Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This past Friday, Governor Holcomb issued his “Back on Track” Roadmap to Safely Reopen Indiana. This roadmap is designed to safely open Indiana’s economy, but it also includes guidelines for places of worship and allows the re-convening of religious services inside churches.

This past Monday, the five Bishops of Indiana agreed that we would all begin to resume public liturgies by May 30th, the Vigil of Pentecost, with the proper restrictions for safety. We also jointly decided that we would maintain the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until at least August 15th.

After much consultation, I have decided to lift the suspension on public liturgies here in our diocese beginning on the weekend of May 23-24, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Though we were not able to celebrate in person together the Resurrection of the Lord on Easter Sunday, we will be able to celebrate together Our Lord’s glorious Ascension. Mass attendance that weekend and following will need to be limited in order to observe the necessary social distancing within our churches. I am leaving it to our pastors to decide how to handle how many people can attend any given Mass. We have not specified a number since our churches differ in size and seating capacity. I know that some parishes will be increasing the number of Sunday Masses.

It is absolutely essential that we observe the required social distancing in our churches (and also outside the church, in the parking lot, etc.), a most effective means to prevent the spread of the virus. We are also mandating that all wear face masks within our churches. I am asking everyone to observe these regulations of our diocese and our government so that we do not contribute to a rebound effect that would force us to take steps back and even force us to suspend public liturgies again.

I have informed our pastors that, in the event of stricter rules and regulations mandated by local government because of particular circumstances (e.g., a serious outbreak of the virus in a local area), those directives should be followed. Such directives may be stricter than the diocesan and state directives.
On Pilgrimage to the Father’s House

IN TRUTH AND CHARITY
BISHOP KEVIN C. RHoades

The following homily was delivered by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades during a livestreamed Mass from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2020:

T

e the Gospel today is part of Jesus’ final things. We can pray: “Jesus, help me to a share in the divine communion which he, as the Son, has with the Father. And He promised them that He would come back and take them with Him to His Father’s house!”

What comfort these words bring to us. That’s why many people choose this Gospel for the funeral Masses of their loved ones. We believe that Jesus has indeed gone to the Father’s house and entered into heavily glory and that He will come back at the hour of our death and take us to be with Him and the Father forever. Because of this faith, when someone we love dies, we don’t fall into despair. St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.” As Christians, we have this hope in eternal life because we believe that Jesus is “the resurrection and the life.” It’s good to think of our life and to live our life with this destination in mind. This is what our life is: a pilgrimage to the Father’s house. Our purpose, our end is to go to the Father’s house. And Jesus shows us the way. He is the way! In the Gospel today, Thomas asked Him about this. I always love when the apostles, who often don’t really understand what Jesus is teaching, speak up and ask a question. I’m glad that Thomas asked the question about eternal life. He had told them that the Father had sent Him into the world. So Jesus then asks Philip and all the disciples: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

Jesus patiently answers and teaches Philip. He says: “Philip, whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Remember, else where Jesus had said this to the disciples: “The Father and I are one.” Jesus had often told them about His union with the Father. He had told them that the Father had sent Him into the world. So Jesus then asks Philip and all the disciples: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

Jesus goes on to explain that the words He speaks are not His own. He is the spokesman for the Father. And then He explains also that His works (His miracles) are the deeds of His Father. Jesus says: “The Father who dwells in me is doing His works.” Our Lord appeals to the disciples to believe this. He says: “believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”

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The basic truth of all this is that whoever has seen Jesus has seen God. As Pope Benedict XVI so often said: “God gave Himself a human face, the Face of Jesus, and consequently, from now on, if we truly want to know the Face of God, all we have to do is to contemplate the Face of Jesus!” In His Face we truly see God and what He looks like!”

“The basic truth of all this is that whoever has seen Jesus has seen God. As Pope Benedict XVI so often said: “God gave Himself a human face, the Face of Jesus, and consequently, from now on, if we truly want to know the Face of God, all we have to do is to contemplate the Face of Jesus!” In His Face we truly see God and what He looks like!”

On Pilgrimage to the Father’s House

“In My Father’s house there are many dwelling places,” Jesus told His disciples. “If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?”

revealed Himself to humanity. He became flesh and blood. Jesus is the Truth, the true Face of God. Jesus of Nazareth is also the ultimate answer to who we are and who we are meant to be.

We all seek meaning in our life. We seek joy and happiness. We find these things in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He has shown Himself to us as a man. As Jesus said to Philip: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

Our mission, the mission of the Church, is to show the world by our words and by our actions the true Face of God. We are the Body of Christ. We are called to reflect in our lives the Face of Jesus. In a world often empty of God, that has often forgotten God, we’re called to show His Face, the Face of mercy, goodness, and love, the Face of Jesus Christ who reveals the Father.

Jesus said in today’s Gospel: “whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.” How is this possible? It is possible because the glorified Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, which we hear so often in the readings of this Easter season, we see the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church.

Brothers and sisters, we’re all on this pilgrimage to the Father’s house where Jesus has prepared a place for us. Jesus is our Way on this pilgrimage. He is the Truth that lights our way. And He is the life that sustains us. I think of the example of Pope St. John Paul II, whose 100th birthday is approaching — May 18th. He lived His whole life as a pilgrimage to the Father. He believed in Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And He showed the world the whole Face of Jesus, the Face of God. The last words He spoke on the day he died, on April 2, 2005, on his deathbed, were whispered to a nun who was caring for him at that time. He said to her in the weakest of voices: “Let me go to the Father’s house!” That was his life’s goal and he reached it. May that be our life’s goal! Let us help one another on our pilgrimage to the Father’s house!
WASHINGTON (CNS) — Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, and five other bishops have concluded that alleged apparitions of Our Lady of America — said to have taken place more than six decades ago — were not of supernatural origin.

While private devotion inspired by reports of the apparitions could continue, without harm to the faith, Bishop Rhoades said, it would not be appropriate for any sort of public devotion.

“I must come to the conclusion that the visions and revelations themselves cannot be said to be of supernatural origin in the sense of objective occurrences,” Bishop Rhoades said in a final document known as a singular decree, adding that he “cannot approve or support public devotion or cult.”

The investigation concerned numerous apparitions reported by Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus in Dayton, Ohio, between 1956 and 1959. At the time, it was reported that Mary had appeared to Sister Neuzil and had identified herself as Our Lady of America.

Sister Neuzil died in 2000. Both before and after the reported apparitions, she said she had other communications or locations from Mary that took place in several dioceses.

