feb. 27 for a chapter meeting of his community, told OSV News he was caught off guard by the attacks.

"It was always in the air that maybe something could happen," he explained. "But it was then a surprise that it really happened today, especially before Wednesday, because Wednesday there were plans for a new round of negotiations."

He said their international group, which included children and the elderly, had been in the shelter for two hours, describing the time—which video obtained by OSV News showed the pilgrims praying and singing—as unifying amid the attacks.

"It was a good experience. We don't know each other, but then we sing songs in different languages. We pray together," he explained.

Father Nikodemus added it was also "very interesting," saying, "I love that ... nobody was in fear about his or her life."

He said the experience was an example of Benedictine hospitality, one of the charisms of the order.

"Very often I say, 'I want that our two monasteries are two islands of hope in an ocean of suffering,'" said Father Nikodemus. "And this was exactly the feeling. We were also today an island of hope in an ocean of suffering."

Jesuit Father John Paul, rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute—located on a 40-acre hilltop campus between Bethlehem and Jerusalem—told OSV News that his morning had been spent "in and out of shelters," although he believed "Jerusalem is not a target area."

The priest, whose institute is staffed by both Palestinians and Israelis, pointed to the sorrow evoked by the strikes, which follow the Israel-Hamas war and ongoing tensions between Israel and Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

"Overall, with local Palestinians" there is "a feeling of real sadness—my guess is with Israelis as well," said Father John Paul.

Father Nikodemus said he and the pilgrims at Tabgha were praying for all affected. †

Marian University panel looks at Pope Leo XIV in light of history, past popes

By Sean Gallagher

When any pope is elected, he is shaped by the time in which he lives and the popes who came before him.

He also has opportunities to shape that time and how the Church and future popes may carry out Christ's mission of salvation after him.

That was the case when American-born Cardinal Robert F. Prevost was elected bishop of Rome on May 8, 2025, and took the name Pope Leo XIV. And it was the topic of a panel discussion on Feb. 11 at Marian University in Indianapolis titled "*Habemus Papam*: Pope Leo XIV in Context."

The panel was made up of Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson; Seth Smith, an associate professor of history at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.; Megan Gooley, an assistant professor of theology at Marian; and Philip Thompson, Marian's Semler Chair of Ethics.

Leo XIII's lasting influence

In his remarks, Smith focused on how the papacy of Pope Leo XIII, who served as bishop of Rome from 1878 to 1903, might help Catholics understand better the current Pope Leo.

He described Leo XIII as having "one of the most consequential papal reigns in modern history."

"Leo confronted the deep structural transformations of the late 19th century: industrialization, the rise of the modern nation-state, imperialism and the first stirrings of global economic and cultural integration," Smith said. "In many ways, these are the same things that are shaping the 21st century as well."

Commenting on Leo XIII's groundbreaking 1891 encyclical letter "*Rerum Novarum*" ("On Capital and Labor"), Smith said that the pontiff tried to steer a "middle way" between socialism and unfettered capitalism in reflecting on the effects of the industrial revolution on the society of his time.

"He offered a principled vision in which the economy existed for the human person and not the other way around," Smith said.

Whether he was laying the groundwork for modern Catholic social teaching in "*Rerum Novarum*" or issuing warnings about the dangers of nationalism and an increasingly interconnected global economy, Smith said that Leo's teaching was based on a renewal in the study of and reliance on the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas that he encouraged.

Smith noted that Leo, looking to St. Thomas, held that "human reason can know real truths about nature and morality in society."

"If there is real moral order accessible to reason and confirmed by revelation, then neither markets nor the state can define justice arbitrarily," Smith said. "The state doesn't get to make its own laws, and the market doesn't get to make its own laws. Economic systems have to be judged by how they serve the human good."

Leo XIII's possible influence on Leo XIV

Smith also explored ways that Pope Leo XIII may be an influence on the current Pope Leo, noting the similarity between the times in which both men served as bishop of Rome.

"Like Leo XIII, Leo XIV inherits a world marked by vast structural forces," Smith said. "Technological transformation, economic inequality, surging nationalism and international interdependence threaten to reduce human beings to data points, consumers or political gifts."

At the same time, Smith noted that the current Pope Leo's experience of being born and raised in America and having served as a missionary and a bishop in Peru might shape his ministry as bishop of Rome in ways that were absent in the exclusively European experience of Leo XIII.

"[Pope] Leo XIV knows firsthand the promises and perils of liberal democracy, pluralism and global capitalism," Smith said, adding that the current pope is from Chicago, "a city which is the product of the 19th century" and its economic and social trends.

"He's also spent most of his adult life in Peru, so he understands the impact of imperialism," Smith continued. "These experiences may allow him to continue Leo XIII's project with great cultural fluency and pastoral sensitivity."

Smith said that if the papacy of Leo XIII has an influence on the current pope, "we might expect a renewed emphasis on human dignity grounded in natural law and revelation" and "a careful distinction between patriotism and nationalism, and a global vision rooted not in abstraction, but in solidarity."

"Above all," Smith concluded, "we might expect a papacy that insists on the Church's engagement with the modern world, but that it must always be ordered toward the salvation of souls and the restoration of right relationships between one another, Church and with God."

Continuity between popes

Gooley focused her remarks on the relationship between Pope Leo XIV and his immediate predecessor Pope Francis who, like the current pope, spent many years leading the Church in South America before being elected bishop of Rome.

She described the hallmarks of Francis' papacy as being a focus on the Church reaching out to serve those on the margins of society, it being "a poor Church for the poor," and synodality in which all the faithful, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to listen prayerfully to each other and work together to further the Church's mission of evangelization.

Gooley noted a difference in pastoral style between Pope Leo and Pope Francis.

"While Francis' style was often direct and spontaneous, Leo XIV's approach to the papacy, at least thus far, appears to be more measured and more deliberate with a strong focus on ecclesial unity," she said.

At the same time, Gooley said that she's observed a great deal of continuity between the two bishops of Rome.

It is seen, she stated, in Pope Leo's first apostolic exhortation, "*Dilexi Te*" ("I Have Loved You"), issued on Oct. 4, 2025, a document which Pope Francis had started but which Pope Leo completed.

Gooley noted that Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, "has described this document as both 100% Francis and 100% Leo."



