



# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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# Court's abortion ruling continues 'cruel precedent,' says archbishop



CNS photo/Carlos Barria, Reuters

**Pro-life activists gather outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington June 29, 2020.**

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a 5-4 decision June 29, the Supreme Court ruled that a Louisiana law requiring that doctors who perform abortions have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals could not stand.

The opinion in *June Medical Services v. Russo*, written by Justice Stephen Breyer, said the case was “similar to, nearly identical with” a law in Texas that the court four years ago found to be a burden to women seeking abortion. Breyer was joined in the opinion by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and

Elena Kagan.

Breyer said the Louisiana law was unconstitutional because it posed a “substantial obstacle” for women seeking abortions while providing “no significant health-related benefits.”

The Texas case, *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, struck down the law with a dif-

ferent bench without Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. The court said the requirements imposed on abortion providers — to have hospital admitting privileges — put “a substantial burden” on women who were seeking abortions and the law

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# 'Racism is not a one-day thing': Black Catholics, diocese reflect on recent unrest

BY JODI MARLIN

**"R**eally, really sick in my heart." That was the reaction of Deacon Mel Tardy to the death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin May 25.

Deacon Tardy, who serves at St. Augustine Parish in South Bend, became emotional and upset at the widely circulated coverage of Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck as Floyd struggled to breathe.

"Just like everyone else, I think. I was upset with other incidents before that, but this was so brazen and open, in broad daylight. There were so many other people around, and other officers involved who didn't stop it or who didn't let other people stop and save George Floyd's life."

As communities across the U.S. act on the tragedy's mandate to sort out how to better identify and overcome racism, Deacon Tardy, chairman of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Black Catholic Advisory Board and president of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, has gotten "exponentially busier."

He's had the conversations before. Deacon Tardy and other BCAB members have been trained by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to educate others on how to discuss racial issues, and Tardy has helped lead cultural competency training with Catholic and secular groups that include the South Bend Police Department.

He believes that many times when people see a situation of racial discrimination, they think to themselves, "But what can be done?"

The protests and discussions going on in light of Floyd's death have given him some sense of hope, however. "It's one thing when you see evil happening and nobody reacts, it's another thing when you see evil happening and people do react." A sense of justice has been triggered, he believes, and he's encouraged by the size of the protests and the diversity they have reflected.

Several instances of deadly injustice against African Americans have happened in the last several years, he noted. But even if the suspect has done something criminal, the encounter shouldn't end in someone's death. "When I see things like that, I can see the injustice."

There are many other moments when officers of the law do their best to treat African Americans fairly and respectfully, but they're met with resistance from the community that thwarts a positive relationship.

"I do understand the difficulty



Eileen Bond

**A Fort Wayne crowd protests the death of George Floyd May 29. Although the nationwide demonstrations of frustration are controversial, they have given Deacon Mel Tardy a measure of hope in the fight against the sin of racism.**

the police are under. But I say, 'It's not you, it's this narrative of history.'

Systemic racism isn't easy to see, he understands. Deacon Tardy likens it to the visibility of the Holy Spirit: "You can't see it, but you can see the results." Those results include disparities in the places where whites vs. Blacks live, for example, their access to and quality of health care, the availability of food and even why they're dying at a disproportional rate from COVID-19.

"They're 'essential workers.' But not because they're really essential, they just are the ones who have to work because they need to make money."

## A wound that hasn't healed

During the last few weeks, BCAB member Wendy Summers feels like she's suffering from a form of something similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. The trauma that comes from being a Black person who lived through the civil rights unrest of the 1960s, was ostracized by neighbors in her all-white neighborhood and was harassed by police in almost every white community she has lived in; even feeling as "other" in her own church. "It's exhausting. That's the one word that describes best how I feel."

Reading Facebook posts has been the most taxing, especially insensitive posts by some members of the clergy. "Many people don't even know how hurtful their comments are." Summers discussed how difficult it is to

worship and pray with those who have such little empathy and compassion.

"Many do not know the real history of racism in our country or the Church. They don't understand white privilege. They don't want to have a dialogue on the subjects. How can anything change if we don't dialogue?"

At the same time, Summers recognizes and deeply appreciates some of the acts of kindness she's seen during this time — kind notes and phone calls received from local friends, people wanting to just check on her and her family and wanting to know how they can help. There was even an anonymous gift left on the front porch. "These are things that make you have faith that things can change."

## Moving hearts and minds

A lot of Catholics, at least a lot of African American Catholics, have come to expect "deafening silence" from the Church regarding racial inequality and racism, Deacon Tardy said. "When they're given that, it sort of affirms this sense that the Church doesn't care. When things like George Floyd's death happen, the Church does say something, but there has to be a constant mantra throughout because racism is not a one-day thing. It happens every day."

The advice he gives to those struggling with the issue is, first and foremost, to go to the Lord in prayer. "Prayer in a sense of an examination of conscience, and with heart to ask 'Lord, how

am I complicit in this social sin of racism?'"

People also need to be clear that racism is a sin, said Summers.

"The Church teaches in its 1979 pastoral letter on racism and reiterates in the 2018 pastoral letter *Open Wide Our Hearts*, that racism is a radical sin," said Deacon Tardy. "Not just any sin among many. And it's a radical sin that divides the human family ... a sin of the things we do, and also for the things we don't do. It's a sin of omission."

There are many things the Church does to address social justice. In fact, because of Catholic social teaching, it is well-positioned to be a leader on the issue. But that's not taken advantage of, he said.

"When we talk about Catholic social teaching and we teach social justice issues and morality, is race part of that conversation, or is it only about abortion? Because of the history of this country, race should always be part of it."

Summers agreed that Catholics are called to discuss the problems of racism so that hearts can be softened. She has thought of that particularly, she said, as she watched historic monuments be toppled recently. "Most Confederate monuments were built during the Jim Crow era to intimidate Black people. These monuments belong in museums that deal with the hatred of racism. I don't want to erase history, but I want it to be a history of truth."

Prayer and self-reflection also need to be ongoing and intentional, said Deacon Tardy, because racism isn't something that happens every once in a while.

"It's happening right now. Somewhere, someone is being given a higher rate on a mortgage, someone is not being given a job because someone is suspicious of their qualifications while someone else is being given a job because they are receiving the benefit of the doubt even though their qualifications might not be as strong. It's not just about acts of overt racism, like people burning crosses on your porch ... It's about these systemic things."

"The Church teaches that Christians should love each other and that everyone should be treated equally. But saying we should love each other isn't enough. Love is, 'I see the injustice, and I'm going to try to do something about it.' That love is mercy. It involves individuals and the Church saying, OK, we might be complicit in this."

Members of the clergy can't talk about the feast days of African American saints, because there currently isn't one, he said — although there are six



File photos

Members of the diocesan Black Catholic Advisory Board have been trained to speak to groups, including parishes, on how to have discussions about race. Some current or former members of the board are, from left, Cheryl Ashe, Wendy Summers, Deacon Mel Tardy, James Summers and Brother Roy Smith.

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candidates, including Servant of God Father Augustus Tolton. But their stories and example could be used in homilies.

Education is also needed in the seminary, he said, to help seminarians begin to see the universal Church by appreciating its already-extensive diversity. "How do we help them see that although it's the norm for priests to be white, it is not God's design that only whites be priests. And how do we build an Indigenous priesthood from the communities that are here?"

**Characterize relationships with mercy**

Deacon Frederick Everett is secretary of the diocesan Office

of Evangelization. As the events of the past few weeks unfolded, he said, there has been an evolution in his thinking.

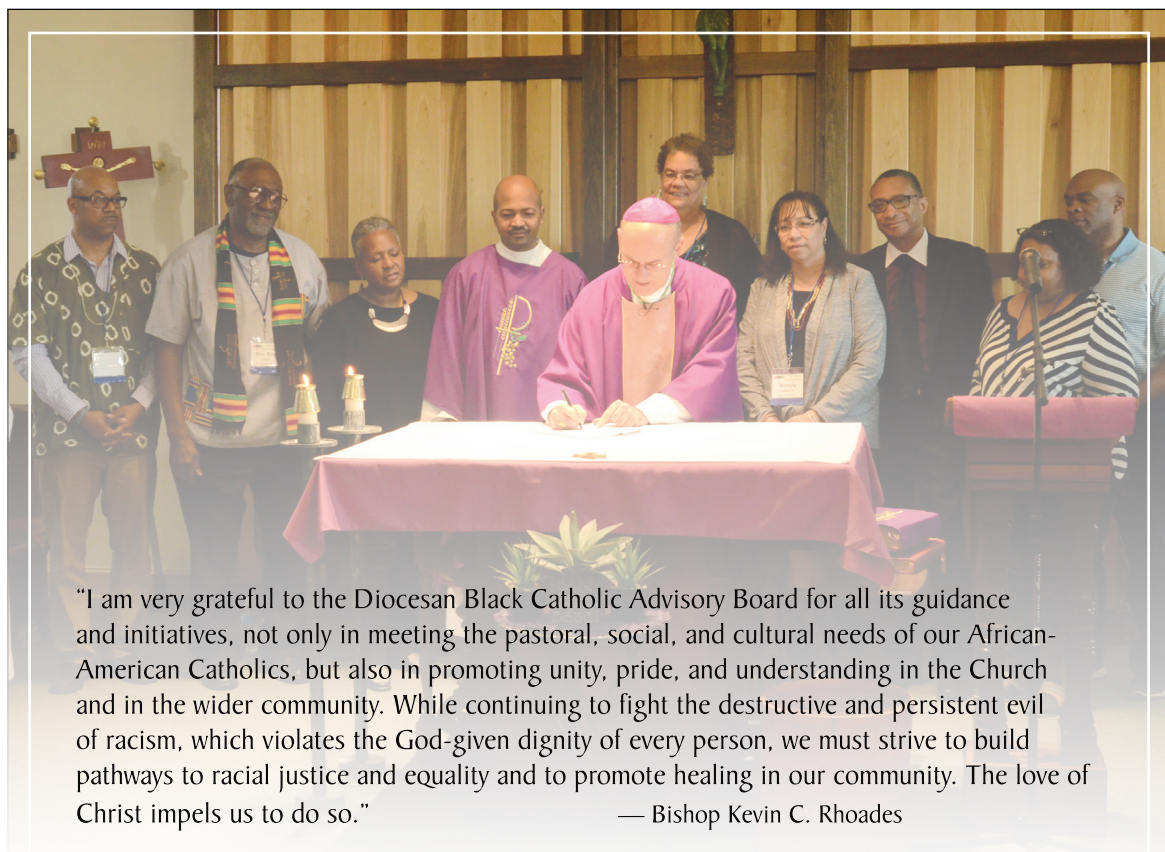
"At the beginning, it was clear there had to be immediate repercussions." He said when things evolved into mass protests and riots, at first he saw the reactions as somewhat unfortunate, but as he listened more to the voices of Black Americans speaking out about it, it deepened his understanding of just how widespread and pervasive the experience of discrimination really is and how it is looked at dismissively. "I've become much more appreciative of just how difficult it can be to be Black in this country."

