SEEK21 speakers share faith experiences, say Christ has all the answers

More than 27,000 people across the country participated in SEEK21 Feb. 4-7, a conference for young adults that included expert speakers, small-group discussions and fun activities for students and parishioners.

BY MAURICE BEAULIEU

ORLANDO, Fla. (CNS) — A bishop and a religious sister who shared the keynote spotlight on the opening night of SEEK21, this year’s national conference of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, discussed their own faith journeys and how Catholics from around the world can improve their faith by accepting Jesus’ divine character.

SEEK21 drew over 27,000 participants for its virtual events Feb. 4-7 and included college students, missionaries, FOCUS alumni, parishioners, young adults, FOCUS benefactors, clergy, religious and others.

Speaking from Texas, Sister Miriam James Heidland, a member of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, began the first half of the keynote address on “Who Am I?” with a story of her own.

Observing a homeless man under an overpass one day, she had pondered the life of the man and what had brought him to that situation.

“That young man, he just found a place in my heart,” Sister Miriam said, wondering which choices led the man there. She used this example to bring light to the Catholics watching her now by asking, “How did you get here? Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically. So often in life we end up places and we have no idea how we got there,” which eventually leads to the bigger question, “Who am I?”

She encouraged the viewers to seek out this answer with Christ. “Christ is such a great teacher because what He does is actually teach by asking questions. He elicits the answers from us perhaps even when we don’t know what they are ourselves.”

Searching oneself for the answer is the key, Sister Miriam added. “There is something special about an answer that comes from deep within. ... It’s only when we find Him, when we continue to turn our face to Him that we find out not just who He is but who we are.”

“It’s such a glorious thing,” she said of human life. “We are made to know and to love. We have an intellect and a will. We can perceive what is good and we can choose what is good and we can travel along that path.

“He welcomes you and I,” Sister Miriam said. “And He delights to answer that question in various forms every single day. Who am I? How did I get here in your masculinity as a man and your femininity as a woman?” Sister Miriam asked. “What is that story? It is a glorious story being told. The Lord desires to take all of it into Himself and to unite it to His heart and to give the gift of Himself so you and I know who we are.”

She referenced the possibility of venturing down negative paths when Catholics forget who they are. “When we forget who we are, we are easily led astray. We easily fall into cancel culture.

SEEK, page 16
Blessed palms become ashes, symbol of repentance

BY JENNIFER BARTON

A dark smudge of ashes on the forehead sets most Catholics apart on Ash Wednesday. Even celebrities have been seen on television marked with this visible sign of repentance. Catholics tend to believe — erroneously — that attendance at an Ash Wednesday Mass is obligatory.

“Ashes are a natural result of death and destruction,” said Father Thomas Shoemaker, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne. “When a tree is destroyed in a fire, all that is left is ash. When a body corrupts in the grave, eventually nothing is left but ash. Ashes are left when something living, something holy, something vibrant, is destroyed. The ashes of Lent remind us that one day each of us will face death.”

The use of ashes also alludes to baptism, according to Father Shoemaker.

“In baptism, we are washed clean of sin and we take on a spotless white garment. When baptized Catholics are later marked with ashes, the symbolism is clear: We have brought sin back into our lives and need to be washed clean again. Our baptismal purity has been stained.” Only through penance and by the mercy of God is this cleansing possible.

The symbolism of ashes

In Jewish tradition, ashes have long been a sign of repentance and mourning. Drying one’s face, hair or clothes with them, along with tearing garments, was a way of humbling oneself before God. Father Shoemaker points to Old Testament examples of their use, including when Joshua prostrated himself before the Lord seeking answers to why the Israelites lost a terrible battle. In the Book of Esther, Mordecai donned sackcloth and ashes after learning of the imminent doom of the Jewish people at the hands of Haman.

Even the king of Nineveh in the Assyrian Empire, a Gentile whose nation was often hostile toward the Israelites, covered himself with ashes in repentance when Jonah warned him that his city would be destroyed if he did not repent. St. Augustine said that the Lordzek answered to why the Israelites lost a terrible battle. In the Book of Esther, Mordecai donned sackcloth and ashes after learning of the imminent doom of the Jewish people at the hands of Haman.

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According to Brian MacMichael, director of Worship for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the Roman Missal prescribes making the ashes out of blessed branches from the previous year. In most instances, palm branches are used, but olive or other native plant branches are sometimes substituted, depending on the church’s locale.

Following annual Palm Sunday celebrations, when palm branches are blessed and distributed to the faithful, like other blessed religious items, the branches cannot be thrown away but must be properly disposed of. This can be done either by burning or burying the old palm.

“Palm rest in a container at Queen of Angels Parish, Fort Wayne, Feb. 5. At many Catholic parishes, palms given out at Palm Sunday Mass the previous year are returned to the parishes so they may be burned to create the ashes that will be imparted on Ash Wednesday.”

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Black Catholic is trailblazer in science; she has been geneticist for 56 years

BY KAREN PULFER FOCHT

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (CNS) — As a child, Sheila Stiles Jewell played outside of the public housing where her family lived in Memphis. She felt one with nature while weaging clever and catching bumblebees, not realizing that she was really feeding her curiosity for science and the natural world.