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, left, Phil Thompson, Seth Smith, Megan Gooley, Marian University president Dan Elsener and John Noble, chair of Marian's theology department, pose on Feb. 11 at Marian University in Indianapolis. Archbishop Thompson, Phil Thompson, Smith and Gooley took part that evening in a panel discussion about Pope Leo XIV. (Submitted photo)

"Here we can see clearly the ways that their experiences living among the poor in Latin America has shaped their moral vision and their pastoral priorities," Gooley added.

She also noted that Pope Leo appears to be continuing Pope Francis' focus on synodality in having already called together the Church's cardinals to discuss evangelization and his plans to call them together on a regular basis in the future.

"Ultimately, the continuity between Francis and Leo XIV can be summed up," Gooley said, "in their shared conviction that the Church's mission must remain responsive to the signs of the times, proclaiming the Gospel with clarity, with credibility and with hope."

He is 'his own person'

Archbishop Thompson expressed his belief that Pope Leo XIV might also be influenced by Pope St. Paul VI, who led the Church from 1963-78.

In particular, Archbishop Thompson pointed to a theme in Pope Paul's 1975 apostolic exhortation on evangelization "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" as being reflected in the current pontiff.

"[He] said that if a teacher is not first a witness, their words will mean nothing," Archbishop Thompson said about Pope Paul. "People won't listen to someone if they don't see their witness being lived. And I think Pope Francis truly wanted to show that narrative of the Church in that living witness. And I think Pope Leo XIV is doing that [also]."

While acknowledging with the other panelists that Pope Leo has been influenced by his predecessors, Archbishop Thompson emphasized that the current pope is "his own person."

"He is not Francis II," he said. "He is not John Paul III. He's not Benedict XVII. He is Pope Leo XIV, and we'll see that. I'm sure we're going to see him do that in his own way."

Pope Leo and artificial intelligence

Philip Thompson rounded out the remarks of the panelists by speaking about the approach that Pope Leo XIV appears to be taking in his comments on artificial intelligence (AI). It's a topic that the

pope described soon after being elected as potentially being as consequential for today as the industrial revolution was in the time of Pope Leo XIII.

"On his third day as pope, he addressed the cardinals and talked about how he identified AI as a challenge to our humanity, to workers' rights, human dignity and justice," Thompson said. "Since that point, he's consistently talked a lot about artificial intelligence and emerging technologies."

Thompson looked in particular to a speech that Pope Leo gave on Dec. 5, 2025, in which he said that "the ability to access vast amounts of data and information should not be confused with the ability to derive meaning and value from it."

"We are the humans," Thompson said. "We determine values."

He said that Pope Leo has reminded the faithful and people beyond the Church that humanity should always be "co-creators" and not just "passive consumers."

"These technologies, as we've seen with social media, draw us into passivity," Thompson said.

Thompson also said the Pope Leo has warned of the dangers that technological trends can have on young people, again quoting from the pope's Dec. 5 speech: "We must pause and reflect with particular care upon the freedom and inner life of our children and young people, and the possible impact of technology on their intellectual and neurological development."

"There's a lot of science that's developing about the harm of being on screens and what it does to your brain," said Thompson, noting how he's observed the challenges his students face in their use of digital technology.

He spoke strongly of the need of the Church and of society more broadly to apply sound, time-tested human values in guiding the use and development of technology.

"We can do this," Thompson said. "We can reassert our control of our technologies and reap their positive benefits, but not reap the dangers that are coming our way." †

USCCB offers March 10-18 novena for those on the adoption journey

Criterion staff report

Among St. Joseph's many patronages are families, fathers and expectant mothers. In light of these patronages, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created an online novena to St. Joseph for those on the path to adoption, available in English and Spanish. The novena begins on March 10 and ends on March 18, the day before the saint's principal feast day.

Each day of the online novena includes an intention for the day, a Scripture reading, a prayer, a petition to St. Joseph and concluding prayers.

At cutt.ly/AdoptionNovena, participants can access the novena each day, register to receive it daily via text or e-mail, or download a printable copy of the novena.

The site also includes a link to parish resources, such as graphics and bulletin announcements about the novena. For those who would like to pray the novena but do not have access to the Internet, the daily intentions are as follows, concluding with an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be each day:

—Day 1: For mothers who place their children for adoption. (Ex 1:22-2:6, Ex 2:10)

—Day 2: For fathers who place their children for

adoption. (Jn 3:16)

—Day 3: For family members of children placed for adoption. (Jn 15:12-17)

—Day 4: For children awaiting adoption.

(Mt 19:13-14)

—Day 5: For married couples pursuing adoption.

(Rom 8:14-17)

—Day 6: For adopted children. (Jn 14:16-21)

—Day 7: For adoptive mothers. (Jn 19:25-27)

—Day 8: For adoptive fathers. (Mt 1:18-21, 24)

—Day 9: For family members welcoming children through adoption. (Eph 3:14-15, 17-19) †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Story of the good thief reveals the simple steps of repentance

By Fr. James Dominic Brent, O.P.

(OSV News)—The heart of the Father is rich in mercy, and he is now calling every human being on the face of the Earth to a change of heart.

“Repent and believe in the Gospel!” were the first word out of the Lord’s mouth in his public preaching (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15).

The Gospel is the happy announcement that the good God who loves us is now calling us into his divine life. He has given us his Son Jesus Christ. He has given us his Holy Spirit. And he has given us his Church so that we might go to him in the Father’s house—into the heart of the Father who loves us beyond all we could ever ask or imagine.

Yet, there is no other way to go than by the pathways of *metanoia*.

“*Metanoia*” is a Greek word that means “transformation of the mind.” Normally, it is translated as “repentance.” In either case, it stands for a change at the core of the person.

When the Lord Jesus proclaims the Gospel, he not only tells us of the Father’s incomprehensible love and calls us to receive that love, but he also insists upon repentance. For *metanoia* or repentance is precisely how you and I receive the Father’s merciful love. It is impossible for anyone to enter the Father’s house without opening one’s own heart to the Father and walking away from sin.

One of the greatest examples of this in all of Scripture is the good thief. Something great takes place between the Lord and the good thief, and the story is found in the Gospel of St. Luke (Lk 23:39-43). Yet, to see the full grandeur of what Luke tells us, one must also take into account what St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us in their Gospels as well.

Matthew and Mark both tell us that Jesus was crucified along with two thieves (cf. Mt 27:44; Mk 15:32). Matthew and Mark concur that both thieves reviled Jesus. Luke, however, says that one thief reviled Jesus, but the other thief did the opposite. The good thief professes the innocence and kingly authority of Jesus (cf. Lk 23:41-42).