The Office of Evangelization's ministries have engaged with efforts to address racism, including listening sessions, rosaries and discussions at Intentional Discipleship and Alpha gatherings.

Deacon Everett believes the

real answer lies inside every person. Certainly, systemic racism exists, he said, but it can camouflage the deeper issue.

"The fact is, you can have the best policies, the best programs, the best laws, but at the end, whether someone is treated with the respect they deserve and the love and mercy they deserve will really be decided in the heart, by people who have experienced the loving mercy of God and then naturally want to express that loving mercy to others — especially to those who are marginalized, those who are discriminated against, those who are belittled in the eyes of society whether that be a Black person, whether that be an unborn child. If they really encounter the love of God in their heart, they will want to radiate that love to others and speak out on behalf of those who are being mistreated or disrespected."



"I am very grateful to the Diocesan Black Catholic Advisory Board for all its guidance and initiatives, not only in meeting the pastoral, social, and cultural needs of our African-American Catholics, but also in promoting unity, pride, and understanding in the Church and in the wider community. While continuing to fight the destructive and persistent evil of racism, which violates the God-given dignity of every person, we must strive to build pathways to racial justice and equality and to promote healing in our community. The love of Christ impels us to do so."

— Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades



**Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades**

- Sunday, July 12: 1 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Avilla
- Tuesday, July 14: 10 a.m. — Blessing of new location and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Christ Child Society of South Bend, Town and Country Shopping Plaza, Mishawaka
- Tuesday, July 14: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Patrick Church, Ligonier
- Thursday, July 16: 9 a.m. — Mass for St. Jude Parish Youth Group, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne
- Thursday, July 16: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Fort Wayne
- Friday, July 17: 12:30 p.m. — Closing Mass for Catholic Youth Summer Camp, Damascus Catholic Mission Campus, Centerburg, Ohio
- Friday, July 17: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Fort Wayne
- Saturday, July 18: 9 a.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Fort Wayne
- Sunday, July 19: 2 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Henry Church, Fort Wayne
- Monday, July 20: 5:30 p.m. — Baccalaureate Mass for Bishop Dwenger High School, Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne
- Tuesday, July 21: 1 p.m. — Meeting and Prayer with Priests Ordained in Past Five Years, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
- Thursday, July 23: 6 p.m. — Baccalaureate Mass for Saint Joseph High School, St. Pius X Church, Granger
- Thursday, July 23: 7:45 p.m. — Baccalaureate Mass for Saint Joseph High School, St. Pius X Church, Granger
- Friday, July 24: 10:30 a.m. — Mass for Saints and Scholars High School Theology Institute, Holy Cross College, Notre Dame

**Justices fail to correct a serious mistake in latest abortion ruling**

BY RICHARD W. GARRETT

On Monday, a divided Supreme Court handed down its decision in a case called June Medical Services v. Russo, which involves a Louisiana law requiring abortionists to hold "active admitting privileges" at a nearby hospital. By a vote of 5-4, the justices ruled that this duly enacted regulation violates the Constitution of the United States.

The court's decision, and the fact that Chief Justice John Roberts — a judicial conservative who, until now, has consistently voted to uphold reasonable abortion restrictions — voted with the court majority, have deeply disappointed not only pro-life Americans but all those who understand how badly the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision has distorted and degraded our law, our politics and our political morality.

The June Medical Services case is a sequel of sorts to another, similar one. In 2016, a few months after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, a different five-justice majority struck down a Texas admitting-privileges requirement, concluding that it unconstitutionally burdened the legal right to abortion. A question, then, in June Medical Services was whether the Louisiana statute and its effects

should be regarded any differently. Justice Stephen Breyer, joined by the court's three other more liberal members, determined that it should not. And Roberts agreed. Louisiana's health-and-safety regulation, he concluded, is "nearly identical to the Texas law struck down four years ago" and it "imposes a burden on access to abortion just as severe as that imposed by the Texas law."

For the chief justice, the key appears to be the doctrine of stare decisis, which requires courts, "absent special circumstances, to treat like cases alike." This doctrine is generally regarded as a useful and appropriate way of achieving stability in the law, respecting judgments reached in the past, instilling humility in judges and avoiding the appearance of judicial arbitrariness or partisanship. The law's meaning and effect, so the argument goes, should not twist and turn — especially in cases involving the Constitution — with the court's membership or the president's party. And so, even though Roberts had voted to uphold the Texas law in 2016, he cited respect for precedent as his reason for invalidating the similar Louisiana law in 2020.

Of course, stare decisis is not an absolute rule. Every justice —

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wasn't necessary to protect women's health.

"The court's failure to recognize the legitimacy of laws prioritizing women's health and safety over abortion business interests continues a cruel precedent," said Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities.

"Even as we seek to end the brutality of legalized abortion, we still believe that the women who seek it should not be further harmed and abused by a callous, profit-driven industry," he added.

In the Louisiana case, Chief Justice John Roberts filed an opinion concurring in the judgment of the four justices voting to strike down this law even though four years ago, he joined the dissenting opinion in the Texas decision. Last year, he sided with the justices who agreed to stop the Louisiana law from going into effect while its challengers pursued their appeal.

"The Louisiana law imposes

a burden on access to abortion just as severe as that imposed by the Texas law, for the same reasons," Roberts said, adding: "Therefore, Louisiana's law cannot stand under our precedents."

He said the legal doctrine known as "stare decisis" — which obligates courts to follow the precedent of similar cases — "requires us, absent special circumstances, to treat like cases alike."

In his dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas said the court's decision "perpetuates its ill-founded abortion jurisprudence by enjoining a perfectly legitimate state law and doing so without jurisdiction."

He also said the court should revisit its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion. "Roe is grievously wrong for many reasons," he wrote, emphasizing that its "core holding — that the Constitution protects a woman's right to abort her unborn child — finds no support in the text of the Fourteenth Amendment."

Louisiana state Sen. Katrina Jackson, a Democrat, who was the author of the 2014 Unsafe

Abortion Protection Act at the center of this case, said the court's action was a "tragic decision that continues its practice of putting the interests of for-profit abortion businesses ahead of the health and safety of women."

Supporters of the Louisiana law said it was a necessary regulation to guarantee women's health and safety while its critics argued that the law placed unnecessary burdens on abortion providers and made it more difficult for women to get abortions.

More than 70 friend-of-the-court briefs were filed on both sides of this case with health care professionals, researchers,

lawmakers, states, and religious and advocacy groups alike weighing in. Catholics groups that filed briefs in support of the state law included: the U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Thomas More Society and the National Association of Catholic Nurses along with the National Catholic Bioethics Center.

Members of Congress filed two briefs on opposing sides.

In his June 29 statement, Archbishop Naumann said: "As we grieve this decision

correct the "grave injustice" of its major abortion decisions and recognize the "right to life for unborn human beings."

The archbishop also urged "people of faith to pray for women seeking abortion, often under enormous pressure, that they will find alternatives that truly value them and the lives of their children."

O. Carter Snead, law professor at the University of Notre Dame and director of the university's Center for Ethics and Culture, said the court "has once again overstepped its constitutionally defined role and robbed the people of this country the authority to govern themselves — even at the margins — on this vital and deeply divisive matter."

"The court has undermined the rule of law, done further violence to the Constitution, and has thus badly damaged its own legitimacy," he said, adding: "This is a sad day for the court and the nation."

*"As we grieve this decision and the pregnant women who will be harmed by it, we continue to pray and fight for justice for mothers and children."*

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH F. NAUMANN

and the pregnant women who will be harmed by it, we continue to pray and fight for justice for mothers and children." He also stressed that the court should

**RULING, from page 3**

including, in several important and high-profile cases, Roberts — has voted at one time or another and for one reason or another to abandon an earlier case. There is general agreement that it is, all things considered, a good thing for the law to be settled, but it is just as clear that, sometimes, errors need to be corrected.

Even if it were the case — and Justice Samuel Alito, in dissent, showed why it is not — that the Louisiana and Texas laws imposed the same "burdens," the 2016 *Whole Women's Health* case was wrongly decided and should have been discarded. The chief justice is right to emphasize judicial humility and to respect earlier courts' conclusions, but he erred in treating a four-year-old mistake as written in stone. He is right to insist that "a weighing of costs and benefits of an abortion restriction [is not] a job for courts," but he neglected his own insight by second-guessing the people of Louisiana. He has overturned wrong precedents in the past, and he should have voted to do so here.

There are, of course, bigger and deeper problems with Monday's ruling. First, as Justice Samuel Alito reminded readers, the June *Medical Services* decision is the latest in a depressingly long string of cases in which "the abortion rights recognized in this court's decisions is used like a bulldozer to flatten legal rules that stand in our way." The late Justice Scalia referred regularly to this dynamic as "the abortion distortion."