Concurring with the conclusion reached by Bishop Rhoades were five other bishops chosen to be the dioceses where Sister Neuzil had stayed during this period: Archbishops Dennis M. Schnurr of Cincinnati, and Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit along with Bishops Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix, Timothy L. Doherty of Lafayette, Indiana and Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Bishop Rhoades said he had agreed to a request by the other five bishops to form a commission of six theologians and canonists to investigate the apparitions. He was asked as the lead bishop of the commission because the alleged apparitions began in Rome City, Indiana, which is in his diocese.

He described the commission as “a very balanced group that was open to the possibility that the apparitions were authentic.”

But after what he said was a year of study of the vast documentation of the case, all members of the commission concluded that the apparitions were not supernatural in origin.

In an explanatory document called “Statement Regarding the Devotion to Our Lady of America” and signed by all six bishops, they said that Sister Neuzil appeared to have been “honest, morally upright, psychologically balanced, devoted to religious life and without guile.” They also said there were spiritual fruits that came from the devotion, although none warranted certification as miraculous.

The bishops said there was not any doctrinal error in the revelations, though the report added that a claim regarding St. Joseph as a “co-redemer” with Christ “must be seen as an error.”

Regarding the experiences of Sister Neuzil, the bishops said their study concluded that they should be described as “subjective inner religious experiences rather than objective external visions and revelations.”

While saying such experiences were “authentically graced moments,” the document added that they were “subjective ones in which her own imagination and intellect were constitutively engaged,” not “objective visions and revelations of the type seen at Guadalupe, Fatima, and Lourdes.”

The report also noted that Sister Neuzil’s spiritual director was a priest who later became archbishop of Cincinnati, Archbishop Paul F. Leibold. He had supported Sister Neuzil in various ways over many years. “However, in a letter written two years before his death,” the document noted that the archbishop said “he was unable to make a judgment on the supernatural nature of the visions or apparitions.”

While he said he attested to the sister’s holiness, he wrote: “I have never taken any action to promote her devotion publicly.” The bishops concluded that since many of the prayers and religious articles such as medals have been given approval by “competent ecclesiastical authority,” the use of such materials could continue “as a matter of private devotion.”

In explaining the origins of the commission, Bishop Rhoades said that after receiving requests from bishops for some sort of assessment regarding the purported apparitions, then-president of the U.S. bishops conference, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith if this was the appropriate competence of the conference.

The doctrinal congregation said it was more appropriately the responsibility of the local bishop where the apparitions and locations were said to have occurred. This case was unusual in that several dioceses were involved, and all the bishops were asked to review and approve the final report.

This image of Mary shown in this 2009 photo is located at St. Francis of Assisi/Our Lady of the Angels Parish in Chicago. A recent bishops’ commission says supposed Marian apparitions of Our Lady of America said to have taken place more than six decades ago are not recognized by the Catholic Church and are not appropriate for public devotion.

On Wednesday, May 13th, the Feast of our Lady of Fatima, the Poor Brothers of St. Francis will end living as a Franciscan community in our diocese. The beloved Brothers have made this decision based on their personal, vocational discernment as they consider where God is calling each of them.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend would like to thank the Poor Brothers of Saint Francis for their service and devotion to our diocese and community. We extend our prayers that God continue to guide and bless them in the days ahead.
Report abuse

It remains important for our Church to protect children and young persons from the evils of abuse. The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend remains committed to upholding and following its guidelines, policies and procedures that were implemented for the protection of children and young people. These can be reviewed on the diocese’s website, www.diocesefwsb.org, under “Youth Protection.”

If you have reason to believe that a minor may be a victim of child abuse or neglect, Indiana law requires that you report this to the civil authorities. If you or someone you know was abused as a child or young person by an adult, you are encouraged to notify appropriate civil authorities of that abuse. In addition, if the alleged abuser is an active priest or deacon of the Catholic Church, you are encouraged to contact Mary Glowski, victim assistance coordinator, at (260) 399-1458 or mglowski@diocesefwsb.org; or Mark Gurtner, vicar general of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, at P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46801; or at (260) 399-1419; or at mgurtner@diocesefwsb.org. The dioceses are committed to helping prevent the abuse or neglect of children and young people and to assist those who have suffered harm as a result of such abuse.

Denuncie los abusos

Es importante para nuestra Iglesia proteger a los niños y jóvenes adultos de los actos malvados como el abuso. La Diócesis de Fort Wayne-South Bend se compromete a mantener y seguir las reglas, políticas y procedimientos que fueron implementados para la protección de niños y jóvenes. Estos pueden encontrar en la página web de la diócesis, www.diocesefwsb.org bajo la sección de “Protección de Jóvenes” (“Youth Protection”). Si usted tiene motivo de creer que un menor es víctima de abuso o negligencia, la ley de Indiana requiere que usted reporte esto a las autoridades civiles. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce fue abusado, ya sea niño o persona joven, por un adulto, le recomendamos que notifique a las autoridades civiles apropiadas. También, si el ehaled abusive es o fue un sacerdote o diácono de la Iglesia Católica, se le insta comunicarse con Mary Glowski, coordinadora de asistencia de víctimas, al (260) 399-1458 o mglowski@diocesefwsb.org; o con el Presbítero Mark Gurtner, vicario general de la Diócesis de Fort Wayne-South Bend, al P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46801; al (260) 399-1419; o al mgurtner@diocesefwsb.org. La diócesis se compromete a ayudar a prevenir el abuso o negligencia de niños y personas jóvenes y ayudar a aquellos que han sufrito daño como el resultado de tal abuso.

Báo cáo Lâm dung Tinh duc.

Nếu bạn có suy luận cho rằng một người trẻ nào đó có thể là một nạn nhân đã bị làm hỏng hoặc bị bỏ bê, Phản luận Indiana yêu cầu bạn báo cáo cho chín quynh dân sự. Nếu bạn hay người nào đó bị làm hỏng với tư cách một công dân hoặc bị bất hiểm hoại hoặc bị một người lừa bán, bạn được tiến hành biết thông báo cho chính quynh dân sự về việc làm hỏng này. Ngoài ra, nếu biết bạn hàng có bị bạo hành, một lĩnh mục hay Pháp luật Chợ giới, xin vui lòng liên hệ: Mary Glowski, Trưởng ban hỗ trợ nạn nhân (260) 399-1458 email: mglowski@diocesefwsb.org hoặc Mark Gurtner, Cha Tổng Đại Diện. (260) 399-1419 Email: mgurtner@diocesefwsb.org.

Why are face masks important at this time?

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The celebration of public Masses in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will resume the weekend of May 23-24, as directed by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades.