At first glance, it seems like the Gospel accounts contradict each other. Did both thieves revile Jesus or just one of them?

The Fathers of the Church noticed the issue, and to harmonize the Gospels, some of the Fathers drew an illuminating conclusion. It must have been that at first the good thief was reviling Jesus, too, but at some later point during his crucifixion, he had a real change of heart toward Jesus—a conversion.

This interpretive conclusion of the Fathers corresponds perfectly with what we see in the story of the good thief in the Gospel of Luke. The words of the good thief, both to his fellow thief and to Jesus, together display all the elements of a heart going through the process of repentance. The story of the good thief is a repentance tale in “real time” so to speak. How does it go?

The story begins with one thief questioning Jesus in mockery: “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us” (Lk 23:39). The other thief then corrects him: “Have you no fear of God?” (Lk 23:4) The Old Testament tells us many times that “the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord” (Prv 9:10). The fear of the Lord is the first step on the road to conversion. Simply by raising the question of the fear of the Lord, the good thief reveals how the topic has recently been on his mind. Though his body has been nailed to a cross, in the depths of his heart he has taken his first step on the pathways of *metanoia*.

The good thief then takes a second step. Still speaking to his fellow thief, he confesses his guilt when he says, “We have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes” (Lk 23:41). There is no repentance without a humble admission of sins and faults. So long as you and I live in a state of denial and rationalization of our sins, transformation of our minds is not taking place. Our hearts remain right where they are and go nowhere.

Where there are acknowledgment and admission of sin and fault, however, a change of heart begins. A new and better way of life—with the help of God’s grace—opens up before our eyes. But the good thief goes further than simply admitting his sin.

He takes a third step when he makes a profession of faith in Jesus. Still speaking to his fellow thief, the good thief professes the innocence of Jesus: “This man has done nothing criminal” (Lk 23:41). In sacred Scripture, innocence and holiness go together. By professing the innocence of Jesus, the good thief in effect also professes



A man portraying Christ nailed to the cross glances at another man on a cross, who is the “good thief,” during a live re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross on April 14, 2017, Good Friday, at All Saints Parish in Houston. The story of the good thief shows believers the steps to repentance. (OSV News file photo/James Ramos, *Catholic Herald*)

the holiness of Jesus. Surely Jesus overheard this dialogue between the two thieves.

Surely Jesus detected the good thief’s newly formed faith and also detected even some apologetic intent in the heart of the good thief. Yet, the transformation of the good thief’s mind and heart was not yet complete. At this point in the story, the good thief had turned against his own sins, had professed a certain faith about the holiness of Jesus and had even defended Jesus against mockery, but his conversion was far from complete. He had not yet turned toward Jesus personally.

Yet, grace was at work in his heart. After addressing his fellow thief, the good thief then shifts to speaking to Jesus. The shift is no mere plot requirement but symbolizes something profound going on in his heart. His heart turns toward Jesus personally and he makes one of the humblest and most soul-stirring appeals for love and mercy in all of Scripture: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42).

In these words, the good thief does two things at once. First, he makes an even more explicit profession of faith. He expresses his faith in the kingly power of Jesus to Jesus himself. A real dialogue between him and Jesus has begun.

Second, the good thief professes the kind of faith that really gives birth to hope. By believing in both the goodwill and the kingly power of Jesus, the good thief really expects Jesus to do something. He does not expect Jesus to take him down from the cross but expects something far better. He expects Jesus to bring him into the kingdom—into the kingdom of love.

Prior to hearing from the good thief, the Lord Jesus obviously overheard the dialogue between the two thieves. Jesus observed the good thief’s fear of the Lord, observed his admission of sin and observed his acceptance of due punishment. Once the good thief turns to Jesus, however, Jesus does not simply observe his appeal for love and mercy or observe his expectation to be brought into the kingdom.

Rather, Jesus *received* it. Jesus received his heartfelt plea and his hope. Jesus received *him*. For Jesus replied to the good thief with one of the most moving words in all of Scripture: “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43).

In Scripture, “today” often symbolizes eternity. In the Book of Psalms, God says: “You are my son, today I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7). “Today” does not mean this calendar day. Rather, the Letter to the Hebrews tells us this verse prophetically reveals the eternal Father speaking to his eternal Son (cf. Heb 1:5, 5:5). “Today” means “from eternity I have begotten you.” Similarly, when Jesus says to the good thief “today you will be with me,” it means “in eternity you will be with me.”

“You will be with me in Paradise,” says the Lord. It is impossible for anyone to imagine what Paradise really is, but the Maronite Catholic liturgy abounds in ancient descriptions of it. “In the Paradise of Light and the place of radiant joy,” it says, “all the saints are glorified, Mary and the patriarchs, the prophets, Apostles, martyrs and the just who are loved by God.”

The same Maronite liturgy also sings of the dwelling places of the just and the abodes of the victorious on high and prays that we, too, might go to that bright place where the light of God shining on the face of Jesus Christ will fall upon us. All of this comes to those who walk the pathways of *metanoia*—life in the Father’s house.

What was it that converted the good thief? Surely, he observed how differently the Lord Jesus acted under crucifixion. Roman historians tell us that men normally went to crucifixion fighting for their lives like wild beasts, but the Gospels tell us that Jesus went like a lamb led to the slaughter.

Normal men went cursing their executioners, but Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of his. The placard on the cross of Jesus said he was the king of the Jews. Ironically, this was the Gospel truth. The word of the placard and the remarkable goodness and merciful love of Jesus toward all on display were an adequate evangelization for the good thief.

In the depth of his heart, the light of grace illuminated it all, and amid death, he saw in Jesus his last chance at life. He received the grace of conversion. May it be so for all of us as well.

(Dominican Father James Dominic Brent, an assistant professor of philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., is the author of *The Father’s House: Discovering Our Home in the Trinity*.) †

Twenty Something/Christina Capecchi

Second by second, minute by minute, day by day, God is moving in us

The older I get, the more I appreciate the math of meteorology. Something has shifted in me, and now I'm all ears when my retired neighbor rattles off numbers from his rain gauge.



What appeals to me, I think, is the precision. We can measure forces of nature—rainfall, snowfall, temperature—and in our uncertain world, we can know them for certain. We can pinpoint them to our backyard—exactly where and exactly when we experienced them.

