

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Volume 94 No. 18

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

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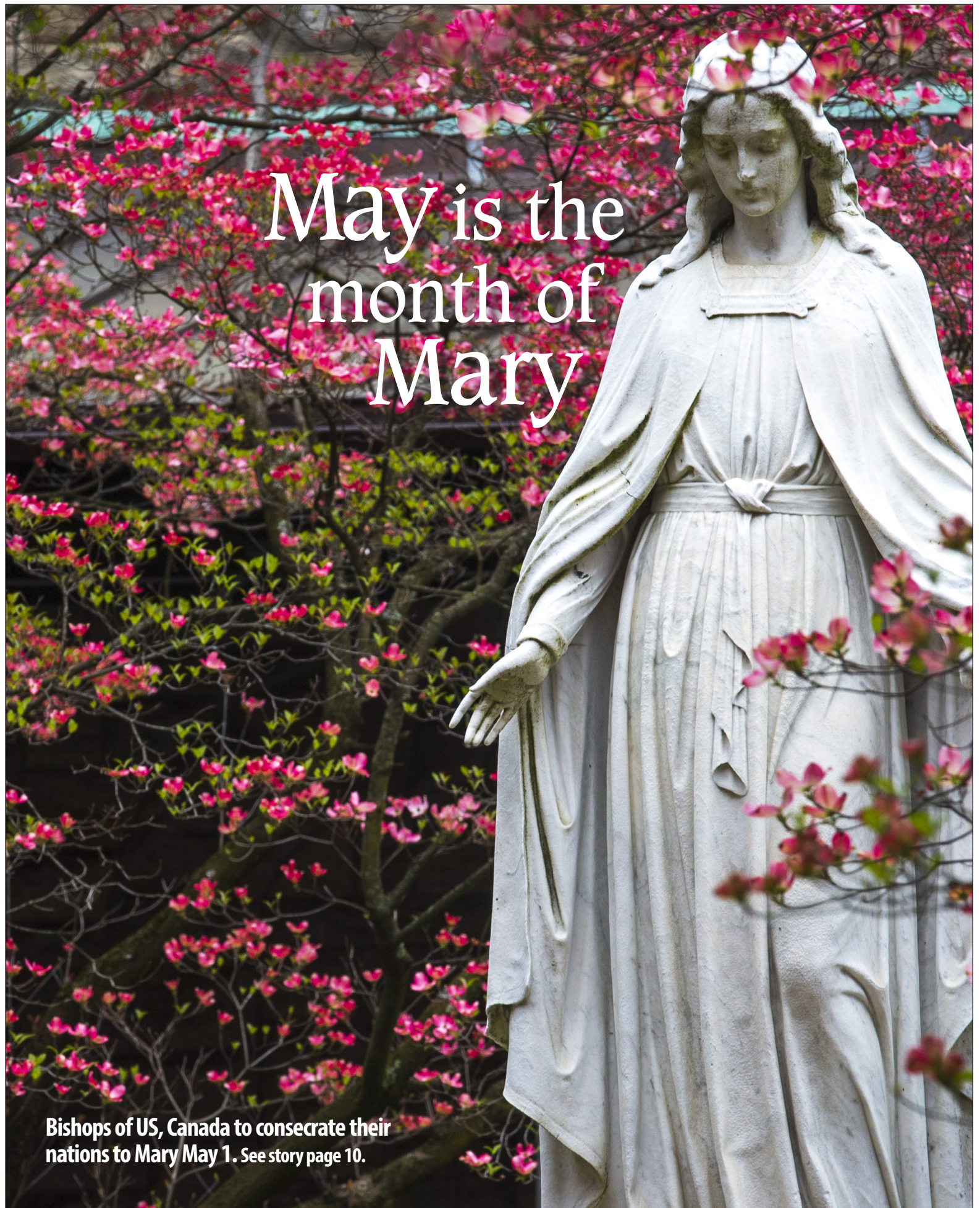
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**Bishops of US, Canada to consecrate their nations to Mary May 1. See story page 10.**

CNS photo/Chaz Muth

A statue of Mary is visible among the vivid spring buddings May 1, 2019, at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. During a livestreamed All-Schools Mass May 1, 2020, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades will join the the national renewal of consecration of the United States to Mary, Mother of the Church, and ask for her intercession in the struggle against COVID-19.

## TODAY'S CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)  
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the  
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend  
P.O. Box 11169  
Fort Wayne, IN 46856

**PUBLISHER:** Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

**Editorial Department**

**PUBLICATIONS MANAGER:** Jodi Marlin  
**STAFF WRITER:** Jennifer Barton  
**PAGE DESIGNER:** Francie Hogan  
**ADVERTISING DESIGN:** Molly Gettinger  
**NEWS SPECIALIST:** Mark Weber

**Business Department**

**BUSINESS MANAGER:** Jennifer Simerman  
**BOOKKEEPING/CIRCULATION:** Geoff Frank  
circulation@diocesefwsb.org  
**BUSINESS SALES MANAGER:** Erika Barron  
ebarron@diocesefwsb.org

**Website:** [www.todayscatholic.org](http://www.todayscatholic.org)  
260-456-2824

Published weekly except for the last Sunday in December; and every other week from third Sunday in May through fourth Sunday in August, by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 915 S. Clinton St., P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46801. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Wayne, IN, and additional mailing office.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169 or email: [circulation@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:circulation@diocesefwsb.org)

**MAIN OFFICE:** 915 S. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax: 260-744-1473.  
**BUREAU OFFICE:** 1328 Dragoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

News deadline is 10 days prior to publication date. Advertising deadline is nine days before publication date.

**Today's Catholic may be reached at:**  
Today's Catholic,  
P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN  
46856-1169; or email:  
[editor@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:editor@diocesefwsb.org)

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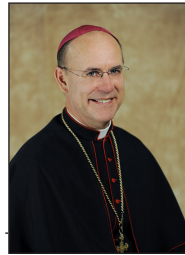
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# The journey to Emmaus is our journey



## IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

*The following homily was delivered by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades during a live-streamed Mass from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception April 26, the Third Sunday of Easter:*

**W**e prayed in the Collect, the Opening Prayer of today's Mass: "May your people exult forever, O God, in renewed youthfulness of spirit." In the Gospel today, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were renewed in youthfulness of spirit when they listened to Jesus explain the Scriptures to them and when they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread.

Before Jesus accompanied them on their journey, their spirits had grown old. The two disciples were disappointed and disillusioned after Jesus was crucified. They were down-cast, the Gospel tells us. They told Jesus, whom they did not recognize, "we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel." Notice the past tense, "they were hoping." So they had lost that hope. They had been Jesus' disciples and had believed He was a powerful prophet, but with His crucifixion, they thought His mission had failed. They were experiencing a crisis of faith and a loss of hope. That's why they left Jerusalem. Why stay? The One they had put their hope in was dead. They had lost their youthfulness of spirit. We can say they were dispirited. But this man who joined them on the road, whom they did not recognize, changed that.

The Risen Jesus explained the Scriptures to them, including the prophets, passages that spoke about how the Messiah would suffer and then enter into His glory. Their spirits were touched by the interpretation of the Scriptures that Jesus was providing them. They were so touched that they urged Jesus to stay with them that evening. As they would say to each other later: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" Their eyes were being opened to the truth about Jesus and what happened on Calvary. Their faith and hope was being renewed. And, of course, the climax of that wonderful encounter with Jesus came when, at table that evening, Jesus "took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them." Then their eyes were truly opened and they recognized Him.

