

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## Catholic Schools: Identifying the need, providing the means

A LETTER FROM DR. JOSEPH BRETTNACHER

For the 47th year, the National Catholic Education Association will celebrate Catholic education from Sunday, Jan. 31, to Saturday, Feb. 6. This year's theme for Catholic Schools Week is: "Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service."



DR. JOSEPH  
BRETTNACHER

Allow me to focus on the last of the three themes, service. Our schools want to serve parents by sharing the responsibility to educate your children, meet their needs, provide them with a choice of schools, assist with tuition and accompany families and their children through graduation from high school and beyond.

### Sharing responsibility to educate children

The Holy See and Church teachings affirm that parents are the first and most important educators of their children and have the right to educate their children according to their moral and religious convictions. Most parents want to share the responsibility of educating their children with schools. Thus, the school becomes an extension of the home. Canon law, a code of ecclesiastical laws

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**Catholic Schools**  
**Faith. Excellence. Service.**

## USCCB president prays God grants Biden 'wisdom, courage' to lead nation

BY DENNIS SADOWSKI

As Joe Biden prepared to be inaugurated as the 46th U.S. president, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, expressed hope the incoming administration "will work with the church and others of goodwill" to "address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion

and discouraging families."

"If the president, with full respect for the church's religious freedom, were to engage in this conversation, it would go a long way toward restoring the civil balance and healing our country's needs," Archbishop Gomez said.

For the U.S. bishops, the "continued injustice of abortion" remains the "preeminent priority," he said, but "'preeminent' does not mean 'only.' We

have deep concerns about many threats to human life and dignity in our society."

Archbishop Gomez also said in a Jan. 20 statement that he was praying for Biden, the country's second Catholic president, as he enters office so that God grants "him wisdom and courage to lead this great nation and ... to meet the tests of these times."

In particular, the archbishop said he was praying God will help Biden "heal the wounds caused

by the pandemic, to ease our intense political and culture divisions, and to bring people together with renewed dedication to America's founding purposes, to be one nation under God committed to liberty and equality for all."

The USCCB leader's comments came in a statement released as the inaugural ceremonies began on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

"I look forward to working

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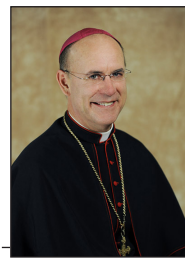
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# Bishop Rhoades on the inauguration of President Joseph Biden



## IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

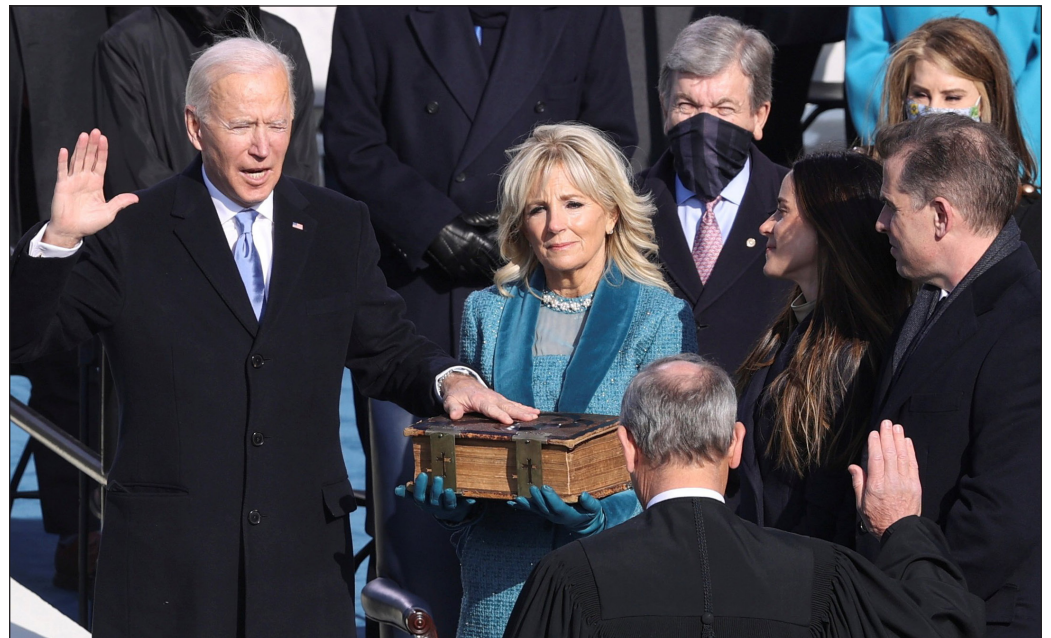
BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

*The following was issued as a statement from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades on Jan. 20.*

I strongly support the statement of Archbishop Jose Gomez, the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, on this day of the inauguration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as 46th President of the United States [usccb.org/news/2021/usccb-presidents-statement-inauguration-joseph-r-biden-jr-46th-president-united-states](https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/usccb-presidents-statement-inauguration-joseph-r-biden-jr-46th-president-united-states). I encourage all to read this statement. I am grateful for the Archbishop's clear articulation of our position as non-partisan pastors in relation to our newly elected president, the second Catholic president in our nation's history.

Our nation needs unity and peace, healing and reconciliation. Let us pray for this intention. At the same time, we are called as Christians to work for these ends. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, including those with whom we disagree. We reject all violence and hatred. Even when there are profound disagreements in politics, we must respect one another and engage in discussions with civility, rejecting hateful rhetoric and personal attacks. As President Biden stated in his inaugural address: "We can see each other, not as adversaries, but as neighbors."

During the election season, I spoke and wrote about our political responsibility as Catholics. I called on the faithful to hold fast to the teachings of the Church and not to adopt positions of either political party that are inimical to the truths of our faith, and not to be blinded by political ideology. In his statement, Archbishop Gomez states: "We work with every President and every Congress. On some issues we find ourselves more on the side of Democrats, while on others we find ourselves standing with Republicans. Our priorities are never parti-



CNS photo/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters

Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts as Biden's wife, Jill, holds the family Bible during his inauguration at the Capitol in Washington Jan. 20.

san. We are Catholics first, seeking only to follow Christ faithfully and to advance his vision for human fraternity and community."

Catholics in our country were pretty evenly divided in the recent election, with half voting for Joseph Biden and half for Donald Trump. No matter how one voted, we should not be divided by political allegiances or by ideologies. We must be united in our common faith and in charity, united with the Pope and Bishops in fidelity to the Church's moral and social teaching and to the obligations of justice and charity that we have in society.

There are issues and policies of President Biden and the Democratic Party with which the Church agrees. I look forward to progress in working together for comprehensive immigration reform, eradicating racism, abolishing the death penalty, protecting the environment, etc. At the same time, there are issues and policies of President Biden and the Democratic Party with which the Church profoundly disagrees because they "would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of

abortion, contraception, marriage, and gender" (Archbishop Gomez's statement). Our religious liberty is another deep concern. We will engage with the new Administration and with Congress, as we always have done, to protect human life, to support marriage and family life, and to guard religious freedom.

We must never tire in our efforts to build a culture of love, solidarity, peace, and justice, based on our belief in the fundamental dignity of every human person. In fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus, we have a preferential love for the poor, the weak, the outcast, and the marginalized. I believe that the Church's social doctrine not only positively contributes to our nation's political discussions, but also addresses underlying problems, including our culture's increasing moral relativism and distorted notions of freedom (on the "right" or on the "left"), which hurt the common good of our nation.

Let us pray for President Biden and his Administration as well as for our Congress. I pray also that the Church may truly be a leaven in society for greater unity and harmony.

### GOMEZ, from page 1

with President Biden and his administration, and the new Congress," Archbishop Gomez said.

"As with every administration, there will be areas where we agree and work closely together and areas where we will have principled disagreement and strong opposition," he said.

While the bishops work with "every president and every Congress," they can find themselves on some issues "more on the side of Democrats, while on others we find ourselves standing with Republicans," he said.

"Our priorities are never partisan," he explained. "We are Catholics first, seeking only to follow Jesus Christ faithfully and to advance his vision for human fraternity and community."

Working with Biden will be "unique," the archbishop said, because he is the first president

in six decades who is Catholic.

"In a time of growing and aggressive secularism in American culture, when religious believers face many challenges, it will be refreshing to engage with a president who clearly understands, in a deep and personal way, the importance of religious faith and institutions," the prelate said.

However, Archbishop Gomez cautioned that Biden has "pledged to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of abortion, contraception, marriage and gender."

"Of deep concern is the liberty of the church and the freedom of believers to live according to their consciences," he added.

The archbishop pointed out the USCCB's quadrennial election document, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to

Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States" tries to help Catholics and others of good will in their reflections on political issues.

An introductory letter accompanying the document describes abortion as the bishops' "preeminent priority," he said, but the document addresses much more.

The bishops also hold deep concerns about "many threats to human life and dignity in our society," Archbishop Gomez said, including euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration policy, racism, poverty, care for the environment, criminal justice reform, economic development and international peace.

The Catholic Church's "commitments on issues of human sexuality and the family, as with our commitments in every other area -- such as abolishing the death penalty or seeking a health care system and economy

that truly serves the human person," he noted, "are guided by Christ's great commandment to love and to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable."

"But as Pope Francis teaches, we cannot stay silent when nearly a million unborn lives are being case aside in our country year after year through abortion," he said.

"It is also a matter of social justice. We cannot ignore the reality that abortion rates are much higher among the poor and minorities, and that the procedure is regularly used to eliminate children who would be born with disabilities," he said.

The prelate also said it was his hope to work with the administration to "finally put in place a coherent family policy in

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# In Jordan, patriarch reaffirms baptismal site, Church's work with refugees

BY DALE GAVIAK

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS) — Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, reaffirmed the Catholic Church's recognition of the official baptism site of Jesus in Jordan and said a new chapel on the opposite side of the river is purely touristic, not historic.

"It is clear from the historical, archaeological, and indeed all the points of view that the actual site of Jesus Christ's baptism (in the Jordan River) is on the Jordanian side. Traditionally, historically and according to the Bible, it is on this side," Archbishop Pizzaballa told Catholic News Service in an interview at the Latin Patriarchal Vicarate in the Jordanian capital.

He also spoke of the Church's continued work with Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

St. John's Gospel records John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus at Bethany, east of the river, or Bethany Beyond the Jordan. Some 31 miles west of Amman and six miles north of the Dead Sea, Bethany Beyond the Jordan receives more than 100,000 Christian and other pilgrims yearly, according to the Jordan Tourism Board. UNESCO designated Bethany Beyond the Jordan as a World Heritage Site.

More than 25 years ago, excavations began on the East Bank of the Jordan River and uncovered the site, which includes the Old Testament Prophet Elijah's Hill. The area is full of the ruins of ancient Roman and Byzantine churches and chapels, a monas-

tery, hermit caves and baptism pools, destroyed by earthquakes and the river's flooding, which through the centuries had commemorated the site of Jesus' baptism.

St. John Paul II visited the Baptism Site in March 2000 and celebrated Mass there, while Pope Benedict XVI visited in May 2009 and blessed the foundation stones of the Latin and Greek Melkite churches.

Archbishop Pizzaballa said that in May 2014, Pope Francis also prayed at the site in Jordan and placed the cornerstone for

are also constructing churches. The Greek Orthodox St. George Church and the Russian Pilgrim Residence are already present.

On the west bank of the river, "In the 1920s, during the British Mandate, the British gave to the different churches a plot of land on condition that they would build a chapel or something, because many pilgrims wanted to go to the baptism site, and they couldn't find the place," Archbishop Pizzaballa said.