The decision is also wrong, as Justice Clarence Thomas eloquently stated, "for a far simpler reason: The Constitution does not constrain the states' ability to regulate or even to prohibit



CNS photo/Jonathan Bachman, Reuters

**A memorial for victims of abortion is seen in Pine Prairie, La., March 26, 2020.**

abortion." Forty-seven years and tens of millions of abortions later, the sweeping and historically ungrounded abortion right invented in *Roe v. Wade* is, and has always been, he said, "a creation that should be undone." Although the court was not asked by the state in June *Medical Services* to reconsider and reject *Roe*, other parties will, and should. Thomas' opinion shows how the justices should respond.

Disingenuous questions, and slippery answers, about *Roe* and abortion have become a familiar feature of judicial confirmation hearings in the Senate Judiciary Committee. For many years, federal judges have been nominated, supported and opposed because of predictions about how they would rule in abortion-related cases. This is unfortunate, but it is also unavoidable. Once the court announced a constitutional right to procure and perform a procedure that most Americans

view — at least sometimes — as morally troubling and that many regard as a gravely wrong assault on the dignity and equality of the most vulnerable among us, we could hardly be surprised that people care very much, and politicians purport to, about the views of the court's members.

The Supreme Court, once again, and notwithstanding the addition of several judicial conservatives, has failed to correct its serious mistake. However, legislators and citizens alike will, and should, embrace the words of the late Father Richard John Neuhaus: "We shall not weary, we shall not rest, until every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life."

*Richard W. Garnett is the Paul J. Schierl/Fort Howard Corporation Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame.*

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# Federal executions in Indiana said to 'add violence on top of violence'

BY NATALIE HOEFER

INDIANAPOLIS (CNS) — A Department of Justice announcement in mid-June that it would resume federal executions beginning at a federal prison within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis drew words of remorse and prayers from Catholic leaders for the crime victims of as well as for the inmates slated to die.

In offering the prayers, Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson acknowledged in a statement "the suffering and sorrow" of the family and friends of the victims, and said that "we must do what we can to help them heal from the deep and personal wounds they have suffered."

At the same time, he cited the words of Pope Francis' August 2018 revision of paragraph 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which states that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

The archbishop's statement came in response to the Justice Department's plans to resume executions at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, located in the archdiocese.

Five executions were originally slated to take place in December 2019 and January 2020. One inmate received a stay of execution. In the other four cases, lawyers challenged a new protocol for the executions, resulting in a preliminary injunction.

In April, an appeals court overruled the preliminary injunction, leading to the June 15 rescheduling of four of the executions of Danny Lee, Wesley Ira Purkey, Dustin Lee Honken and Keith Dwayne Nelson. The men were convicted of killing children in separate crimes. Three executions are scheduled to take place in July and one is scheduled for August.

Attorney General William Barr had announced last year the federal government was reinstating the federal death penalty. At the same time, he said the executions would use a single drug instead of a three-drug protocol carried out in most recent federal executions and by several states. The planned use of the one-drug method is what led to the court challenge by some of the federal death-row inmates.

Once the appeals court ruled in the case, Barr rescheduled the executions. On June 29, the U.S. Supreme Court said it would not hear the federal death-row inmates' appeal in their challenge of the method to be used in their upcoming executions.

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called on President



CNS photo/Paul Haring

**Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis arrives in procession for Pope Francis' celebration of Mass marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 12, 2019.**

Donald Trump's administration to reverse its decision, saying June 30 "to oppose the death penalty is not to be 'soft on crime.' Rather it is to be strong on the dignity of life."

Archbishop Thompson explained that Pope Francis' revision of the catechism is consistent with the teachings of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. "The church has consistently held up the dignity of the person and sacredness of life from the moment of conception to natural death," he said.

Rather than condoning criminal behavior and heinous acts of violence, he said, the "underlying Catholic teaching on this particular matter is grave

concern for the care of souls of all involved — including the judge, jury, prison personnel, families of these officials and society itself. Taking the life of any human being, even one who is guilty of grave crimes against humanity, weighs on the conscience of both individuals and society as a whole."

Earlene Peterson has publicly opposed the execution of Lee, who was convicted of the killings of her daughter and granddaughter. Peterson, now 80 and a supporter of Trump, asked the president to stop the execution.

"We feel Mr. Lee's execution would dishonor the memory of my daughter Nancy Ann and my granddaughter Sarah Elizabeth," Peterson said in a statement June 24. She urged Trump and Barr to commute Lee's sentence to life in prison.

When Deacon Steven Gretencord heard the news of the rescheduled executions, he said he felt "profound sadness." Deacon Gretencord has ministered to men on death row at the Terre Haute facility for nearly a decade.

"Our country has just gone through a time of terrible turmoil in the racial confrontations because of our lack of respect of human life," he told *The Criterion*, newspaper of the Indianapolis archdiocese. "And now our country is doing it again, not respecting lives by carrying out executions. We're trying to bring about healing, and we don't bring about healing by killing."

"That's where my profound sadness comes in," Deacon Gretencord said. "The fact that I know these men, yes, that hurts. But on a spiritual level, the concept of execution makes no sense. It's archaic. It serves no purpose. It's not a deterrent. That's been proven time and time again."

Providence Sister Barbara Battista, who serves as jus-

tice promoter for the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, said she also was "surprised" by the timing of the Justice Department's announcement.

"I do think it's important to put this (rescheduling of the executions) in the context of the violence that has been and is being inflicted on communities of color across the nation," she said. "Eyes are being opened across the country to the depth of the violence and how long it's been happening."

Sister Barbara said her order and others see the decision "as another act of violence."

"We know the criminal justice system is deeply flawed, racially biased, and in fact, innocent persons have been executed," she said. "It's not debatable. The facts are there. To resume executions in the midst of this awakening just adds more violence on top of violence."

Terre Haute Death Penalty

Resistance, to which Sister Barbara belongs, is working on ways for citizens to petition against the Justice Department decision and on plans for those who wish to pray or protest to be allowed on the prison grounds during the executions should they occur.

Meanwhile, Deacon Gretencord said, the focus must remain on the dignity of all human life.

"Yes, these men made terrible mistakes," he said. "For some, it was a matter of passion. And yes, sometimes it was even cold-blooded. But they were mistakes."

"They're human beings. In order to teach that all life matters, we have to live it, we have to believe it and act on it."

"Their lives are just as important as any other life."

*Hoefer is a staff writer at The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.*



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## Cardinal Dolan: Broad criticism of NYPD unfairly tarnishes police officers

NEW YORK (CNS) — Utilizing personal stories from his interactions with the New York Police Department, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan said in a newspaper column that the city's police officers deserve better treatment and broad support on the job. Writing July 1 in the New York Post, Cardinal Dolan said police officers deserve to be recognized for the heroic work they carry out daily to protect the city. "Our valiant police officers have one of the most perilous, stressful duties around, and from what I have seen in my nearly dozen years here, they do it with care, compassion and competence," the cardinal wrote. He said "one of the tumors on our beloved nation, past and present" is how often African Americans are targeted, profiled, caricatured, blamed and suspected "as the cause of all evil and woe in society." And he urged people now not make police officers the object of similar broadsides. "That is raw injustice," Cardinal Dolan wrote of this treatment of African Americans. "But for God's sake, let's not now, in a similar way, stereotype the NYPD."

## Judge blocks law requiring 24-hour waiting period before getting abortion

DAVENPORT, Iowa (CNS) — A Johnson County district court judge has temporarily blocked the enforcement of the state's new law requiring women to wait 24 hours before having an abortion, the Iowa Catholic Conference reported July 1. Gov. Kim Reynolds signed the bill into law June 29. The injunction will continue while the suit against the law brought by Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union takes its course. Iowa Catholic leaders praised the legislation while the bill's opponents argued the new law is unconstitutional because it violates due process and equal protection rights of pregnant women. Opponents also said the manner in which the bill passed at the end of the session did not allow for public debate, apnews.com reported June 30. The judge's decision prevented the law from taking effect July 1. Introduced late in this year's pandemic-shortened session, the measure states that a physician performing an abortion shall obtain written certification from the pregnant woman at least 24 hours prior to doing the abortion. Existing law requires a pregnant woman to undergo an ultrasound test so that she has an opportunity to see an image of her unborn child before making a decision about that child's life. In Iowa, abortion is not allowed after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Celebrating safely at the nation's capital



CNS photo/Rhina Guidos

Fireworks light up the sky around the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington July 4, 2020. Officials in the nation's capital encouraged residents to watch Fourth of July fireworks at home as a way to prevent spread of the coronavirus.

## John Feister of Glenmary Challenge wins St. Francis de Sales Award

WASHINGTON (CNS) — John Feister, assistant editor of Glenmary Challenge, is the recipient of the 2020 St. Francis de Sales Award from the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada. The award — named for the patron saint of writers and journalists — recognizes "outstanding contributions to Catholic journalism" and is the highest honor given by the CPA. The announcement was made July 2, via a pre-recorded video released as a premiere on social media during the 2020 Catholic Media Conference, which was held virtually using digital technology due to the coronavirus pandemic. "It's an honor to receive this prestigious award," Feister said in his video acceptance message. He spent much of the message thanking family, friends and colleagues who had supported him over the decades in his craft in print, broadcast and digital media. "In a media environment where ongoing change becomes our new normal, there is

someone who has for more than a quarter century led the charge to make the media organizations he has worked with better and has collaborated with and shown his colleagues in the Catholic press ways forward," said Mark Lombard, the 2019 winner of the St. Francis de Sales Award, in his nomination of Feister.