One of the weightiest considerations in formulating a plan to resume Masses, according to diocesan Office of Worship director Brian MacMichael, was how to celebrate liturgies while at the same time taking all possible precautions for preserving the health of all participants and protecting them from exposure to the novel coronavirus. Among the precautions in place will be the requirement that some form of masking cover the nose and mouth be worn while worshiping.

MacMichael said the mandate of wearing masks in the context of COVID-19 is not intended as a means to force an individual to protect himself or herself, but rather a way to protect others. Cloth or surgical masks are ineffective at keeping the virus from entering (as opposed to the N95 respirators used by health care workers), but they do a much better job of containing droplets from one’s own respiration.

“This is particularly important because researchers believe that an infected individual is most contagious when still asymptomatic,” MacMichael noted. “I personally think that wearing a mask is a small inconvenience in exchange for returning to Mass and helping keep our more vulnerable brothers and sisters in Christ safer — including older members of our clergy, who don’t have as easy a choice to sit Sunday out.”
Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings to you during this blessed Easter season! I hope and pray that, in the midst of this dangerous coronavirus pandemic, the grace and peace of Our Risen Lord continues to sustain you and fill your hearts.

The season of Easter ends on the Solemnity of Pentecost. The Second Vatican Council spoke of “the Church’s birth” on the day of Pentecost. The apostles received the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel of Jesus to the nations. The Holy Spirit, who guided and strengthened the apostles, continues to guide and strengthen the Church. We can say that “the grace of Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church.” The Holy Spirit makes the Church grow and continually renews Her.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit works in the Church is by inspiring vocations to the priesthood. I give thanks that the Holy Spirit is blessing us here in our diocese with a good number of priestly vocations. I am grateful to you for your prayers for priestly vocations here in our diocese and throughout the world.

Every year, I ask you to be generous in the Pentecost collection, a special collection in our diocese to help fund the education of our seminarians. This is a large item in our annual diocesan budget. Given the financial challenges we face during this pandemic, the need for your support is even greater this year. If you are able, I humbly ask for your extra generosity in the Pentecost collection this year.

Our diocese and the Church worldwide need good and holy priests. Thank you for doing your part in supporting the formation of our seminarians so that, like the Apostles at Pentecost, they will one day go out with joy and enthusiasm as priests to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus with the strength of His Spirit.

May the Risen Lord bless you for your generosity! May the Holy Spirit strengthen you on Pentecost and every day to live and practice your faith with courage and joy!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

LETTER, from page 1

During the weekend of May 16-17, I am allowing First Holy Communion Masses to be celebrated in our parishes. These are not per se “public Masses” since attendance will be open only to first communicants and their families and invited guests. I felt it was important to do this for the sake of our children who have been so eagerly awaiting to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist for the first time. I have left it up to the pastors to decide if their parishes are ready and prepared for First Communions on that weekend.

I know it will be a challenge to organize the numbers of people who might attend any particular Mass. There will no doubt be some challenges, so I ask everyone to be patient. This is new territory for all of us. We want to accommodate as many people as is safely possible. There is no “perfect” plan in the situation we face and we are all doing our best in resuming public liturgies while, at the same time, taking the necessary precautions to protect people from the virus and to serve the common good. This will require everyone’s cooperation, patience, and understanding. I know I can count on you, the people of our diocese, who have been so cooperative these past two months. It has been beautiful for me to see our spiritual solidarity during this pandemic.

You may wish to check out the more specific liturgical directives and recommendations from our Diocesan Office of Worship. They can be found on www.diocesefwsb.org/covid-19.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to whom our nation, our diocese, and our parishes were re-consecrated on May 1st, intercede for us as we follow our roadmap to a safer earthly situation, and, even more importantly, as we strive to follow the roadmap to the safety and joy of heaven! And may Pope Saint John Paul II, whose 100th birthday is May 18th, intercede for us! May God bless you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

The faithful are reminded that, with Indiana’s allowance of in-person religious services and the resumption of public liturgies in our diocese on May 23-24, public health officials recommend that all individuals who are 65 and above or who have an underlying at-risk health condition stay home and watch services online.
Global action needed to alleviate hunger crisis, Caritas says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Economic stagnation, ongoing sanctions, food shortages and reduced funding are still making it difficult for organizations to help countries in need, Caritas Internationalis said May 6.

Caritas Internationalis, a Rome-based organization that unites 160 Catholic relief organizations around the world, said improved aid efforts are needed as the global pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on vulnerable communities, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

“During a pandemic, vulnerable people are particularly vulnerable,” Caritas Internationalis Director-General Sister Carmen Sammut said in a statement.

She said Caritas’s response to the pandemic has supported the most vulnerable persons and organizations, including food assistance, and it is especially important to act now.

“Caritas is committed to providing immediate assistance to people who are experiencing hunger and poverty, and we urge all governments to increase aid to vulnerable communities,” Caritas said.

Pope advances sainthood cause of Italian millennial

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis advanced the sainthood causes of one woman and four men, including an Italian millennial, who dedicated his life to spreading faith and happiness to his peers.

The pope signed the decrees May 5 during a meeting with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes. The Vatican published the decrees May 6. The pope recognized the heroic virtues of Maria de la Concepcion Barrecheguren Garcia, a Spanish woman who died in 1927 at the age of 28. She dedicated her life to spreading faith and happiness to her peers, the pope wrote.

Francis also recognized the heroic virtues of his father, Redemptorist Father Francisco Barrecheguren Montt, who died in 1948 at the age of 44. He was a priest who dedicated his life to spreading faith and happiness to his peers.

Francis advanced the sainthood causes of four men, including an Italian millennial, Giuseppe Pisanelli, who dedicated his life to spreading faith and happiness to his peers. The pope signed the decrees May 5 during a meeting with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes. The Vatican published the decrees May 6. The pope recognized the heroic virtues of Maria de la Concepcion Barrecheguren Garcia, a Spanish woman who died in 1927 at the age of 28. It was the first time that the pope recognized the heroic virtues of a non-Catholic.

The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of two men, including a Polish priest, Fr. Janusz Kolbe, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944 at the age of 32. The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of a Polish priest, Fr. Janusz Kolbe, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944 at the age of 32. The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of a Polish priest, Fr. Janusz Kolbe, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944 at the age of 32. The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of a Polish priest, Fr. Janusz Kolbe, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944 at the age of 32. The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of a Polish priest, Fr. Janusz Kolbe, who was executed by the Nazis in 1944 at the age of 32.
SAINT JOSEPH — Saint Joseph High School announced recently that it has been recognized as a Project Lead The Way Distinguished School for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities for students through PLTW Biomedical Science and Engineering. It is one of just 143 high schools across the U.S. to receive this honor. PLTW is a nonprofit organization that serves millions of pre-K-12 students and teachers in over 12,200 schools across the U.S.