"There are millions of pilgrims on the other side (Israel and West Bank) and they want to explore the place. Their rationale is we have millions of pilgrims who cannot go to Jordan, so we give this side. Now, after the demining of the place, they saw the touristic, and I suppose, business potential," he added.

On Jan. 10, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Mass was celebrated at St. John the Baptist Chapel in Qasr al-Yahud, West Bank, for the first time since the 1967 war. The area had been heavily mined.

Jordan is one of four regions, including the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, comprising the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. As such, Archbishop Pizzaballa recently celebrated Mass at the unfinished church at the Baptism Site in Jordan to mark the feast of Epiphany.

"The Latin Patriarchate also has financial issues in the past, almost solved, but we can't afford everything at the same time. We didn't stop the Baptism Site project, but it goes slow," said Archbishop Pizzaballa. "I hope in 2021, we can turn the page."

the "building of a big Catholic church and two monasteries: one for nuns, one for male religious who will run the place and receive pilgrims there who want to have a moment of prayer, retreats, a spiritual experience."

Other Christian denominations, including the Anglicans, recognize the Jordanian site and

*On Jan. 10, the feast of the*

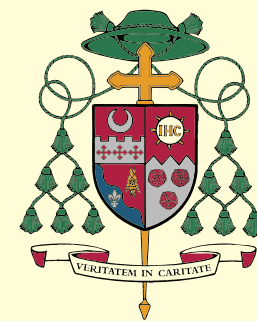
*Baptism of the Lord,*

*Mass was celebrated at St. John*

*the Baptist Chapel in*

*Qasr al-Yahud, West Bank, for the*

*first time since the 1967 war.*



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, January 31: 9:30 a.m. — Mass, St. Bernard Church, Wabash

Sunday, January 31: 7 p.m. — Talk with St. Jude Parish Youth Group, Thaddeus Hall, St. Jude Church, Fort Wayne

Tuesday, February 2: 7 p.m. — Little Flower Holy Hour, St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel, Fort Wayne

Archbishop Pizzaballa is on a monthlong visit in Jordan, looking into the work of various parishes throughout the country, the ecclesiastical court and refugee work.

"Jordan is a completely different reality because there is no political conflict here. Everything in Israel/Palestine affects the conflict. But here, there is regime stability," he said. But he added that the coronavirus pandemic has badly impacted the country's economy and has affected the church's ministry to Jordanians as well as to hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian refugees sheltering in the resource-poor country.

"Already before COVID-19, the economic situation was fragile. We have people from almost a year, not working because borders are, in reality, closed. There are no tourists, no pilgrims. Especially for Christian families, this is a big problem," Archbishop Pizzaballa said.

"Most of the Christians go to Christian schools, so it's difficult to support the schools, and the schools don't have enough, so they cannot pay salaries.

"Then, there is the psychological effect with some fears. The elderly remain at home. It's difficult to gather. We didn't have a proper Easter or Christmas. Pastoral life, in reality, is suspended because we can't perform first Communion, confirmation, marriages, and this also hasn't helped and is not, of course, an encouragement," he explained.

But Archbishop Pizzaballa pointed out: "There are commu-

nities or groups of families that gather to organize support for others, and not only Christians. This is nice. Sometimes when finances are reduced, we see more involvement from our different communities.

"Caritas and other Christian and Catholic institutions, including the Pontifical Mission, have been very active in helping refugees from the beginning," Archbishop Pizzaballa said.

"When I visit various parishes and communities, there is always a school for Syrian or Iraqi refugees. There is always a group supporting Iraqis wherever they live, sometimes in very miserable conditions," he said of the tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians sheltering in Jordan after escaping atrocities carried out by Islamic State militants against them in their homeland.

"Schools in Jordan are often Jordanians in the morning, Iraqis in the afternoon because there is not enough space for all. They have different programs. The church from the beginning has been very, very involved in refugee support," Archbishop Pizzaballa said. Schools for younger children in Jordan are set to reopen Feb. 7, whereas older students will remain in online learning.

"In our Latin Patriarchate schools, we accept hundreds of Syrians and Iraqis free of charge because, of course, they cannot pay. But one of the main problems the refugees have is that they cannot remain for years without an education. It's quite concerning for them."

## GOMEZ, from page 2

this country, one that acknowledges the crucial importance of strong marriages and parenting to the well-being of children and the stability of communities."

Archbishop Gomez concluded his statement saying that Biden's call for national healing and unity is a welcome one, saying it was "urgently needed" as the country continues to confront the pandemic and

social isolation "that has only worsened the intense and long-simmering divisions among our fellow citizens."

He also called for continued prayer that "God will give our new president, and all of us, the grace to seek the common good with all sincerity."

**Editor's Note:** The full text of Archbishop Gomez's statement can be found on the USCCB website at <https://bit.ly/2XUU6Vi>.



CNS photo/Muath Freij, Reuters

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, sprinkles holy water as he celebrates Mass at the unfinished Church of the Baptism of Christ at the site of Jesus' baptism at Bethany Beyond the Jordan near Amman Jan. 9. Archbishop Pizzaballa is on a monthlong pastoral visit to Jordan, which is part of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.



# Fort Wayne pro-life rally



Right to Life of Northeast Indiana conducted a rally at Abundant Life Church in Fort Wayne Jan. 23 to mark the anniversary of the court decision Roe v. Wade. In the opening prayer, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades voiced repentance on behalf of the nation, that the U.S. "allows human life to be struck at the time of its greatest frailty, when it lacks any means of self-defense, life in the womb, and even upon coming forth from the womb: abortion and infanticide," as well as euthanasia.

The brother-in-law of deceased abortionist Ulrich Klopfer speaks with Cathie Humbarger, executive director of Right to Life of Northeast Indiana, before the crowd.

*Babies are a gift from God*



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**"The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage."**  
**-Pope Francis**



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 StPius.net/RespectLife



Advocates for life listen to Congressman Jim Banks speak during the rally, which replaced the annual downtown march for life this year.

Photos by John Martin



# Pregnancy accommodations under consideration at Statehouse

From the governor's office to a growing grassroots effort around the state, momentum is building for Indiana to join more than half the nation in providing reasonable accommodations for pregnant women in the workplace.

Companion bills introduced in the Indiana House of Representatives and the Indiana Senate would require employers with at least 15 full-time employees to provide reasonable adjustments for the safety and well-being of workers who are pregnant. These types of accommodations would include longer and more frequent breaks, modified work schedules, access to appropriate seating and temporary transfers to less strenuous or hazardous environments.

House Bill 1358, authored by Rep. Sharon Negele, R-Attica, and Senate Bill 246, authored by Sen. Ron Alting, R-Lafayette, are currently awaiting committee hearings. Gov. Eric Holcomb highlighted the legislation in his 2021 State of the State address.

"Women make up over half of Indiana's workforce and should expect reason-

able accommodations (during pregnancy) at their workplace, which often come at little or no cost to the employer," Holcomb stated in the Jan. 19 speech. "This is why I've come back to the legislature again . . . to make Indiana the 31st state to pass a pregnancy accommodations bill. Most employers already do this on their own. So let's get this done for the well-being and security of Indiana's current and future working mothers."

As it has with similar efforts in recent years, the Indiana Catholic Conference stands in strong support of the proposed legislation, which it considers pro-life.

"We want to do everything we can to ensure that a woman doesn't have to choose between a healthy pregnancy and her job," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Among the pillars of Catholic social teaching are respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, as well as the dignity of workers. These bills will protect mothers and their unborn babies as well as provide workplace stability for employers."

For Espada, this issue is personal. During a hearing on similar pregnancy accommodation legislation last year, Espada shared her own story of being born two months prematurely to a mother who worked long hours in an industrial laundry facility. The ICC and other advocates were dismayed when compan-

## INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

ion bills ultimately stalled in the 2020 General Assembly in the face of opposition from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana Manufacturers Association and others who raised questions about the impact of the legislation, particularly on small businesses.

This year, the ICC and its allies are hopeful that updates to that legislation will result in passage of the current bills.

"This year's bills draw from legislation that passed unanimously in Tennessee last year," said Erin Macey, senior policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families. "While in substance they are still very similar in their aim to last year's bills, we are hopeful that some of the modest changes will help ease objections. Now there is further clarity around what is considered 'reasonable,' especially for small businesses, and it moves administration of the process to the Indiana Department of Labor."

Pregnancy accommodation efforts are perhaps more critical than ever now, Macey said, as women have been disproportionately affected by job losses due

to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As they seek to retain their jobs or re-enter the workplace, there may be an increased fear of reporting a pregnancy or requesting accommodation due to high unemployment and a need to recover financially," Macey said.

Her organization is among those partnering with the Grassroots Maternal and Child Health Leadership Training Project, concentrating efforts in areas of Indiana with persistently high maternal and infant mortality rates. This coalition, associated with the Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at IUPUI, is mentoring women to become community leaders and policy advocates on these matters.

"Many of these women had difficult experiences working low-wage jobs while pregnant, so this issue means a lot to them," Macey said.

Among these advocates is Destiny Faceson, who has been working with other grassroots leaders to support HB 1358 and SB 246. Several years ago, as a first-time mother during her third trimester of pregnancy, she lost her retail job as a penalty for too many prenatal medical appointments.

"The closer it came to my due date, the more stress and uncertainty I experienced," Faceson said. "The pregnancy accommodation legislation is important because it would relieve the stress factors that cause preterm births, miscarriages, and other health factors that not only

affect the child but the mother's health, including mental health."

Espada expressed hope that the legislation would be enacted as the Catholic Church nationwide moves toward the conclusion in late March of its yearlong effort to draw attention to the challenges of mothers, especially the poor. Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service began in March to coincide with the 25th anniversary of St. John Paul II's groundbreaking encyclical "Evangelium Vitae," or "The Gospel of Life."

"It would be wonderful if we could pass this legislation this year," Espada said.



SEN. RON ALTING



REP. SHARON NEGELE

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

"All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect."

POPE FRANCIS



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# NEWS BRIEFS

## At national memorial, Cardinal Gregory prays for all who died of COVID-19

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Saying the nation “reverently pauses in supplication to remember and to pray for the many thousands of people who have died from the coronavirus during this past year,” Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory offered the invocation at a pre-inauguration memorial service Jan. 19 to honor and remember the more than 400,000 Americans who have succumbed to COVID-19. “We turn to the Lord of all to receive these, our sisters and brothers, into eternal peace and to comfort all of those who grieve the loss of a loved one,” Cardinal Gregory said in his invocation at the memorial service, attended by President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. “Let us, with one heart, commend those who have died from this virus and all of their loved ones to the providential care of the One who is the ultimate source of peace, unity and concord.” The memorial service — held the day before the presidential inauguration — included prayer, music and a lighting of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool with 400 lights in honor of lives lost in the pandemic. “To heal we must remember,” President-elect Biden said just prior to the lighting. “It’s hard sometimes to remember, but that’s how we heal. It is important to do that as a nation. Between sundown and dusk let us shine the lights along the pool to remember all the lives we have lost.”