## Concert honoring St. John Paul II centenary available online

WASHINGTON (CNS) — An concert honoring the centennial of St. John Paul II's birth is now available online. The concert, featuring some of the United States and Poland's top classical music artists, was held June 21. St. John Paul's birth was May 28. The concert features introductory remarks from Polish Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poznan, president of Poland's bishops' conference, and Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York. The performances can be seen at <https://jp2concert.com>. The total running time is two hours and 47 minutes. The musical program begins with pianist Szymon Nehring, in a church courtyard, playing a solo piano rendition of "Etude

in C# Minor, No. 25, Op. 9," written by one of Poland's musical treasures, Fredric Chopin. The program, a combination of sacred and classical music, includes Metropolitan Opera soloist Angel Joy Blue's rendition of Franz Schubert's "Ave Maria"; two other Metropolitan Opera soloists, MaryAnn McCormick and Lisette Oropesa, performing Mozart's "Panis Angelicus" and "Laudate Dominum"; Metropolitan Opera featured performer Latonia Moore singing the "Ave Maria" from Verdi's opera "Otello"; and Brandie Sutton's performance of the "Lamb of God" to the accompaniment of David Sneed, who has performed with such artists as Aretha Franklin, Wynton Marsalis, Jessye Norman, Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross.

## Indiana priest suspended after derogatory remarks about protesters

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, Indiana, has suspended a priest from public ministry after the pastor referred to Black Lives Matters protesters as "maggots

and parasites" in a Sunday bulletin. In a July 1 statement issued by the diocese, Bishop Timothy L. Doherty said that "Father Theodore Rothrock is suspended from public ministry," citing the priest's June 28 bulletin article. Though the article the bishop refers to was on the website for St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church in Carmel, Indiana, it has since been removed and replaced with a "response and clarification" from the priest saying it was not his intention "to offend anyone, and I am sorry that my words have caused any hurt to anyone. However, we must also be fully aware that there are those who would distort the Gospel for their own misguided purposes. People are afraid, as I pointed out, rather poorly I would admit, that there are those who feed on that fear to promote more fear and division," Father Rothrock wrote. The diocese's statement said the bishop "expresses pastoral concern for the affected communities" and said that the suspension offers an opportunity for pastoral discernment "for the good of the diocese and for the good of Father Rothrock." A local group had called for Father Rothrock's removal and had planned to protest outside the church.

## Providence College cemetery reconsecrated after vandalism attack

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (CNS) — Two days after a vandal defaced some of the gravestones and a central cross with swastikas at the Dominican Cemetery at Providence College, Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Providence reconsecrated and rededicated the sacred grounds where Dominican friars have been buried since the college's founding in 1917. About 75 friars and members of the Providence College community gathered for the solemn ceremony June 24 when the bishop blessed the grounds with holy water and incense while offering prayers of consecration. "Today we come to pray that God will cleanse us. That God will cleanse our world, our nation, our community, our church and this place of vandalism from all sense of anger and division, violence and vandalism, leaving a kind of peace that only the presence of God in the end can give us," Bishop Tobin said in the tree-shaded cemetery grounds between the college's Center for Arts, Culture and Social Justice and its athletic fields. Dominican Father Brian Shanley, who stepped down as president June 30 after 15 years in the post, greeted Bishop Tobin at the cemetery entrance, and remarked that the moment was one of healing. "We as a community all felt violated by what happened the other night and this is a chance for us to heal ourselves as a community and this holy ground," Father Shanley said, adding they also should pray for the man now charged with doing the damage.

# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## New mausoleum blessed at Catholic Cemetery



Jennifer Barton

Father Tom Shoemaker, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, blesses the new St. Charles Borromeo Mausoleum at Catholic Cemetery in Fort Wayne. During the blessing, Father Shoemaker spoke of the good works that the saint performed in ministering to those suffering from the plague and in burying the dead.

## Retiring Serra Club chaplain honored at reception



Provided by Randy Blum

Members of the Serra Club of South Bend attended the St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish reception in New Carlisle June 21 for retiring pastor Father Paul McCarthy. The Serrans came to thank Father McCarthy for his service as chaplain of the club for the past 12 years. From left are Randy Blum and his wife, Debby, of Corpus Christi Parish, South Bend; Father McCarthy; Ray Vales and his wife, Susan, of St. Pius X Parish, Granger; and Esther Cyr of Christ the King Parish, South Bend.

## St. Vincent de Paul Society of Fort Wayne welcomes first executive director

FORT WAYNE

— The board of directors of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Fort Wayne welcomes its first executive director, Lara Schreck, to the organization. Schreck will lead the 23 parish conferences of the Fort Wayne District as they provide help to those in poverty with food, clothing, transportation, furniture, rent or utility payments and household repairs.

Schreck comes to the society with five years of nonprofit experience in the areas of fundraising and program management. Most recently, she was the fundraising manager of Wellspring Interfaith



LARA SCHRECK

Social Services, where her responsibilities included grant writing, donor relations and new funding research. She was the first program director of the Wellspring Shoppe, a local clothing bank, where she actively recruited volunteers and marketed the new program to clients and donors in the community.

“We’ve been searching for our first executive director for several months,” stated Jack Dunifon, board president. “Lara’s experience and dedication to serving others make her the right person to help advance the mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.”

Schreck has extensive volunteer experience while serving in board leadership positions. She has a Master of Science degree from Northwestern University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Notre Dame.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Fort Wayne is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1944. It currently serves over 40,000 individuals each year.

## Serra Club inducts new members



Provided by Randy Blum

Two new members were inducted into Serra Club of South Bend on June 17. From left, Ann Humphrey; Ray Vales, club president; Maria Siqueira; and Father Daryl Rybicki, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish and chaplain of the Serra Club. Both new members belong to St. Monica Parish, Mishawaka. The Serra Club fosters and promotes vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

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# Businesses bear fruit for Catholic community

BY JENNIFER BARTON

In a capitalist society, businesses can have a great deal of influence for good or for ill, and Catholic-owned businesses have a special duty to put into practice the values and morals of the Catholic Church. There are many businesses in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend that think outside the box in supporting Catholic churches, schools and ministries.

One example is Notre Dame Federal Credit Union located — naturally — on the university's campus. Though the credit union was founded in 1941 by Catholic economics professors and leases an office on the campus, it is not affiliated with the university or limited to persons connected with Notre Dame, said Bob Kloska, chief partnership officer at Notre Dame FCU.

Kloska is an enthusiastic proponent of Catholic credit unions. "Why I love our mission is that it's a great marriage for me with my faith and my professional skills and I love serving the Church and empowering the Church in its mission of everything the Church does," Kloska said. As a nonprofit, any excess earnings they make are filtered back into the local Catholic community, benefiting such organizations as the Christ Child Society, Rekindle the Fire as well as providing numerous school scholarships.

Catholic credit unions have a long history throughout the world. Popes have championed them; churches have organized



them and even saints like Pope St. Pius X — prior to his papacy — have founded them. At one time, there were more than 800 Catholic credit unions in the United States, though that number has dropped to less than 100, according to Kloska. Notre Dame FCU is the only Catholic credit union within the diocese.

Its reach is far wider, with roughly 57,000 members in all 50 states, many of whom bank online. Their branches in the Midwest are the most active, and an office has been opened in Phoenix, Arizona. Credit unions differ from banks in their non-profit, member-owned status, where profit margins are not at the heart of their business model.

"Our philosophy is that it's not transactional, it's relational," Kloska stated. He stressed that Notre Dame FCU is intent on meeting people where they are and walking with them in times of need.

This has never proven truer than in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kloska relates how many parishes and dioceses from all over the country have

contacted Notre Dame FCU for assistance in filing for Paycheck Protection Program loans. "A lot of dioceses' banks were not serving them, and I was taking phone calls from bishops who were asking me to please take on their diocese ... we took on everyone we could."

That included some parishes in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend and around 15 other dioceses, along with various Catholic radio stations, colleges and other apostolates. That is not to say that Notre Dame FCU said yes to everyone, as there were some larger archdioceses that simply were too big to take on financially.

And Kloska is not the only businessman who sees his work as a partnership with the Catholic sphere. Brothers Dan and Deacon Jim Fitzpatrick own Quality Dining Inc., a chain of 229 restaurants in seven states, including Burger Kings, Chili's and Papa Vinos. Though the restaurant business is not strictly built on a framework of Catholic social teaching as a credit union could claim, Quality Dining is known throughout the diocese for its mission of assisting schools through their annual "You Can Lend a Hand" coupon book campaign.

"It has always been our attempt to help Catholic schools be as affordable as possible," said Dan Fitzpatrick, chairman and CEO of Quality Dining. To date, the campaign has raised over \$11.5 million in its 38-year history. "It started out humble and small and has grown ... This allows the schools to do things



File photo

**Quality Dining Inc. Chairman and CEO Daniel Fitzpatrick, along with three of his brothers, began the You Can Lend a Hand program in 1982 as a way to unify local Catholic schools.**

supplementary, such as buying updated textbooks, technology, taking field trips, and recently have allowed some schools to begin offering classes in ESL for school parents."

Schools that have needed unplanned maintenance have been able to make necessary repairs without going into debt because of this campaign. Last year, a collaborative effort was made between St. Vincent de Paul School in Fort Wayne and St. Bernard School in Wabash. After St. Bernard lost its biggest supporter, students at St. Vincent sold coupon books in an effort to aid their fellow Catholic school, raising over \$5,000.

Such benefactors of Catholic schools are vital to society in raising younger generations of Catholics to contribute to the greater good of society. Carl Loesch, secretary for Catholic Education, said that "a lot of times, public schools talk about college and career readiness. My initial reaction is, no we're not preparing kids for that, we're preparing them for heaven; to be holy like the saints. But there is a practical side to it. Hopefully, we're training people to be good mothers and fathers, good lawyers, doctors, teachers, plumbers, electricians, whatever, who lead good lives and contribute to society and serve other people."

The role models that young people are exposed to provide

examples for how to live their adult lives in service to God, the Church and to others within the context of their own vocations in life. "I hope that our schools are preparing young people to use their gifts and talents; if they have business acumen — great, go be a wonderful businessperson, contribute to community, be a leader. And you don't have to leave your faith at the door."