The PLTW Distinguished School recognition honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement and achievement in their PLTW programs. To be eligible for the designation, Saint Joseph had to meet the following criteria:

• Offer and have students enrolled in at least three PLTW courses
• Have 25% of students or more participate in PLTW courses, or of those who participated in PLTW, have at least 35% who take two or more PLTW courses
• Have 95% of students take the end-of-course assessments
• Have strategies and procedures in place that support reasonably proportional representation with regard to race, ethnicity, poverty, gender and can support such claims with relevant data

Through PLTW programs, students develop STEM knowledge as well as in-demand, transportable skills that they will use both in school and for the rest of their lives, on any career path they take.

“It is a great honor to recognize Saint Joseph High School for their commitment to providing students with an excellent educational experience,” said Dr. Vince Bertram, president and CEO of PLTW. “They should be very proud of their work to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to be career ready and successful on any career path they choose.”

Saint Joseph is part of a community of pre-K-12 schools, colleges and universities and corporate and philanthropic partners across the country united around a passion for providing students with inspiring, engaging and empowering learning opportunities. For more information about PLTW’s recognition program visit pltw.org/our-programs/program-recognition.

Christ Child Society of South Bend diaper drives net thousands

SOUTH BEND — Because of the economic uncertainty of the moment, the Christ Child Society of South Bend is helping some of its partner agencies with a drive-by Diaper Drop Off.

On May 6, 6,500 diapers were delivered by the Christ Child Society to the Center for the Homeless for the toddlers who are sheltered there. Donors simply drove up and tossed diaper boxes into bins, a safe and easy way to contribute to those in need.

A second diaper drop-off took place May 15 at the Christ Child Society Clothing Center in South Bend. This time, even more children in the community benefited through their association with St. Margaret’s House, El Campto and the Hope Rescue Mission. All three organizations refer clients to Christ Child so that, every fall, thousands of children from birth through age 12 can receive new coats, shoes and clothing at the clothing center.

In response to the sudden closing of schools this spring, in March the Christ Child Society donated learning materials and books to children at St. Adalbert School, which families picked up along with their free lunches. The materials had been purchased for “learning parties” with second grade and kindergarten students that were scheduled for April and May. The parties are part of the Success program Christ Child operates at the school in an effort to enhance the educational experience of the students.

Despite fundraising efforts such as graduation gift wrapping at the University of Notre Dame bookstore and the annual Derby Day luncheon being canceled, as well as the possibility that the society’s fall dinner auction might not occur, the organization is working hard to continue serving the children of St. Joseph County.

The Christ Child Society is moving from its current location at Western and Scott streets in South Bend to the Town and Country Shopping Center in Mishawaka, which will offer more space for its volunteers to clothe more children and increase services to the community. The building is undergoing some basic renovation to accommodate the storage and distribution of thousands of coats, shoe boxes, blue jeans, bundled socks and more. At the same time, inventory and ordering continue in anticipation of increased need.

To contribute to helping children in the South Bend-Mishawaka community, visit www.christchildsb.org. One hundred percent of donations is used exclusively for children in St. Joseph County.

Graduates head for professional ministry

University of Notre Dame master of divinity lay formation students celebrated a social-distanced Mass of blessing and sending with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades May 4. The students have completed three years of human and spiritual formation and are graduating this year. During the liturgy at St. Joseph Church in South Bend, each was presented with an icon of “The Vineyard” — Jesus in the center with vines and branches coming out from Him. From left are Raquel Falk, Patrick Schmadeke, Chris O’Brien, Bishop Rhoades, Daniela DeCiantis, Grace Carroll and Maggie McMahon. Not pictured is Kevin Elfron.

Provided by Stacey Noem

Provided by Beth Barrett
The novel coronavirus. For two months, it has held back the world. Even to those who were passed over by the deadliest effects of the pandemic, the suspension of public Masses, other sacraments and devotions caused spiritual discomfort. Many felt cut off from their normal relationship with the Lord — removed from His presence and His graces.

On Palm Sunday, as the potential for a drastically altered Holy Week loomed, Pope Francis acknowledged the disorienting and sudden lack of spiritual normality that occurred in the Church throughout the world.

"Today, in the tragedy of a pandemic, in the face of the many false securities that have now crumbled, in the face of so many hopes betrayed, in the sense of abandonment that weighs upon our hearts, Jesus says to each one of us, 'Courage, open your heart to my love. You will feel the consolation of God who sustains you,'" he said in a nearly empty St. Peter's Basilica to an attentive and multitudinous virtual audience.

He went on that day to tell Catholics around the world: "Inspired by the Lord's example of love and service despite the cost, the faithful are also called to "refuse to betray him for whom we were created and not abandon what really matters in our lives."

"We were put in this world to love him and our neighbors," the pope said. "Everything else passes away; only this remains."

"The tragedy we are experiencing summons us to take seriously the things that are serious and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that life is of no use if not used to serve others," he said. "For life is measured by love."

Catholic News Service reported last month that many of the faithful feel the pandemic forced them to sacrifice more than they ever had throughout the liturgical season of Lent and beyond. But in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, during the time of sacrifice, faith grew in ways it would not have, had it not been challenged by lockdowns and stay-at-home orders.

Families brought the Mass into their homes, prayed the rosary around the fireplace and initiated spiritual discussions. Shrines and prayer spaces sprang up in homes, parents became religious education teachers and rosaries were said on the couch, the home office and the living room floor. Masses were celebrated before empty churches but packed computer, tablet, TV and phone screens.

As they always do, the works of mercy managed to be lived by those called to be disciples in charity. With caution, schools, food pantries, St. Vincent de Paul societies and Catholic Charities worked nearly around the clock to provide for the physical needs of those who were out of work. The young and old reached out to each other to check on their welfare and spirits.

It has already been asserted that as the privileges of publicly practicing the Catholic faith begin to return, the things learned in the meantime perhaps should not be discarded for a return to normalcy.

"It has been beautiful for me to see our spiritual solidarity during this pandemic," Bishop Rhoades said in his letter to the faithful last week outlining the resumption of public Masses. Noting the patience, cooperation and sacrifice that has been required and that will continue to be required, he prayed for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the diocese follows a road map to a "safer earthly situation, and, even more importantly, as we strive to follow the roadmap to the safety and joy of heaven."
Faith under quarantine — How the diocese bore the cross of COVID-19

Provided by Kim Bentley

The Bentley family of Fort Wayne shares hope and shows support for their neighbors by decorating the windows of their home.

Provided by Beth Barrett

Members of the Christ Child Society of South Bend deliver diapers collected during a drive to the South Bend Center for the Homeless to meet an increased demand.