During the days of segregation, the Catholic Church recruited her family, living at Lemoyne Owen Gardens at the time, to receive a Catholic education. It was a noble act that she credits with much of her success today.

Working into her 70s, Jewell is a research geneticist at the U.S. NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Milford, Connecticut. NOAA Fisheries is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“Science has made my faith stronger,” she said. “The DNA structure is amazing. It is beautiful and is evidence of what God can do and has done. Look around you, it is just wonderful!”

Women from her generation are underrepresented in the field of science.

Jewell would like to see more African American females enter the field of science. She speaks at schools and brings her sea creatures to show the students hoping to spark an interest within them.

“My faith has been an important part of how I persevered and persevered. I can’t imagine how I could have done it without my faith,” she said. Jewell still comes home often to be with family and together they attend Mass at St. Augustine Church in south Memphis.

She remembers the times as a child in the segregated South, when she went to Mass at a white church, she had to stand in the back, sit in the balcony at the movies, and drink out of separate drinking fountains.

“We came from humble beginnings,” she recalled. Her mother, a teacher, was her first role model. She instilled in Jewell that an education was the key to a successful life. “We couldn’t always realize our dreams because of segregation, but that did not keep us from striving to be somebody,” she said.

The people in the public housing where she lived always looked out for the children. “We were sheltered and protected, it was a village.” They were always encouraged to go to church.

Jewell studied science at Fair Bertrand High School, where she was valedictorian. It was there that Sister Mary Kilian, a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, encouraged her to go to college and major in biology.

She attended Xavier University in New Orleans, the only historically Black Catholic university in the U.S., and then accepted an internship in Milford. She was apprehensive about leaving all she knew.

That summer, her advisers convinced her to go on a 30-hour Greyhound bus ride to pursue new opportunities. Because she was Black, she rode in the back of the bus and even though the North was not officially segregated like Memphis at the time, there was nowhere to stay. Housing was not open to Blacks in the 1960s. Her advisers found a family for her to stay with.

She was the first permanent African American female employee in Department of Interior in the Milford marine biological laboratory, where she has had a 56-year career and is still working today.

“I had a passion for genetics. Early in my career, there were no role models in this male-dominated field,” she said.

She studied shellfish, such as oysters, clams, scallops and mussels, and working on restoring this population through genetics and breeding for better survival and growth.

Women’s rights and civil rights have helped and brought a lot of improvement, though there are still some barriers today, she said.

She loves working with young people, “reaching out and reaching back,” she said. “If you have a dream, follow it, do what it takes, don’t be discouraged, don’t give up.”

Jewell was a trailblazer. This past fall she was inducted into the Memphis Catholic High School Hall of Fame. For so many years, she drew on her faith. “If it were not for my faith, I would not have been as successful as I have been. God has been beside me throughout this journey. I could not have made this journey alone. I am so thankful for my faith, my family and my friends.”

Kelly to succeed Anderson as Knights of Columbus CEO

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (CNS) — Patrick Kelly, a retired U.S. Navy captain, is the new leader of the Knights of Columbus, succeeding Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson, who has headed the International Fraternal Organization as its CEO for more than two decades.

Elected deputy Supreme Knight in 2017, Kelly was elected to the top post by the Knights’ board of directors Feb. 5. He begins his term as the organization’s 14th Supreme Knight March 1.

Anderson will retire Feb. 28 upon reaching the organization’s mandatory retirement age of 70.

“I am honored, thankful and blessed. I am honored to be called to serve as Supreme Knight,” Kelly said in a Feb. 5 news release.

He credited Anderson for his guidance over the last four years.

“Carl has long been a friend to me, and while I count myself among my many colleagues who will miss his daily contribution, I know that he will continue to contribute much to the good of the (fraternal) order as past Supreme Knight and a member of the board of directors,” Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, supreme chaplain to the Knights, described Kelly as a “brilliant new Supreme Knight.”

“He possesses the knowledge, experience and commitment necessary to carry the order forward in service to our brother Knights, their families, our parishes and our communities,” he said in a statement.

Calling Kelly “extraordinarily well-qualified,” Anderson credited the new leader for his dedication to service to the Catholic Church, the United States and the Knights. “He is ideally suited to carry on the work of the Knights of Columbus as we enter a new era, faithful to our principles of charity, unity and fraternity, and in close collaboration with the Holy See and the bishops throughout the world.”

With the fraternal organization, Kelly played a prominent role in international religious freedom, the Knights’ Ultrasound Initiative, and a grassroots response to the coronavirus pandemic, known as Leave No Neighbor Behind involving members worldwide serving people in quarantine, supporting food banks and blood centers and supporting other humanitarian services.

Kelly served 20 years in the Navy, retiring in 2016 from the military branch’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps Reserve where he specialized in international and operational law. He also served as the commanding officer of the international law unit at the U.S. Naval War College in Rhode Island.

In his career he also has served as senior advisor to the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom at the U.S. State Department. His responsibilities included working with the Vatican and other nations on religious freedom issues.