Loesch easily listed many additional businesses that model good stewardship of the blessings God has bestowed on them. The Tippmann Group, Schenkel Construction, and Reibold and Anderson were just a sampling of companies that he pointed out for their philanthropy toward Catholic organizations. James Hoch, AIA, Principal and President of Hoch Associates architectural firm has supported building projects at Bishop Luers and has served on their school

board as well as the diocesan school board.

Supporting Catholic churches and schools, radio and other media, ministries and faith apostolates are all part of living as faithful Catholic professionals, helping to evangelize beyond the church doors and stand as ethical business models. Businesses such as these prove that one's calling in life does not have to be in a religious setting to serve God and others.

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# Memory of couple who escaped Nazis lives through endowment

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

Three students at St. Jude School, Fort Wayne, received a unique grant from a family at the parish.

Peter, Bosco and Augustine Cing, brothers who immigrated from Vietnam, received the first annual Elisabeth and Nikolaus Reitzug Spirit of Hope Endowment through the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana.

The Reitzug family established the grant in memory of their parents who escaped Nazi Germany during World War II.

Elisabeth and Nikolaus Reitzug "worked hard to make a new life for themselves here in this country," said Sheila McGarry, who is part of the

social action committee at St. Jude Parish.

The St. Jude Parish Social Action Committee, of which Elisabeth was a long-standing member, plans to distribute this award to immigrant families annually.

"The intent is for the committee to identify and assist hard-working individuals and families who are chasing their hopes and dreams by emigrating to this country, but are going through a season of need," McGarry continued.

Msgr. Robert Schulte, Father Peter Dee De, St. Jude principal Mike Obergfell and McGarry awarded the grant to the three boys during a small presentation at the family's home.



Provided by Mike Obergfell

Lian Cing and her children, Peter, Bosco and Augustine, were given a \$1,000 grant through the St. Jude social action committee during a presentation at their home. Msgr. Robert Schulte, committee member Sheila McGarry and Father Peter Dee De awarded the three boys the Elisabeth and Nikolaus Reitzug Spirit of Hope Endowment, an annual immigrant grant established in memory of the couple who escaped Nazi Germany during World War II.



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One year later:

# Couple reminisce on their journey to the Catholic Church

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Sometimes God requires worldly sacrifices to give His children a greater good. Among them, converts to the Catholic faith sometimes face resistance from their friends and family when they unite themselves to Christ's Church.

Troy and Elizabeth Cummins were conscious of this when their search for truth pulled them from their work in Protestant ministry toward the Catholic faith. The couple completed the sacraments of initiation into the Catholic Church last year.

They met in college at Ashland University, a Christian college in Ohio, and were married at the end of their time there. Three years later, Troy decided to go into the seminary at the same university to pursue a master of divinity degree, planning to go into pastoral ministry thereafter.

He said it was there that he was first introduced to "the depth of the history of the Catholic Church – the first time I read some of the early saints and Church fathers and I really fell in love with it."

After seminary, the family moved to Manassas, Virginia, where Elizabeth met a woman whose Catholic faith had a strong and lasting impact on her. Both women were hired to work in the nursery at a Methodist church, but neither was of the Methodist denomination. "It was interesting to talk to her, and she was really passionate about her faith. It was really good for me to see," Elizabeth remembered.

Wanting to return to a country setting, they moved back to Ohio and continued to study Christian faiths.

Troy eventually had to leave his role in pastoral ministry in a Protestant church, though, due



Provided by Elizabeth Cummins

Leaving behind their Protestant background, Elizabeth and Troy Cummins entered into full communion with the Catholic Church at the 2019 Easter Vigil at St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Angola. Their youngest child, daughter Ella, standing between her parents, was baptized into the faith the same evening.

to his restlessness when it came to faith. "I was at a point where I didn't think I could continue to do that with some of my searching." He found a job as an administrator in a Christian school, while Elizabeth began teaching elementary reading at a public school. It took around 10 years for them to let go of their Protestant roots and grasp the foundation of the Catholic Church, and they began attending St. Anthony of Padua Church across the state line in Angola.

St. Anthony of Padua was founded in the Franciscan tradition and is served by the Conventual Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Consolation. That Franciscan spirituality drew Troy and Elizabeth to the parish.

They had long spoken of "trying out" the Catholic Church, and both of them "fell in love with it; with the reverence of it and just the depth of it, for me. And I love Father Bob and Father Bernie. The people were so loving," Elizabeth remarked. They attended St. Anthony for a year before starting the Rite of Christian Initiation process.

Troy describes his journey as a gradual conversion of study and reading. "Scripture has always been really important to me. I came to the point of understanding or recognizing how involved the Catholic Church has been in protecting that tradition. It just all fell together. The theology, in my mind, made sense. It had all fit together for a while, but then my heart kind of caught

up with it."

As faith has been central in the Cummins' marriage from the beginning, it was natural that they would speak of the things they were both learning throughout those years and share them with their children. Their youngest child, daughter Ella, became interested in the Catholic faith and was baptized at the same time her parents joined the Church. She and Troy were glad to see Ella join the Catholic Church with them. Their older sons, though neither is Catholic, also attended the Easter Vigil last year to support their parents and sister.

Elizabeth said that the RCIA process was "a really good experience for us, we looked forward to that time every week

on Thursday nights and it was really weird this year when we didn't go on Thursday nights." Elizabeth describes her confirmation at Easter Vigil as a "rock-star moment," filled with such joy that neither of them could get to sleep until after 2:30 in the morning. "It just feels like after 46 years that I'm finally home where I'm supposed to be."

Conversion was not an easy thing for the couple in many ways. Troy was forced to leave his position as an administrator in the Christian school where he worked. Troy recalls that while many of their friends were respectful of their decision, those friends distanced themselves from the Cummins when they became Catholic. Elizabeth already had many Catholic friends from her work in the public-school system, so the situation wasn't as harsh for her.

But the benefits have far outweighed the struggles. Troy found a job teaching junior high math and fifth grade at a Catholic school near Toledo and they have found a home at St. Anthony.

They both admit that the Catholic Church is not perfect, but they see many good things being lived out in the Church that they hadn't found in other churches. Having witnessed the divisions within Christianity, Troy said he hopes to find a way to "help bring unity back to the Church."

This Easter has been "bittersweet" for the couple. They had planned to attend the Easter Vigil Mass, to celebrate the entrance of new Catholics at St. Anthony, "just because it was such a beautiful service," said Elizabeth. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, that was not to be.

Their welcome into the Church was not the end of the Cummins' story. Elizabeth stated that they were asked to speak to the next group of RCIA candidates at St. Anthony, during which they shared their conversion story. Both of them want to continue to be a part of the community at their home parish and are now instructing new parents in baptismal preparation for infants.

The reopening of churches comes as a blessing for Troy and Elizabeth, since attending church had always been an essential part of their lives and they have never before been so long without being present in one. Both are excited to be back, and they look forward to many years of continued learning and growing in their new Catholic faith.

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# Proving God's existence

BY JENNIFER BARTON

One of man's deepest and most enduring questions is this: Can the existence of an unseen and mystical God be proven? Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Dr. Lewis Pearson, philosophy professor at the University of Saint Francis sought to answer that question on "Truth in Charity" with Kyle Heimann, which aired on July 1.

Dr. Pearson has taught ethics and philosophy at the University of Saint Francis for many years and is a former-atheist-turned-Catholic. His own search for truth has gained him a significant knowledge to defend the existence of God. Bishop Rhoades also admitted that as a college student, he himself struggled with whether or not he should believe in the existence of God. He stated that "what tipped the balance for me ... were the five proofs, or the five ways, of St. Thomas Aquinas."

Many arguments for the existence of God come from the middle ages, but the ideas have been put forward by people seeking the truth of God long before that, to the beginnings of Christianity and even centuries earlier in pagan cultures. Bishop

Rhoades and Dr. Pearson spoke about arguments made by St. Augustine, St. Anselm and St. Bonaventure, among others.

Proofs, as Dr. Pearson points out, "are something that we've had from the beginning of the time that the Church fathers have been writing about the faith, showing that the god of the philosophers — the ancient



**BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES**

Greeks — just so happens to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

He continued, "The problem with proofs for today is when people say you can't prove these things, people have a different understanding of what they think a proof is than what a proof actually is." He goes on to explain that a philosophical proof will not necessarily convince everyone who hears it; rather, "a proof works if its premises, with the use of the rules of logic, actually support the truth of the conclusion." Using the idea of a mathematical theory, Dr. Pearson pointed out that though the complicated theory is valid, a child who doesn't understand mathematics would not be convinced of its truth.

The idea that faith might seem to conflict with both science and reason came up a couple of times during the discussion. Dr. Pearson said, "I think

when you talk about proofs, there's this false dichotomy that we have today from pop culture and maybe bad media coverage that says that science and faith conflict." He believes that many people will deny the existence of God out of a desire to be taken seriously as a scholar or to be seen as a rational person but said that there is no conflict between science and faith. Using the example of Father Georges Lemaître, the Catholic priest who first proposed the "Big Bang theory," Dr. Pearson demonstrated that an understanding of science and faith can work hand in hand.

In fact, understanding the universe is one of the ways to prove God's existence. According to Dr. Pearson, cause-and-effect types of reasoning fall under cosmological arguments. He used an analogy comparing creation to a row of dominoes falling over onto each other, but the ultimate cause points back to the finger that pushed the first domino.

Similarly, the odds that a universe built to sustain abundant forms of life would have formed by chance are astronomical, since any minute change could have caused immense differences in the laws of nature, preventing the formation of life on Earth. Dr. Pearson explained off-air that those odds would be like flipping a coin. "You flip a coin, it's 50-50 chance it's heads or tails, but that's not actually the odds. There's a small chance it will land on its edge. But if it lands

on the edge of its edge, that is impossible. It doesn't matter how many coin flips or how many coins one gets, the odds never become probable, or even reasonable, that any coin on any flip will land on the edge of its edge and stay that way." Proofs for God's existence that focus on the sophisticated nature of the universe are often called fine-tuning arguments — or arguments from design.