It offers a rare kind of certainty—the confirmation of a shared experience. “Yes, I was there, I witnessed that, too.”

Weather gives us something to rally around, something we can agree on. The rain really did fall. The temperature really did drop. In a world where so much feels subject to debate, these measurements let us say together: “This happened.”

Of all the weather stats, the most hopeful one is happening now: our steady march toward summer. This movement is measured in seconds.

It begins on Dec. 21, the winter solstice, when the sun sets here in St. Paul, Minn., at 4:33 p.m. One day later, we northerners gain 4 seconds of daylight. The second day after the solstice, we gain 9 seconds. The third day, 14. The fourth day, 19. The fifth day, 24.

Shall I continue with these riveting numbers? They are drenched in optimism.

All that incremental progress adds up. Tiny gains that stack up to big ones. By the time March arrives, we've gained nearly two and a half hours of daylight. And the biggest change of all here happens this month.

This fact of nature instills such confidence. Our swing to the sun is guaranteed. No matter how badly we mess up, it's a sure thing, a promise of progress made each day.

March does the most work to carry us to summer, the heaviest lifting, when our hemisphere turns toward the sun at its quickest pace. We see our biggest gains in St. Paul in mid-March, when a single day adds 3 minutes and 9 seconds of daylight. From that first daily increase of just 4 seconds, it's a marked jump.

It makes for a busy month. During the duration of March in St. Paul—just 31 days—we gain one hour, 34 minutes and 17 seconds of daylight. We hold at that peak for about two weeks before the pace eases in April and May, even as the days keep lengthening. Once we reach the summer solstice, in total we've added 6 hours, 55 minutes and 2 seconds of daylight since winter solstice.

This fact of nature instills such confidence. Our swing to the sun is guaranteed. No matter how badly we mess up, it's a sure thing, a promise of progress made each day.

So too is God's grace, working in us daily, transforming us in barely perceptible increments—4-second gains that add up to 7 hours. St. Paul the Apostle pledges this with the same kind of certainty. “I am confident of this,” he writes in his Letter to the Philippians, “that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6).

Good work is underway in you and in me. God is moving in us right now—second by second, step by step. Even when we can't feel it, even if it is still dark, even though we fail, we are turning toward the Son. We are becoming more fully ourselves, made in God's image. And this work will be brought to completion. God will see us through.

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

Journey of the Heart/Jennifer Burger

Make an effort this Lenten season to be fully open to God's embrace

As a new grandma back in the world of “baby care,” I am amazed at all of the new gadgets there are out there for little ones and their families!



I've also been introduced to some new terms, one of which is “contact nap,” which is exactly as it sounds—napping on someone as opposed to in a crib. This is nothing new when it comes to practice, I just didn't know it had an official name!

I enjoy these contact naps and look forward to this closeness with my granddaughter. Although I am mindful that she needs to learn how to sleep on her own, there have been times when this is the better way to give her the rest she needs, especially when she is congested and has an ear infection and being upright helps alleviate some of her pain and discomfort.

Such was the case a couple of weeks ago. Although not inconsolable, she was more “clingy” and restless than usual, and as she started to exhibit the telltale signs of rubbing her eyes and big yawns, I knew what the next hour or so would entail.

I gathered her up in my arms and she immediately took to my embrace, but she was not yet ready to settle into her much-needed rest. I held her close as we walked in a rhythm around the room.

At first, she was distracted by the things around her—and I was beginning to wonder if she was ever going to fall asleep—but it didn't take long before I could feel her body relax and her head gradually rest on me.

Holding her so close, I felt one with her, her heart bound to my heart. A deep love was enkindled, and a greater awareness grew in me of my desire for this kind of intimacy with God, to be one with him, in his arms and heart to heart, a sacred time together.

We all need this kind of rest in God. We long for this sometimes without

knowing it. Some telltale signs of this desire are when we find ourselves grasping for or clinging to what can quickly provide comfort or meaning, when what we need most is simply to return and be with God.

It is good to be reminded of what Jesuit Father Thomas H. Green tells us in *Opening to God*: “Our effort is secondary to the work of God in our encounter with him. ... This depends almost entirely on God's grace and is always God's initiative.”

Infants cannot lift themselves into the arms of their caregiver; they depend on someone to do that for them.

And so it is as we encounter God. He is always reaching out and pursuing us. It is up to us to make the effort to be fully open to his embrace. We must remove the distractions—externally and internally—and find the rhythm of God that beats in our hearts. This allows us to be held and rest in him. It takes time and patience and may take a little bit of practice, but God always has time for and is patient with us.

We are given this time during Lent to return to God. During these 40 days, we are making ourselves more available for God. In our penance and fasting, we are removing the distractions and desires that separate us from God. We are adopting a rhythm of life and prayer that quiets our hearts and minds to hear his voice.

In this rest, we learn more deeply of God's love and mercy as we make contact with his beating heart in the life of Jesus. Let us open our arms to his embrace!

(Jennifer Burger is a spiritual director and a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.) †

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Guest Column/Richard Etienne

How will you respond when you are asked to go where you would rather not go?

There is a critical message that Jesus delivered to Peter in the Gospel of John just after his resurrection.

It follows a moment when a group of the Apostles had just eaten a meal with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was at this time that Jesus asked Peter three times if he loves him. (After all, he had denied him three times.)



Peter assures Jesus three times in return that, in fact, the Lord should already know that he loves him.

Then Jesus shares this very disturbing image: “I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself

and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go” (Jn 21:18).

Often, early in many of our faith experiences, it is common to expect our continuing journey of following Christ to be more like a heavenly banquet than a difficult journey. I know that my personal experience of a

Christian awakening retreat nearly 50 years ago seemed that way.

This experience was like a wonderful trip with a large group of my peers, who expressed only positive and warm feelings toward me. And, if we are blessed, there can be these types of wonderful moments in our lives

May God give us the strength to always say “yes” to carrying out his will regardless of our confused feelings during major life crises.

when we can experience such feelings.

But as our faith deepens, we are quite often called to do much more difficult tasks.

Reflecting on such a personal experience is what prompted further reflection on the Scripture passage above from John.

In late 2024 and early 2025, I was immersed in an intense situation playing a key role in my son's hospice and eventual death from pancreatic cancer. It was the most difficult thing I have ever done.

But over time, I have eventually realized that it was what God wanted me to do at that particular place in my journey—however difficult it was or how long it would take.