The journey of Emmaus is our journey. In our journey of life, we experience disappointments, doubts, times of sadness and disillusionment. We can experience crises of faith, loss of hope, and temptations to despair. We all have some negative experiences in our life. We can become dispirited like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We need our youthfulness of spirit to be renewed, like we prayed in the opening prayer today. I was thinking about this need



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Fritz von Uhde painted this image "Der Gang nach Emmaus" ("The Road to Emmaus") in 1891.

today as we go through the trial of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Risen Jesus wants to renew our spirits, like He wanted to renew the spirits of the two disciples. He wants to join us on our journey. He wants to accompany us. We can encounter Him in our journey to Emmaus by listening to His Word through the Sacred Scriptures. Some of the faithful have shared with me that during this time of no public liturgies, they have spent more time reading and praying with the Scriptures. This has revived their spirits. They have experienced the Lord's presence and grace at the table of his Word. That's been a kind of unexpected grace for them as they long to return to Mass.

One man told me he has rediscovered the Scriptures during these past several weeks. I asked him about this and told him, "but we always listen to the Scriptures at Mass — in fact, the first half of Mass is the Liturgy of the Word." He agreed, but he told me that he's now meditating more on the Scriptures than he used to. That's been

an unexpected gift he has experienced during this time as he eagerly looks forward to receiving the Eucharist again. I hope and pray that others are also using this time to

encounter the Lord more deeply by reading and praying with the Scriptures.

As I mentioned, the climax of the Emmaus story was indeed when Jesus sat with the two disciples at table and broke the bread. The climax of our journey is also when we participate at the table of the Eucharist. There our spirit is nourished in the most profound way by the Body and Blood of the Lord. Like the two disciples, we recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread. It is good to have this longing to go back to Mass and to receive the Bread of life.

Our faith is nourished by the Word of God and by His Real Presence in the Eucharist. Our youthfulness of spirit is renewed. I invite you to relive the experience of the disciples of Emmaus and to open yourselves to the grace of that transforming encounter with the Risen Lord. May we, like those two disciples, plead with Jesus: "Stay with us, Lord."

Brothers and sisters, the Risen Lord is ever present in our midst. He walks with us on our journey to Emmaus. He guides us and opens our eyes. He has the power to do this. He gives us the grace to believe and to hope. And when we open our hearts to Him, He frees us from fear and despair. Faith in Him transforms us and fills us with God's love. That's what gives meaning to our lives.

May the Lord bless us with renewed youthfulness of spirit! May our hearts burn within us as we read and pray with the Scriptures! And may we soon be able to gather again at the table where we recognize the Lord in the breaking of the bread!

*We can become dispirited like  
the two disciples on the road to  
Emmaus. We need our  
youthfulness of spirit  
to be renewed.*

# Offertories, parish communication set off on new paths during COVID-19

BY JODI MARLIN

As Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend enter a seventh week of suspension of public Masses, worshipping from living rooms and home offices is the new normal. Unfortunately, that's where most collection envelopes have stayed as well.

Parish collections across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend are taking a significant hit. With no way to pass the collection basket, the weekly offertory — the main source of income for most parishes — faltered immediately. Meeting expenses became an immediate challenge.

The biggest expense challenge by far for parishes is personnel costs — parish and school staff salaries, wages and insurance, all of which still have had to be paid during the pandemic-related closures and stay-at-home orders. In the face of the compromised parish collections, parishes and schools have been forced to lay off personnel in many cases.

As a lifeline, some parishes have taken to reminding the faithful to give by mailing their donations into the parish, or by using what looks to be the post-COVID-19 choice of giving tools: online giving.

At St. Monica Parish, Mishawaka, 28% of regular givers submitted their donations this way. Through daily social media posts, the parish was able to share with members that it is still working hard to bring people closer to the Lord and help them enter into the Triduum and Easter, however, and the effort made a difference.

Pastor Father Jacob Meyer said during the last few weeks, however, the percentage of families signed up for online giving increased 63%, to 98 families. "Most people sent in their envelopes as well as an extra offering for those in need as well as through online giving," he noted. This generosity bolstered the parish's ability to continue performing works of charity.

"Our social media presence has been the largest factor," he said. "We've used this medium to help people know that we as a Church are here for people in need, parishioners or others in the community. As a result, our people have responded generously to help with the poor and I now have a fund to help those in need."

Although Father Meyer had a Facebook presence prior to the pandemic, that presence is now more frequent and includes the livestreaming of Masses.

On April 6, the diocese stepped in to assist parishes interested going online for week-

As disciples of Jesus, we live for life, true life, the abundance of life. We live for communion with the infinite love which is the source of life: communion with the Most Holy Trinity through our communion with the One who is the Resurrection and the Life. He stretches out His hand to us during this pandemic. Let us take His hand and live the abundance of life He gives and communicate that life to our neighbors!

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES  
March 29, 2020

[www.diocesefwsb.org/give](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/give)

ly and one-time donations. A new website was rolled out, [diocesefwsb.org/give](http://diocesefwsb.org/give). Through the site — which is also navigable in Spanish — any individual may donate directly to any parish in the diocese by designating that parish from a drop-down list. They can also donate to the diocese itself, to the Annual Bishop's Appeal, Pentecost Collection for the Education of Seminarians or the office of diocesan communications.

Local Catholic organizations like Catholic Charities, the Women's Care Centers, the St. Vincent de Paul and Christ Child societies, and others can also be accessed through the site for the purpose of donating.

Both those who have previously made an online donation through the diocese and first-timers can donate through the site. The process is short and fairly simple, in the hope that someone who hasn't given to their parish in such a way before might try it during this crisis, if they're not

inclined to mail a check.

Additional good news for parishes arrived March 27 in the form of a law signed by President Trump to provide relief for taxpayers affected financially by the pandemic. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act includes tax provisions for Americans who give to charitable organizations. According to the Business Office of the diocese, it includes an above-the-line deduction for nonitemizers of up to \$300 for cash contributions to a public charity, including parishes. For individuals who itemize and certain corporations, the CARES Act temporarily increases limitations on deductions for charitable contributions made in 2020.

What the offertory process will look like post-COVID-19 remains to be seen, but indications are that some key parish processes have changed



permanently. The decision has already been made to leave the diocesan giving website operational indefinitely for ease of donation to both parishes and the diocese.

Jeff Boetticher, director of the Secretariat for Stewardship and Development, said that prior to the beginning of the pandemic and certainly since, many parishes were already moving toward alternatives to the collection basket. Some had successfully implemented them.

"Since more of the parishes are doing livestreaming (of Masses), the collections are starting to come back" through one form or another, he noted. "When we first started the giving website, about 50 of our 81 parishes had some kind of online giving opportunity in place. Now, through this site, they all do."

"That was Step 1. Now, Step 2," he said. Once public Masses

resume, there is a question of whether it will be prudent for everyone's safety to begin passing collection baskets around again.

Boetticher also ponders another question pastors will need to ask themselves post-COVID-19, about what he has heard referred to as "protected giving" — a form of that giving that is more regular, less interruptible and can provide a regular revenue stream for the parish. Parishes may need to give thought to how they can be intentional about directing parishioners' giving to online and automatic withdrawal mechanisms. "Maybe this is a chance for us all to rethink how we do offertory," he said.