Faith also does not need to conflict with reason, as Bishop Rhoades pointed out. "Saint Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that God can be known through the things He has made. One can come to the knowledge of God through the world, through creation. Saint Thomas Aquinas likewise taught that we can know from reason that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, namely, God. Through the use of reason, we can come to know that God exists, but our knowledge of Him through reason is quite limited. It is through God's revelation of Himself to man that we come to know, for example, that He is Triune, that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has revealed His mystery to us by sending us His Son."

While many of the terms discussed may have sounded perplexing, Dr. Pearson assured listeners that proving God's existence need not be complicated. For someone who does not particularly have a background in philosophy, Dr. Pearson stated

that he would simply give historical arguments in the person of Jesus Himself. "How else can you explain that a Man has all these followers who died for the sake of someone they say came back to life. You don't do that if you're a fraud; you don't do that if you're trying to cheat people, if you're trying to hide a lie."

While all these arguments are good and valid, both Bishop Rhoades and Dr. Pearson stress that the best way to prove God's existence is by living as Christlike as possible; by loving others and supporting them when they are struggling within their own lives. These arguments are meant to be tools for evangelization, not for winning debates; meant only to be used when someone is open to the Spirit and prepared for a rational discussion.

For those who want to go deeper into the proofs of God's existence, Dr. Pearson recommends a book by Christian theologian and writer C.S. Lewis titled "The Problem of Pain," stating that C.S. Lewis is very accessible to the average reader. Bishop Rhoades recommended Peter Kreeft's "A Shorter Summa" and "A Summa of the Summa," edited by Kreeft, both of which are more digestible versions of St. Thomas Aquinas's weighty "Summa Theologica."

**To listen to the program** at Redeemer Radio visit <http://www.redeemer-radio.com/askbishop/>

## Diocese announces new human resources director

BY JENNIFER BARTON

When Laurie Haverty received a job offer from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades as the new director of human resources for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, she felt humbled and honored. Leaving a position in a parish that she loved was difficult, but she views her new path as "an opportunity to learn from others and hopefully to give back my ideas and experience."

Haverty brings 14 years of experience as business manager at Queen of Peace Parish in Mishawaka as well as a master's degree in church management from Villanova, which is similar to an MBA. Queen of Peace has been her spiritual home for the last 20 years in addition to her workplace. She is proud of her parish and the loving, family atmosphere. Her three children attended school there and have continued their Catholic education through Marian High School.

Originally from Dearborn,



**LAURIE HAVERTY**

Michigan, Haverty studied science at Eastern Michigan University, intending to become a teacher. The responsibility of caring for 30 students felt overwhelming, however, and God called her in a different direction. She moved to Indiana in 1999. When her oldest child was ready for preschool, she found that Queen of Peace had openings in its program, and

she knew from the moment she walked through the door that that was where she wanted to be. As her children grew older, Haverty began to work in the church office and eventually became business manager in 2007. She had applied for the job as human resources manager for the diocese years ago, but God's timing wasn't right.

"Everything was great in my parish, but I decided that maybe I needed to look into doing more. So, I went back for my master's and I received an SCP (Senior Certified Professional certificate) in HR." She continued her work at Queen of Peace until recently receiving a call from Joe Ryan, chief financial officer for the diocese. He had been the one to interview her previously and thought her qualified to fill the recent vacancy. Haverty contacted

Father Mark Gurtner, the diocese's vicar general, and interviewed via Zoom. She was surprised to receive the offer from the bishop.

Now that her children are older — her youngest at 16 — she felt she could pursue the new path that God placed before her with confidence. "This is a wonderful opportunity that I'm so blessed to have." Father Tom Shoemaker, pastor at St.

Charles Borromeo, even made a space for her personal use within his parish to make her commute between Fort Wayne and South Bend easier.

Haverty expects her job to include aiding the many secretariats in the diocese in any capacity she is needed: helping hire, train and restructure positions as needed. She also expects to work with employees

to ensure that their best interests are being looked after, and to support priests and principals with the unique resources they might need.

Since starting in the position in June, Haverty said she has felt incredibly welcomed. Now that she is settling in to her new job, she has been receiving more and more phone calls from offices in the diocese seeking her help. "I feel like this position just provides so many opportunities to be a resource and to help parishes and the diocese further our mission of the Church ... And so, whatever I can do, whatever contribution that I can make as part of this team to help ... I'm excited about that."

Haverty remains an active member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society at Queen of Peace and serves on the school board for Marian High School, functioning as treasurer. Her hobbies include camping, walking and reading, and she is "open to new adventures"; learning new skills and seeking out new interests in the current chapter of her life.

*"This is a wonderful opportunity that I'm so blessed to have."*

LAURIE HAVERTY

# Court says tax credit program can't exclude religious schools

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a 5-4 ruling June 30, the Supreme Court said the exclusion of religious schools in Montana's state scholarship aid program violated the federal Constitution.

In the opinion, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, the court ruled that if a state offers financial assistance to private schools, it has to allow religious schools to also take part. Separate dissents were written by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor.

Roberts said the decision by the Montana Supreme Court to invalidate the school scholarship program because it would provide funding to both religious schools and secular schools "bars religious schools from public benefits solely because of the religious character of the schools."

"The provision also bars parents who wish to send their children to a religious school from those same benefits, again solely because of the religious character of the school," he wrote.

Sister Dale McDonald, a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the director of public policy and educational research for the National Catholic Educational Association, said she was happy with the decision, mainly because "it puts faith-based organizations on a level playing field" to be able to also take part in other opportunities.

And for the court to say these scholarship programs have to be inclusive, "that is a big victory," she told Catholic News Service.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said the court "rightly ruled that the U.S. Constitution does not permit states to discriminate against religion. This decision means

that religious persons and organizations can, like everyone else, participate in government programs that are open to all."

The statement from Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, chairman of the USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty, and Bishop Michael C. Barber, of Oakland, California, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, also said the decision was "good news, not only for people of faith, but for our country."

"A strong civil society needs the full participation of religious institutions," the statement said. "By ensuring the rights of faith-based organizations' freedom to serve, the court is also promoting the common good."

Advocates for school choice also praised the decision. "The weight that this monumental decision carries is immense, as it's an extraordinary victory for student achievement, parental control, equality in educational opportunities and First Amendment rights," said Jeanne Allen, founder and chief executive of the Center for Education Reform.

The case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, was brought to the court by three Montana mothers who had been sending their children to Stillwater Christian School in Kalispell with the help of a state scholarship program.

The program, created in 2015, was meant to provide \$3 million a year for tax credits for individuals and business taxpayers who donated up to \$150 to the program. It was helping about 45 students and just months after it got started, the Montana Department of Revenue issued an administrative rule saying the tax credit donations could only go toward nonreligious, private schools — explaining the use of tax credits for religious schools



CNS photo/Will Dunham, Reuters

**Montana resident Kendra Espinoza, a key plaintiff in a religious rights case involving school choice, poses for a photo in front of the U.S. Supreme Court with her daughters Sarah and Naomi Jan. 19, 2020. The court ruled June 30 that religious schools cannot be excluded from Montana's school tax credit program.**

violated the state's constitution.

The mothers were represented by the Institute for Justice, a nonprofit legal advocacy group based in Virginia. In 2015, these mothers sued the state saying that barring religious schools from the scholarship program violated the federal constitution. The trial court agreed with them, but the Montana Supreme Court reversed this decision.

The court based its decision on the state constitution's ban on funding religious organizations, called the Blaine Amendment.

Thirty-seven states have Blaine amendments, which prohibit spending public funds on religious education. These bans date back to the 19th century and are named for Rep. James Blaine of Maine, who tried unsuccessfully in 1875 to have the U.S. Constitution prohibit the use of public funds for "sectarian" schools.

In oral arguments, Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the

amendments reflected "grotesque religious bigotry" against Catholics. Adam Unikowsky, Montana's attorney, argued that the state's revised constitution in 1972 does not have "evidence whatsoever of any anti-religious bigotry."

The USCCB's June 30 statement said the court "dealt a blow to the odious legacy of anti-Catholicism in America," stressing that Blaine amendments "were the product of nativism and bigotry" and were "never meant to ensure government neutrality toward religion but were expressions of hostility toward the Catholic Church."

Justice Samuel Alito, in a concurring opinion in the case, highlighted the anti-Catholic origins of state Blaine amendments like the one in Montana and he even included an 1871 political cartoon from the political magazine *Harper's Weekly* to show the bigotry toward Catholics at the time. The cartoon depicts priests as crocodiles slithering

toward children in the U.S. as a public school crumbles in the background.

The USCCB also filed a friend-of-the-court brief, along with several other religious groups, in support of the plaintiffs, which said: "Families that use private schools should not suffer government discrimination because their choice of school is religious."

A group of Montana Catholic school parents also submitted a friend-of-the-court brief stressing that state Blaine amendments "should be declared unconstitutional once and for all."

Before the case was argued, Richard Garnett, director of the University of Notre Dame's Program on Church, State and Society, said it could have major implications for education-reform debates and policies and it "could remove, or at least reduce, one of the legal barriers to choice-based reforms like scholarship programs and tax credits for low-income families."

## Chapel blessed and dedicated in Corby Hall



Provided by the Congregation of Holy Cross

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades blessed and dedicated the new altar of the Holy Spirit Chapel in the rebuilt Corby Hall on July 3. Corby Hall, which sits beside the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame, serves as residence for Holy Cross priests and brothers who serve as faculty or staff members of Notre Dame. Corby Hall is named after the third president of Notre Dame, Rev. William Corby, CSC, who was once also a Union Army chaplain to the 88th New York Infantry of the famous Irish Brigade during the Civil War. Father Corby's statue is the only one erected on the Gettysburg, Pa., battlefield for a man who had no weapon.