I continue to work through many of the feelings that overwhelmed me while I was caring for Eric. But the reason that I share this very personal story is the following: Will God put a belt around you and ask you to go where you would rather not go? How will you respond?

May God give us the strength to always say “yes” to carrying out his will regardless of our confused feelings during major life crises.

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

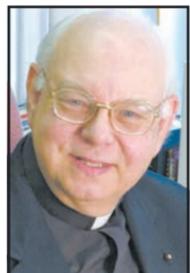
Third Sunday of Lent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, March 8, 2026

- Exodus 17:3-7
- Romans 5:1-2, 5-8
- John 4:5-42

The source of the first reading for Mass this Lenten weekend is the Book of Exodus, one of those five books of the Bible regarded as the basis of God's revelation to the chosen people. The initial theological concepts and regulations about behavior are seen as being rooted in the original teachings of Moses.



Together, these books constitute the Torah, then and still the cornerstone of Judaism. Another name is the Pentateuch, this term coming from the Greek word for five.

As the title implies, the Book of Exodus greatly is concerned with the experiences of the Hebrews as they fled Egypt and moved toward the land that God had promised them. It was a very difficult trip. Even today, a journey across the Sinai Peninsula by land is bleak. It is not surprising that the Hebrews wondered if they had swapped the witch for the devil as they wandered across Sinai. In frustration, bewilderment and misery, they grumbled about Moses, who led the way.

Water was a precious commodity in this arid environment. Understandably, the people feared thirst. Moses, enlightened by God, told them to look for water in an improbable place—the side of a rock. As directed, the people struck the rock and water flowed.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans supplies the second reading. As is so typical of Paul's writing, this passage celebrates Jesus as the only source of life and of bonding with God. It proclaims salvation in Christ as the gift coming from the willing sacrifice of the Lord on Calvary.

For its last reading this weekend, the Church presents a selection from St. John's Gospel. It is the story of the Lord's meeting with the Samaritan woman beside a well in Samaria. The reading is filled with lessons for us.

First, the site is Samaria. For the Jews of the Lord's time, Samaria represented many bad things.

The woman is a Samaritan. Samaritans were of Hebrew heritage, but they had acquiesced when foreigners invaded the land, compromising with paganism and even inter-marrying with pagan foreigners. Inter-marriage added insult to injury, because by such unions Samaritans defiled the Hebrew heritage. Faithful Jews thus looked upon Samaritans with contempt. Also, at the time of Jesus, no adult unmarried man ever engaged an unknown woman in conversation, let alone a Samaritan.

Jesus set all these considerations aside. He bore the mercy of God, and this mercy was meant for everyone, all conventions aside.

Furthermore, by outreach to this Samaritan woman, the Lord asserts that every person possesses a dignity and an invitation to eternal life.

More than Jacob of old, Jesus promises a gift of water greatly more satisfying than any that could be drawn from a well.

Finally, the Lord predicts that a new order is coming. It will be neither centralized in Jerusalem, nor on the mountaintops where the Samaritans customarily worshipped.

Reflection

A historic fixture in any Catholic church is a small bowl or vessel placed at the church's doors. It is filled with water that has been blessed by a priest or deacon. It represents the water used in Christian baptism.

When Catholics enter the church, they touch the water in the bowl with their fingertips. Then, with their fingers moist with the holy water, they make the sign of the cross on themselves.

This gesture hopefully reminds people of their baptism when a bond with Christ was established with them. He received them in the Church. They promised, perhaps through their godparents if they were infants, to follow Christ all their days.

Lent is the time to decide whether or not these promises have been fulfilled up to now. Are they still the blueprint of life? It is time for re-commitment to them. †

Daily Readings

Monday, March 9
St. Frances of Rome, religious
2 Kings 5:1-15ab
Psalm 42:2-3; 43:3-4
Luke 4:24-30

Tuesday, March 10
Daniel 3:25, 34-43
Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6-7bc, 8-9
Matthew 18:21-35

Wednesday, March 11
Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9
Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20
Matthew 5:17-19

Thursday, March 12
Jeremiah 7:23-28
Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9
Luke 11:14-23

Friday, March 13
Hosea 14:2-10
Psalm 81:6c-11b, 14, 17
Mark 12:28-34

Saturday, March 14
Hosea 6:1-6
Psalm 51:3-4, 18-21b
Luke 18:9-14

Sunday, March 15
Fourth Sunday of Lent
1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a
Psalm 23:1-6
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41
or John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Prayers of petition are an important part of Christian spirituality, leading us to grow in humility and love of God

QIn a recent homily, my parish priest suggested that we all “give up prayers of petition for Lent.”



He said we're not being good friends to God if all we do is ask him for things, and that “you've all said enough prayers of petition, it's time to say some other prayers.” But I'm not sure exactly what he meant by this or how I should incorporate this guidance into my prayer life.

AFirst, this may not have been made clear in the homily you mentioned, but it needs to be pointed out that a general message in a homily is very different from personal, individual guidance in spiritual direction or in the confessional.

Unless a homily is just reiterating basic requirements that are binding on all Catholics, you are free to use careful personal discernment in terms of whether or not the advice given in a homily applies to you.

Since parishes are ordinarily meant to serve all the Catholics in a given area based on simple geography rather than level of personal spiritual maturity, no parish homily is going to be able to give specific advice on prayer that will apply equally to all the souls who happen to be present to hear it.

That all being said, I suspect your priest was thinking of the four categories we traditionally use to describe different kinds of prayer: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and petition (sometimes called “supplication”).

“Adoration” is prayer where we worship and praise God for his goodness. In a similar way, prayers of “thanksgiving” are when we thank God in prayer for the blessings he has given us. Prayers of “contrition”

are when we apologize to God for having offended him and express our sorrow for our sins. The sacrament of penance is the highest form of prayer of contrition, although we can certainly pray prayers of contrition in other contexts.

We pray prayers of petition where we ask God for what we need or ask him to fulfill some holy or at least wholesome desire that we have.

I suppose it would be possible for someone with a significantly undeveloped life of prayer to lean too heavily into this last category. So, for example, if the only time a Christian ever turned to God in prayer was to ask him for selfish material things, then it probably would be healthy for such a person to start saying some additional prayers of thanksgiving and adoration, and at the very least to go back to confession if he or she has been away from the sacrament for a while.

But holding that someone should omit prayers of petition altogether would seem to imply a fundamental misunderstanding of this kind of prayer.