The standard tools of evangelization and communication with parishioners may also have been permanently altered by coronavirus-related circumstances. Father Meyer said he has already been asked to continue his social media presence. "I admit I find the idea of that daunting, but I've seen the fruit of people's spiritual lives growing from these efforts. I'm definitely tempted to continue, even though the workload would be difficult to maintain," he said.

He won't be alone. "Many of our parishes are reaching new audiences on social media now," said secretariat staff member Claire Klinedinst. Among the many priests who have embraced a digital presence are Father David Ruppert, Decatur; Father Terrence Coonan, St. Therese, Little Flower, and Father John Eze, Queen of Peace, who were "newbies" to livestreaming; and Father Chris Lapp, St. Joseph Parish, Mishawaka, who enhanced his already-consistent Facebook presence to include livestreaming, she noted.

But the adjustments that both parishes and the faithful have had to make have been underpinned by stories of hope and joy. Among the blessings St. Monica's has experienced the last few weeks is a renewed sense of gratitude for the Eucharist," said Father Meyer, as well as gratitude for "our amazing community, and love for our Church itself."

"Some of the things we have taken for granted are now at the forefront of importance in our lives and desires of our heart. The Devil will not win! Our Lord will bring good out of all evil and the good is the longing for Jesus in Eucharist," he said in a Facebook post following his initial plea for members to remember their parish financially.

The St. Monica faithful responded so generously that resources are now available to help those in the broader community.

## Creation is sacred gift deserving respect, care, pope says on Earth Day

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Humanity has failed to take care of the earth and its inhabitants, sinning against God and his gift of creation, Pope Francis said. Celebrating Earth Day, which fell during the “Easter season of renewal, let us pledge to love and esteem the beautiful gift of the earth, our common home, and to care for all members of our human family,” he said during his livestreamed weekly general audience from the Vatican. The pope dedicated his catechesis April 22 to a reflection on the human and Christian responsibility to care for the earth, humanity’s common home. The day marked the 50th Earth Day, which was established in 1970 to raise public awareness and concern for the environment and its impact on people’s health and all life. This year also marks the fifth anniversary of the pope’s encyclical, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.” In his catechesis, the pope said Earth Day was “an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family.” “As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst,” he said. As the Book of Genesis relates, he said, “we live in this common home as one human family in biodiversity with God’s other creatures,” and God has called on humanity to care for and respect His creation and “to offer love and compassion to our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable among us, in imitation of God’s love for us, manifested in His son Jesus.”

## Pope postpones International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis, the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and local organizers have agreed to postpone by one year the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress, the Vatican announced April 23. Because of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the travel and assembly of large groups of faithful, the pope, the papal committee, congress organizers and the bishops of Hungary decided to hold the congress in Budapest in September 2021 instead of this year. The announcement came a few days after the Vatican announced the next World Meeting of Families would be pushed back until June 2022 and the next international gathering for World Youth Day would be postponed to August 2023.

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Fifth anniversary of Laudato Si’ approaching



CNS photo/Chaz Muth

Raindrops bead up on the leaves of a tree branch April 26, on a trail near Bladensburg, Md. Dioceses and other organizations around the world are planning to mark the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ encyclical on care for creation with online events and prayers during Laudato Si’ Week May 16-24.

## Religious education continues in different format during pandemic

WASHINGTON (CNS) — When parishes announced they were no longer having public Masses or church events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this brought typical religious education classes, youth retreats and preparation programs for first Communion and confirmation across the country to a stop or at least sent them in a slightly different direction. Parishes, unlike many schools, were unable to put in place online programs for dis-

tance learning. In many cases, parishes had to furlough their directors of religious education. The teachers of religious education classes are almost all volunteers, facing their own challenges in the current pandemic. But at diocesan and sometimes parish levels, Church leaders have been working hard to come up with creative ways to stay connected with these young people and their families and to give them resources to help the students continue to grow in faith during this time of isolation. From the start of discontinued religious education classes, a major concern for parents was if or when their children would receive first Communion or confirmation, sacraments that typically are given in late spring

and that involve big groups of people. Archdiocesan directors of catechesis and religious education from coast to coast — specifically in the Washington and Los Angeles archdioceses — told Catholic News Service that they have reassured parents these sacraments will take place, but they just don’t know how or when right now. Jamie Gutierrez, coordinator of youth ministry and confirmation at St. Frances of Rome Parish in Azusa, California, said she has told parents from the start there are no clear answers about the confirmation schedule and this still might not clear when California’s stay-at-home order is lifted, but one thing is certain: confirmations will take place.

## ‘Spiritual adoption’ project aims to foster connection, hope amid virus

BOSTON (CNS) — The Daughters of St. Paul have launched a “spiritual adoption” project as part of their #SpiritualCommunion online response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “Spiritual adoption is a specific effort within #SpiritualCommunion for those on the front lines to be spiritually supported,” the Boston-based religious congregation said in an April 22 news release. “Spiritual adoption also is designed to bring meaning, connection and hope to those feeling the effects of isolation in lockdown.” The release described the #SpiritualCommunion response overall as “an invitation sent out across the digital continent to reach and support the Catholic Church during the current pandemic.” The congregation’s spiritual adoption project is aimed at COVID-19 patients, doctors, nurses, and other first responders on the front lines as well as those in lockdown. There are three aspects: It allows participants to become spiritually adopted, to have their loved ones become spiritually adopted or to become “spiritual adopters” themselves. All participants can sign up online at [www.tinyurl.com/SpirituallyAdopt](http://www.tinyurl.com/SpirituallyAdopt). Then Daughters of St. Paul pair participants together and connect them virtually.

## God is telling us ‘we have to take care of one another,’ archbishop says

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — As stay-at-home orders remain in place during this pandemic, “it is frustrating for all of us,” and Catholics especially want life to return to normal so they can attend the celebration of Mass in church and receive the sacraments, said Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez. “We are united in prayer, but we long for the comfort of just being together in the same church, praying and sharing our faith,” and while he is grateful to be connected to his flock via the internet, “it is not the same as seeing one another face-to-face, drawn together in the fellowship of Christ,” he said. He made the comments April 21 in his weekly column, “New World of Faith,” which appears in English and Spanish on the website of Angelus, the media arm of the Los Angeles archdiocese, <https://angelusnews.com>. Archbishop Gomez, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that in his own reflections amid this “extraordinary Easter season,” he sees “God calling us, in a most dramatic way, to realize how much we need Him, how we cannot live without Him.”

# Canceled baby shower garners donations for Women's Care Center

BY DENISE FEDEROW

The intentions were good. The Mom's Group at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Goshen wanted to host a baby shower in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the feast of the Annunciation, March 28, with the recipient being Women's Care Center in Elkhart.

The Women's Care Centers offer support and assistance to women with unplanned pregnancies and continues supporting families up to kindergarten age. They provide ultrasounds, counseling, parenting classes and more.

The St. John's Mom's Group even planned to incorporate the monthly Women's Morning of Reflection, organized by Alycia Valentiny, into the baby shower so more women could participate. One of the moms, Amanda Woodiel, created flyers and sent them to St. John the Evangelist School so the students could also participate.

Theresa Gerwels, a member of the Mom's Group, contacted Women's Care Center and obtained a list of items they needed new and ones they could accept used. When space at St. John to hold the event couldn't be found, Gerwels and her husband planned to open their home



Denise Federow



## To donate to Women's Care Center

The donations needed include diapers, wipes, crib sheets, mattress pads, diaper bags, baby thermometers, shoes and spring coats, especially sizes 2T-5T. The Women's Care Center's Elkhart location is at 229 W. Marion St. Hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Those wishing to make donations or those in need of receiving donations are asked to call (574) 296-6603.