Kelly joined the Knights as a university student in Wisconsin in 1983 and later served as state deputy in the District of Columbia from 2012-2013. He was named the Knights’ vice president for public policy in 2006.

He also was executive director of the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington.
Keeping promise made at Jesuit event, Biden raises refugee cap to 125,000

BY RHINA GUIDOS

In November, incoming U.S. President Joe Biden said at a Jesuit Refugee Service event that he would be heading in a dramatically different direction than the previous administration on refugee admissions.

On Feb. 4, Biden delivered on those remarks, signing an executive order to raise the refugee cap to 125,000 for fiscal year 2021.

“It’s going to take time to rebuild what is so badly damaged, but that’s precisely what we’re going to do,” he said, referencing the near dismantling of the program under the Trump administration, which dropped the cap late last year to a historically low figure of 15,000.

As the world faces a crisis of more than 80 million displaced people looking for refuge, the United States can return to what it once was, he said in a televised address at the U.S. Department of State.

What are your plans for God’s gifts? Today’s Catholic February 14, 2021

The refugee cap is the maximum number of displaced people the U.S. decides to resettle in a federal fiscal year. Biden initially announced the number of refugees the country would be seeking to resettle in a Nov. 12 virtual event marking the 40th anniversary of I.R.S.

During the Trump presidency, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, along with other Catholic organizations and a variety of faith and secular groups, struggled in advocacy efforts with the administration to allow more refugees into the country.

Instead, little by little, Trump’s team whittled away at the numbers — in dramatic fashion.

Hours after taking office in January 2017, the Trump administration announced it was cutting the cap of 110,000 allowed under the Obama administration to 50,000. The administration consistently lowered the number each fiscal year.

In 2019, the Trump administration announced it was setting the cap at 18,000 refugees for the 2020 fiscal year, but fewer than 10,000 were ultimately allowed in.

Catholic and other faith-based organizations hailed the news about Biden’s executive order.

Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, in a Feb. 4 statement, said the organization “celebrates this decision.”

“Opening our doors to refugees during a global refugee crisis is the right thing to do,” she said. “Maryknoll missionaries working in refugee camps around the world know that hundreds of thousands of refugee families have been needlessly suffering and waiting for too long in unsafe conditions ... as people of faith here in the United States, we are called to create communities of welcome.”

“Welcoming more refugees, we show the world that we are an open, tolerant nation that protects the vulnerable. Leading by example encourages other countries to be more welcoming as well,” said Bill O’Keefe, executive vice president for mission, mobilization and advocacy at Catholic Relief Services, in responding to the administration’s announcement.

CRS is the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency.

“As an organization that supports refugees in many countries, including Uganda and Bangladesh, we witness the tremendous strains on these families and communities. COVID-19 has made refugees even more vulnerable. These men, women and children are fleeing war, persecution and extreme violence,” O’Keefe said.

“We will continue to urge the U.S. government to provide humanitarian assistance overseas and address the root causes of forced displacement, including conflict and persecution,” he added. “We need to use all the tools at our disposal, including refugee resettlement, to support the people who need it the most.”

Ashley Feasley, director of policy for Migration and Refugee Services at the USCIRF, said in a Nov. 13 interview with Catholic News Service that the change in U.S. refugee policy would take some ramping up of a network of agencies, international and domestic, whose resettlement work trickled in the past few years.

Since the refugee program began 40 years ago, up until the Trump administration, the country had been taking in an average of 80,000 refugees a year.

But agencies and the staff that once helped with resettlement have shuttered their doors. COVID-19 also has thrown a wrench into travel and the ability for workers to vet refugees before they enter the United States.

Feasley said it would take a lot of effort, rebuilding relationships with global agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to get the program back up to what it once was.

“I don’t see them getting to 125,000 this fiscal year, but I do see a rebuilding of the infrastructure,” Feasley said in the November 2020 interview after Biden had made clear plans to raise the cap.

Working with refugee resettlement is an opportunity to embrace the call of Pope Francis to “welcome, protect, promote and integrate” some of the most vulnerable among us,” Feasley said.
Expansion to school choice program under consideration

Ten years after the passage of groundbreaking legislation that made Indiana a national leader in school choice, state lawmakers are considering a bill that would extend the reach of the program to far more Hoosier families.

House Bill 1005 builds upon the 2011 law establishing Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program, more commonly known as the voucher program. As he was a decade ago, the lawmaker behind the effort is Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis. His current proposed legislation, which passed the House Education Committee on Feb. 3, would expand eligibility to allow more parents in Indiana to select the school they believe is best for their children.

“We have excellent schools across the state, but it is nearly impossible for them to meet every unique need of every child,” said Behning, chairman of the committee. “Because the coronavirus pandemic has changed how some students attend class, parents began considering other options to educate their students. Many Hoosier families already enjoy the flexibilities of Indiana’s school choice program, but there is still a large group shut out of these opportunities.”

House Bill 1005 would help middle and upper-middle-class families still struggling to pay for private school tuition by raising the financial eligibility requirements for vouchers. That threshold, which currently stands at a maximum family income of 150% of the federal Free and Reduced Lunch program, would be increased to 225% this year and then 300% by July 2022 under the proposed legislation.