## Bishops welcome Biden executive order that strengthens DACA program

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Two leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops applauded President Joe Biden’s Inauguration Day executive action ordering the federal government to keep in place and strengthen the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Biden also pledged Jan. 20 to produce immigration reform legislation. Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, USCCB president, and Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Migration, said they were prepared to work with the president and Congress on such an “urgent matter of human life and dignity” for immigrants. In a statement released Jan. 21, the prelates said action on DACA was particularly important for about 800,000 young people who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children. They said the young people who benefit from the program, known as Dreamers, deserve the opportunity to continue working

## Pope advances sainthood causes of pro-life geneticist Lejeune, others



CNS photo/KNA

Jerome Lejeune, a pro-life French Catholic pediatrician and geneticist who died in 1994, is pictured in an undated photo. Pope Francis has advanced the sainthood cause of eight men and women, including Lejeune, who was involved in discovering the extra chromosome that causes Down syndrome. The pope recognized the heroic virtues of Lejeune, who was born in 1926 in Montrouge, France. He established the first specialized clinic for Down syndrome patients at Necker Children’s Hospital near Paris and devoted his life to protecting unborn children with Down syndrome from so-called “therapeutic abortion,” which he regarded as a grave corruption of medicine. He was a strong opponent of abortion and unrestricted experimentation on human embryos.

legally in the U.S., access educational opportunities and not fear deportation. “We welcome the announcement preserving and fortifying DACA,” they said. “For years, DACA youth have been enriching our country. They are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities and leaders in our parishes and communities. They and their families deserve certainty, compassion, generosity and justice.”

## Pope prays Biden works to heal divisions, promote human dignity

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis prayed that President Joe Biden would work to heal the divisions in U.S. society and promote human dignity and peace around the globe. “Under your leadership, may the American people continue to draw strength from the lofty political, ethical and religious values that have inspired the nation since its founding,” the pope wrote in a congratulatory message Jan. 20 as Biden was inaugurated as the 46th president of the United States. Popes traditionally have sent such messages and assurances of prayer to a new U.S. president upon his inauguration and have included mention of issues of concern, particularly about the dignity of every human life. “At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for farsighted and united responses,” Pope Francis wrote to Biden, “I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom, together with unflinching respect for the rights and dignity of every person, especially the poor, the vulnerable and those who have no voice. I likewise ask God, the source of all wisdom and truth, to guide your efforts to foster understanding, reconciliation and peace within the United States and among the nations of the world in order to advance the universal common good,” he said.

## Catholic leaders welcome Biden plan to rejoin Paris climate agreement

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic leaders welcomed President Joe Biden’s Inauguration Day announcement that the United States would rejoin the Paris climate change agreement. Such action would allow the U.S. to

work to reach the goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has called for, and position the country to become a global leader in addressing climate change, the leaders said. In a joint statement, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, and Sean Callahan, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, announced their support for Biden’s plan Jan. 21, a day after the new president entered office. Former President Donald Trump announced the U.S. would withdraw from the landmark five-year-old accord in 2017. Trump formally told the United Nations Nov. 4, 2019, the U.S. was withdrawing. Under the agreement, however, the process was not completed until Nov. 4, 2020. The administration argued the agreement was not beneficial to U.S. interests and hindered economic growth.

## Bishops say order on LGBTQ equality has implications for religious liberty

WASHINGTON (CNS) — President Joe Biden’s wide-ranging executive order to extend existing federal nondiscrimination protections to LGBTQ people exceeds the U.S. Supreme Court’s June ruling on the issue in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, said the chairmen of five U.S. bishops’ committees. In so doing, they said, the Jan. 20 order has implications for religious freedom. “Every person has a right to gainful employment, education and basic human services free of unjust discrimination. That right should be protected,” the committee heads said in a joint statement released late Jan. 22 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. However, Biden’s order on “sex” discrimination exceeds the court’s decision,” they said. “It threatens to infringe the rights of people who recognize the truth of sexual difference or who uphold the institution of lifelong marriage between one man and one woman.” The statement was issued by the chairmen of the USCCB committees for Religious Liberty, on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and on Catholic Education as well as the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage.



# Parents appreciate in-person learning — and having options

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

The four Zielinski children, who range from 6 to 18 years old, began attending Holy Family School, South Bend, as preschoolers. Kelley, their mother, said the school has always felt like home. "It's small, we know all the families, the teachers are great, and many of them stay on year after year."

When the pandemic hit last spring, Zielinski and her husband were grateful she could be a stay-at-home mom. Her older children did their schoolwork independently, but her younger two, who are both girls and in the first and third grades, needed more help.

"I have no complaints," she said. "The teachers did the best they could. They communicated well with us parents, kept the children in touch with each other and made themselves available through flip grids whenever a student needed individual attention."

At the decision point last summer, the Zielinskis felt it would be safer to keep their children at home. But they didn't feel left out. They were in constant communication with Holy Family School, and they Zoomed in frequently to say hello to their classmates. When Kelley went to pick up materials for her at-home learners every Friday, she saw teachers taking students' temperatures in the parking lot. She asked how things were going and always got positive responses.

"Principal Jennifer Veldman often said, 'Whenever they're ready to come back, that's fine.'" By the end of the first quarter, Zielinski responded, "They're ready."

One was a little reluctant to give up her "mommy time," but they all adjusted well," said their mom. "Everything's great with us at Holy Family."

## Anxious to return

When someone in the Duron house tested positive for COVID-19 in early November, the two Duron boys had to quarantine. Neither of them came down with the virus, but after two weeks of virtual learning, they were eager to get back to St. Adalbert. Now in sixth and eighth grades, they've attended the school since first and second grade and have grown up with their classmates, their mother, Anna, said.

"They really missed the interaction with their teachers and classmates," she added.

Since Duron is able to work from home some of the time, she was able to juggle things to supervise their e-learning. "But they didn't like me as a teacher," she admitted.

"Virtual learning was fine, but I really believe in-person learning is better as far as education goes."

## No hesitation

When the novel coronavirus shut down everything last spring, Angela Gernhardt had a child in college, two at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne and two at Most Precious Blood School. Suddenly, all five were learning at home.

"They're all good students," said their mom. "They all put themselves on a schedule, found a spot in the house to study and did great. Their teachers were very diligent, working hard to post their lessons. However, they all wanted to go to school in person this fall."

Since one was an eighth grader and one a senior in high school last spring, they had to forego many of the usual end-of-year activities like graduation and confirmation. But their schools "went out of their way to make it special for them," Gernhardt said.

Working in the school office, Gernhardt heard from many parents about students who were easily distracted and didn't do very well learning virtually. Even though she's blessed with children who can stay on task, she came to the conclusion that "kids learn better in person."

Her husband works in a hospital, so the family is well aware of the dangers of COVID-19. "But we had no hesitation sending them back to school," Gernhardt said. Both schools have safety protocols in place that have worked well.

## Virtual struggles

Jorja Ramos was in the eighth grade at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, Fort Wayne, last spring. Her mother, Lisa, said learning at home was "kind of OK," but that Jorja struggled with algebra. Because the class wasn't able to Zoom, the teacher couldn't see her students' faces to know when they weren't getting it, Ramos said, and Jorja also found it stressful to have all her assignments post at once instead of coming her way one at a time.

When school began this fall, Ramos had no hesitation about sending her daughter to her new school, Bishop Luers.

"She's doing great. I feel strongly that it's much better for her to be able to interact with her teachers and classmates in person, especially in a setting that's new to her. I'm thankful Luers has been able to stay open most of the time."

## A learning curve for everyone

When the pandemic began, Angela Arambula's daughter Amelia was in kindergarten at St. John the Baptist School in Fort Wayne.

"St. John's never even had remote learning as an option for snow days," she said. "Suddenly, everyone had to figure it out. The teachers worked their tails off. It was such a blessing!"

Because another household member is medically vulnerable, Arambula was happy to have the children at home instead of risking their bringing COVID-19 home. That's why Amelia also began this school year at home.

Bishop Luers, where Arianna and Karson Arambula go to school, made the shift to virtual learning more easily last spring. When it came time to decide about this school year, Karson wanted to stay home but Arianna opted for in-person learning. Interestingly enough, she is now learning remotely while Karson is attending in-person at Bishop Luers.

"You have to weigh it all out carefully," explained their mom. "You have to decide what works best for your family and for each child. Everyone's circumstances are different."

On her first day back to Bishop Luers, Arianna was exposed to someone awaiting test results for the virus. That meant she had to quarantine for two weeks. Even though she eventually tested negative, at the end of those two weeks, she decided to keep learning remotely, as most of her friends were doing. An excellent student, that style of learning works well for her.

Karson has an Individual Services Plan. His learning challenges made it more difficult for him to learn virtually.

"He needed more resources than I could give him," said Arambula. He's been doing much better since he returned to Bishop Luers in person at the end of September, she noted. However, he follows a strict protocol when he gets home from school, immediately wiping everything down,



Provided by Angela Gernhardt

Anna Duron of South Bend is a St. Adalbert School parent who was glad to have her boys back in school this fall after being quarantined. From left are Anna and Omar Duron with, sons Omar Jr., 13, and Adan, 12.



Provided by Anna Duron

While schools in the diocese have fine-tuned their remote learning processes since the start of the pandemic, some students, like Jorja Ramos, left, a freshman at Bishop Luers, say parts of it didn't work well for them. Mom Lisa Ramos is at right.

Provided by Lisa Ramos



'We love to be around students' —

# Teachers as glad as students to be back at school

BY KATIE MURRAY

Coming back to school in the fall was a dream come true for many teachers across the Fort Wayne – South Bend diocese. Getting back to in-person instruction was something they had longed for since the spring school closures.

During the summer it was not clear how the next school year would start. Administrators and faculty members spent the months planning and strategizing in order to get teachers and students back into the classroom by the fall, and their hard work paid off.

When the pandemic began, everything came to a halt. Teachers had little to no notice that they would be scrapping their lesson plans and recreating them three quarters of the way through the school year. They had to quickly learn how to use brand-new programs and platforms to keep in touch with their



Facebook

Teachers, administrators and staff at Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, were as glad for students to come back in the fall as the students were glad to be there. Getting back to in-person instruction was something they had longed for since the closure of schools in the spring.

students and engage with them like they would in the classroom. Going all virtual wasn't easy, and students and teachers alike had a trying transition period.

Maggie Javins, freshmen math teacher at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, shared her story on how she and her students transitioned to hybrid learning and how they managed.

"Virtual instruction was very challenging as a teacher last year. All the little things you take for granted in the classroom were gone."

One of those challenges was encouraging students to stay focused without being able to see her students' facial expressions, to see if they understood the

ily admit that they perform better in the classroom. ... I spend a lot of time rotating around the classroom and watching students complete practice problems. Right then and there I can see the errors they are making and can help to correct them" she said. She went on to say that the type of partner work that can be done in the classroom is difficult to do virtually.

When it was determined that students and teachers could be back to school in-person, the excitement was contagious. At Bishop Luers, the voices of students laughing and catching up with their friends echoed through the halls. Teachers had their classrooms ready to start



Facebook

Bishop Luers principal Jim Huth participates with students in a 90s dress-up day last fall. No one decides to be a teacher or school administrator because they want to sit in front of a computer all day, said freshman math teacher Maggie Javins. We love being around students."

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material. "I just asked as many questions as I could ... and prayed they were understanding what we were trying to do."

Using EdPuzzle, Microsoft Teams and Canvas, a course management system that allows teachers to post assignments, information and grades online, Javins was able to create videos and hold conference calls as a class. This allowed students to ask questions and get clarification on assignments.

Though the programs were helpful for continuing the students' education, the plan still had holes. Hybrid learning made it easy for students to rush through work, miss class meetings or not login at all. "I had students that would show up to each and every meeting and students that would not show up at all" said Javins.

By the end of the summer, teachers were ecstatic to see the inside of their classroom and have it filled with students.