Provided by St. Joseph Parish

St. Joseph Parish begins a livestreamed Tenebrae service in darkness and solitude.

John Martin

The vicars forane concelebrate the Chrism Mass April 9 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Molly Wynen

Two boys climb the steps of St. Monica Church, Mishawaka, to gaze inside from a distance. “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14)
An extraordinary calling: Mother-daughter team prepare older children to receive first Communion

BY TAMI DELUCENAY

T he theme of Catechetical Sunday for the school year that is coming to a close has focused on “Stay with Us,” or helping the young faithful to stay close to their Catholic faith. Convenient Grace has shared stories throughout the year of how volunteer catechists live out their call to be witnesses to the faith in religious education classes.

Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy serves as director of religious education for the Diocese of Honolulu. In a recent article in Catechist Journal, she expressed what this calling means.

“Being a catechist is not just a job or weekly voluntary commitment. We don’t ‘do’ catechesis and then go back to our usual lives. We are catechists, and our whole being is immersed in this mission. Even though we turn off the lights in our classrooms at the end of our sessions, our mission continues: to adopt a worldview illuminated by the light of Christ, a worldview that allows us to see through his eyes and carry the Truth to the whole world with love and compassion. As Pope Francis explains, it is a splendid mission.”

“A Christian’s mission in the world is splendid, it is a mission intended for everyone, it is a mission of service, excluding no one; it requires a great deal of generosity and above all setting one’s gaze and heart facing on High, to invoke the Lord’s help. There is a great need for Christians who faithfully witness to the Gospel in everyday life. The disciples, sent out by Jesus, ‘returned with joy.’ (Pope Francis, Angelus, July 5, 2016) Two catechists from St. John the Evangelist Parish, Goshen, have embraced this call in family life as well as catechetical life in their parish. Sarah Roeder grew up in Goshen and received her sacraments of initiation at St. John. She and her husband, Robert, have been married for 35 years and have five children. “I have been a catechist for 23 years. I taught third grade for most of those years and now teach the first-year sacramental preparation class with my daughter Helen,” stated Sarah.

Helen Roeder is a young adult living in Elkhart. “Although my address is Elkhart, I call Goshen my home,” she said. “I was baptized at St. John and made my first Communion and confirmation at St. Mary of the Annunciation in Bristol.”

I grew up listening to the Gospel stories from my parents. Our mom taught me and my siblings who Jesus is with great joy and animation of the Scripture stories. It was a no-brainer that I would eventually follow in my mom’s footsteps of being a catechist; I just started teaching earlier than I anticipated.” Helen has taught religious education for five years. For the past two she has taught the Sacramental Preparation for Youth class with her mom.

To carry the truth of salvation to the whole world, Sarah Roeder and her daughter, Helen, start with fourth through sixth grade children who would like to prepare to receive the Lord in the Eucharist for the first time. They are catechists at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Goshen.

SPY class was created for this group of children because they were just a little older than our first, second and third grade students. In this class, we use different catechetical material that is more age-appropriate for them,” she said.

Sarah has a passion to share the love of her faith with the children entrusted to her. “These children are like little sponges; they soak up every story with great enthusiasm and get so excited when they hear the historical stories of the Bible and the lives of the saints.

“We don’t just read from the book but bring the stories to life through animated storytelling and acting out the Scriptures. Most of the children know the basic stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, and Noah’s Ark, but when we tell the story about the twins, Jacob and Esau, and how the brothers would fight, they relate to this very human characteristic. It’s so exciting to see their hands go up in a jeopardy-type game because they know the answers and just about jump out of their seats to share what they know.”

Helen enjoys teaching with her Mom. “I love how we work together on lesson plans and our teaching styles complement each other. We begin with just the basics. I find it very rewarding to be part of a child’s early faith formation and watch the light bulb go off when they understand what they are learning. My favorite lessons to teach are the miracles of Jesus and to witness the children’s reactions as they learn of Jesus’ love for them.”

Although the ending of this catechetical year came to an abrupt halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Roeders pray for their students and their families every day. “This mission is an extraordinary calling. If you think you could never teach a class and retain the children’s attention, I challenge you to give it a try,” said Sarah. “It is so rewarding when a child wants to continue to know more about their faith, and as you teach you also strengthen your own faith.” Helen shared, “Not many people get to teach the faith with their mom, it is a joy and very special. I encourage anyone wanting to be a catechist to just jump in headfirst.”
Volume on assisted reproduction falls short on moral considerations

BY PATRICK T. BROWN

I t might seem like another lifetime ago, but bioethical questions about the beginning of life used to regularly be topics of national discussion and controversy. Even as recently as the early 2000s, decisions on embryonic stem-cell funding merited a nationwide presidential address and was even the focus of the first veto wielded by President George W. Bush.

Since then, bioethics have fallen largely off the national radar screen, as culture war battles have focused more on questions of marriage definition than reproductive technologies and economic crises and populist movements took center stage politically.

But as Margaret Marsh and Wanda Ronner illustrate in their new book, “The Pursuit of Parenthood: Reproductive Technology from Test-Tube Babies to Uterus Transplants,” the need for these conversations may be less visible now but may be more needed than ever. Familiarizing oneself with the history of their development does not require adopting the mindset of assisted reproduction proponents, but drives home the need to socially and legally address the intimate and delicate questions about what it means to be a parent and to seek a child at any cost.

Marsh and Ronner are sisters, one a historian and the other a gynecologist, who have written twice previously on conception or lack thereof. Their first book, “The Empty Cradle: Infertility and Assisted Reproductive Technology — and indeed, Marsh and Ronner describe opponents of assisted-reproductive technologies to tame the Wild West of reproductive medicine for another generation at least, and perhaps not ever.”

William F. Buckley famously defined conservatism as “standing athwart history, yelling ‘Stop!’” The genie of technologically-assisted reproduction may be too far out of the bottle for any amount of yanking. But the Catholic view of the inseparability of the marital act’s procreative and unitive dimensions requires us to take a critical stance toward technology that would treat the buying and selling of reproductive material as any sort of market.

“The Pursuit of Parenthood” will inform the reader about the development of these technologies and may help to raise awareness of their more visible dangers. It should also act as an encouragement to Catholic bioethicists to develop a similarly readable history that outlines the limitations and dangers of a mindset that treats parents as consumers and children as products.

Brown writes from Columbia, South Carolina.
Medical care has changed forever

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted medical care in a drastic way. It was told by my administration soon after the virus hit the Northern Indiana area to begin to change most of my patient encounters to a video conference or a phone call. These are called telehealth or telemedicine visits. This was recommended to protect my patients, my staff and me as well.