In addition, the bill would increase the scholarship amount that a voucher student receives in a school year. Currently, the program operates under three tiers, with students receiving vouchers of 50, 70 or 90% of tuition based on family income. House Bill 1005 would streamline the program by setting the scholarship amount at 90% for all students eligible for vouchers. “A child’s success should not be dictated by their family’s income,” Behning said. “When we started looking at the current eligibility requirements, we found a lot of hardworking families still could not send their child to the school of their choice.”

House Bill 1005 seeks to expand the existing school choice program in two additional ways. First, it would add foster care as a pathway into the voucher program. Second, it would create the Indiana Education Scholarship Account, which would provide eligible families funding to directly pay for tuition or other education-related expenses at an Indiana school. This account would be offered to children in foster care, those with special needs, and those with parents on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard. The Indiana Catholic Conference and the Indiana Non-

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Ash Wednesday: different look, same message

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Ash Wednesday, as with many other things right now, will have a different look at many Catholic parishes across the United States this year. For starters, Catholic churches that are still offering ashes are having to be creative when marking indi-

WASHING

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Recognizing their welcome of and witness to Christ, Pope Francis has approved changing the litur-

gical feast of St. Martha to include her sister and brother, Mary and Lazarus, on the Church’s univers-
al calendar of feast days. The names of Mary and Lazarus will be added to the July 24 feast in the General Roman Calendar, the universal schedule of holy days and feast days for the Latin rite of the Catholic Church. The Vatican Feb. 2 published the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments’ decree ordering the change in calendars.

Pope adds Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Church doctors to universal calendar

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TODAY’S CATHOLIC

almost 50 years. The National Catholic Educational Association issued highlights from its annual report on school enrollment Feb. 8. The full report, titled “United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2020-2021,” will be available Feb. 17. The annual figures show the num-

NEWS BRIEFS

In Iraq, pope hopes to encourage Christians, build bridges

Ash Wednesday: different look, same message

A Catholic church destroyed by Islamic State militants in Karamdes, Iraq, is examined by a priest March 6, 2018. On his historic visit to Iraq March 5-8, Pope Francis hopes to encourage his Christian flock, badly bruised by sectarian conflict and brutal attacks, while building further bridges to Muslims by extending fraternal peace. For years, the pope has expressed his concerns publicly for the plight and persecution of Iraq’s Christians and its mosaic of many religious minorities, including the Yazidis, who have suffered at the hands of the militants and have been caught in the crosshairs of Sunni and Shiite Muslim violence.

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholics in St. Petersburg, Florida, will need to get their napkins ready because some barbecue from Kansas City, Missouri, is coming their way. A friendly wager between the bishops and two Catholic schools from the dio-
ceses — St. Paul’s Episcopal School and St. Joseph Catholic School — will hopefully provide a much-needed lift and some local food: St Paul’s would send the other school team would send the other school

Priest says thousands of refugees in Tigray deported to Eritrea

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — In the midst of the conflict in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, thousands of Eritrean refugees who fled oppression and authoritarianism have been deported back to their home country, said an Eritrean Catholic priest. Father Mussie Zerai, a priest of the Archdiocese of Asmara, Eritrea, who works with migrants, said the refugees were in Schimelba and Hitsats camps, which hosted about 20,000 refugees. He said about 10,000 of them were deported to Eritrea. The refugees are part of the 96,000 who were host-

Use the pandemic silence to listen, build unity, pope tells musicians

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While protocols to slow the COVID-19 pandemic have silenced many concert halls and restricted the use of congregational singing in many churches, Pope Francis prayed that musicians were using this time to listen. Good music, like any kind of effective commu-
nication, needs both sound and silence, the pope said in a video message Feb. 4 to participants in the Pontifical Council for Culture’s international meeting on the Church and music. Recognizing the impact the pandemic has had on musicians around the world, Pope Francis expressed his sympathy to “the musicians who have seen their lives and profes-
sions disrupted by the demands of distancing; to those who have lost their jobs and social con-
tact; to those who have had to cope, in difficult contexts, with the necessary training, education and community life." But he also recognized how many of them, inside the church and out, “have dedicated significant efforts to continue to offer a musical ser-
vice endowed with new creativity" whether online or at open-air venues. The international confer-
ence Feb. 4-5, also held online because of the pandemic, focused on the theme, “Text and Context.”

School enrollment, hit by pandemic, lowest in 50 years

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic school enrollment figures for the current school year — sig-
nificantly impacted by the pan-
demic — dropped 6.4% or more than 111,000 students from the previous school year, which is the largest single year decline in

Florida bishop and Catholic school win Super Bowl food wager

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WASHING
OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation launched

HUNTINGTON – In an ongoing effort to answer St. Pope John Paul II’s call for a New Evangelization that is new in its action, expressions and methods, OSV Institute has unveiled the OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation. This new innovation ecosystem is committed to pulling together the best of both worlds in ministry and entrepreneurship, established with the sole purpose of forging new paths for people to encounter the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church.