Women who are pregnant and in need of help can also call the Women's Care Center helpline at 877-908-2391. There are also Women's Care Center locations in Bremen, Plymouth, South Bend and Fort Wayne.

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**Theresa Gerwels of the St. John the Evangelist Parish Mom's Group in Goshen did "porch runs" to collect donations for Women's Care Center after a planned baby shower in the Blessed Mother's honor had to be canceled due to COVID-19. The need for the donations has increased the past few weeks, according to the Women's Care Center's director, so the donations were greatly appreciated.**

to host the baby shower and morning of prayer on March 14. The spread of the COVID-19 and ensuing state of emergency declarations put an end to plans for the gathering. Disappointed but not deterred, Gerwels emailed the women in the group. She asked if they were going out to get essentials, to please pick up a box of diapers or pack of wipes as well; and if they were spring cleaning, to set aside outgrown clothing, unused boxes of diapers or unwanted books, and she'd do a "porch run" to pick up the donations.

On April 6, she did just that. She picked up several items at St. John, where someone who couldn't attend the shower when it was still scheduled brought their donations. She retrieved items from front porches of Mom's Group members in Goshen and in Syracuse. A couple of moms dropped off donations on her porch.

Gerwels ended up with several large garbage bags of diapers, wipes, clothing and books. She shared that Better World Books had a bookmobile event last month and also allowed her to come in and choose as many books as she wanted for the cause — approximately 500 books.

"They were excited because they'd saved board books to be donated to the Women's Care Center and were excited to donate books for older children, too," she said.

The back seat of Gerwels' vehicle was completely filled with donations except for where her children were seated, and the back was filled to the top with donations, too.

Gerwels said the Mom's Group was happy to donate to Women's Care Center because, "They just love on everyone there. They don't ask questions other than 'How can we help?'" She said they are committed to helping families from pregnancy to school-age and offer parenting classes, nutrition classes and more.

Angela Martinez, director of Women's Care Center in Elkhart, said the need for assistance to mothers is even greater now.

"We are definitely seeing an increase in need," she said. "We are giving out more than 200 diapers daily. So many families are laid off and need the help, but even those who aren't are having a hard time finding some of those essential items."

Donations like the one received from the St. John Mom's Group "mean so much to our

staff, who are serving more families in this time of stress. It's great for the families too, but our staff sees and experiences the generosity of the community at St. John's and the community at large. We're so grateful."

"We look at this as another way God is smiling at us as we provide for our families in need," Martinez said.

Staff at Women's Care Center have been getting in touch with regular clients or have been receiving calls, following which they prepare packages of diapers, wipes and books for the many families with day care or school children who are home now. They will bring the items out to the car.

"We're keeping the doors to the building locked, but we can still see them and smile at them," she said.

Clients can come anytime during regular office hours of Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., but are asked to call first. The Women's Care Center will help any family in need.

"We so appreciate Theresa and the moms at St. John's. I'm amazed at their resourcefulness: Even though they couldn't hold the shower, she did porch runs. We're just so grateful," Martinez said.

Giving God the control —

# Evaluating priorities as wedding plans change amid pandemic

BY JENNIFER BARTON

**W**edding dress chosen, venue booked, invitations sent out. All the tiny details were neatly arranged, until COVID-19 unraveled the carefully made plans.

Brides and grooms in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend have been agonizing the past several weeks over how, or even if, to go forward with one of the biggest days of their lives. What are a bride and groom to do when gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited for everyone's safety?

Three couples in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend shared insights gained from their own recent experiences on handling the big day — and learning to follow God's plan — with Today's Catholic.

## 'Special in a way we hadn't planned'

Over 300 guests were invited to St. Monica Church in Mishawaka for Kate and Tom Kurzthal's March 28 wedding. On March 15, those plans began to fall apart. After whittling the guest list down to the required 250 (at that time) through a series of "uncomfortable" phone calls, the stay-at-home order came into effect in Indiana, limiting gatherings to 10 people. With no available hairstylist, no cake decorator and a limit of 10 guests, the couple had to make a choice.

"Tom and I had a talk," Kate stated, regarding their decision to proceed with the wedding. "At the root of it all, we picked this date to be together. Are we going to move forward even if it's you, me and Father Jacob (Meyer) in the church? That was what we, as a couple, decided."

At every step during the two weeks before the wedding day, Tom and Kate agonized over the decision. As the day approached, they faced some backlash. "On top of our wedding falling apart from what we envisioned, those kinds of comments were really tough," Kate admitted.

The couple received more reassurance than disapproval, however. "We felt the support that we got from the rest of the immediate family, friends and people around was overwhelming — (it) definitely overshadowed the maybe three negative comments," Tom added.

Although they may not have had the full celebration originally planned for the big day, the Kurzthals now have unique stories to tell — including an aunt and uncle who, though they couldn't attend, still dressed up for the wedding along with friends who FaceTimed the couple from Nashville. Their wed-



Provided by Kate Kurzthal

**Even though COVID-19 decreased attendance at their March 28 wedding dramatically, Mishawaka residents Kate and Tom Kurzthal say they still walked away with each other, which was "everything we hoped to gain." They have tentatively planned a reception for July.**

ding album boasts pictures of "guests" who took selfies toasting the couple. Father Meyer lovingly walked with the couple in their decision process, they said, and livestreamed his own toast to them on Facebook.

While they are hopeful the reception they rescheduled for July will take place, neither regrets going forward with their smaller wedding. "We were making a promise to each other and beginning our lives together, and if that's the only thing we could uphold about our day, then we still left with everything we hoped to gain," Kate said. "The marriage is the foundation that we're building. We didn't feel like it was in our best interest to put that foundation off."

Tom joked that without all the stress of a usual wedding, they were much more relaxed and able to focus on each other. Going through such a trial early in their marriage has been very eye-opening, too: "It puts you to the test," Tom stated. It showed the Kurzthals that the trivial details of the wedding are of lesser importance. Kate said, "In some ways, this was God telling us that none of that mattered."

She offered advice to other brides in the same situation. "Really be there for each other.

Remember why you're doing what you're doing and lean into each other instead of turning out."

## 'God works in mysterious ways'

Brandon Gernhardt and Alexis Adams work in the medical field and watched the spread of COVID-19 with trepidation. At first, they were not overly worried since their wedding was scheduled for June 27. With the suspension of public Masses, however, Father Tom Shoemaker, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, sent the couple an email indicating their guest list might need to decrease. By the end of March, Gernhardt and Adams knew they needed to make a decision.

"We finally just went ahead and made the final decision based off of what our gut feeling was," Adams shared. Since they have extended family whom they wanted to include in the ceremony, some from out of town and many who are elderly, they decided to postpone the wedding until the fall. "We made sure that option was on the table — that all our vendors were available," she noted.

Gernhardt emphasized how important it was for them to have their families present to witness their vows. "It's huge for us; our families are so big."