The difference between virtual learning and in-person learning is the one-on-one interaction students get. It helps them to learn better when they are physically present, according to Javins.

"In-person instruction is extremely vital ... students read-

learning with the smart boards ready to go.

Javins could not contain her excitement to be with her students once again.

"I was most excited to be with the students. No one decided to be a teacher because they wanted to sit in front of a computer all day. We all got into this noble profession because we love being around students" she said.

Without the teamwork and cooperation of faculty, students and parents, the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year could not have gone better, given the circumstances. Students were able to go about their extra-curricular activities by following school, state and local health department guidelines, and teachers have been able to interact with their students, leading to academic success for many.

Maggie Javins would especially thanks parents for helping to make this school year a brighter one.

"Our parents have been amazing. They have been with us through this crazy journey and have been patient and supportive. I know it was scary for many of them to send their students back to school. The trust they have placed in us is humbling! We are so blessed to have them."



# The Catholic school value proposition: faith and family

BY JENNIFER BARTON

There is power in a community pulling together to bring love, comfort and support to those of its members who are hurting and in need. Bethany Dick has witnessed this outpouring of care not for herself, but for others. And she is exceedingly grateful for that community – the Catholic school community of Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne.

Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been a tough school year for Bishop Dwenger. November saw the sudden passing of freshman student and athlete Clayten Stuart, plunging the school into mourning over the tragic loss. Additionally, a handful of school parents have engaged in personal battles with cancer this year. Through it all, Dick said, “I can’t even explain how amazing the community has been.”

Dick played a supportive role for the families. She describes the fundraising events, memorials and prayers that sprouted from roots of love within the Bishop Dwenger family. “I think this last year, people realized that Dwenger isn’t just about sports; that we really are a family community, or a community of families.”

Clayten was an avid football player and played on the freshman football team. He had friends at numerous schools in the area, including crosstown rival Bishop Luers High School. “He was an amazing kid. I’ve known him since third grade,” Dick said. “He was tenacious on the field and off. And he always had people laughing.”

The deluge of compassion for him was overwhelming. While he was in the hospital on the Thursday evening before his death, Bishop Dwenger head football coach Jason Garrett led a Divine Mercy Chaplet on the football field before the crucifix “and all these people showed up,” Dick said. Throughout Clayten’s hospitalization, Dick kept Garrett updated on Clayten’s condition through daily text messages.

After his passing, the Bishop Dwenger community continued to show love and support to his family. A group of moms began to find ways of honoring Clayten. One decided to make a bracelet for Clayten’s mother, which snowballed into classmates clamoring for the bracelets, emblazoned with his jersey number, 34.

Dick helped organize a celebration of life for Clayten. One of the managers at Kelley Chevrolet, where her husband works, donated pizzas; Jimmy Rongos, president of Ziano’s Italian Eatery, donated breadsticks; the remainder of the food was donated by parents. More than 270 people attended, some from as far away as Indianapolis, including some from both Bishops



A large group of students gathers at Shields Field outside Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne last year to pray for the health of sophomore Clayten Stuart in the days before he died. Friends of Clayten from Bishop Dwenger and Bishop Luers High School showed solidarity and support for the Stuart family.

Dwenger and Bishop Luers, as well as local public school students who knew Clayten through various sports programs.

All of this took place around the same time that Chanin Henry, a Bishop Dwenger mother, was admitted to the hospital for over a month for cancer treatments. To help the family with medical expenses, Dick worked with Kelli Stopher to arrange an evening of prayer and silent auction. What started out as a basket raffle for 20-30 projected female attendees quickly came to include over 300 people. Once again, donations poured in for things like food and auction items and a “huge spread” was put together for \$300, with food left over.

“I’m still to this day trying to figure out how we fed that many people,” Dick remarked. “And without even three weeks of planning, we got it all done. We raised triple what we thought we would make. I cry every time I look at the pictures, I think, ‘How did that happen?’ And I know it wasn’t me. I was just the vessel.”

The Bishop Dwenger community supported Henry in other ways as well. Dick described how parents came together to work on Henry’s house when she was in the hospital. “There were people from Dwenger there every day,” she said. A separate Divine Mercy Chaplet was said for Henry prior to one of the football games this season. Some spectators even believed that they saw an angel in the sunset-tinged clouds overhead.

The school’s nickname is the “Saints,” and Dick believes strongly in the intervention of the saints at the school this year, pointing to St. Philomena, St. Jude, St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother as sources of personal comfort and aid during these difficult times. She said she felt that the support of the faithful



Clayten was an avid football player. His death spread sadness throughout the Bishop Dwenger community and beyond.

at Bishop Dwenger is something special that cannot be found in every school.

“I just feel that the Catholic education envelopes those kids and it shows them that God is real. Just because you can’t see Him doesn’t mean He’s not there.”

Dick has been an extended member of the Bishop Dwenger family since the 1980s, when her nieces and nephews attended. She became a Bishop Dwenger parent in 2003 when her oldest son attended. As a convert

to Catholicism, she recognized the importance of structure that Catholic schools could offer her children — a structure she herself had not grown up with.

She was introduced to St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne in 1993 and felt drawn into it, joining a preparation class for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and sending her three children through Catholic school there. Her youngest son is now a freshman at Bishop Dwenger.

For Dick, Catholic education reaches far beyond textbooks. From her early days at St. Jude, she has learned a great deal about her faith from those around her. Even in the last year, her personal devotion to the saints and understanding of the power of the rosary has increased.

She appreciates even the smallest things about Catholic schools, such as the uniforms that equalize every student.

More than anything, it is the connections she and her children have made through the schools that Dick finds the most significant part of the Catholic school experience — relationships that last a lifetime. The faith example of other Bishop Dwenger parents has changed her for the better, she said, and her children who have graduated still maintain friendships with high school classmates.

For her children and others who attend the school, she remarked: “I hope they understand how blessed they are to go to Dwenger.”

It hasn’t always been easy for Dick to put three children through Catholic schools, but she believes so strongly in the value of Catholic education that she, like many parents, is willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary. “I worked two jobs to send my kids by myself ... I was a single parent the entire time. ... In my eyes, it was totally worth it.”

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Photos provided by Mike Obergfell

One strategy used by Catholic school teachers to keep students interested and engaged in learning once schools reopened was to study outdoors when the weather permitted.

*Faith and resilience —*

## Mitigation strategies provided framework for fall

BY KATIE MURRAY

The beginning of this school year looked a lot different than in years past. The pandemic made it difficult to return to the classroom, but pastors, administrators and staff were determined to be back to in-person classes by mid-August so they spent most of the summer planning and implementing new strategies for the 2020-2021 school year. Those strategies followed the guidelines set by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Catholic Schools Office and were informed by local and state health departments to ensure that going back to the classroom would be safe for everyone involved.

In a statement made by the Catholic Schools Office July 31, schools that could maintain effective social distancing were encouraged to reopen for in-person classes. "Our faith is relational, incarnational and sacramental," the statement said. "We learn best about accompaniment, abiding with Our Lord, and the importance of personal witness, when we are in-person. While some Catholic schools may be able to open with in-person classes due to the space in their building that allows for social distancing, other Catholic schools may need to begin with a hybrid or virtual model, and then move

Implementing the new strategies took a great deal of teamwork and cooperation when the school year began.

to in-person learning later."

The statement went on to list approved reopening policies created by the Catholic Schools Office. Some of the policies included:

- Parents could have a choice between in-person learning or virtual courses for their children
- Schools needed to have a virtual transition strategy in place
- Faculty and students need to have their temperatures taken before entering the building and

must stay home if ill

- Touch-point surfaces must be cleaned throughout the day, with more enhanced cleaning at night

At St. Jude School in Fort Wayne, principal Mike Obergfell and his faculty worked diligently to create such a safe learning environment. During the planning stages, Obergfell said, "We did a lot of reinventing ourselves. We planned to be open and in person but did not know what to expect." There were

many questions left unanswered in the beginning, such as: Would schools have to be shut down again, and at what point would that happen? How would they strategize going virtual again in an instant? And how would teachers work with students who were in quarantine to provide them the best instruction, so they did not fall behind?

Planning for safety was proven to be the most difficult task, but a creative one. At St. Jude, drop-off and pick-up procedures

were revamped to maintain social distancing, students and staff ate lunch in their respective classrooms and recess was restricted to children only being able to play with their immediate classmates.

The Mass schedule was also tweaked so all grade levels could still attend on a weekly basis. Two grades would attend at a time, and the tradition of a weekly all-school Mass was set aside until it is safe to gather everyone together again.

To keep the school open, not only did the strategies need to be followed meticulously, but everyone also would need to be adaptable to make it work. Obergfell said his faculty and staff "... have adapted and assumed additional duties and responsibilities to do what was needed."

"I think everyone in the building is working overtime and pitching in to help us stay open."

Implementing the new strategies took a great deal of teamwork and cooperation when the school year began.

"Each grade level worked together to prepare for distance learning for their grade. The older grades did most of their work online and were well-prepared for the transition. The younger grades came up with plans for take home packets of information and parents could drive through



Temperature checks, masks and social distancing are still the norm in schools across the diocese.



**MITIGATION, from page 10**

to pick up other assignments or books from their child's teacher. Communication was kept open and video lessons were sent to stay in touch with students and families," said Obergfell.

Over Christmas break, the strategies were revisited to ensure they were going smoothly and to determine if any updates or changes were necessary. Fortunately for St. Jude, they were going well. By Christmas, the faculty hoped they would be able

to open up a bit more. However, COVID-19 cases surged again, so it was not possible. First semester plans for a more complete return to normalcy were pushed into the spring semester.

The entire year was difficult. Administrators were sometimes given a moment's notice that their school would be switching to a virtual learning or hybrid mode. At first, the uncertainties were only supposed to last a few weeks, but that stretched into a month and finally to the remainder of the year. But by

working together, administrators and staff are effectively riding the rest of the 2020-2021 school year and instructing students to the best of their abilities. This camaraderie is what paved the way to strategize a way to keep students in the classroom in fall, and to keep everyone safe.

"Although this has been a very challenging time for all of us, the children have been so resilient and adaptive to the situation ... I truly believe that we are learning a great lesson of our faith" said Obergfell.



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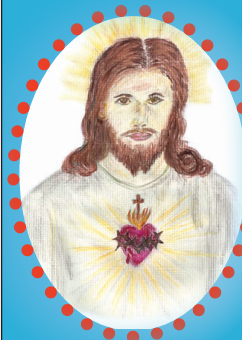
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Back to school plan —

# Flexibility, support equal success for diocesan schools

BY JENNIFER BARTON

When schools across the country closed in March, fears and questions about the following school year assaulted school leaders from all sides. No one knew what to expect or how schools would reopen in the fall.

Even before the end of the school year, though, a collaborative effort led by Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Superintendent Dr. Joseph Brettmacher and Carl Loesch, secretary for Catholic education, was already underway to navigate the unexpected scenario. The team worked long hours throughout the summer to pave the way for schools to reopen safely.

"It was critical for our schools to be able to open, for our teachers to know what the plan was and for our parents to know what the plan was," said Loesch.

## The freedom to find their own way

For the plan to come about, school principals, counselors and staff members had to work together to answer the many questions the schools faced.

According to Loesch, other dioceses in the state of Indiana "left it up to the individual schools to write their own plan. It was Joe's brainchild to do what we could to take some stuff off the principals' plate."

Brettmacher assembled a team of individuals with experience in specific areas of expertise in a Catholic school setting.