Operating as the philanthropic arm of OSV and recognized as one of the oldest Catholic grantmakers in the United States, the newly named OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation seeks an evolution that better embodies the values by which OSV was first founded. Archbishop John F. Noll, a trailblazer of his time, founded OSV over 100 years ago using new methods and approaches to educate Catholic faithful and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation recognizes the need for a similar catalyst today to cultivate thought leadership, strategic doing, and design thinking to ultimately energize and renew the 21st-century Church.

This is an unprecedented initiative in the Church, and OSV aims to lead the way by fostering new ideas and approaches necessary for the Church to reach the modern world.

This shift in paradigm was brought to life in 2020 with the first-ever OSV Innovation Challenge, a contest set to recur annually that awarded three $100,000 grants to projects making a profound impact on the Church. It also debuted the release of OSV Innovation Talks, a series of professionally produced talks by prominent Catholic leaders aimed at sparking discussion on a broad range of topics relevant in ministry.

Beyond these new initiatives, OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation’s vision for the future includes such things as learning labs, a consulting network of coaches and mentors, startup accelerators, think tanks and capacity-building grants in targeted areas that are outcome-driven and offering lasting solutions, said Jason Nees, director of marketing services. “There’s never been a better time for innovation in our Church, and we are excited to be leading the way.”

St. Joseph Community Health Foundation awards grant

FORT WAYNE — Amani Family Services has been awarded a grant in the amount of $20,000 by the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation. The grant will be used to partially support Amani’s Substance Use and Community Support Programs, which provide mental health assessments, counseling, bicultural adjustment groups and substance use support services to immigrants and refugees residing in Allen County.

Amani Family funds have allowed Amani to continue to provide substance use and mental health therapy services to clients in spite of barriers incurred by COVID-19.

Like many clients, upon being referred to Amani following a drunk driving arrest, “Scott” had struggled to maintain a stable relationship with his wife and children. Following Scott’s completion of Amani’s Substance Use Program, his wife contacted Amani personally to let them know of the positive change she had witnessed in her husband, who is now stably employed, saving money to purchase a home and much more involved in his children’s lives.

With regard to St. Joseph Community Health Foundation’s long-standing support of Amani and local immigrants and refugees, Irene Puxa, CFO, said “thanks to the work of community partners like the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, we are able to more effectively help those in need. We are truly fortunate to work alongside such generous individuals in achieving our mission of promoting safety, encouraging personal growth and fostering a spirit of belonging for immigrants and refugees here in Allen County.”

Amani Family Services is a private nonprofit organization serving over 1,800 families and individuals from around the world who have made Allen County their home. It is one of the largest nonprofit agencies serving immigrants and refugees in the area, offering five programs and employing over 40 multilingual staff members, contractors and interpreters. Amani services include child abuse and neglect intervention and prevention, victim care support for human trafficking victims, substance use support, mental health counseling and connecting clients to local community resources.

For further information visit www.amanifamilyservices.org, email info@amanifamilyservices.org or phone at 260-484-1414.

Amani Family has received $20,000 grant from St. Joseph Community Health Foundation.

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Pro-life awareness effort in Elkhart

ADVOCATES for life encourage awareness and solicit honks from motorists on Bristol Street in Elkhart, outside St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Jan. 30. At a Mass celebrated at the church prior to the protest, worshippers prayed for the protection of human life in all its stages.

New Ave Explores looks at health of Catholicism around the world

NOTRE DAME — The next Ave Explores series will focus on the health and cultural richness of Catholicism around the world. It will begin Feb. 21.

Ave Explores is a free educational series created to help Catholics explore aspects of their faith from a variety of angles, helping them take a look at topics that are relevant to their daily spiritual life in fresh, engaging and practical ways.

While the core beliefs of Catholicism are the same everywhere, this four-week, multimedia series will focus on the diversity of practices, traditions and the health of the Church in different corners of the world — in the Americas, Asia and Oceania, Africa and the Caribbean, and in Europe. Because Ave Maria Press is a ministry of the Congregation of Holy Cross, United States Province of Priests and Brothers, participants get a special look at the work of Holy Cross across the 16 countries in which its priests and brothers serve. A new saint will also be introduced each week through art and the written word.

Catch a sneak preview to Ave Explores: Catholicism Around the World, with two special editions of the Ave Explores podcast. Katie Prejean McGrady will talk with Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of South Africa Feb. 17 and Archbishop Peter Comensoli of Melbourne, Australia, will be featured Feb. 19. The series runs from Feb. 21 to March 20.

The podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Play Music, and is also located on Breadbox Media, Redeemer Radio and Spoke Street Media.

Here are some of the podcasts, videos, articles and Facebook Live events scheduled during the four-week Ave Explores: Catholicism Around the World series.

• Week 1 highlights the Americas and features J.D. Flynn, Father Harrison Ayre, Mariana Pinheiro and Brenda Noriega.
• Week 2 highlights Asia and Oceania and features Father Rob Galea, Joseph Moeno-Kolio and Liz Hansen.
• Week 3 highlights Africa and the Caribbean and features Father Louis Merosne and Chika Anyanwu.
• Week 4 highlights Europe and features Paul Jarzembowski, Leanne Bowen and James and Catherine McCloughlin.