To put it mildly, I was reluctant. Being the senior cardiologist in our group, I never saw a patient other than face to face in the office. I was trained by some of the best clinicians in the United States at Ohio State University, and to me it was nearly unthinkable to assess someone without doing a good physical examination. I can still remember how thoroughly I was taught not only to examine the entire body, but especially the heart.

I can flash back that I was a senior medical student on a cardiology rotation at University Hospital at OSU. I was with my attending physician on rounds on the heart floor when he said to me: “Kaminskas, give me your stethoscope. Now go into that room and use only your sense of touch to examine the patient. Do not come out until you know the diagnosis.” About 20 minutes later, I caught up with my attending physician and told him how I came up with the diagnosis without being able to listen to the heart. There were two important clues. When I put my fingers on the carotid artery there was a slow upstroke of the pulse and I could feel a slight vibration in the artery. Then, when I palpated the heart by putting my hands on the chest, I felt a thrill over the aortic valve, that is the pop of the valve. This is different in kind of thrill you get from riding a roller coaster! Rather, it is a subtle vibration that can be felt in individuals that have severe narrowing of the aortic valve. It is caused by the turbulence made by the blood flowing through the very narrow orifice. This is one example of why I want to examine my patients when I see them in office.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am currently assessing about 70% of my patients with video technology or by phone call. These are mostly stable patients getting routine checkups, who within the last six months have had a good examination by me. I really enjoy the opportunity to evaluate new patient consultations unless I can see and examine them, though. I am concerned that I could miss a significant finding on examination. This may make a difference in my treatment plan.

An example of this would be missing a severe heart valve problem that could mean the patient’s demise in just a few months if not accurately diagnosed and treated. Because of the pandemic, many patients are not currently evaluating nearly 100% of their patients without seeing and examining them. It is clear by the number of in-office encounters that have been done for years can be successfully accomplished with a video conference or phone call.

From hero to hated in less than a week

Although we are well into the Easter season, my mind harkens back to an event on Good Friday that has often puzzled me. What turned the crowd against Jesus? Recall that just six days earlier, on Palm Sunday, the crowds praised Him, acclaimed Him Son of David, and spoke of Him as a king and messiah. By the morning of Good Friday, though, they were calling for Him to be crucified. What turned them against Him?

My usual explanation was to suppose that the Temple leaders hired a crowd ofuffians and coached them on what to say. In other words, I conjectured that these were not the same people who welcomed Him on Palm Sunday but rather a carefully selected group assembled on the plaza in front of the governor’s residence (the Praetorium). While it may be true that the Temple leaders coached them, it still raises the question, how were they able to find so many people willing to turn against man so widely admired and appreciated by the ordinary faithful?

Father Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges gave a thoughtful and insightful analysis of this event and the crowd’s motivation in his book “What Jesus Saw from the Cross.” Let us consider Father Sertillanges’ explanation of the mood of the crowd.

(“On that Good Friday morning the crowd assembled for reasons of its own. They have a right to have a prisoner released on them and they are coming to claim that right. Perhaps they are thinking of Barabbas, perhaps of Jesus, who is just at this moment appearing before the tribunal. … Filiate [however] irritates them twice …”)

The Spirit of truth is in us

THE CATHOLIC DOCTOR IS IN

The Acts of the Apostles once again this Easter season furnishes the first reading. In the readings of the weekends earlier in this season, the identity of the Apostles has clearly been given. The Apostles, absent Judas, of course, had exercised the very power of Jesus in naming a new member of their group, Matthias, who succeeded the Judas. Peter healed the sick. On behalf of the Apostles, Peter spoke as Jesus had spoken.

It was not just simply that the Apostles had been with Jesus as specially selected students and followers, but the Lord commissioned them to discharge divine power itself, and thus they continued the mission of Jesus. In the spirit of Jesus.

In this reading, clarifying this identity continues. While Acts already has clearly established that Peter was the head of the Apostles, the character of Apostleship also belonged with the others.

For this reading, the central figures are Philip and John. They performed miracles, as Jesus had performed miracles. They were part of the community of Apostles, then centered in Jerusalem, gathered around and beside Peter.

This Apostles in Jerusalem, sent Philip and John to Samaria. Just as Jesus had granted salvation to the Samaritans in a manner different from foreigners, the Apostles looked to the salvation of all people. In this case, as had the Lord, Philip and John took salvation to Samarians. Later, Apostles would go much farther afield, bearing with them the mercy and power of Christ.

They began the brilliant history of evangelization in the Church, still a fact, and a goal, for Catholics.

The second reading is from the First Epistle of Peter. This reading is a strong, joyful, and enthusiastic proclamation of Jesus as Lord, calling believers to listen to the Lord and to follow the Lord. The Lord should be in our hearts and minds.

The Church will reassure and comfort us. What turned them against Him?

Reflection

The next major liturgical event for us will be the celebration of the feast of the Ascension of Jesus. Soon after this feast, we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Within sight now is the close of the Easter season.

Already, for weeks, the Church has informed us of the Resurrection of Jesus, gloriously occurring after the dreadful events of Good Friday. It has shared with us its joy, copying the joy of the first Christians. It has reported again and again of the Lord’s appearances and admonitions.

Gently, gradually, but emphatically, the Church has begun the process of leading us in our day to ask what the Resurrection truly means for each of us individually. Is it an abandoning of the Lord or each one of a personal experience?

The Church will reassure us. Contact with Jesus was not lost with the Ascension, when Jesus returned to the Father. Contact remains, and it remains very clearly in the visible, institutional Church, standing with the Apostles. This link with Peter and the other Apostles also is God’s gift to us.

Through the Church we hear again the words of Christ. In the Church’s sacraments, we still access Christ’s eternal strength and life.

These readings call us to peace, hope and goodness. Absolutely, they teach us about life and how to live.

READINGS

Sunday: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 Ps 66:1-7, 16-20 1 Pt 3:15-18/Jn 14:15-21

Monday: Acts 16:11-15 Ps 149:1-6a, 9b In 15:26-16a

Tuesday: Acts 16:22-34 Ps 138:1-3, 7c-8 In 16:5-11


Friday: Acts 189-18 Ps 47:2-7

Saturday: Acts 182-28 Ps 47:2-3, 8-10 In 16:23b-28
Gov. Cuomo and God’s noncompetitive transcendence

Last month, Andrew Cuomo, the governor of New York, made a rather interesting theological observation. Commenting on the progress that his state has made in fighting the coronavirus and praising the concrete efforts of medical personnel and ordinary citizens, he said, “The number is down because we brought the number down. God did not do that. Faith did not do that.” I won’t waste a lot of time exploring the hubris of that remark, which should be obvious to anyone. I might recommend, out of pastoral concern, that the governor read the first part of Genesis Chapter 11.