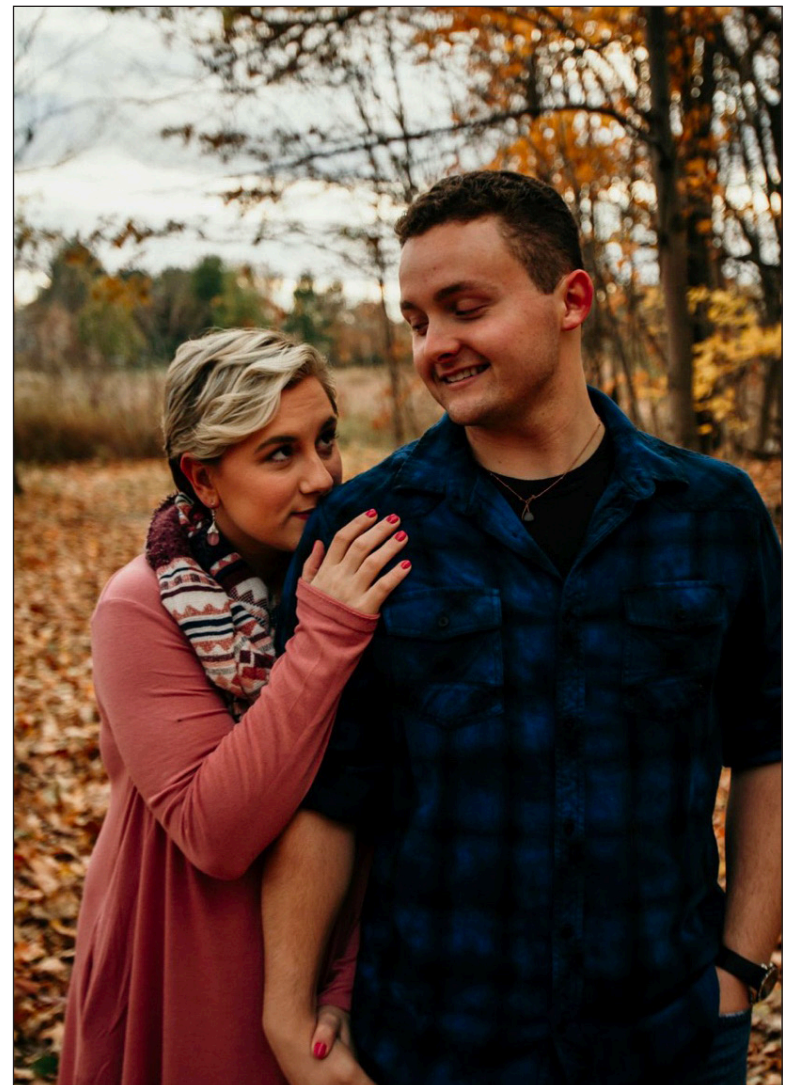
Neither of them struggled immensely with the delay. "We've been engaged for quite a while," Gernhardt stated — three years, to be exact. Both of them wanted to finish their education and begin their careers before taking the step into marriage. Adams added, "I've always wanted a fall wedding, so it didn't bother me too much."

The one downside was that St. Charles was no longer available for the date that they chose in the fall — Nov. 7. "We were a little bummed out about it,

control over their future. "Prayer goes a long way," Gernhardt stated. He emphasized that any couples facing a similar situation should turn to God. "Pray about it, talk to your families."

The couple consider themselves very blessed to have had the time to think things over and make the decision together. Safety of their family was of utmost importance, because Gernhardt works as a nurse at Parkview Regional Medical Center. Fortunately, they had not sent out the invitations they ordered, and both the invitation company and their venue allowed them to make the necessary changes.

Although it has been stress-



Provided by Alexis Adams

**Having all of their family present was so important to Brandon Gernhardt and Alexis Adams of Fort Wayne they postponed their June nuptials. It was a stressful decision, they say, but handling it together gave them the opportunity to learn of how to manage challenging moments once they're married.**

but we're getting married at (the University of) Saint Francis, which is where we met and where he proposed so it's a little extra special. I think God works in mysterious ways to make it work out for the better."

Father Shoemaker will also be unable to officiate at the time of the new rite, so Gernhardt is hoping to contact another priest with whom the couple has a fond relationship to perform the ceremony.

Together, they have given God

ful, including many long, late-night discussions, Gernhardt has a positive perspective. "Think of it like a roller coaster. If you didn't have the ups and downs, it's just a level plain ... Stuff like this just goes to show how couples deal with stress and kind of gives an idea of what marriage is like."

"I get to marry my best friend, so I'm happy," he said.



Provided by Gwen Meyer

WEDDINGS, from page 6

**'It's about us getting married'**

Every bit of the planning was completed for Phillip Sordelet and Gwen Meyer's May 9 wedding, also at St. Charles. Invitations had been sent out for 420 guests and RSVPs had poured back in, some as recently as early April. But barring a lifting of the restrictions, both of them knew their big wedding had become impossible. "It was hard at first, Meyer stated. "We'd been planning this for over a year and a half, and we just wanted to go through with it."

Meyer works as a pediatric nurse, and Sordelet works long hours at Steel Dynamics; so getting their schedules to coordinate long enough to discuss changing their plans was difficult. With all the uncertainty, there was also no way to know when they might be able to reschedule their vows. In the end, the couple decided all the extras that go along with a wedding were secondary. They felt God nudging

them to keep their wedding date.

With Sordelet's large extended family, it was difficult to choose who would be present in the church. "Our priest told us that we can have 10 people at the wedding. Phil has 11 siblings, so it's a little complicated, but we're making it work."

Even the bridal party will be unable able to attend, but Meyer stated that they were all very understanding. There have been other adjustments as well, such as finding a presentable suit for the groom to wear when tuxedo shops and department stores are closed.

They have learned to lean on each other and the rest of their family. Sordelet's mother contacted her siblings to keep the relatives updated. Word was also spread through a private Facebook group for friends and family members. "We've gotten a lot of supportive comments on it," Meyer said, with loved ones encouraging them and ready to celebrate when the time finally comes.

They worried about all the money they had already deposited at various vendors, but

Sordelet said that "for the most part, the vendors worked with us ... because I think they understood that it's a tough time for everybody."

They have no plans as of yet for rescheduling the reception, stating that they have learned to be flexible. They want to wait "till we're in the safe zone," Sordelet said.

Prayer has been their constant companion. "It's our first big hurdle with problem-solving with each other," Sordelet shared. "I think we did pretty well." They feel the experience has brought them closer together and taught them the importance of communication. For Meyer, it has also been an exercise in giving God control over their lives. After praying and placing their plans in God's hands, they were able to discern the best option for their situation.

To allow others to participate in the wedding it will be livestreamed.

The couple was a bit disappointed they couldn't celebrate in a style similar to two of Sordelet's brothers who married last year, but they see the greater importance of joining their lives in the eyes of God. For the big day, Gwen has no expectations besides becoming husband and wife. "We're getting married, and that's what matters at the end of the day."

Although the idea of so drastically changing their plans gave Phillip Sordelet and Gwen Meyer pause, the Fort Wayne couple say ultimately those plans were secondary to their joining together before God. They've chose to proceed with their May wedding.

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**Pope postpones World Meeting of Families, World Youth Day**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has agreed with a recommendation by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life to postpone by one year the next gatherings of the World Meeting of Families and World Youth Day.

"Because of the current health situation and its consequences on the movement and gatherings of young people and families," the World Meeting of Families in Rome will be pushed back until June 2022 and World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, will be pushed back until August 2023, the Vatican announced.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the dicastery, told Catholic News Service April 20 that now is the time his office would be signing contracts with hotels and airlines if the World Meeting of Families were still to be held in 2021, "but no one knows what will happen," so it seemed prudent to push the meeting back a year.