Sign up for limited-time, weekly emails during this series at www.avemariapress.com/aveexplores-series/registration.

Sisters to host ‘The Scriptures of Lent/Spring’


Unpack the richness and beauty of the Scripture passages used during the Lenten season as they come alive in new ways. Each session will be facilitated by a preacher, teacher or Scripture scholar. Scripture passages will be provided or participants may use their own Bible. Presenters include Sisters of Providence Sister Marsha Reilly, Sister Jan Craven, Sister Janice Smith and Sister Paula Damian.

“We will give background to each of the readings, based on research,” Sister Paula said. “At the same time, we will all help make the readings applicable to life as we know it today.”

Get $30 per session or $25 for all six sessions. The registration deadline is Feb. 15 or three days before each session online at Events. SistersofProvidence.org or by calling 812-535-2952 or emailing fros@spsmw.org.
Beyond ‘I do’: helping couples plan for a lifetime of marriage

By Teresa Breckler

S

St. John Chrysostom once wrote about society that “there is nothing which so weds our life together as marriage.” Throughout the ages following the life of the Church father, Catholicism has continued to be a protector of and advocate for marriage and family life. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI described the vocation as “the first building-block of a well-ordered and welcoming society.” The Catholic Church values family life so much that at the Second Vatican Council, it described married life as “the domestic church.”

As beautiful as the statements may sound, one need not look far to see this “building block” of society and the Church seemingly crumbling. The role of marriage in society, and even its basic definition, seem to be fading.

But the Church has not wavered in proclaiming the good news of God’s plan for marriage. For the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, this has meant maintaining a constant engagement with couples in order to help them learn about God’s plan for them. As Lisa Everett, director of Marriage and Family Ministry, said, the office’s purpose is to provide “pastoral care for spouses and parents and … to encourage and equip couples and families to deepen their relationship with each other and with God so that they can grow in holiness and live out the Gospel.”

The ways the ministry has reached out to couples have both expanded and faced quick adaptations in the past decade. One continuous method of engagement is a brochure titled “Before You Say I Do,” first published under Bishop John M. D’Arcy and most recently updated by Bishop John R. Coohes in 2011. In the brochure, the diocese outlines the standards that the Church will ask couples to abide by before joining in marriage. The main focus of the brochure, which functions in a Q&A format, is the expectation that couples live chastely while they prepare for marriage.

There are both metaphysical and sociological reasons for the request. Firstly, the Church understands marital relations to be a profound gift of self that can only be fully realized in a public, permanent, and hence unconditional commitment. If a couple lives together before marriage, even if their intention is to live chastely and their plan is to stay together, there is still the implicit reality that cohabitation is a sort of trial run because, in the words of Everett, God’s “wants to be a gift of oneself but on a loan of oneself for an undetermined period.” Ultimately, between cohabitation and marriage is “the difference of unconditional permanence versus entailment run.”

Furthermore, setting theology aside, there is ample sociological evidence of the benefits waiting until marriage to live together, or at least, if a couple has already cohabitating, pausing until they are married. On the first page of the brochure, the diocese writes that, “The Church is particularly concerned about cohabitation because the practice is so common today and because it actually decreases a couple’s chance of having a successful marriage … by carrying a ‘cohabiting mindset’ into marriage, they are then at greater risk for divorce.”

In an interview with Today’s Catholic, Everett acknowledged the challenges many couples face. She said about couples that “the world in which they have grown up is very different and many couples have grown up not seeing many examples of the place of sex in marriage.” Despite this somber reality, she offers hope to those aspiring to chastity.

“More and more, the Church really wants to reach out to couples … to share with couples the truth, beauty and goodness of God’s plan, which is a plan for their happiness. What I really want to encourage every engaged couple is to really trust in God’s love for you and that He desires your happiness even more than you do.”

Marriage and Family Ministry also hosts events like “Just Desserts” and a Conference for Engaged Couples. Both had to adapt in the past year, in the face of the pandemic. The Conference for Engaged Couples successfully transitioned into an online webinar. It covers a range of topics from theology of the body to dealing with in-laws and finances. In its original form the conference was a one-day event, but in its new form it is split into three two-hour sessions over two days, Everett has found couples use the break between sessions to process the content that was covered. Lisa and her husband, Deacon Frederick Everett, who runs the webinar with her, have also seen an increase in attention and absorption of the concepts. “Just Desserts,” a date night for engaged and married couples, didn’t transition as well. Pioneered last February, couples would come and listen to a talk while enjoying a smorgasbord of desserts and fair-trade beverages. The speaker would present on such topics as deepening a couple’s relationship and prayer life as a couple to family of origin issues. Lisa and Cate Burke, associate director of the office, tried to transition this to an online platform in the fall but “fellowship with other couples was a big draw” to the in-person events, Lisa explained. Besides that, there were no desserts.