For instance, if someone were to literally give up all prayers of petition for Lent, this means that they would not be able to say the “Our Father”—the prayer that Jesus himself taught us word-for-word—until Easter, since in the “Our Father” we pray a prayer of petition that God “give us this day our daily bread.” And for priests, men and women in consecrated life, and the laity who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, each liturgical “hour” always begins with the prayer of petition: “God, come to my assistance; Lord, make haste to help me.”

Prayers of intercession, where we ask God to help other people in their needs, are also prayers of petition. Since praying for both the living and the dead is a spiritual work of mercy, it wouldn't seem fitting to give this up for Lent!

Understood correctly, prayers of petitions are not meant to be a selfish “wish list” we impose on God, but rather are powerful ways to grow in humility and love of him. When we ask God for help, we come to understand that we are mere creatures who need him and that he is a loving Father who always cares for us.

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

My Journey to God

Jesus, Lord of My Life

By Leslie Lynch

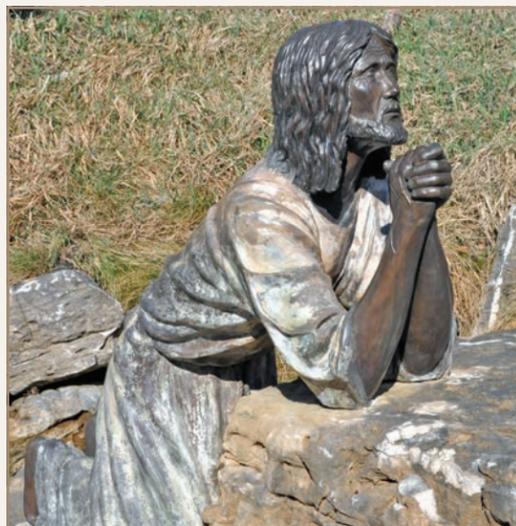
Jesus, Lord of my life,
Gentle teacher and guide,
Draw me closer to You, my Lord,
Through fellowship with You each day.
Jesus, Lord of My life.

Teach me to accept Your will,
As in heaven, so in me.
Cleanser my heart and make it pure, my Lord,
A holy sacrifice to You.
Jesus, Lord of My life.

Help me love instead of judge.
Help me forgive from my heart.
Teach me in Your ways of righteousness.
Don't let me wander or run.
Jesus, Lord of My life.

Amen.

(Leslie Lynch is a member of St. Mary Parish in Lanesville. Photo: A bronze sculpture represents Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane at the Shrine of Christ's Passion in St. John, Ind. The figure is one of 40 life-size bronze sculptures at the Shrine of Christ's Passion, a multi-media, interactive, half-mile winding trail that depicts the last days of Christ's life.) (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)



Rest in peace

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

BIGLER, James E., 75, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Feb. 1. Husband of Diane Bigler. Brother of Jan Bigler, Suzanne Henke and Bonnie Hinds. Uncle of several.

BONOMINI, Joseph L., 66, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bright, Feb. 11. Husband of Kathy Bonomini. Father of Kelsey Alig, Rebecca, Bradley, Gregory and Joseph Bonomini. Grandfather of nine.

BOWER, Donna L., 74, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 20. Sister of Allan Jones. Aunt and great-aunt of several.

BROWN, Gerald, 89, Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, Feb. 12. Husband of Ellyn Brown. Father of Andrea Butler, Debbie Wildrick, Brian Brown, Bennett, Douglas and Lincoln Kern. Brother of Alvin Brown. Grandfather of six.

BROWN, Harold W., 89, Holy Angels, Indianapolis, Feb. 2. Father of Jeffrey, Kevin and Steven Brown. Brother of Jewel Johnson. Grandfather of seven. Great-grandfather of three.

COOK, James, 78, Prince of Peace, Madison, Feb. 11. Husband of Jennifer Cook. Father of SeLisa and James Cook. Brother of Jacqueline Giden and Kathleen Green. Grandfather of two.

COTTON, Dennis, 77, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 13. Husband of Deb Hartgrove-Cotton. Father of Julie Reed and Dennis Cotton, Jr. Stepfather of Trisha, Adam and Joshua Rafferty. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of five.

CREWS, Robert, 67, SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood, Dec. 20. Husband of Sandra Crews. Father of Megan, Christopher, Eric and Matthew Crews. Grandfather of two.

DEJARNETTE, Jr., John T., 86, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 9. Father of Chanel Gross, Susan Schwartz, Glenn and Johnny DeJarnette. Brother of Carolyn Mattingly and Mary Ann Skene. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of seven.

ELDER, Georgia L., 80, St. Paul, Tell City, Feb. 16. Wife of Joe Elder. Mother of Joni Elder and Amy Mohler. Sister of Tootie Schreiber and Kathy Wininger. Grandmother of three.

FEHRMAN, Robert, 77, St. Mary, Greensburg, Feb. 23. Husband of Mareta Fehrman. Father of Eric Fehrman. Brother of Becky Goskill, Charlotte Heppner and Dan Fehrman. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of one.

FINK, Constance A. (Winchester), 93, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 12. Mother of Mary Boelke, Pam Jesch, Julie Leach, BJ, Gary and Steve Winchester. Sister of Bette

Bus blessing



With a member of the Little Sisters of the Poor looking on, Father Jude Nwaigwa blesses a new 14-passenger bus on Feb. 17 at the St. Augustine Home for Aged in Indianapolis. The bus, purchased with funds raised last year by the St. Augustine Home Guild at its annual Hats Off to Spring fundraiser, will enable the residents of the retirement and nursing home operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor to enjoy outings and remain connected to the broader community. Father Nwaigwa is a chaplain at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis. (Submitted photo)

Lou Hauber. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of one.

FOX, Barbara, 82, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 3. Mother of Bart, Greg, Matt and Pierre Fox. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of three.

FREDETTE, Christine, 60, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Feb. 3. Wife of Steve Fredette. Mother of Hayley Saylor, Katherine Zaiger, Audrey, Hollie, Mary, Sierra, Vallory and Steven Fredette. Sister of Nick Bryant and Robert Butler III. Grandmother of 12.

HAYHOW, Jr., Edward F., 89, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Feb. 15. Husband of Barbara Ann Hayhow. Father of Eddie, Jeff and Jerry Hayhow. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of 10.

HUDSON, Karen, 80, St. Luke the Evangelist, Indianapolis, Jan. 3. Wife of Sydney Hudson. Mother of Colin Hudson. Sister of George and John Forline. Grandmother of two.