The dicastery also would not hold two large gatherings during the same summer, so that was one reason World Youth Day was pushed back, he said.

The other reason, Cardinal Farrell said, is that although people are talking about "returning to normal" and government leaders are making plans for phasing out lockdowns and reopening businesses, "we do not believe travel will be that extensive" anytime soon.

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# Fort Wayne-area Vincentians mobilize network of solutions

BY JENNIFER BARTON

FORT WAYNE — The needs of families and the poor during the COVID-19 pandemic are being eased by multiple St. Vincent de Paul Society conferences, parishes and suppliers in the Fort Wayne area who are working together with joy and purpose. The 22 conferences in the District of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Fort Wayne are finding creative ways to help those experiencing difficulty meeting physical needs during the crisis.

Seven St. Vincent de Paul food

pantries are allowing clients to come pick up food to help feed their families. The Vincentians pull food from the pantries and deliver it clients who cannot get to the pickup site.

Community Harvest Food Bank vouchers are being provided to clients who live near a conference that does not have a food pantry.

At some parishes, a combination of the above two efforts happen.

Outlying St. Vincent de Paul

conferences, such as Auburn, are purchasing Walmart or Kroger gift cards to allow clients to purchase food at grocery stores.

Some conferences are conducting parish food drives due to high local need. St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Angola, for example, asked for donated food dropped off in the entryway of the church recently to avoid personal contact.

The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store on South Calhoun Street in Fort Wayne is the only recipi-

ent of a large local retailer's regular donations of food, water, diapers, toilet paper and other necessities. Those items are delivered primarily to St. Peter and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception food pantries and consist of things parishes typically haven't been able to get their hands on since the pandemic hit the U.S., including laundry detergent and toilet paper.

Tim Fagan, manager of the thrift store, said that although it feels good to be part of so much that is going on to help others, "it makes me feel like I wish we were able to do more. That's our obligation, to take care of who we can take care of.

"Lots of organizations are doing what we're doing, and hopefully between us we can take care of them," Fagan said. "People are burning through their savings, and from our standpoint, that's when you treat them with dignity. You don't ask why they need help. It's what all organizations who do what we do should do, what St. Vincent would do, and what Jesus would do."

A voucher system operated by the St. Vincent de Paul Society allows those who have needs beyond food and toiletries to obtain them as well. Clothing, furniture and other urgent items are still being provided to the store which, although closed, is supplying them to clients.

If a parish is approached by someone with such a need, it can issue a voucher that will make the item free at the thrift store.



Behind the scenes, the conference splits the cost of the item with the referring parish — except in the case of clothing, in which

the referring parish pays nothing.

Pickup times for items are scheduled for clients, or the items can be delivered if clients have no way to pick them up.

One of the largest charitable organizations in the world, the St. Vincent de Paul Society is an international, nonprofit Catholic lay organization of more than 800,000 men and women who voluntarily join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to the needy and suffering in 150 countries on five continents.

The local first conference was organized at St. Patrick Church in February 1944. The Fort Wayne District made 10,874 person-to-person visits to homes, prisons, hospitals and nursing homes that year to give spiritual support and to evaluate the needs of the poor whom they serve.

Seven core programs that help to serve the poor of the greater Fort Wayne community include: thrift stores in Fort Wayne and Decatur, a voucher program that provides free furniture and clothing, a Care Van that transports the needy to medical appointments, a wood shop that builds bunk beds and dressers at a nominal fee, food program, jail ministry and handyman group. Last fiscal year, the society helped 46,803 people by giving out \$852,342 worth of household items, clothing, food and financial aid.



Provided by Julie Workman

St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store on South Calhoun Street in Fort Wayne is the only recipient of a large local retailer's regular donations of food, water, diapers, toilet paper and other necessities. Those items are being delivered to St. Peter and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception food pantries to help those affected by COVID-19.



Jennifer Barton

Tim Fagan, manager of the thrift store, sorts donations earlier this month. He said it feels good to be part of so much that's going on to help others.



Jennifer Barton

Gift certificates to local grocery stores are being provided to those in need by some Fort Wayne-area St. Vincent de Paul conferences that don't have food pantries.



Provided by Tim Fagan

Needed household furnishings sit ready for pickup outside the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store.



# An eighth corporal work of mercy

There are strange gifts wrapped in this terrible pandemic.

Its horrors are known, even if they were not appreciated early enough by many. Yet this stealth virus has held up a mirror to us all, showing us what we value, what we hold dear, what we are able to sacrifice.

In this trying Lent of lockdowns and quarantines that is stretching past Easter, almost all of us have found ourselves abstaining from the sacraments. Our eucharistic fast has stretched on for weeks. This has been disconcerting for many. That is not necessarily a bad thing.

I have gone to my parish several times since public Masses were banned. Even sitting in the darkened nave illuminated only by the light passing through the stained glass windows showing the seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy, I felt an invisible communion of souls bonded by our shared deprivation of the Mass.

In this unprecedented time of restraint, it is as if there is an eighth corporal work of mercy. We cannot visit the sick or the imprisoned, but we are being asked to give up something as dear as reception of the Eucharist for a little while for the sake of our fellows.

The confounding truth of the COVID-19 virus is that someone who is infected has no symptoms, whether for a little while before the fever comes, or perhaps never any discernable sign of illness. Yet that person remains contagious. With the

ongoing lack of adequate testing, almost none of us knows with certainty whether we are contagious or not.

Which means that any of us could be the unwitting cause of another's death. If I am infected but asymptomatic, I may feel free to spend time with you.

You then become, at least at first, asymptomatic. And you go visit your parents. Or your friend with hypertension. Or your spouse battling lupus. And suddenly my decision to spend time with you has endangered the lives of four others.

John Milton's great line in his Sonnet 19, "They also serve who only stand and wait," takes on special meaning now. For this is a moment we serve in our isolation. We offer up our eucharistic hunger to save others. We stay in place to save lives.

Such a sacrifice conforms to Catholic morality and Catholic social principles. We are willing to sacrifice this good for a little while out of respect for the lives of others.

There are some who have had their Caiaphas moment, viewing individuals as expendable for the sake of the economy, calculating the likely risk to the elderly or the infirm so that, to paraphrase the Gospel, the whole nation's economy may not perish. It is a profoundly unjust and anti-life calculus.

Our sacrifice for the sake of others is a small imitation of our Savior's sacrifice for us. This will soon pass, but there are lessons here for us, lessons for our children as well. For the sake of the defenseless, we abstain. For the



## AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

sake of the weak, we fast. How we respond will be our measure.

And those other works of mercy? Those that can be done are needed now: By supporting Catholic Charities and other aid organizations, we can feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty. We can clothe the naked and shelter the homeless.

And whether sitting in a silent church or our own living room, we can pray for the living and the dead, and ask God in his mercy to bring an end to this terrible plague.

Though deprived of the bread of life and cup of salvation, this is a most Catholic moment.

Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at [gerlandson@catholicnews.com](mailto:gerlandson@catholicnews.com).

# SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for May 3, 2020

John 10: 1-10

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Cycle A: A lesson about recognizing the Shepherd. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

THE GATE	CLIMBS	THIEF
SHEEP	OPENS	HEAR
CALLS	NAME	LEADS THEM OUT
HIS OWN	STRANGER	JESUS
OF SPEECH	LISTEN	WHOEVER
BE SAVED	COME IN	PASTURE
TO STEAL	I CAME	HAVE LIFE

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# Jesus is the only route to heaven



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Fourth Sunday of Easter John 10:1-10

The Acts of the Apostles again furnishes the first biblical reading. As was the case last weekend, it is a passage recalling a time when Peter spoke on behalf of all the Apostles.