What I will do instead is explain the basic interpretative confusion that undergirds Cuomo’s assertion, one that, I fear, is shared even by many believers. The concern here is the possibility of the governor’s declaration that God is one competitive cause among many, one actor jostling for position and time upon the stage with a coterie of other actors. On this reading, God does certain things — usually of a rather spectacular nature — and creates causality and destroys other things, usually more mundane. Thus, we can clearly see God’s role in the suffering of responsibility and credit — some to God and some to finite agents. But this account is deeply unbiblical and alien to the Catholic theological tradition.

To understand the scriptural sense of the play between divine and human causality, it is helpful to consult the cycle of stories dealing with King David in first and second Samuel. What strikes the attentive reader is that nothing obviously “supernatural” takes place in these accounts. Practically everything that happens to David could be adequately accounted for on psychological, historical, military or political grounds. However, throughout the narrative, God’s activity and involvement are assumed, for the author tells us for granted the principle that the true God works not typically in an interruptive way but precisely through a congeries of secondarily causal causes. Mind you, it is not the case that some explanations of David’s story are political or psychological and some properly theological; rather, everything is, at once, natural and supernaturally — precisely because God’s causality is operating noncompetitively, on a qualitatively different level than creativity and causality. If you want a one-liner summary of this distinctively biblical perspective, you could not do better than this, from the prophet Isaiah: “O Lord, it is you who have accomplished all that we have done.” (isa. 26:12)

Now, why should this be true? Here it would be helpful to turn to the Church’s greatest theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas, God is not the supreme being (“ens summum” in his Latin), but rather “ipsum esse subsistentis,” which means “the sheer act of to be itself.” In a word, God is not one more instance of the genus “being,” one thing, however exalted, among others; instead, He is the self-explaining source of existence as such, that great font of being in and through which all finite things subsist and act. Therefore, God does not compete for space, so to speak, on the same ontological grid as creatures; a zero-sum game does not obtain in regard to God’s activity and creativity activity — the more we ascribe to God, the less we have to ascribe to the other.

Allow me to ground this rather abstract rhetoric with a very concrete example. If one were to ask what is necessary to make a bicycle, the response would be something like this: “tires, brake pads, a chain, a metal frame, the skill of the builder, perhaps a schematic to guide the building process, etc.” No one would ever be tempted to respond as follows: “tires, brake pads, a chain, God, a metal frame, the skill of the builder, etc.” And yet, a smart religious person, upon finishing the project of constructing that bike, would quite legitimately say, “Thank God!” The prayer would be a humble acknowledgment, not that God is a fussily invasive way interfered with the building process, but that God is responsible for the entire process of causes and behaviors that made up the process. The upshot is that the two dimensions of causality — one finite and the other transcendent — operate simultaneously and noncompetitively: “You have accomplished all that we have done.” All of which brings me back to Gov. Cuomo. To claim that “God did not do that” because we did it is simply a category mistake. What brought the coronavirus numbers down? It is perfectly accurate to say, “the skill of doctors and nurses, the availability of hospital beds, the willingness of so many to shelter in place, etc.” But it is also perfectly valid to say that God brought those numbers down, precisely by grounding the entire complex of creaturely causality just referenced. This relationship holds at the metaphysical level, but it is perhaps even clearer when it comes to the psychological motivation of those dedicated physicians and nurses. Why ultimately were they willing to do what they did? I would be willing to bet a large percentage of them would say that it was a desire to serve others and to be pleasing to God.

So we should thank all of the good people involved in bettering our current situation, and we shouldn’t hesitate, even for a moment, to thank God as well. There is absolutely no need to play the zero-sum game proposed by the governor of New York.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

POPE, from page 12

by referring jocularly to [Jesus] as ‘their king.’ And thus, Jesus now assumes his divinity more than their pity: a messiah in political terms, a religious messiah in the psychological and alien to the Catholic theological tradition. But this account is deeply unbiblical and alien to the Catholic theological tradition.

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Catholic educators wonder how to restart the next school year

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CNS) — Education leaders imagining how Catholic schools will safely reopen this fall agree on two things: different decisions will be made according to locations and reopening plans may change on short notice.

In addition, with so much unknown about if and how the country will fully reopen with a COVID-19 pandemic far from over, there is also the possibility that many schools will restart in the fall through remote learning only — a prospect that educators say they hope to avoid.

“If we don’t have that face to face (contact) and just go immediately into remote learning, it is more difficult and it is not what I want for our teachers or students — I want them to have some time together,” said Kathy Mears, interim director of the National Catholic Educational Association.

Educators are hearing the predictions of a possible second wave of COVID-19 arriving toward the end of this year. But if schools can get an early start on the school year by starting earlier in the fall, they can get an early start on the end of this year. But if schools can get an early start on the school year by starting early in the fall, they can get an early start on the end of this year. But if schools can get an early start on the school year by starting early in the fall, they can get an early start on the end of this year. But if schools can get an early start on the school

“Then if we have to go back into remote teaching I think it is a stronger kind of teaching when everyone knows each other because my fear is that the virus comes back and harms more people,” Mears said, referring to an old definition of Catholic education as an intimate communication between souls best developed face to face. “If we need to (stay on lockdown) then we will, but everybody in the country wants to reopen and I am hopeful that we will be able to do that,” she told Catholic News Service.

To plan for either eventually, some Catholic schools plan to craft teaching lessons in blocks of four weeks at a time both in face-to-face and remote learning formats so that they can rapidly shift between the two if need be. “Schools are looking at all those questions right now and trying to figure it out — and that will be the focus of our phone calls with superintendents and having them share ideas online and learn from each other,” Mears said.

One possibility under consideration is that schools could reopen as early as July and try to get at least three months of face-to-face time underway before October — a concept that is being floated on the West Coast and a few other places, according to Mears.

That, however, may present practical problems for Catholic schools that aren’t outfitted with adequate air conditioning and are located in regions with hot, humid summer climates.

Another idea gaining some traction is to break the school day into two shifts, from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and then 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., in order to have fewer students on campus at any one time and to better comply with social distancing protocols.

Others have suggested schools take learning outdoors as much as possible, gathering students in open air spaces.

“Some of our best teachers already provide a lot of outdoor activities even now during remote learning and are still providing them: I go on Twitter and watch teachers having their children go on walks, taking pictures of what they see and writing...”

- SCHOOL, page 15
Schools are looking at options amid the pandemic.