# Learning how to saunter: the gifts of quarantine

Tonight, I wrote two events on my calendar: a birthday party and a baptism.

They will be sanitized, scaled-down gatherings — and they will be fun — but still, it pained me to sully those blank boxes with black ink.

This stay-at-home and do-not-overschedule-your-family mandate has been a balm to my soul.

I'm not the only one.

My backyard neighbors used to keep the busiest schedule. Between dance, hockey and lacrosse, the logistics of their Saturdays were dizzying. They always felt it was justified, especially when their oldest made the varsity dance team as an eighth grader.

Only an outside force, like a thunderbolt from God or an order from the governor, would bring an end to all their activities. And when it did, they were surprised by what they discovered: Being home together is wonderful!

The five of them set a schedule and stuck to it. The preteens learned how to manage their time, how to cook and how to exist without their friends. They looked forward to nightly movies, riveted by "The Hunger Games" series.

"This is the best thing that ever happened to us," the mom told me.

My next-door neighbor made new discoveries too. For one, he actually likes to sit in the long-empty Adirondack chair on his front porch. Reading the paper and watching the kids in the cul-

de-sac — "reality TV," he quipped — provides plenty of entertainment.

When nothing else normal happened, spring still came, as if for the first time. Our neighborhood hit the trails in full force, swapping routes in passing and occasionally crossing in the woods.

"Five miles!" a dad would call out.

When you couldn't go anywhere else — churches were closed, even playgrounds were cordoned off — you could still walk in the woods. So, we did, religiously.

Henry David Thoreau would approve. One of his most famous essays, published in *The Atlantic* in June 1862, was titled "Walking." In language that is at once plain and snappy — and, hence, feels fresh today — he extols the "noble art" of walking.

"It requires a direct dispensation from heaven to become a walker," Thoreau writes. "It comes only by the grace of God."

Though many people go on walks, he notes, very few possess "a genius, so to speak, for sauntering." He goes on to explain the word's origin. When pilgrims in the Middle Ages were heading to the Holy Land, village people would inquire about their destination. The reply: "a la sainte terre," French for "to the Holy Land." And so, the pilgrims became known as sainte-terrers — saunterers.

The effect of sauntering is not merely physical, Thoreau



## TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

writes: "There will be so much the more air and sunshine in our thoughts."

He concludes with one of his most quoted lines, an observation I have been reflecting on in the age of COVID-19: "In short, all good things are wild and free."

I can think of nothing more wild and free than family and faith. The rest, the pandemic taught us, is secondary.

We don't need to celebrate a birthday with a big party at a splashy complex. The sweetest gift is the chance to spend the day with those you love the most.

We don't need a gym to exercise. We don't need restaurants to eat well. We don't need a vast circle to socialize. Family is enough. When all we have is each other, we have all of each other.

Just as surely as the quarantine healed our wounded earth, it healed the fractured family. Finally, we get to be together, enjoying all of each other, sauntering toward the holy land.

**Christina Capecchi** is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

# SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for July 12, 2020

Matthew 13: 1-23

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A: A boat parable. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

JESUS	CROWDS	GATHERED
AROUND HIM	A BOAT	STOOD
PARABLES	A SOWER	BIRDS CAME
ROCKY GROUND	SOIL	SUN ROSE
SCORCHED	THORNS	CHOKED
SIXTY	EARS	EYES
BLESSED	PROPHETS	EVIL ONE

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S C O R C H E D J O T B  
S E R P N A N A C O F I  
E D E L H J L K W D S R  
B E W I S E Y E S I U D  
L K O O H G T H O R N S  
E O S S R A X S N A R C  
S H A O O C I F R N O A  
S C U B E R S W L A S M  
E N A K E N O L I V E E  
D E R E H T A G L W K X

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# The Word of God, planted in our hearts, is a command



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

### Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Matthew 13:1-9

The third and last section of the Book of Isaiah is the source of the first reading for this weekend.

This reading was composed when pious Jews easily could have become disillusioned and uncertain in their devotion to God. For decades, Jews exiled in Babylon, the capital and center of the once-powerful Babylonian Empire, longed to leave the pagan environment of this great city (coincidentally in present-day Iraq) and return to their own homeland.

At last, as ancient political fortunes changed, these Jews

were allowed to go back to their ancestors' homes. Upon returning, however, they found no "land flowing with milk and honey." Life was hard. Difficulties were many. For so long, they had dreamed of leaving Babylon for security, order and peace in the Jewish land, yet they instead found destitution and misery. God had spared them, but for what?

Certainly, many were angry with God. Also, most probably, the author of this third section of Isaiah was one of several or even many prophets who reminded them that God's work must be their own. God had freed them, but they had to create a society of justice and prosperity.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans supplies the second reading. Written to the Christians of Rome about two generations after Jesus, Paul refers to their "sufferings." They indeed suffered. The legal and political systems in the empire were against Christianity. Persecution was real and fearful.

The law aside, the culture of the Roman Empire in the first

century A.D. stood directly opposite the values of the Gospel.

The Apostle consoled and challenged the Roman Christians. He reminded them that sin ultimately enslaves humans, demeaning them and robbing them of freedom. Sin disorders creation itself, so creation "groans" in agony.

Jesus is the Redeemer. He gives true freedom to people. This freedom opens the way to peace and eternal life, despite any hostility or threat all around.

St. Matthew's Gospel furnishes the last reading. It is the familiar parable of the farmer who sows seed in different places, some conducive to growth, others not. Similar passages occur in Mark and in Luke. It is in the Synoptic tradition.

A great crowd awaited Jesus. As are people everywhere, at any time, these people thirsted for the truth and insight that only God gives.

In all likelihood, everyone was a Galilean and therefore of rural backgrounds and circumstances. The imagery of a farmer, and the sowing of seed, was easily

understood.

Agriculture often is a game of chance. It was all the more so when Jesus preached in Galilee. Hot days easily scorched seeds that fell on shallow soil. Birds and pests were everywhere. Weeds suddenly appeared. Here and there was good soil, able to receive the seeds and produce a yield.

The message is clear. God sows the seeds in our heart. We must be humble enough to receive God's word.

As an aside, here again in the Gospels the disciples had privileged access to Jesus. They questioned the Lord about the technique of speaking in parables. Jesus explained that parables assist in understanding great mysteries. Jesus explained this parable. He prepared them for their future role.

## Reflection

A saint once said that Christians should pray as if salvation depended solely upon God and live as if salvation depended solely upon their own virtue.

The first step to being redeemed is to be humble enough to admit the need for God. The second step is to be humble enough to live according to God's word, not by personal human instincts or hunches.

God sows the seed of faith and grace in our hearts, but we ourselves make ourselves fertile ground by repenting, reforming and willingly accepting God. This humble turning to God brings us life.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Is 55:10-11 Ps 65:10-14 Rom 8:18-23 Mt 13:1-23

**Monday:** Is 1:10-17 Ps 50:8-9, 16b-17, 21, 23 Mt 10:34—11:1

**Tuesday:** Is 7:1-9 Ps 48:2-8 Mt 11:20-24

**Wednesday:** Is 10:5-7, 13B-16 Ps 94:5-10, 14-15 Mt 11:25-27

**Thursday:** Is 26:7-9, 12, 16-19 Ps 102:13-14b, 15-21 Mt 11:28-30

**Friday:** Is 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8 (Ps) Is 38:10-12, 16 Mt 12:1-8

**Saturday:** Mi 2:1-5 Ps 10:1-4, 7-8, 14 Mt 12:14-21

# 100 years after canonization, Joan of Arc remains a symbol for many

BY CLEMENCE CIREAU

ORLEANS, France (CNS) — This year, the Church celebrates the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Joan of Arc, a 15th-century peasant who is one of the most enduring female symbols in Western culture.

For several decades, she was associated with the French nationalist right. However, her image now transcends political divisions.

In Orleans, south of Paris, Joan of Arc is hailed as the liberator of the city. Statues, hotels, a church, a house, a high school, and shops are named after her. A square is named after Domremy, her native village.

St. Joan was born around 1412. At the age of 13, she repeatedly heard voices that gave her the mission to liberate France from the English invader in the Hundred Years' War.

Introduced to the court of the Dauphin Charles VII, the teen was sent in 1428 to the siege of Orleans with a supply battalion, where her arrival brought a new energy. She took the initiative to

write a letter to the British ordering them to leave Orleans. A week after her arrival, the British lifted the siege.

She then persuaded the Dauphin to go to Rheims, in Burgundy territory, to be crowned king of France.

Wounded while trying to liberate Paris, Joan of Arc continued to fight locally, but without as much success. In 1430, she was captured by the Burgundians at Compiègne and was sold to the British for 10,000 pounds. They took her to Rouen and entrusted her to Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais, one of the French advisers to the dual monarchy. Condemned for heresy, she was burned at the stake May 30, 1431, at the age of 19.

Joan of Arc has been subject to numerous political reclamations since the 15th century. But at the end of the 19th century, she took on a mythical dimension.

France's socio-political evolution paved the way for the myth of "a lay saint," someone not seen as a political figure. It was in this context that Bishop Felix Dupanloup of Orleans filed a request for canonization before

Pope Pius IX in 1869. Shortly thereafter, France was defeated by Prussia and lost the border region of Alsace-Lorraine.

"The elite then used her image as a heroic and martyred figure: Joan, the good (daughter of) Lorraine, symbol of national unification and patron saint of the lost provinces. She became the patron saint of the invaded, the one who resisted, a national heroine," explained Olivier Bouzy, a medieval historian and scientific director of the Joan of Arc Centre in Orleans.

She then became the object of friction between Catholics and French Republicans.