JORAY, Douglas, 59, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Feb. 18. Father of Micah Ayers, Anna Marie Wolfa and Boone Joray. Brother of Julie Felabom, Joanie Montgomery, Janet Thatcher, Greg, Jeff, John, Joseph, Pat and Tom Joray. Grandfather of two.

LAKER, Jerome J., 83, St. Mary-of-the-Rock, Franklin County, Feb. 19. Husband of Helen Laker. Father of Brian and Scott Laker. Brother of Barbara Glaub, Bernice and Leroy Laker. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of one.

PARROTT, Dr. Michael, 78, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Feb. 11. Husband of Michelle Parrott. Father of Megan Dunn and Melissa Konkol. Brother of Jane, Marcia, Nancy, Larry and Rick. Grandfather of four.

ROSENSTEIN, Beverly K., 84, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Feb. 1. Mother of Kathy Elmore, Karla Kaufman and Kris Widmann. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of four.

SCHNEIDER, Connie R., 91, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Feb. 13. Mother of Kristin Borgert, Annette Rhine, Carol Untrauer, Cindy, Bob and Gene Schneider. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of 15.

SEMENICK, Virginia, 91, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Feb. 12. Mother of Christina Bentley, Jennifer Downey, Beth Richards, Amy Young

and Steven Semenick. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 14.

SHEPARDSON, James E., 45, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Indianapolis, Jan. 13. Son of Bill and Patricia Shepardson. Brother of Sarah Daniels, Tom and Will Shepardson. Uncle of several.

STEMNOCK, Myra A., 95, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Feb. 12. Mother of Lisa Hughes, Laurie Seeber, Joe and Steve Stemnock. Grandmother of eight. Great-grandmother of nine.

TORZEWSKI, Susan K., 81, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Jan. 15. Wife of Dan Torzewski. Father of Molly Pierce, Christine and Kerri Torzewski. Sister of Nancy Petroff, Pam Vetter, Jim and Tom Thompson. Grandmother of three. †

Mother Cabrini garners most votes to be depicted in statue for Chicago park

CHICAGO (OSV News)—A statue of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first American saint, will be put in a public park on Chicago's Near West Side. It will replace a Christopher Columbus statue that was removed during the pandemic.

The Chicago Park District announced on Feb. 18 that Mother Cabrini received 1,500 of a total 3,900 votes submitted by the public. She was one of eight eligible nominees who were Italians or Americans of Italian descent, who were chosen from dozens of proposed candidates and met specific criteria.

The memorial statue of the patron saint of immigrants will be erected at Arrigo Park in Chicago's Little Italy, a historically Italian American neighborhood.

Mother Cabrini arrived in the U.S. in 1889 via Ellis Island, providing the poorest of the poor Italian immigrants of New York with food, shelter, education and health services. By the 1890s, she established services in Chicago, also erecting several hospitals there. She expanded those services to all immigrants across the country and around the world.

By the time of her death in 1917 at age 67, the naturalized American citizen had established 67 education, health and social service institutions throughout the world.

"[Mother Cabrini] didn't just serve immigrant families, she built institutions that transformed lives," said Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson in the park district's press release. "She founded schools, orphanages and hospitals that cared for Italian immigrants facing hardship, and she ensured that resources flowed back into the neighborhoods that needed them most."

Mother Cabrini, originally from a small town outside Milan, Italy, founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1880. The order has a few hundred sisters serving in 15 countries, according to the sisters. They serve refugees and work in social work, health care and education among other areas of services.

The park district said the city looked for specific criteria in its search for a candidate to be memorialized, including demonstrated "civic contribution, historical and cultural significance, and integrity and enduring impact." They were required to be of Italian descent and to have been deceased for more than a decade.

The office said it received 157 proposed candidates. The eight who met all criteria included Mother Cabrini; Renato Dulbecco, a pioneer in molecular biology, virology and cancer research; Enrico Fermi, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist; Philip Mazzei, a philosopher whose writing was incorporated by Thomas Jefferson into the Declaration of Independence; Maria Montessori, known for her innovative education method; Florence Scala, a

community organizer who fought to keep the Little Italy neighborhood intact during a time of rapid expansion; U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; and explorer Amerigo Vespucci, who named the Americas.

A Sacred Heart missionary sister confirmed to OSV News this will be the first Mother Cabrini statue to be erected in a public place in the city. Her only other statue in Chicago is on the grounds of Holy Name Cathedral downtown.

In 2020, a Christopher Columbus statue downtown was removed after protesters tried to topple it in a fight with police. The city also removed the one in Arrigo Park and another one on the South Side, after protesters said the explorer was an insult to Indigenous Americans. †



A statue of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, patron of immigrants, is seen after its unveiling on Oct. 12, 2020, in the Manhattan borough of New York City. A Chicago neighborhood is replacing its statue of Christopher Columbus with another Italian Catholic hero and champion of immigrants: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. (OSV News photo/Carlo Allegri, Reuters)

Online Lay Ministry Formation

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

- Earn certificate in Lay Ministry
- Complete 12 courses online with ND STEP program
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If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

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Confidential, Online Reporting
www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

'Come and see' events about the diaconate to be held throughout May

By Sean Gallagher

Beginning in early May, four "come and see" events will be held in parishes across central and southern Indiana to help Catholic men in the archdiocese learn more about the life and ministry of deacons.

Deacon John Jacobi, archdiocesan associate director of deacon formation, described in an interview with *The Criterion* the qualities of a man who might show a possible call to the diaconate.

"It's a man who is engaged in prayer," he said. "It's a man who is involved in his parish beyond Mass attendance. He's really involved in ministries of charity. He loves being a servant and is already engaged in some sort of work of service."

The events held in May will take place from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday evenings. A short presentation on the diaconate will be given, and a deacon who serves in the archdiocese will share his journey toward this ministry in the Church. There will also be time for questions about the diaconate. (See article below.)

These meetings will be held in advance of monthly inquiry sessions about the diaconate on Sunday afternoons that will begin in September and will continue through the following spring.

Those sessions are meant to assist men who are discerning a possible call to be a deacon. During the course of them, they may be able to apply to be accepted into a new cohort of aspirants for the diaconate that would begin formation in the fall of 2027.

The Church's *Code of Canon Law* sets 35 as the minimum age at which a man can be ordained as a permanent deacon. Additionally, the archdiocese also requires

men to be no older than 65 at the time of their ordination.