"We had five or six committees. We called them domains," Brettmacher explained. "Then we had a committee of about 30 or 40 people that worked on them, from various stakeholder groups, to help out."

The domains included logistics and planning,

fostering community, curriculum and instruction, Catholic identity and technology support. By researching larger schools like Loyola University and local organizations such as Parkview Healthcare Systems, the team came up with main areas on which to focus.

Once they established the primary areas the committees began digging deeper, studying each minute detail and tackling every question they could think of. "It's so complex. They had to rethink every single procedure in their school," Brettmacher said.

*"It was critical for our schools to be able to open, for our teachers to know what the plan was and for our parents to know what the plan was."*

CARL LOESCH



Provided by Mike McClain

A preschool class at Sacred Heart School, Warsaw, enjoys a socially distanced outdoor read-aloud session led by teacher Cindy Hollowell last spring, shortly before schools shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But even before the premature end of the 2019-2020 school year, a collaborative effort led by Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend school leaders was underway to navigate reopening concerns that were on the horizon.

## The keys to success

Flexibility has been the greatest advantage the plan gave to the schools. Situations evolved as new problems surfaced, such as requiring students to log in virtually to ensure they are completing their work and handling school closings, as needed. The plan also allowed schools in various locations to use their best judgement, based on local data, to protect students while still giving them the best educa-

tion possible.

Principals have been able to refer to the plan or to use the networking opportunities Brettmacher put in place to answer their questions. "We've done whatever we could to reduce the amount that our principals have to do," reiterated Brettmacher.

But he does not take credit for the 40-page plan that was the final product of the committee meetings, nor implementation of the plan within individual

schools. He stressed, "It's been everybody pulling together." He emphasized the role that Loesch and Mary Glowaski, assistant to the bishop in pastoral care, played in ensuring the continuity of Catholic identity in the schools, as well as Glowaski's work fostering community and tending to the social-emotional well-being of students.

He also credits Jeff Kiefer, assistant superintendent, for visiting various schools to instruct teachers in methods that best



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utilize their teaching time: such as recording and uploading videos rather than duplicating a lesson. Loesch explained that prior to this, "some of the teachers were doing double work – preparing a lesson to teach in person and recording themselves for the next day."

### Giving more than was expected

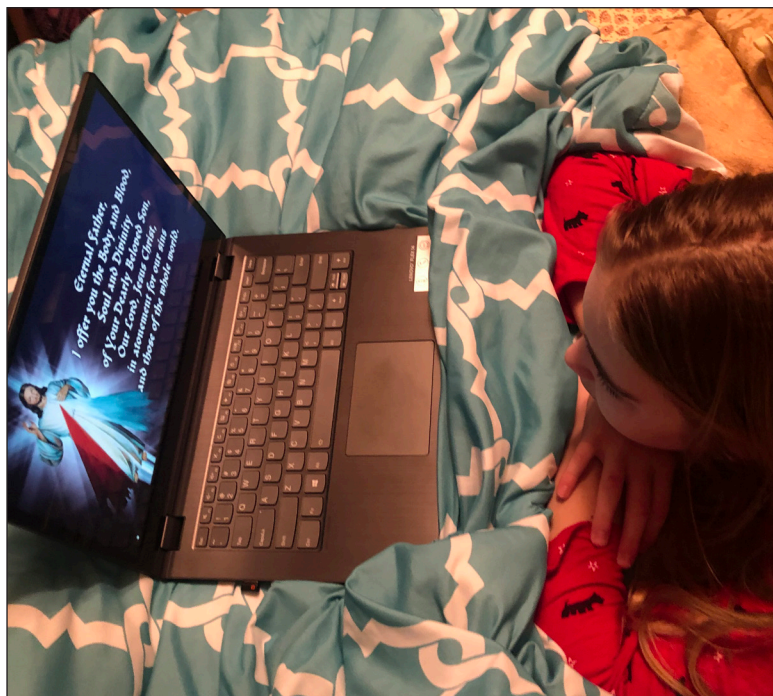
One of the larger problems facing schools in the diocese this year was a lack of substitute teachers – something that had also been an issue prior to the pandemic. In many instances, school staff had to take on the job.

According to Brettnacher, the schools also did a great job of helping one another.

"One instance is Marian High School. St. Anthony of Padua had their whole cafeteria staff quarantine, and they went and did the food for them. At St. Joseph School in Fort Wayne, when the entire cafeteria staff got it, they told the (food service) company, 'you have to supply us with workers to get the cafeteria going.'" He told of a principal who cleaned toilets when the maintenance staff was out with COVID-19.

In spite of the stress and strain, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend was not forced to permanently close a single one of its 43 schools in 2020, in large part due to the support of parents, staff, the parish community as well as the reopening plan.

"When doing something this big, it's really important to have the 'why' in mind," Loesch said. "The 'why' is that we are better



Provided by Jonelle Lesniak

**Schools across the country faced large challenges to beginning the fall semester. In the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, part of the solution was to give Catholic school principals the freedom to make individual adjustments and decisions, including when to resume in-person learning. Above, a Holy Family student studies religion virtually.**

when we're together; we're better when we're in relationship. We've a sacramental, incarnational Church."

"Catholic schools are a great gift to our diocese, a great gift to our Church," he added. "I think when the history books are written, 2021 is going to be a pretty proud year for what everybody did in them."

Three modes of learning A major part of the return-to-school plan for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend was for schools to have the ability to switch between three modes of learning with relative ease. Those modes are Mode 1, in-

person with virtual option; Mode 2, hybrid with virtual option; and Mode 3, virtual only.

In Mode 2, the student body is split into two groups that come into school on alternate days and learn virtually on the other days, which allows for fewer students in the building four days a week. The fifth day is typically a virtual day, which is an opportunity for deep cleaning of the schools by janitorial staff. Mode 2 also frees up classroom space for students to spread out on in-person days.

Two of the high schools had to make the switch between modes during the fall semester: Bishop Dwenger in Fort Wayne and St. Joseph in South Bend. Allen County and St. Joseph County have seen very different numbers of COVID-19 cases, and

they took different approaches to implementing learning styles this year.

### Plan, adjust, revise

St. Joseph High School principal John Kennedy took one tact at the start of the new school year. "A guiding principle of our back-to-school plan was to protect the health and safety of all and so that's been a priority. Another guiding principle was to live our mission, which is to transform students in heart and mind. So we looked at this from a standpoint of, how can we deliver quality learning and also foster community in any of the modes of learning?"

Given large COVID-19 numbers and tight restrictions in St. Joseph County early in the school year, Saint Joseph began in Mode 3: virtual for the first three weeks of school. Kennedy said that throughout the semester, it has "strategically made some shifts" due to changing numbers in both the county and the school community.

Saint Joseph has been through all three modes, ending the semester back in Mode 3 after Thanksgiving.

Because of the hard work of the committees that laid out the plan over the summer, Kennedy said, "We felt prepared, but then we also had to adjust and revise and problem solve along the way. We had a great plan that was our foundation, but then ... a new situation came along and you had to figure it out. So it was a combination of relying on the plan and problem solving and adapting as needed."

### Streamlining and finding a silver lining

Bishop Dwenger took a somewhat different approach, though

adjustments have been necessary on the Fort Wayne side as well. Starting off the year in Mode 1, principal Jason Schiffli stated that shortly into the school year, roughly 10% of absences were COVID-19 related, either because of symptoms that indicated the virus or quarantining due to exposure. "Ten percent was a benchmark to me," Schiffli said. He explained that the high school principals had discussed a 10% threshold, though it was not set in stone and was simply what he had chosen as a trigger to make the transition to Mode 2.

"Our teachers I felt were prepared because we trained them over the summertime to do synchronous learning. That was the big buzzword in education, 'synchronous learning,'" he continued. It meant that teachers were able to teach live lessons through virtual platforms rather than posting assignments on the Canvas online learning platform and then recording lessons for students' later use.

Leaders at Bishop Dwenger planned to reassess the learning style weeks after school began, but it seemed that every time they hoped to go back to Mode 1, the COVID-19 numbers would spike again.

"I want everyone to be in the building, I really do. ... And that's part of the education, not only the education, but the experience of being at Bishop Dwenger, of being 'Dwengerized' — exposure to your friends, your teachers, all that interaction going on. That's the special part. Unfortunately, a lot of parents, when I went to Mode 2, saw that being kind of like an ax cutting down what they thought Dwenger was all about."

Both principals sought to keep

**FLEXIBILITY, page 14**

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## SCHOOLS, from page 1

governing the Catholic Church, indicates that Catholic parents should provide a Catholic education for their children. If they cannot, they are bound to provide them with a suitable Catholic education outside the school.

In this shared responsibility, parents and educators must collaborate and work cooperatively. For parents to want to partner with our schools in the shared responsibility of providing their children with a quality Catholic education, we must meet your needs.

## Identifying the needs

In a recent focus session with the marketing firm 86, a diocesan leadership group of educators discussed parents' needs in a quality Catholic education. Some of the items parents expressed to principals included: faith and character building, good quality academics, college preparation and science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Also, parents want the school to provide safety, discipline, extracurricular activities, structure, soft skills, good peer groups and more.

In a 2018 study conducted by Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities and the National Catholic Educational Association, the organizations asked 1,043 parents — Catholic, nonCatholic and Hispanic — their three most important educational needs for their children. The first was encouraging individual and critical thinking (53%). The second was preparing children to enter the job market (47%) successfully. The third was to prepare their children for college (43%).

"Religion was important, but the perceived need for additional religious instruction appeared to be lacking," the report said. In other words, parents felt schools already provided adequate religious instruction.

## FLEXIBILITY, from page 13

parents informed of any changes and the need for them. "While there were different opinions, overall parents were very supportive," Kennedy said. Schiffli shared that though there was some pushback, by mid-semester many of those who had initially opposed the hybrid system expressed a desire to remain in Mode 2. "Being at Dwenger half the time is better than not being here at all."

He admitted that the psychological toll on students has been rough, with a majority of them feeling the strain of dealing with COVID-19 restrictions. For students with special needs and those at risk of failing classes, Bishop Dwenger has made exceptions, allowing them to be



Provided by Mike McClain

**In accordance with canon law, Catholic schools share the responsibility of parents to provide a quality education for children in accordance with the Catholic faith. Above, students at Sacred Heart School in Warsaw perform a dissection in biology class.**

## Providing a choice of schools

The Catholic Church asserts that parents must have a choice (i.e., public and nonpublic) when choosing the best school for their children. They believe the choice is a fundamental right of parents based on many factors. However, the biggest factor, according to the report, is whether parents perceive they can afford a Catholic education for their children. The Holy See and the Catholic Church contend that it is difficult to see how Catholic education can remain affordable without public funding. We are fortunate that Indiana does provide some public funding to assist families with tuition.

## Public and private support

Indiana provides some public funding for parents who want to send their children to a nonpublic school. A qualifying family can receive a voucher through the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program. It is important to note that the money follows the student and does not go directly to the school.

in school four days a week. He gives credit to the pastoral ministry staff, school counselors and chaplains for aiding the students and the teachers during this difficult time.

## The priority: Students' well-being

While there is an obvious concern for students' mental health, most of them have handled the transition between modes fairly well, Kennedy said. "They showed up and they did their best and were just incredible in that they gave us their best in whatever mode it was." The school itself already had a bit of a head start in that each student is given a laptop when they begin at Saint Joseph. "And

Also, Indiana has a Scholarship Granting Organization Program for donors who want to direct funds to nonpublic schools by giving to a Scholarship Granting Organization. Qualified families can apply for an SGO grant.