This event occurred on Pentecost, an important Jewish feast. The sermon is in the literary style of kerygmatic. It goes to the essence of the Christian message. It highlights the basics of Christian belief. Jesus is Lord, Son of God. He is the Redeemer. In Jesus, and only in Jesus, is salvation. Jesus bears God's

mercy and eternal life.

Divine mercy and eternal life are not thrust upon us. We ourselves must accept Jesus. We must turn to God. We must repent and reform. This was Peter's plea.

The reference to Pentecost is not just simply to provide a date. Mentioning Pentecost reminds us that the Apostles stood at the center in the current of God's long process of salvation and protection, linking the salvation offered by Christ, and salvation offered by the Apostles in the Lord's name, in the context of God's constant loving care.

First Peter once again supplies the second reading. Scholars dispute that the Apostle Peter, Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman, literally authored this epistle. Discussions in this regard in no way demean or discount the assertion that this epistle is the authentic and revealed word of God.

The tests of the authenticity of Scriptures is that they were believed to be divinely inspired by the early Christians. Most importantly, they were accepted

as such and formally and officially identified by the Church.

First Peter fully meets these tests. Its message is twofold. First, Jesus is the Savior. His blood, spilled on Calvary, reconciles for all time God's relationship with created humanity. Secondly, we must link ourselves with Jesus, affirming by our faith and by our total rejection of sin our love for God through faith in the Lord.

St. John's Gospel is the source of the last reading. It dwells on a theme so often preferred by Jesus and emphasized in the Gospel of John, namely, that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Raising sheep was a popular livelihood in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Contemporaries of Christ instantly understood the imagery of sheep and shepherds. Jesus and the Evangelists employed these images to make clear and direct the message of salvation.

Their very technique in teaching reveals the holy yearning of God to be united with us.

This reading insists that Jesus is the only route to heaven.

Without the Lord, we search for heaven in vain.

Also important in this reading is its reference to a thief who slyly, and under the cover of darkness, steals the unsuspecting and helpless sheep away, taking them to death and destruction.

We need Jesus. Sheep are tame and unsuspecting in the face of danger. They are vulnerable. So are humans. Thieves lie in wait for us. But fear not. The Lord, the victor over death itself, is our Good Shepherd.

### Reflection

Still, several weeks after Easter, the Church proclaims its joy and faith in the Risen Lord. It repeats the message long ago spoken by Peter on Pentecost. Jesus is Lord! He lives! Repent, renounce sin and turn to God!

These readings present reality. We weak humans are prey before the devil and forces hostile to Jesus. We cannot withstand these threats without God's help. We are like sheep. We are limited. We are shortsighted.

Temptation and the human condition limit us.

Nevertheless, if we are in Jesus, and with Jesus, we are strong. No power can overwhelm us, because no power can overwhelm the Lord, the victor over death itself.

The Church bids us to face the facts about ourselves — and about the power of the Lord.

### READINGS

**Sunday:** Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Ps 23:1-6  
1 Pt 2:20b-25/Jn 10:1-10

**Monday:** Acts 11:1-18 Pss 42:2-3;  
43:3-4 Jn 10:11-18

**Tuesday:** Acts 11:19-26 Ps 87:1b-7  
Jn 10:22-30

**Wednesday:** Acts 12:24—13:5a  
Ps 67:2-3, 5-6, 8 Jn 12:44-50

**Thursday:** Acts 13:13-25 Ps 89:2-3,  
21-22, 25, 27 Jn 13:16-20

**Friday:** Acts 13:26-33 Ps 2:6-11b  
Jn 14:1-6

**Saturday:** Acts 13:44-52 Ps 98:1-4  
Jn 14:7-14

# Bishops of US, Canada will consecrate their nations to Mary May 1

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has announced the U.S. bishops will join the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops May 1 in consecrating the two nations to the care of the Blessed Mother under the title "Mary, Mother of the Church."

"This will give the Church the occasion to pray for Our Lady's continued protection of the vulnerable, healing of the unwell and wisdom for those who work to cure this terrible virus," said Archbishop Gomez in a letter to the U.S. bishops. Each year, the Church seeks the special intercession of the Mother of God during the month of May.

"This year, we seek the assistance of Our Lady all the more earnestly as we face together the effects of the global pandemic," he said.

This consecration reaffirms the bishops' previous consecrations of the United States to Mary. In 1792, the first bishop of the United States, Bishop John Carroll, consecrated the nation to Mary under the title Immaculate Conception, and in 1846, the bishops unanimously chose Mary under that title as the patroness of the nation.

In 1959, Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle of Washington again consecrated the United States to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was the year when construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington was completed. The national shrine was elevated to minor basilica status by St. John Paul II Oct. 12, 1990. This was renewed by the U.S. bishops Nov. 11, 2006.

Archbishop Gomez will lead the prayer of reconsecration May 1 at 3 p.m. (EDT) and has invited the bishops to join in from their respective dioceses and asked them to extend the invitation to the faithful in their dioceses for their participation.

This reconsecration follows the Latin American bishops' council who consecrated Latin America and the Caribbean to Our Lady of Guadalupe on Easter.

**Join in the reconsecration with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades during a livestream All-Schools Mass Friday, May 1, at 10 a.m.**

To participate, visit the diocesan YouTube page or find the livestream on Facebook.



*Most Holy Virgin Mary,*

Mother of the Church, you are the fairest fruit of God's redeeming love; you sing of the Father's mercy and accompany us with a mother's love. In this time of pandemic we come to you, our sign of sure hope and comfort.

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## Principal runs for school's seniors



Saint Joseph High School newsletter

In the wake of the global pandemic, Saint Joseph High School principal John Kennedy found an inspiring way to honor the Class of 2020: run a mile for each member of the senior class. The principal's journey began on April 5, when he ran his first four miles for the Class of 2020. To date, he has logged 68 miles while listing a senior's name for each mile ran on his Twitter account, @SJHS\_JKennedy. His goal is to log each mile by the students' final day of e-learning, which is May 19 for seniors and May 22 for all other students.

## No neighbor left behind



Provided by Justin Purdy

Working with pastor Father Thomas Shoemaker and the Northeast Indiana Red Cross, the St. Charles Borromeo Knights of Columbus Council 451 in Fort Wayne maintained course for a planned April 19 blood drive conducted under the "No Neighbor Is Left Behind" initiative set forth by the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council. Council 451 established rules for safe social distancing, and 71 units of blood were donated to the American Red Cross organization. Grand Knight Dr. Tom Ryan was commended during the drive for his can-do attitude and persistence to ensure the event became a reality.

## REST IN PEACE

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Arcola</b><br>Norman Burkett, 64,<br>St. Patrick       | <b>Granger</b><br>Dawn Rojics, 48,<br>St. Pius X             | George Listenberger,<br>87, St. Matthew<br>Cathedral |
| <b>Fort Wayne</b><br>Elfreda Anderson, 88,<br>St. Patrick | <b>South Bend</b><br>Joe Gerow, 86, St.<br>Matthew Cathedral | RaeMarie Matt, 63, St.<br>Matthew Cathedral          |
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| Phyllis Reed, 95,<br>St. Vincent de Paul                  |  | Florian Tyl, 96, Christ<br>the King                  |

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# Eleven myths about religious life

(CHICAGO) — Don't let common misunderstandings about sisters, brothers, and priests trip you up on your discernment journey. Here is the hard data on what's really happening in religious life today.