One of the main services Marriage and Family Ministry offers to engaged couples is a one-day marriage preparation program. Participants attest to the fruits of the program both before and during the pandemic.

Raquel and Stephen Storey of South Bend were married last summer and attended the preparation program — currently taking the form of a webinar — in the spring. They said their mentoring couple, who guided them through the FOCUS inventory, “provided a great opportunity to touch on many of the important discussions in married life and glean from their own wisdom and experience.”

Jessica and Alex King, who were also married last summer in South Bend, spoke highly of a program called The Engaged Encounter, saying that it “was thoughtfully put together and covered the basics of what it means to be married. We loved seeing all the couples who were also getting married in the Catholic faith. It made us feel like we were not alone on the journey ahead.”

“I remember we left the pre-wedding giggling and holding hands as we talked about our love language and how we can better express the sacrificial love of marriage to each other. It was really nice to just take a day away from wedding planning and focus on our relationship and future marriage.”

When asked what it was like to prepare a wedding during COVID-19, Raquel responded: “It seems that wedding planning is a gateway for engaged couples under normal circumstances, and navigating the unpredictable and volatile public health situation was certainly an added challenge. It was a blessing at the same time, though, in that we started to learn how to work together as a team in times of uncertainty and stress.”

“There was also freedom in knowing that any idea of a ‘perfect wedding’ was out the window, letting us focus on the most important elements which COVID-19 couldn’t affect: the sacramental grace, the beginning of our life together, and celebrating that in the Church. We were ultimately overwhelmed with gratitude.”

Living chastely, both before and after marriage, may be one of the most difficult challenges facing marriage and the family. Says Stephen, and Raquel admitted that living chastely “is one of the Church’s legitimately hard teachings that is a real sacrifice, and many couples might think, ‘But, they continued, ‘like all of the Church’s hard teachings, there’s a lot of grace in embracing them.”

Provided by Raquel Storey
Spring at Forever Learning Institute

SOUTH BEND — it might be cold outside, but as the days blur longer, Michiana adult learners are getting ready to return to Forever Learning Institute for another 10-week semester of lifelong learning at its finest.

Spring classes will again follow the institute’s traditional format beginning Monday, March 1. As with many area schools and service organizations, Forever Learning is turning to technology this semester to continue its mission of bringing intellectually vibrant senior adults together. Whether students are interested in politics, literature or reviewing French, Zooming with Forever Learning will keep area senior adults socially engaged and intellectually challenged.

Forever Learning recently unveiled a new online course catalog and registration system, CourseStorm, to assist seniors who need to maintain their social distancing. Recognizing the increasing isolation brought on by the current pandemic in an age group already struggling with this issue, Forever Learning is committed to its mission of service through educational offerings of all kinds. Students may register now for classes at www.foreverlearninginstitute.org.

The Forever Learning Institute is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality and dignity of senior adult life through continuing intellectual challenges, spiritual reflection and social interaction. Classes are available to all adults 50 years of age and older regardless of race, color, religion or ethnic origin and are taught by an all-volunteer faculty. Tuition for courses at Forever Learning is $55.

FLI was founded in 1974 by Rev. Louis J. Putz, CSC, a retired professor from the University of Notre Dame who saw a need for lifelong learning opportunities in the South Bend area and surrounding communities and the program continues to thrive. For more information, contact Eve Finnissy, executive director, at 574-282-1901 or eve@foreverlearninginstitute.org.

Frascati Fellowship opportunity for those in Catholic ministry

NOTRE DAME — Catholic pilgrimage company Verso Ministries has announced it is accepting applications for the inaugural Frascati Fellowship, a six-month journey of prayer, formation and pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The program has been created exclusively for individuals in Catholic ministry — whether volunteering or working full- or part-time in parish, school or nonprofit ministry. Individuals enrolled in full-time graduate studies in theology, divinity or related fields are also welcome to apply.

Fellows will meet virtually for bimonthly meetings that will include formation activities, mentor sessions, prayer and readings in anticipation of a nine-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land July 14-22. With visits to places like Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee, participants will experience firsthand the land of Jesus’ birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

Following the pilgrimage, each participant will present a creative project expressing outcomes from their participation. Program cost is $2,499, plus the cost of round-trip airfare to Israel. This final cost includes a $2,000 scholarship courtesy of Verso Ministries. An additional $500 discount can be applied by entering the code “TodaysCatholic” when submitting your application.

Applications can be completed online at www.VersoMinistries.com/Frascati-Fellowship and must include a personal statement, current resume and letter of support from a supervisor or religious superior. The application deadline is March 15. Finalists will be invited to a virtual interview and decisions for the cohort of 25 will be communicated the week of April 5.

Catholic Charities launches Outpatient Addiction Treatment Program

SOUTH BEND — Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has announced the launch of an outpatient drug and alcohol addiction treatment program. The program is currently available in South Bend only and is now taking referrals from health care professionals, courts and attorneys as well as self-referrals.

“Addiction is a common companion to mental illness, and it affects people of all ages and backgrounds with devastating results,” said Chris Nowak, Catholic Charities clinical director and certified addictions therapist.