Finally, most parishes provide some form of tuition assistance, such as tiered tuition, parishioner and nonparishioner rates, and scholarships. A brief explanation of all three follows.

## Indiana Choice Scholarship

The ICS Program provides state funding to families of qualifying students to offset tuition. Students have to meet three criteria.

First, the student must reside in Indiana. Second, the household's annual income must be less than a predetermined Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program limit. Finally, each student must meet one of the eight ICS Program tracks.

The eight tracks are: 1) Continuing ICS, 2) Previous ICS, 3) Previous SGO, 4) Special education, 5) "F" public school, 6) Two semesters in a public school, 7) Sibling or 8) Pre-K.

we offered hotspots to students if they needed them to improve their internet access at home."

Schiffli noted that less than 15 families chose the virtual option from the start of the school year, but some of the athletic students chose to go into Mode 3 to minimize their time in school and the risk of getting ill during their sports season. "It was not a mandate or a requirement from the coaches for the girls and boys to go into Mode 3; that was something the parents asked to keep our kids safe."

Catholic identity is still at the heart of the education system, of course, especially in the midst of a pandemic. At Saint Joseph, Kennedy said teachers still start each class with a prayer and students attend Mass prior to going virtual. "And while we were vir-

For more information on these three criteria, call the Catholic Schools Office at 260-422-4611 and ask for Karen De Rose, or email her at [kderose@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:kderose@diocesefwsb.org). You can also go to our webpage to access contact information at <https://diocesefwsb.org/Catholic-Schools-Office/>. Ask for the principal.

## Parish tuition assistance

Many parishes charge lower tuition than what it costs to educate a student. Some charge a lower rate based on the number of children in the family. Many schools have parishioner and nonparishioner rates. Almost all schools have scholarships. Also, the diocese has tuition assistance in the form of scholarships or funds from a foundation. To learn more about the assistance, contact your parish school. The CSO website has contact information for our 43 schools on its webpage, and each school has an expert. Another option is to contact De Rose.

## Through graduation from high school and beyond

In Catholic schools, our telos, or ultimate goal, is different. While other schools may talk about college and career readiness, our goal is eternal. As parents, we have no greater responsibility than to help our children get to heaven and become saints. The diocese's Catholic schools are here to help parents with this awesome responsibility. Archbishop J. Michael Miller of Vancouver stated it beautifully in his 2006 book, "The Holy See's teaching on Catholic schools":

"The Church sees education as a process that, in light of man's transcendent destiny, forms the whole child and seeks to fix his or her eyes on heaven. The specific purpose of a Catholic education is the formation of boys and girls who will be good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbor and enriching soci-

ety with the leaven of the gospel, and who will also be citizens of the world to come, thus fulfilling their destiny to become saints."

We can accomplish this formation best in a faith community where we learn from and with each other and pray together as a community. We invite Catholic parents to be a member of one of our school communities. From the "first point of interest," we begin to develop a relationship with you. Your family can take a tour of the building, have your child shadow a current student for the day and participate in special events. We will provide help with the application and tuition assistance process. We are committed to sharing the responsibility of educating your children by providing a quality Catholic education. Our relationship with you will not end upon graduation of your children from our schools. Beyond graduation from high school, our schools will keep you informed about progress, provide you and your children opportunities to participate in special events, seek your input on important issues, and hopefully continue to assist you and your child on your journey to heaven.

## Summary

The 43 Catholic schools of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend are committed to serving families by sharing the responsibility to provide children with a quality Catholic education. We will work hard to meet your needs and provide you with an affordable Catholic school option with three tuition assistance possibilities. Our relationship with families and their children extends beyond their graduation. We will continue to keep you informed, invite you to special events, seek your input, and help you and your children achieve the ultimate goal of Catholic education, heaven. If you have yet to visit one of our schools, we invite you to do so because Catholic education is a journey for a lifetime.

*Dr. Brettnacher is the superintendent of Catholic education for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.*

tual, we did a variety of things; daily prayer at the start of every class, some virtual speakers and some opportunities for students to come into the building to participate in small-group faith activities. While it was a challenge, we made it a priority that the Catholic faith was present and every student was engaged."

## Leading by example

For the start of the new semester, both schools planned to continue in the mode in which they had ended the fall semester, with Saint Joseph progressing to Mode 2 in early January. The plan is to eventually get back into Mode 1, with all students returning to the school campuses when it is deemed safe to do so.

Teachers have been the real

backbone in the schools this year, say the principals. Without their hard work in learning new modes of teaching, methods of engaging students who are not physically in the classroom and altering the materials to changing expectations, students would not be able to adjust to the changes as easily.

"I want to acknowledge that our teachers and staff have worked extremely hard and been extremely dedicated to bringing quality learning to our students throughout the semester," said Kennedy.

Schiffli acknowledged Brettnacher and Loesch for their tireless work in the spring and summer meeting with principals and staff members and training and preparing them for what may be the strangest school





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**OPTIONS, from page 7**

showing and putting his school clothes in the washing machine. “That seems to be a good game plan,” said Arambula. “We haven’t been sick at all.”

Amelia was the only first grade student at St. John the Baptist whose parents chose to keep her at home, but her teacher worked hard to keep her connected with her class, recording daily videos just for her. However, her mother began to feel Amelia needed more help learning to read. “After all,” she said, “who wants her mom to be her teacher? That’s not what I was trained to do.”

St. John the Baptist had worked hard to make in-person learning safe, she said, dividing the first graders into two separate classes of 14 students each to facilitate distancing. So the Arambulas felt safe sending Amelia back in October. She was happy to be with her friends, her mother said, and her learning has accelerated.

“All my children have phenomenal teachers,” Arambula testified. “They give 150%. We love Catholic schools!”



Provided by Rob Sordelet

**While schools in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend have developed and fine-tuned their remote learning processes since the start of the pandemic, many students were anxious to return to in-person, classroom learning, like these students at St. Charles Borromeo School, Fort Wayne.**

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Angelica Duarte’s four children have gone through parochial schools; currently, Jossie is a junior at Saint Joseph High School, South Bend; Gaby in junior high at St. Adalbert.

“I wanted them to go in person if at all possible,” said their mother. “I just believe it’s a lot better for the children.”

In her work as the Latino liai-

son at Saint Joseph, Duarte has observed students’ grades drop when they can’t be in school. It’s especially difficult for these students, whose parents may not have sufficient time or mastery of English to reach out to teachers or to help their children stay on track, she said.

Even though Duarte is able to support her children as they learn, she insisted they attend school in person. Jossie was apprehensive because of the virus, but at the end of her first day she told her mother, “I’m so glad you made me go.”

For the first month of this school year at St. Adalbert, half the students attended in the morning, the other half in the

afternoon; each cohort learned virtually during the half-day they weren’t in school. Besides better social distancing, this gave the school a chance to practice its protocols.

“Our teachers and students have done a fantastic job of adapting to remote learning, via Google Classroom,” said principal Joseph Miller. “But our plan is to continue in-person instruction as long as we are able.”


“Ours is an incarnational faith. Jesus did not Zoom in. He took on flesh. So being with each other, and even taking on risk — though never in a reckless way — seems consistent with Jesus’ way.”






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## A new day and an offer to engage

Inauguration Day began with a private Mass of Thanksgiving held at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, for the Biden family and congressional leadership. The inauguration itself started with an invocation by Jesuit Father Leo O'Donovan, and the inauguration was layered with Catholic touches that reflected President Joe Biden himself.

President Biden is a Catholic, and not just in a cultural way or a Christmas-and-Easter-only way. He's a Sunday and sometimes daily Massgoer kind of Catholic. Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, acknowledged this in his extraordinary 1,250-word statement following the inauguration.

"It will be refreshing to engage with a president who clearly understands, in a deep and personal way, the importance of religious faith and institutions," Archbishop Gomez said.

"Mr. Biden's piety and personal story, his moving witness to how his faith has brought him solace in times of darkness and tragedy, his longstanding commitment to the Gospel's priority for the poor — all of this I find hopeful and inspiring."

There is a host of issues on which President Biden and Church leaders all the way up to the Vatican agree. Reinforcing Archbishop Gomez's claim that "our priorities are never partisan," in the 24 hours after the inauguration, the U.S. bishops' conference issued four statements endorsing initial actions by the new president. There is the potential for common ground on everything from the death penalty and

health care to refugees, poverty relief and fighting racism.

But Archbishop Gomez sees reason to be frustrated with President Biden as well. Over his long political career, President Biden has come to differ with Church leaders in terms of public policy on such issues as "abortion, contraception, marriage and gender." In fact, on Jan. 22, the new administration affirmed its desire to preserve access to abortion.

For President Biden's Catholic critics, these exceptions to the teachings of the faith he professes are maddening. Some will simply not vote for him, but others demand that he be denied Communion because of his contrarian stances, calls that his current bishop, Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, will ignore.

Archbishop Gomez is clear-eyed about where the Church differs with President Biden as well as where it agrees. He seemed to be addressing part of his statement to the president's critics as well as to the president: "Real reconciliation requires patient listening to those who disagree with us and a willingness to forgive and move beyond desires for reprisal," he concluded. "We are all under the watchful eye of God, who alone knows and can judge the intentions of our hearts."

Archbishop Gomez has been criticized for the timing of his unusual and lengthy statement, coming as it did on Inauguration Day. There are clearly those who feel he went too far, and those who feel he did not go far enough.

I hope that President Biden takes the archbishop at his word: "I look forward to working with



GREG ERLANDSON

### AMID THE FRAY

President Biden and his administration. ... As with every administration, there will be areas where we agree and work closely together and areas where we will have principled disagreement and strong opposition." As an experienced politician, President Biden would expect nothing less.

I hope Catholics takes to heart the archbishop's words as well: That instead of condemnation and vitriol, we "bless those who oppose us, and ... treat others with the same compassion that we want for ourselves."

The battle on behalf of the unborn has been going on for more than half a century in our country. It did not end with the last presidency. It will not end with this presidency. It will not end because it is part of the great weave of Catholic social teaching that is, in the words of Archbishop Gomez, "guided by Christ's great commandment to love and stand in solidarity with ... the most vulnerable."

Let's accomplish what we can and fight for what we must. The day is long, and there is much to do.

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

## When an obituary becomes a prayer

I've never had to write an obituary. I realize how fortunate that makes me.

As a professional writer, I've imagined what it would be like to write one. Perhaps that's morbid, but it's a curiosity of mine.

Of all writing forms, the obituary is the life summary, the final word. It conveys what may be the only information future generations will ever know of a particular ancestor. I cannot imagine a more daunting assignment for the grief-stricken.

Last summer I read an obituary that has stuck with me, challenging me to live well. It was written for my husband's beloved aunt Bridgann, his godmother, who died in July after a short illness. She was 79 — an age that once sounded old to me and now feels far too young.

The obituary names her parents, her eight siblings and her three children. It highlights the happy milestones in her life. Somehow, the mere date and location of her wedding Mass — April 20, 1962 in Castle Grove, Iowa — sparkles, conjuring a nostalgic springtime joy.

With the biographical facts aside, the obituary goes on to describe Bridgann, capturing her essence in just a few words: "Her smile and laughter were contagious."

And then, the sentence that stopped me in my tracks: "She was deeply faithful in everyday life."

Wow.



CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

### TWENTY SOMETHING

Bridgann was a Catholic who cherished her faith. This statement testifies to that: daily prayer, countless rosaries, an abiding love for the Mass. And it speaks to fidelity more broadly, to be faithful in all facets: faithful to God, to spouse, to sisters, to traditions, to children and grandchildren, to birthdays and birds, to favorite singers and long-held values. To be faithful to all you hold dear.