At whatever age a man is ordained, Deacon Jacobi emphasized that the call to this ministry is lifelong.

"Pope John Paul II said that the deacon is the Church's service sacramentalized," he said. "There's a love of service and it's lifelong," adding that a deacon is "a servant of the Church for however many years God gives him."

The life and ministry of permanent deacons, which was common in the first centuries of the Church, was revived in the implementation of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Permanent deacons may be married at the time of their ordination. Their primary ministry is in various forms of service. They also may proclaim the Gospel and preach at Mass, may celebrate baptisms and officiate at graveside services.

The first cohort of archdiocesan deacons was ordained in 2008. There have been subsequent cohorts ordained in 2012, 2017 and 2022. A cohort of current deacon candidates is expected to be ordained in 2027.

Deacon Jacobi said that the process is starting for a new cohort of men to be formed for the diaconate because an increasing number of men who were ordained in the initial cohorts are retiring from ministry. He also said that there is a growing desire for deacons to serve in more parishes across the archdiocese.

"There are still a lot of parishes that don't have a deacon," he said. "We can move a few [deacons] around to help with that. But we'd really like to increase the number as well. If a priest wants a deacon's assistance in his parish or parishes, the archbishop would like to be able to offer that."



Deacon candidates from across the archdiocese kneel in prayer during a June 24, 2017, Mass in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in which 21 men from across the archdiocese were ordained as permanent deacons. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Deacon Jacobi noted that men ordained as deacons are to have a broad vision of ministry, both within the archdiocese and beyond.

"We're ordained for the archdiocese, not for a parish," he said. "We're also there to minister to the wider community, Catholics and non-Catholics."

Deacons serving across central and southern Indiana do this broader ministry of charity in a variety of ways: in jails and prisons, in hospitals and nursing homes and in charitable agencies and programs.

Deacon Jacobi, who also serves in the New Albany Deanery at St. Bernard Parish in Frenchtown, St. Joseph Parish in Crawford County and at St. Michael Parish in Bradford, had already been a parish catechetical leader and youth minister for many years before discerning a call to the diaconate.

"When I was in formation, I really struggled with why God was calling me to this," said Deacon Jacobi, who was ordained in 2017. "I couldn't shake the

call I knew that was there. But I had been involved in Church ministry for many years. Why did I need this?"

"Finally, it just sunk in that I was pledging myself to this. I wasn't simply being called to ministry for a time but for a lifetime. There is such a blessing when God's will and our will align. There is such a blessing in being able to answer God's call."

He encouraged men who have already engaged in service of various kinds in and beyond their parishes to take part in any of the "come and see" events in May.

"If you've felt the tug, come and see," he said. "That's the invitation."

(For more information about the upcoming diaconate "come and see" events to be held in May across the archdiocese or for more information about the formation of deacons and the life and ministry of deacons in the archdiocese, visit archindy.org/deacon or contact Deacon John Jacobi at jjacobi@archindy.org or 812-946-0873.) †

Learn more about the diaconate at 'come and see' events in May

Men interested in learning more about the life and ministry of deacons and deacon formation in the archdiocese are invited to take part in any of a series of four "come and see" events held across the archdiocese.

The two-hour events will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Tuesday evenings as follows:

- May 5 at Christ the King Parish, 5884 Crittenden Ave., in Indianapolis
- May 12 at St. Patrick Parish, 1807 Poplar St., in Terre Haute
- May 19 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane, in New Albany
- May 26 at St. Michael Parish, 145 St. Michael Blvd., in Brookville.

For more information about the upcoming diaconate "come and see" events to be held across the archdiocese or about the formation of deacons and the life and ministry of deacons in the archdiocese, visit archindy.org/deacon or contact Deacon John Jacobi at jjacobi@archindy.org or 812-946-0873. †

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

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The Criterion Readership Survey

We need your help!

The Criterion would like to better understand how you prefer to receive our newspaper and which types of news coverage and features matter most to you. Your input will guide our future editions and delivery options.

There are two ways to participate: online or by filling out and mailing back this page.

If you would like to participate via an online survey, go to archindy.org/ReadershipSurvey (or scan the QR Code to the right) and answer the questions.

If you would like to respond by mail, please fill out the survey below, cut it out and mail it to:

The Criterion
ATTN: Readership Survey
1400 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202



Please answer all the questions as best you can; if you need any clarification, contact Ann Lewis at 317-236-1585 or alewis@archindy.org.

Your Readership of The Criterion

1. How frequently do you read The Criterion?

- Every issue
- Most issues
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

2. How much of The Criterion do you typically read? Select the answer that most applies to your readership.

- All articles. I read all the articles and columns within each issue.
- Most articles. I review all the pages, read parts of each article, and read most articles in full.
- Some articles. I scan all of the pages, read the opening paragraphs of most articles, and fully read some of the articles that pique my interest.
- A few articles. I briefly scan the issue and read a few things of interest.
- None. I typically don't read it or find time to read it.

Your Reader Preferences

3. How often would you prefer to receive The Criterion?

- Weekly (current distribution)
- Biweekly (every other week)
- Monthly
- Quarterly (4 times per year)

4. How much time do you prefer to spend reading a typical article?

- Under 2 minutes
- 2-5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- More than 10 minutes

5. What format would you prefer to receive The Criterion? (check all that apply)

- Mailed printed newspaper (current method)
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- ePub (downloadable digital publication)
- Website (CriterionOnline.com)

6. If you selected printed newspaper or magazine in Question #5, would you be open to a mix of digital (email) and printed editions?

- Yes — I would prefer a combination of digital and print
- Yes — but primarily printed
- No — prefer print only
- NA — I did not select printed newspaper or magazine.

7. If you currently receive news digitally, which device do you primarily use?

- Smartphone
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- eReader
- NA - I do not receive news digitally

8. Which types of The Criterion content do you most want to receive? (Rank Your Top 5)

Rank	Type of Content
<input type="checkbox"/>	Archbishop's Messages and Official Statements
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocations (seminarians, religious life, priestly vocations)
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<input type="checkbox"/>	National and Global Catholic News
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9. Are there topics not listed that you would like to see more coverage of? List them below.

10. What would make The Criterion more valuable to you?

The Criterion Readers

11. What is your age group?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

12. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male

13. What is your parish/city? (optional)



Thank you in advance for your help with this important survey! Also available at archindy.org/ReadershipSurvey.