Religious life has often been mysterious to those outside its fold. To get an accurate picture of it, Vision's publisher, the National Religious Vocation Conference, commissioned a groundbreaking study in 2009 about newer members in U.S. religious orders. It shed light on many realities and destroyed a number of myths. Since that time, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, which conducted the study, has done further research confirming the facts behind the myths listed here.

## Myth #1: No one is entering religious life anymore

**Fact:** Since 2009, approximately 70 percent of religious communities have had at least one person in formation, that is, preparing for membership. Nearly 20 percent have two or more people in some stage of formation, that is, preparation for full membership.

Today's numbers are different from the large numbers that entered religious life in the 1950s and '60s, although many people have used this period as a point for comparison. Historically, the smaller number of entrants seen today is more normal for religious communities. In recent years more than 200 men and women a year have taken final

vows to join dozens of different communities. Even more begin the formal application process, with some 400-500 U.S. men and women each year beginning the entrance process, a period of serious discernment.

## Myth #2: Most new members are older or second-career candidates

**Fact:** The average age for entering a religious community is 30, and almost half are under age 25. The data also show that the average age for making final vows is 39. Although there always will be a place for older or second-career candidates in religious life, multiple studies confirm that an increasing number of young people are looking at religious life as a possible life option. The average age for discerning religious life is 19, and about half are under 18 when they first consider it.

## Myth #3: Conservative or traditional communities are the only communities attracting new members

**Fact:** Religious institutes that have a focused mission, who live in community, who have regular prayer and sacramental life, and who wear a habit show a high proportion of newer members. Not all of those characteristics are restricted to communities typically identified as "traditional." The 2009 study indicates that men and women are drawn

to all types of religious life. In the past several years, new entrants have been spread out among an average of 69 different communities.

## Myth #4: Women entering religious life want to wear habits

**Fact:** Both men and women seem to be drawn to habited communities according to the 2009 study and subsequent data, although a substantial minority is not interested in the habit. About two thirds of the newer members in 2009 said they belonged to a religious institute that wears a habit. Among those that responded affirmatively, a little more than half indicated that the habit is required in all or most circumstances.

Interestingly almost half of the men who belong to a religious institute that does not wear a habit say they would wear it if it were an option, compared to nearly a quarter of the women respondents.

## Myth #5: Entering religious life is a last resort

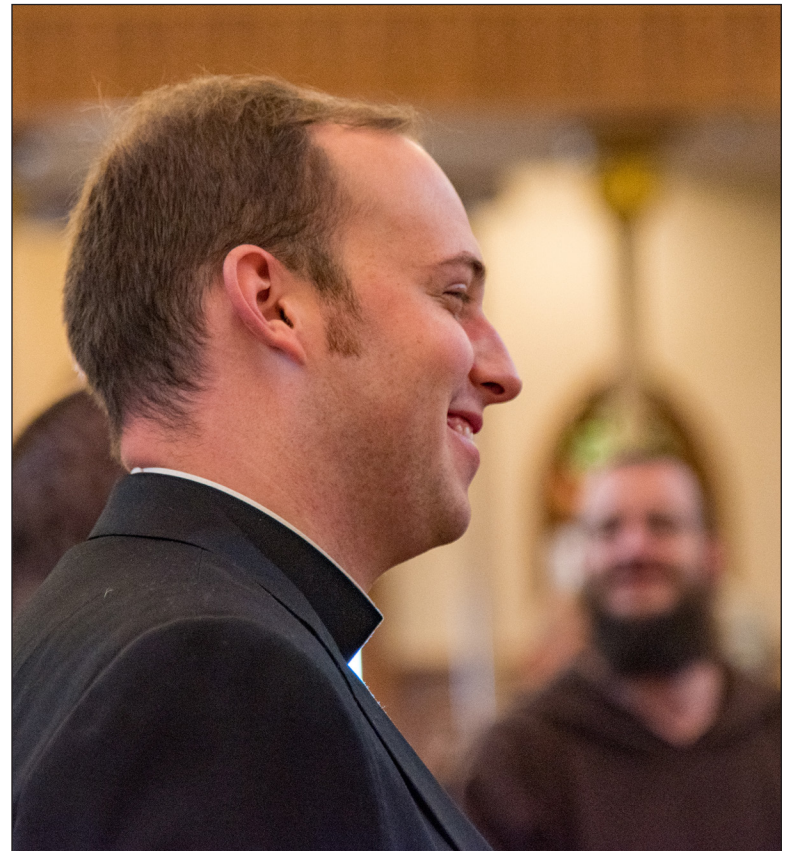
**Fact:** New members to religious life report having rich options available to them—in terms of career, education, and personal life choices. In the years since the 2009 study, research has confirmed that more than 70 percent of entrants to religious communities have at least a bachelor's degree before entering, with around one quarter having graduate degrees. Roughly nine out of 10 people taking final vows say that they were employed prior to entering religious life. Most also have ministry experience in a parish or social service setting.

## Myth #6: Younger religious are not interested in traditional devotional practices

**Fact:** Newer members rank daily Mass as very important to them. Their prayer style also expresses a strong preference for Liturgy of the Hours, faith-sharing, non-liturgical common prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and common Rosary and meditation.

## Myth #7: There are fewer religious communities

**Fact:** The rise and fall of religious institutes has always been part of the continuum of religious life. Once a need is met, unless a community adapts its founding charism to addressing the changing needs in the church, it is not uncommon for the community to end. Many congregations today that share the same charism have recently consolidated or merged into new



File photo

Spenser St. Louis attends a rehearsal in 2018 for the Mass of ordination at which he would become a priest of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

religious institutes. One little known fact is that since the end of Vatican II in 1965, approximately 175 new religious communities have been founded in the United States alone. Some were only short-lived, but others are canonically recognized as religious institutes by the church today.

## Myth #8: Religious communities are homogeneous and lack ethnic and cultural diversity

**Fact:** This may have been the case previously in the United States, but newer members are definitely changing the face of religious life in this country. As the U.S. church grows more diverse, so too do religious communities. Of those who made their final vows in 2017, 64 percent were white Anglo; the remaining third were 11 percent Latino, 18 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and 6 percent African or African American.

## Myth #9: New members would prefer to live alone

**Fact:** Men and women are coming to religious life not just for ministry, but also for common prayer and community living. Respondents to the 2009 study of newer members were much more likely to indicate a preference for living in a large (eight or more) or medium-sized (four to seven) community than living in a small community or alone. Recent research confirms that this desire for communal

living and communal prayer continues, especially for younger people.

## Myth #10: New members want to live with younger members

**Fact:** Although having a peer group of people close in age is very important to younger members, the evidence shows an extremely high percentage (93 percent) of newer members prefer to live in community with people of different ages. In addition newer members also show a preference for living with people of different cultures and who do different ministries.

## Myth #11: New members are drawn to the ministries of a community

**Fact:** Newer members indicate that they are drawn to religious life because of the example of the members, the spirituality, prayer life, community life, and mission of the institute. In fact, multiple studies show that the majority of new members were previously involved in ministry in a parish or other setting. Since newer members were already involved in ministry, clearly they are coming to religious life not just for ministry but for a way of life that is different from what they were living before.

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