There is nothing normal about this situation. Kate Quinn, assistant superintendent for the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, said that the Columbus Catholic schools are looking at options amid the pandemic.

Schools have to make decisions that best suit their environment, said Donoghue, who predicts that some reopen plans subject to change right up until the last minute and long after the normal spring and summer enrollment season.

It doesn’t help that scientific data and understanding about COVID-19 is still in its infancy stage, Donoghue added, saying: “There is nothing normal about this situation.”

Kitty Quinn, assistant superintendent of elementary schools for the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, said that the Columbus Catholic schools are looking at some kind of slower reentry to give faculty and staff time to assess the student social-emotional issues amid the pandemic. Schools there are scheduled to reopen Aug. 20.

“Not everyone is there all at once — sort of a staggered opening,” Quinn said, adding that safety is a top priority.

Looking ahead, she put it this way: “We are cautiously optimis tic.”

SCHOOL, from page 14

ing stories about it. Mears said, acknowledging moving outdoors on a school-wide level may nevertheless be impractical.

Mary Pat Donoghue, executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, notes that in a country as big as the United States, different regions will come up with different solutions for the fall.

“Like everyone, I have no specifics, but it will look different in Montana than in New York,” Donoghue said. “My sense is that the leadership of our schools are informed and working closely with their local government officials and that is the most important thing.”

“They all desire to get back into school as quickly and safely as possible, only when we feel it is safe,” she said, adding that there are regions in the U.S. with significant COVID disease and others with very little.

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Local company produces film on Lakota Indian spiritualist

BY JENNIFER BARTON

In an age when television shows frequently contain objectionable content, it can be refreshing for Catholics to find a program that features a person’s quest for godliness amid extreme hardship. Such a program has been created by a local company.

New Group Media, based out of South Bend, produces films for various clients. For the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, it has created the Annual Bishop’s Appeal video for many years.

The company has now been blessed to have its documentary, “Walking the Good Red Road: Nicholas Black Elk’s Journey to Sainthood,” picked up by ABC affiliates and set to air nation-wide on May 17. The hour-long film highlights the life and the road to canonization of Nicholas Black Elk, Lakota Sioux spiritual leader and Catholic catechist.

Christopher Salvador, director and producer of “Walking the Good Red Road,” is enthusiastic about the message and artistry of the completed project. He stressed the importance of authenticity in the documentary, including using actors from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, who spoke the Lakota language, and drummers from the Red Cloud Indian School.

The project began when Sister Judith Zielinski, OSF, screenwriter and producer, was approached by a Catholic theologian of Native American history concerning creating a short film about Black Elk. Their conversation sparked the idea for a larger video. Since New Group had already produced content for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, she and Salvador went to the USCCB communications office to look into grants that might finance the documentary. As it turned out, the office’s Catholic Communications Campaign was looking for projects to fund.

“I wrote to the bishop of Rapid City to ask if he would serve as executive producer and he agreed; he was very supportive,” said Sister Judith. After the grant was approved, she and Salvador began researching Black Elk’s life and scouting potential filming locations in South Dakota.

Black Elk lived during the destruction of the Lakota Sioux way of life and the forced resettlement of his people on reservations in the Dakota Territory in the late 19th century. As a youth, he participated briefly in the Battle of Little Bighorn and was part of the rescue party at Wounded Knee. For a time, he toured with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and even performed for Queen Victoria.

His spiritual life and path to canonization are portrayed in the documentary. A vision that he had as a young boy spurred his life’s search for God. In that vision, he felt himself being called to become a spiritual leader for the Lakota Sioux. He continued to seek understanding and had another vision as an adult where a man spoke to him—a man he said was “the Son of God.”

In studying Black Elk’s life, Sister Judith learned that in the 1880s, Lakota Sioux Chief Red Cloud had persuaded the United States government to send Jesuits, the only religious group that he trusted, to the Pine Ridge Reservation to serve as missionaries for the Lakota Sioux. These “Black Robes” built a church and a school to teach the Native Americans, including Black Elk, the Catholic faith. In 1904, Black Elk, then in his 40s, was baptized Catholic and took the name Nicholas. The school and church are still a part of the reservation today, as are the Jesuits who continue to meet the spiritual needs of the Lakota people. The school has been renamed Red Cloud Indian School to honor the Lakota heritage.

Black Elk was able to merge the truths of Christianity with Lakota spirituality. After his baptism, he trained as a catechist. Several photographs of Black Elk show him reciting the rosary and teaching it to children. He taught in the native language, and it is said that he led 400 people into the Catholic Church. He often traveled the reservation by wagon or horseback to evangelize his people.

Salvador spoke of the difficult conditions the crews had to overcome during filming on location in the Pine Ridge Reservation. “When we filmed one of the scenes, it had snowed and rained for four days, and the areas we wanted to film were all under mud,” he remembered. Since trucks and even a backhoe could not get to the site to recreate Black Elk’s burial scene, they ended up digging the grave by hand in the mud.

The filmmakers had to recreate other scenes in Black Elk’s life as well, including his baptism. Although the original church burned down in 1996, Salvador said that the font used in the film is the original baptismal font, which was rescued during the fire.

Salvador credits the Jesuits who currently serve on the reservation for their assistance in making the film as accurate as possible. “We wanted everything to be authentic, so we provided a list of props we needed.” The Jesuits, in turn, loaned him a turn-of-the-century stole from their archives for the baptism scene, along with “a 1950s aspersorium (liturgical instrument for sprinkling holy water) and cross for the funeral scene.”

While most of the filming took place in South Dakota, there are ties to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The narrator, Jim Greulich, is from the area, and many of the film’s costumes were provided by the Casaday Costume Company of South Bend. Larry Bilinski, post-production director, stated that when some areas of the documentary needed to be revisited in the editing process, these shots were staged locally in South Bend.

“To re-create the past took a lot of research — documents, letters, photos — visually, that is the backbone,” Bilinski said. Sister Judith shared that in the beginning, she didn’t feel an emotional connection to Black Elk. But after hours of research at Marquette University’s Native American Catholic archives, she began to see him as an “incredible saint for today.”

His forgiveness and holiness made him a model for modern Lakota Catholics. “One very important thing for me to include in the documentary was Lakota Catholicism today,” she said.

Black Elk’s view that all people belonged to the family of God makes him an important figure not only to Native Americans but to all Catholics. Sister Judith sees him as a man who can bridge the gap between opposing opinions in a divided world. Indeed, Black Elk himself is quoted as saying, “There is only one important law, to love one another … We are all related.”

To view “Walking the Good Red Road,” check local listings or contact the local ABC station for a broadcast date and time. Copies of the film will also be made available in early summer through the Diocese of Rapid City.