However, Bouzy said that since 1999, he has seen "a new impetus, thanks to the impressive regenerative power of the myth" and the willingness of politicians of all stripes to retake Joan of Arc as a symbol. He even sees a renewed interest among French Catholics.

"Her image now carries a wide range of messages," said Bouzy.

*Cireau is a journalist for Presence info in Montreal.*



CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

St. Joan of Arc is depicted in a stained-glass window at Immaculate Conception Church in Westhampton Beach, N.Y. This year, the Catholic Church celebrates the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Joan of Arc, whose image transcends political divisions.

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

**WHAT'S HAPPENING** carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. View more Catholic events and submit new ones at [www.todayscatholic.org/event](http://www.todayscatholic.org/event). For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

**Theology on Tap: Getting Back to Basics**  
**FORT WAYNE** — Theology on Tap is a Catholic speaker series for young adults in their 20s and 30s, single and married, to share in food, fellowship and faith. The summer series will offer the theme Getting Back to Basics and will meet from 6:30-8:30 Tuesday evenings outdoors at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 4916 Trier Rd. The series will begin July 21 on the topic "The Good News" with speaker Nathaniel Binversie. On July 28, the topic "Prayer with Justin Aquila" is planned. On Aug. 4, the topic is "The Eucharist" with Sister Maria Gemma, OSF. On Aug. 11, the topic "The Universal Church" with Monica Aquila will be discussed and the closing Mass and party will be Aug. 18. This series will be held outdoors per social distancing guidelines. Each night will include a treat from local bakeries, cold-brew coffee from Conjure Coffee and an engaging talk followed by discussion. Bring a lawn chair for seating and a favorite summer beverage. For more information visit: [www.diocesefwsb.org/tot-fw](http://www.diocesefwsb.org/tot-fw) or contact Crystal Serrano-Puebla at [cserrano@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:cserrano@diocesefwsb.org). The series is sponsored by Knights of Columbus Insurance.

**Kingdom Builders gathering**  
**SOUTH BEND** — All women are invited to attend the first of monthly Kingdom Builders gatherings hosted Thursday, July 16, from 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Therese, Little Flower Church, 54191 Ironwood Rd. Gather together as beloved daughters of the King for a teaching and eucharistic adoration. Come, sit at Jesus' feet, and be loved. To learn more about Kingdom Builders visit [www.buildingthroughhim.com](http://www.buildingthroughhim.com) or contact Megan Gettinger [megan@littleflowerchurch.org](mailto:megan@littleflowerchurch.org).

**Catholic Questions Answered**  
**FORT WAYNE** — St. Vincent de Paul Parish's Seize the Faith committee presents Catholic Questions Answered on Wednesday, July 22, from 6-8 p.m. at the Msgr. John Kuzmich Life Center, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. A panel of experts will be answering your written questions. Food trucks will be available. Panelists include: Father Daniel Scheidt (pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish); Father Andrew Budzinski (diocesan vocations director and pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish, Fort Wayne); Father Mark Gurtner (diocesan vicar general and pastor of Our Lady of Good Hope); and Meg Hanlon (for-

mer theology faculty member at Bishop Luers High School). The event will be broadcast live by Redeemer Radio. Visit [www.saintv.org](http://www.saintv.org) for information or contact Dorothy Schuerman at 260-489-3537 or [church@saintv.org](mailto:church@saintv.org).

**Blessed Solanus: Canoe the Wabash**  
**HUNTINGTON** — Canoe the Wabash will be Thursday, July 30, and is an outdoor canoe pilgrimage for high school youth.

The day begins with Mass at St. Felix Friary, 1280 Hitzfield St., to celebrate the feast day of Blessed Solanus Casey. Following Mass participants will embark on a 15-mile canoe trip down the Wabash River. The \$60 registration fee covers canoe rental, shuttling service from Wabash to Huntington, and a small meal. For more information, contact John Pratt [jpratt@diocese.fwsb.org](mailto:jpratt@diocese.fwsb.org) or visit [www.fwsbym.com](http://www.fwsbym.com).

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# Gomez: Truth of saint's ministry is his respect, loving care of Indigenous

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez has asked Catholics of the archdiocese to invoke the intercession of St. Junipero Serra “for this nation that he helped to found.”

He also urged prayers especially for “an end to racial prejudice and a new awareness of what it means that all men and women are created equal as children of God.”

“In this hour of trial in our nation, when once again we are confronting America’s shameful legacy of racism, I invite you to join me in observing St. Junipero’s feast day, July 1, as a day of prayer, fasting and charity,” Archbishop Gomez said in an open letter to Catholics.

The letter appears as his June 29 column “Voices” in English and Spanish in *Angelus*, <https://angelusnews.com>, the online news platform of the Los Angeles archdiocese.

He addressed the recent controversies in California surrounding public monuments to St. Junipero Serra, “the Apostle of California.” On June 19 a statue of the saint in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park was toppled and desecrated. Archbishop Gomez also said a Serra statue in the plaza outside the archdiocese’s first church, Nuestra Señora Reina de los Angeles, in downtown Los Angeles also was torn down.

“Up and down the state, there is growing debate about removing Serra memorials from public lands,” he wrote. “Ventura officials have announced that they will hold a public hearing July 7 to debate whether to take down his statue from in front of Ventura City Hall.

“Faced with the possibility of vandalism, we are taking increased security precautions at the historic missions located in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, we will probably have to relocate some statues to our beloved saint or risk their desecration,” Archbishop Gomez wrote.

He said these developments sadden him. “I have been thinking and writing about Junipero Serra for many years now.”

“I understand the deep pain being expressed by some native peoples in California. But I also believe Fray Junipero is a saint for our times, the spiritual founder of Los Angeles, a champion of human rights, and this country’s first Hispanic saint,” the archbishop said, noting that he was “privileged” to concelebrate the Spanish Franciscan’s canonization Mass with Pope Francis in 2015 during the pontiff’s pastoral visit to Washington.

“I rely on his intercession in my ministry, and I am inspired by his desire to bring God’s ten-

der mercy to every person,” the archbishop added.

Known for spreading the Gospel in the New World during the 18th century, the Franciscan priest landed in Mexico, then made his way on foot up the coast of Mexico and to California, where he established a chain of missions that are now the names of well-known cities such as San Diego, San Francisco and Santa Barbara.

He was the first president of the California mission system, and personally founded nine of the state’s 21 missions. It is estimated that during his ministry, St. Junipero Serra baptized about 6,000 native people.

In 2015, some people objected to the canonization of the Spaniard, like critics did of his beatification in 1988, because of questions raised about how Father Serra allegedly treated the native peoples of California and about the impact of Spanish colonization on native peoples throughout the Americas.

“The exploitation of America’s first peoples, the destruction of their ancient civilizations, is a historic tragedy,” Archbishop Gomez wrote. “Crimes committed against their ancestors continue to shape the lives and futures of native peoples today. Generations have passed and our country still has not done enough to make things right.”

In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, “we have worked hard to atone for past errors and wrongs and to find the path forward together,” he said. “We honor the contributions that native peoples made to building the church in Southern California and we cherish their gifts in the mission of the church today.”

Archbishop Gomez said over the years he has “come to under-

stand how the image of Father Serra and the missions evokes painful memories for some people,” and for that reason, he said, he feels the protests in California and around the country over historical monuments are important.

“Historical memory is the soul of every nation. What we remember about our past and how we remember it defines our national identity — the kind of people we want to be, the values and principles we want to live by,” he said.

“But history is complicated. The facts matter, distinctions need to be made and the truth counts,” he explained. “We cannot learn history’s lessons or heal old wounds unless we understand what really happened, how it happened and why.”

Archbishop Gomez said U.S. society might reach a consensus on not honoring St. Junipero Serra or other figures from the past, but “elected officials cannot abdicate their responsibilities by turning these decisions over to small groups of protesters, allowing them to vandalize public monuments.”

“This is not how a great democracy should function,” he said.

“Allowing the free expression of public opinion is important,” Archbishop Gomez added. “So is upholding the rule of law and ensuring that decisions we reach as a society are based on genuine dialogue and the search for truth and the common good.”

He praised the city of Ventura for planning a public hearing and how it is approaching the debate by involving civil authorities and indigenous leaders, and representatives of the Catholic Church and the community at large. This could be “a model for



CNS photo/Victor Aleman, courtesy Angelus News

**Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is seen May 1, 2020, from the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles.**

thoughtful and respectful discourse,” he said.

Those who are attacking St. Junipero Serra’s good name and vandalizing memorials to him “do not know his true character or the actual historical record,” Archbishop Gomez said, adding that decades ago activists started “revising” history to make Junipero the focus of all the abuses committed against California’s Indigenous peoples.”

“But the crimes and abuses that our saint is blamed for — slanders that are spread widely

today over the internet and sometimes repeated by public figures — actually happened long after his death,” he said, noting that a genocidal war waged against the Native Americans took place in 1851, and the saint died in 1784.

“The real St. Junipero fought a colonial system where natives were regarded as ‘barbarians’ and ‘savages’ whose only value was to serve the appetites of the white man,” Archbishop Gomez said, yet in online petitions today the saint “is compared to Adolph Hitler, his missions compared to concentration camps.” No serious historian would accept this, he added.

The saint lived and worked alongside native peoples, defended their humanity and protested crimes against them; he celebrated their creativity and knowledge; and he learned their languages and their ancient customs and ways, the archbishop said.

“I like to think that his deep reverence for creation was influenced by his conversations and observations among this land’s first peoples,” Archbishop Gomez said. He also said the saint “did not impose Christianity, he proposed it.”

“Pope Francis called Junipero one of the founding fathers of the United States. He recognized that the saint’s witness anticipated the great spirit of human equality and liberty under God that has come to define the American project.”



CNS photo/David Zandman via Reuters

**A vandalized statue of St. Junipero Serra in San Francisco is seen June 19, 2020. The Spanish Franciscan founded several missions in what is now California.**