The fidelity is applied broadly — and, even more challenging — it is exercised "in everyday life."

This is where the real beauty comes. There's something quiet and stirring about a mother who is faithful in everyday life. Bridgann was. She was faithful to warm meals and dirty dishes, to handwritten cards and late-night text messages. She tended to the work of daily life with grace. She was unwavering.

We tend to measure life in terms of resume points and marathon moments. But what nobler goal could you pursue than to be like Bridgann, to be faithful in everyday life?

CAPECCI, page 17

## No attachment to sin or evil is greater than the power of God



### THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

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#### Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Mark 1:21-28

The Book of Deuteronomy furnishes the first reading for this weekend. Deuteronomy appears in modern bibles as the fifth book in sequence in the Old Testament. It is one of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, all of them attributed to Moses.

In this reading, Moses addresses the chosen people, whom he has led, with God's help, from Egypt, where they were enslaved. He promises that God will send prophets with whom the people can relate. But if anyone presumes to take the

role of prophet upon himself or herself without having been called by God, then this imposter will die.

God takes care of His people. St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is the source of the second reading. From the earliest days of Christianity, virginity has been treasured. Christians have never been forbidden to marry, although all Christians are bound to be chaste, according to their state in life. Over the centuries, however, Christians have chosen lifelong virginity for religious reasons.

Corinth in the first century A.D. was a city notorious for its outrageous immorality. It was a busy commercial center. Visitors often availed themselves of the pleasures of the flesh provided in Corinth. Indeed, Aphrodite, the goddess of love and carnal desire, was the city's special deity.

Paul saw virginity as a powerful Christian value, and from a more pragmatic point of view, he thought that Christians not obligated by marriage and parenthood should devote their

time to God's service.

St. Mark's Gospel is the source of the third reading. Luke's Gospel contains an almost exact parallel story. Matthew treats this event only glancingly.

Judaism has never required weekly attendance by Jews at synagogue services. However, going to synagogue to pray together and to learn the teachings of the Torah was definitely a priority for Jews during the time of Jesus, as indeed it is even among Jews today.

That Jesus went to the synagogue, and on the Sabbath at that, reveals how seriously the Lord took the Law of Moses.

As Jesus spoke, the people were spellbound at His knowledge of things relating to God. It is important to note here that the man in the story recognized Jesus as the "Holy One of God." Furthermore, the man believed Jesus has the power to do anything.

The Lord's power pierces the darkness even of Satan. Jesus orders the unclean spirit to leave

the man, and the unclean spirit obeys.

Again, the people are amazed. The message, however, is not in their amazement, but that Jesus could command the unclean spirit and be obeyed, and that the man, albeit harboring this evil spirit, recognized Jesus as the Son of God. No bondage to sin or evil can overcome the power of God.

### Reflection

Few people today say that they, or great numbers of people, are "possessed by the devil," although the Church teaches that such possessions occur.

All people have "unclean spirits" within them, since everyone sins and sin is the mark of the devil's involvement — to some extent — in any person's spiritual life.

People may be aware of how and when they turn away from God and harm themselves or others. The allurements of sin overpower them, as it overtook people in wide-open Corinth. For many, this realization produces

the cynical hunch that virtue is impossible for them to attain. They are mistaken.

For them, these readings are especially comforting and encouraging. God will never leave us. Such was the promise of Moses and of Paul. The Son of God can conquer any evil and dull any temptation, if asked. No sin can obscure the reality of the Lord. His light shines. His strength is mighty.

### READINGS

**Sunday:** Dt 18:15-20 Ps 95:1-2, 6-9 1 Cor 7:32-35 Mk 1:21-28

**Monday:** Heb 11:32-40 Ps 31:20-24 Mk 5:1-20

**Tuesday:** Mal 3:1-4 Ps 24:7-10 Heb 2:14-18 Lk 2:22-40

**Wednesday:** Heb 12:4-7, 11-15 Ps 103:1-2, 13-14, 17-18a Mk 6:1-6

**Thursday:** Heb 12:18-19, 21-24 Ps 48:2-4, 9-11 Mk 6:7-13

**Friday:** Heb 13:1-8 Ps 27:1, 3, 5, 8b-9c Mk 6:14-29

**Saturday:** Heb 13:15-17, 20-21 Ps 23:1-6 Mk 6:30-34



# An examination of identity

Recently I was on retreat for a week and was given the time to pray and to reflect on the year 2020 and to look forward to the future of 2021. During that time, I recalled a conversation I had with a friend in which she invited me to think about making an examination of identity.

Now, most of us are probably familiar with the examination of conscience we make before going to the sacrament of reconciliation. In it, we acknowledge the ways in which we have sinned through what we have done or in what we have failed to do. But the examination of identity proposed by my friend was something different. It was not fundamentally focused on my own actions, but rather on who I am in relationship to the Lord.

During my retreat, I began to think about the question St. Francis of Assisi is famous for posing: "Who are you, O Lord my God, and who am I?" To hear the Lord's answer, I thought about my identity in terms of the sacraments in which Christ has claimed me for His own — baptism, confirmation and Eucharist — and I looked to the Scriptures to hear His words speak truth over my life.

In the midst of a world with so many competing claims for our allegiances, I invite you to also step back from the noise and to make a similar examination of identity. Let Jesus speak His word into your heart and let His sacraments be the memorial of His covenantal love for you.

I share with you now an outline of the examination of identity I used during my retreat.

1. Baptism. In Mark 1:11 it says, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."

Through baptism, God the Father chose me as His beloved son/daughter. With Jesus, do I hear the voice of the Father over my life declaring that I am His beloved child? Or do I find my fundamental identity from some other source or relationship?

Colossians 1:13-14 says, "Jesus has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Because of the work of Christ and the gift of

baptism, I have been ransomed from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Christ. Do I identify as someone rescued from sin and death who lives in the freedom of the children of God? Or do I allow my identity to be ruled by the dominion of darkness?

Romans 8:15-17 reads: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Christ has made me an heir of eternal salvation. He has chosen me for heaven and has invited me to speak to God in the same way He does. Do I identify as an heir to the greatest inheritance ever — heaven? Do I speak to God as my Abba, my Daddy? Or do I remain in fear of the Father's love and doubt His goodness over my life?

2. Confirmation. In Luke 4:18-20, it says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Through confirmation, I have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and sent on a mission to proclaim the good news of Christ's redemption, healing and mercy. Do I identify as a missionary disciple who lives in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord? Or do I find it difficult to identify as a witness to Christ's resurrection?

3. The Eucharist. 1 Corinthians 11:24 reads: "This chalice is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The Eucharist is the very body and blood of Jesus, which brings me into His everlasting covenant — meaning I am made a member of the family of God by blood. Do I identify as a blood relative of God's family? Or do I see myself

## CAPECCHI, from page 16

I can think of none. That simple sentence in her obituary has stayed with me, connecting me to Bridgann. It has become my prayer. I thought of her often at Christmas, recalling her beautifully wrapped presents and the gingerbread ornaments she hung on the tree. I think of her when I wipe down the kitchen table and sing my kids lullabies at night. Faithful in everyday life. I feel something easing

in me, the high-achieving college student who racked up internships and endorsements. Where once was an urge to prove myself is now a trust to simply be. I'm letting life emerge, embracing its quiet gifts. I'm no longer compelled to take my private life, spiff it up and make it public. Quitting Instagram helped. I don't view my days as fodder for social media, but as moments to hold to my heart. I'm the protagonist, not the producer. Maybe this a shift that comes with aging. Perhaps



## A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

BRIAN ISENBARGER

as a more distant relative? It says in John 6:51 — "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The covenant of the Eucharist is the promise of eternal life. Do I identify as someone destined for heaven? Or do I find my identity amid the passing things of the world?

In 1 Corinthians 12:12,27, we see: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "Since receiving this sacrament [the Eucharist] strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the mystical body of Christ." Am I a living and healthy member of Christ's body, in harmony with the other parts, especially the Holy Father, my bishop and the magisterium? Or do I find myself to be in discord with Christ's body, the Church?

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." And so as a new year comes upon us, may Jesus make us a new creation, a new version of Himself. For the identity of a Christian can be nothing less than Christ.

**Brian Isenbarger** is a seminarian of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. He is studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

the pandemic accelerated it, clarifying for me what matters most and casting all the rest aside. But surely, I know, the memory of Bridgann inspires it, with the words from her obituary as a guidepost. When we are tired, when we are unsure, when we rise each morning and begin anew, presented with 100 little ways to serve our people: faithful in everyday life.

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

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 31, 2021  
Mark 1:21-28

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: a demon cast out. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

CAPERNAUM	SABBATH	JESUS
SYNAGOGUE	PEOPLE	AS ONE
AUTHORITY	A MAN	UNCLEAN
SPIRIT	CRIED OUT	COME
DESTROY US	I KNOW	HOLY ONE
REBUKED	AMAZED	WHAT IS THIS
OBEY HIM	SPREAD	REGION

## CONFRONTATION

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



## MARGARET CLITHEROW

FEAST: MARCH 25  
1553-1586

Born into a prosperous York Protestant family when Catholicism was forbidden, Margaret married wealthy Protestant John Clitherow, whose brother became a Catholic priest. Margaret soon became a Catholic and set up Mass centers in her home and a nearby inn. She was imprisoned three times for failing to attend Protestant services. When officials confirmed the secret Masses, Margaret was sentenced to death for treason. She died a martyr, pressed to death by a heavy load.



# Candidates for diaconate instituted as lectors

FORT WAYNE — Focusing their vocation to become ministers of God's word, 19 men who have completed two years of diaconal formation were instituted by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades into the ministry of lector Jan. 24 during a Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend.

This important step in the candidates' formation focuses on their vocation to become ministers of God's word, Bishop Rhoades said. He noted the appropriateness of celebrating their institution as lectors on Sunday of the Word of God, designated last year by Pope Francis to take place on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. It is a reminder of the importance and value of Sacred Scripture for the Christian life.

It was also appropriate to celebrate the rite in the co-cathedral of St. Matthew, the sacred author of the first Gospel, the bishop said. He asked the holy evangelist, the secondary patron of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, to intercede for Daniel Avila, Joseph Brown, Steven Burkins, John Burzynski, Joseph Cochran, Roger Dinius, Curt Feece, Edward Fox, Philip Hayes, Raymond Krouse, Thomas Labuziowski, Orlando Miranda, Andrew Oross, Maximo Ortega, Michael Plenzler, Stephen Reed, Robin Slocum, James Summers, Harry Verhiley and also Robert Lortie, who was quarantining and could not be with his brothers in formation for the rite.

"Our deacon candidates, who today will be instituted as lectors, have a special duty to grow in their knowledge and love of the Scriptures," the bishop began. "My brothers, the word of God is indispensable in your formation for the diaconate since you will be ordained ministers of that word. In your own spiritual life, one of the pillars must be your contact with God's word.

"You need this contact in order to grow in holiness," he continued. "I encourage you not only to be diligent in your study of Sacred Scripture in your classes, but to be diligent in reading and meditating on the word of God in your daily prayer. Before reading or preaching the word of God to others, we must first be hearers of that word, allowing God's word to illumine our minds and fill our hearts. We must dwell within the word and allow it to form us so we take on the mind of Christ."

He presented each candidate with a Bible and commissioned him to be faithful in handing on the word of God. They would do so not only as lectors at Mass, he told those present, but also in catechesis and later in preaching.

"All of this presupposes that you are devoted to the Scriptures, that you nourish your lives by your faith-filled reading of the Bible, your study of God's word, and your prayer with the

Scriptures. You must learn to love the word of God that you will read and teach," he told the men.

The Gospel for Word of God Sunday recounted the beginning of Jesus' ministry of preaching. In it, St. Mark says that "Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God, the good news that "this is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand."

"The arrival of the kingdom calls for a response," said the bishop. "After Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is at hand, He exhorts us to respond. What is this response? Jesus tells us: 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel.'

"Without conversion, one cannot enter the kingdom of God," he explained. "Central to Jesus' ministry is His invitation to sinners to conversion and entrance



into His kingdom. Our Lord said: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.' In His words and works, Jesus reveals the boundless mercy of the Father and the vast 'joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.'"

Addressing the men, he said: "God-willing, in two years you will be ordained as servants in this kingdom. You will become deacons of the Church, the community of faith, the community of salvation, which is "on earth the seed and beginning of God's kingdom.

"All of us are called to live every day in the kingdom of Jesus, to bear witness to Him and His Kingdom by our words and works, and to do so with joy. We're called to repent and to believe in the Gospel, which is something continual and not just once and done."

Immersion in the word of God through prayer and study is essential for the candidates' future service as deacons, he said, since they will be called in their ministry to lead others to live in God's kingdom.

"You are generous men who desire to serve Christ and His kingdom. God is calling you to dedicate yourselves to His kingdom. You have the love and support of your wives in embracing this vocation and I thank them for their wonderful generosity."

In a year or so, the next step for the men will be the Rite of Acolyte.

**At top, candidates for the diaconate meet Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades outside St. Matthew Cathedral Jan. 24 following their installation as lectors. Below: Candidates and their families celebrate the Mass with the rite of installation.**

Following the Mass, Burzynski recalled that the bishop had charged them to be faithful and prudent in their dissemination of the word of God, and that they were charged to do so not only as lectors, at Mass, but also to throughout the parish in teaching situations such as RCIA or children's classes — and also to bring the word of the Lord to the wider community, being "faithful in handing on the word of God so that it may grow stronger in the hearts of His people and that would be everyone from within our parish and community."

Miranda said he felt great joy at receiving the Bible from Bishop Rhoades as part of the rite.

"What this means for me today is that I can live the word of God in my heart and spread the word to the people that I encounter every day. I can share the love of God with them through the word, so they can live the joy of the Gospel the same way I live it. ... It's just the beginning of the journey the Lord has for me to be this humble servant for His people."



Photos by Ana Ponce

**Bishop Rhoades gives the gift of the word of God to Harry Verhiley, saying: "Take the book of holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of His people."**

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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.

**Little Flower Holy Hour**

**FORT WAYNE** — Little Flower Holy Hour for Vocations will be Tuesday, Feb 2, from 7-8 p.m. at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel, 1102 S. Clinton St. The February holy hour will be led by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades. Contact Christine Nix at 260-422-4611 or [cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:cbonahoom-nix@diocesefwsb.org).

for your school, parish or family. Total capacity is limited to the first 100 reservations. For more information on this, as well as the noon pro-life event hosted by the Right to Life Michiana, visit [diocesefwsb.org/local-marches](http://diocesefwsb.org/local-marches).

**Registration deadline nears MISHAWAKA** — Register for the Called and Gifted Discernment Process by Wednesday, Feb. 10, to allow time to receive your materials in the mail before the start of the series. Contact TheaMarie Burns at 574-234-0687 or [tmurns@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:tmurns@diocesefwsb.org). Cost is \$20 per person.

**Pancake and sausage breakfast**

**DECATUR** — A pancake and sausage breakfast Sunday, Jan. 31, is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, 1703 High St. in Decatur and will be a drive-thru event this year. Tickets \$6. See an eighth grade student for tickets or contact Stephanie Woodworth [stefwoodworth@yahoo.com](mailto:stefwoodworth@yahoo.com).

**Mass for Life with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades**

**SOUTH BEND** — Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades will celebrate a 10:30 a.m. Mass on Friday, Jan. 29, to offer students and families an opportunity to gather and pray for the defense of human life at St. Patrick Parish. Space is limited and advance reservation is highly encouraged. RSVP to John Pratt at [jpratt@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:jpratt@diocesefwsb.org) with the number of seats needed



## PRINCIPAL

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Applications available at <https://theapplicantmanager.com/jobs?pos=df322>

## REST IN PEACE

<b>Arcola</b> William Browne, 79, St. Patrick	<b>Huntington</b> Eugene E. Fleck, 76, SS. Peter and Paul	Jeanette Spaulding, 93, St. Matthew Cathedral
<b>Decatur</b> Barbara A. Braun, 86, St. Mary of the Assumption	<b>Granger</b> Jessica Spenner, 75, St. Pius X	<b>Wabash</b> Helenjean Goff, 92, St. Bernard
<b>Fort Wayne</b> Arlene Baker, 86, St. Vincent de Paul	<b>Mishawaka</b> Alex Pal, 92, St. Bavo	
Thomas C. Forbes Sr., 80, St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel	<b>South Bend</b> Ronald Aigotti, 87, Christ the King	
Marjorie K. Mommer, 96, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception	Irene Craft, 95, Holy Family	
	Damon Emigdio, infant, Holy Family	
	Edward Kopczynski, 85, Christ the King	



## Catholic Diocese of Evansville

*is seeking*  
**Human Resources Director/Manager**

The Catholic Diocese of Evansville, Indiana, which serves a Roman Catholic community of more than 75,800 across 12 counties in southwestern Indiana, seeks candidates for the newly created position of Human Resources Manager/Director. The actual position title will be dependent on the qualifications and experience of the successful candidate.

The successful candidate will be responsible for all aspects of the diocesan benefits plan; develop, maintain and continuously improve the diocese's comprehensive process for hiring employees; oversee the compensation system for diocesan-agency employees; develop and maintain a performance-evaluation process; and serve as an advisor to pastors and management team members parishes, schools and other diocesan agencies.

The successful candidate will be a Catholic in good standing, a bachelor's degree is required (master's degree preferred) in human-resources management, organizational development, business administration or a related field. At least five years of previous experience in humanresources management is required. Designation as a Senior Professional in Human Resources or Professional in Human Resources is preferred. The successful candidate also must complete a full Criminal History Clearance.

A complete position announcement is available online at  
[www.evdio.org/employmentopportunities.html](http://www.evdio.org/employmentopportunities.html)

To apply, send a letter of application, resume and at least four references to:  
Search Committee, Human Resources, Diocese of Evansville, [hr-manager@evdio.org](mailto:hr-manager@evdio.org).  
No phone calls, please.



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# Bishop preaches Christian love at visit to high school

BY JENNIFER BARTON

High school students were called to “be authentic Christians” at Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades’ pastoral visit to Bishop Luers on January 12 and 13. The annual visit looked different this year, as the bishop did not visit individual classrooms, but he did spend two consecutive mornings at the school to ensure that all Bishop Luers’ students could be present with him at a Mass.

Bishop Rhoades drew from the first letter of St. John in his homily and asked the students to always hold fast to the truths of the Gospel — particularly Jesus’ commandment to love others and to remain unified in the Christian faith and the life of the Church.

He proclaimed his joy at visiting the school, but this joy was tinged with sadness, as well.

“I also sometimes worry about you, kind of like a father who worries sometimes about his kids,” he said. “Why do I worry? Because I know there are antichrists around us. This is a problem today like it was back in the time of St. John. There are still those who propagate errors and falsehoods, who deny the true faith and try to convince young people to deny their faith. There are a lot of false teachers out there; those who try to deceive, to get young people to follow a different path than the path of Jesus.

“St. John is talking about many antichrists,” Bishop Rhoades stated. “He’s referring to members of the Christian community who did not persevere in the faith, who departed from the Church because they denied that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ.

“St. John calls them liars for denying that Jesus is the Christ. He calls them antichrists for refusing to recognize that God had come in the human life and death of Jesus; that He had come in the flesh. ... And connected to this denial of the Incarnation was their disobedience to the great commandment to love.”

The bishop said he has seen a lot this past year, during the election season and during the pandemic, and is struck by “people claiming to be Christian or Catholic and yet filled with anger and hate. As Pope Benedict XVI taught, hatred and violence are tools of the antichrist.”

He warned that both racist and pro-abortion ideologies cannot be reconciled with the Gospel. While the bishop highlighted the abundance of Christian love exhibited during the pandemic, he also lamented the selfishness of some who focused on their own comfort and autonomy, rather than the common good and protecting the elderly and the vulnerable.

“The bishop spoke about the attack by a riotous mob on the Capitol the week before, noting



Photos by John Martin

**Bishop Luers High School students celebrate Mass with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades Jan. 12 in Fort Wayne during a pastoral visit. Because of pandemic restrictions, the bishop celebrated Mass for half of the student body Jan. 12 and the other half Jan. 13.**



**Freshman Edwin Gomez receives the sacrament of confirmation from Bishop Rhoades.**

that a few carried banners with the name of Jesus. He asked: “how can one reconcile Christian discipleship with unrighteous anger and hate?” The simple answer: you can’t!”

“We must all ask: Who do we belong to – Jesus Christ or a political idol? We can’t let our faith be eroded by ideology. The Christian faith is not an ideol-

ogy.”

He recommended to the students that they read St. John’s letter and take to heart its strong words. He continued: “St. John says, ‘Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.’ He also writes: ‘If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar.’ This is the logic of Christianity; it’s the logic

Rudolph praised the students’ dedication to their preparation for this sacrament. “They really desired to receive the sacrament, having personally made the decision to do so on their own and taking the responsibility to commit to attending classes. Some of them have taken theology classes at Bishop Luers for two to three years, which helped inspired their decision. All the students were really attentive, engaged, and actively participated which I was always impressed with especially since the sessions where at the end of full school days.”

Even on days that students had to miss sessions due to quarantine or virtual learning, they and Rudolph always found ways to make up the missed time. Most of the young men selected older siblings or other family members for sponsors, though one of them chose theology teacher Ann Isch as his



**Students process for Communion. Principal James Huth is at left.**

of God, the logic of God who loved us so much that He sent His Son who died on the cross out of love for us.

“Young people, be authentic Christians!” he exhorted. “Reject the antichrists who try to manipulate you, political ideologues and demagogues who do not uphold the dignity of the human person. Don’t listen to the false teachers and hypocrites, modern-day Pharisees who claim to be religious, whose hearts are hardened to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus — the truth that we must love one another and that’s how we’ll be judged by God!”

Six students were confirmed during the bishop’s visit: Daniel Barron, Johnny Bloom, Edgar Castro, Eross Garcia, Isaac Zay and Edwin Gomez. Pastoral minister Nicole Rudolph worked with these students during after-school sessions to prepare them for their confirmation.

sponsor. Father Patrick Hake, co-chaplain at Bishop Luers, offered a personal reconciliation service for them a week prior to their confirmation to help “prepare their souls to receive the sacrament.”

Even though the pandemic caused great changes to the annual visit, Principal Jim Huth was pleased, he said, to welcome Bishop Rhoades to the school and to hear his message.

“After the events of last week in Washington, his message of God’s love was a message our students really needed,” Huth said. “They are torn and confused by these events and the message of centering ourselves on God’s love and denouncing hatred and violence helps give us all courage and strength in these crazy times; a foundation built on truth – God’s truth.”