“It has the power to destroy health, relationships and livelihoods. And people in our diocese are suffering from addiction to drugs and alcohol in record numbers.”

A recent report from the U.S. Surgeon General estimates that more than 20 million Americans have problems with prescription drugs, illegal drugs or alcohol. However, only a small percentage get meaningful help.

“What sets us apart is our ability to attend to the spiritual needs of clients,” said Burton Whitcraft, CEO of CCFWSB.

“We don’t impose faith on our consumers, but we provide a safe and encouraging environment to nourish the mind, body and spirit for the sake of healing.”

For now, the new program is limited to outpatient treatment for alcohol and drug addiction. Until further notice, CCFWSB will not be addressing other addictions such as gambling.

Nowak said the program is abstinence-based, meaning clients need to remove themselves completely from the addicting substance. Clients are also strongly encouraged to participate in support programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

“Support groups are critical to long-term success,” said Nowak.

“We strongly encourage clients to find one and stick with it.”

CFWSB launched the established outpatient treatment program from owner Rob Morgan, a certified addictions counselor. Morgan provides the same services for clients through Catholic Charities.

He has 25 years of experience in addiction treatment and acts as clinical supervisor. Catholic Charities received state certification for the program on Jan. 5.

Outpatient services are by appointment only and are conducted on-site at the Catholic Charities office at 1817 Miami St. in South Bend. These services are provided in person, observing all COVID-related safety protocols.

For more information, call 574-234-3111 or email cnowak@ccfwsb.org.

Faces of Lent

What does Lent mean to you?

What is one way you observe Lent?

How does the Lenten season bring you closer to God?

Responses will be published in Today’s Catholic or online at todayscatholic.org.

April 10, 2021
After a lifetime in parish music ministry in Fort Wayne, Jim Didier will retire Feb. 14. The vocalist, keyboardist, organist and composer said that the opportunities he has had and the music he has been given were “all a gift from our good God. I am grateful beyond measure,” he said.

Parish music minister to compose melodic retirement

BY JODI MARLIN

The soundtrack of Jim Didier’s life is liturgical. For six decades, worshipers at two Fort Wayne parishes have drawn closer to the Lord through the vocation of the music minister, vocalist and composer. They might not have known whom they owed thanks for accompanying them in the liturgy, however, unless they turned toward the balcony before or after Mass. Didier would have been the man whose voice they heard during the Responsorial Psalm and the one pulling the stops on the church organ.

Friends, family and his fellow Most Precious Blood parishioners will have an opportunity to express appreciation for Didier’s years of service Feb. 14. He will play his last Mass at 10:30 a.m. at the parish, after which he’ll transition from performing to retirement and to composing.

He’s ready, he said. Didier is looking forward to quiet, relaxing days with his wife, Shari, and their family.

Many years ago, Sister James Therese came into the second-grade classroom at Cathedral Grade School and asked who wanted to take piano lessons. Seven-year-old Didier raised his hand. Listening to his mother play classical music on the family’s piano each Sunday had conditioned an interest in the young man.

It meant his parents, who “did not have two pennies to rub together, let alone come up with a dollar” for the cost of the weekly lessons, would have to scrape even more. “But my mother was an operatic singer and my dad loved music too… I’ve always been grateful to them for making that sacrifice for me."

When he was 10, John Yonkman, choir master and organist at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, asked Didier and three friends if they would join a boys choir. Didier was game for that too: and so began a decades-long adventure in church music. Despite the occasional difference of opinion or change in direction — Vatican II reforms introduced girls into the choir — the young man maintained his focus and rose to the occasion again and again.

He credits his perseverance with liturgical music to knowing its aim.

“(Mr. Yonkman) pounded it into us that our purpose was to sing for ‘the honor and glory of God.’ In today’s terms, that it wasn’t about us. That lesson has always remained with me.”

In 1966, Yonkman suffered a heart attack. While he recovered, Didier was asked to step in, play the organ at Mass and accompany the choir. The 16-year-old keyboardist and singer didn’t have the slightest idea of how to make the organ work, but he gave it a go. When Yonkman returned, he began giving lessons to the youth.

Throughout high school at Bishop Dwenger and as a music education major at the University of Saint Francis, Didier sang in the parish’s choirs and was assistant organist. His senior year he wrote his first Mass for the occasion of his parents’ 25th anniversary.

“Jazz and rock ‘n’ roll – along with contemporary hymns — caught his ear not long after and became his preferred styles. But the “high church” music of his formation remained a polished part of Didier’s repertoire.

By 1973, however, “I was ready to see a little more of the world.” Didier took a position as organist and choir director at St. Andrew Parish, which later combined with St. Hyacinth. Over the next 14 years he developed a “deep community connection” to the now-suppressed parish.

Didier’s bread and butter, though, came from teaching. He taught elementary and middle school classes at Cathedral and Most Precious Blood schools, a marriage class at Bishop Dwenger and instructed music classes for four years at USF, also serving two years as a director of student affairs. By 1992 he was back at Most Precious Blood, this time as the parish music director.

It has been “a privilege and an honor” to be a musician in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Didier said. He particularly enjoyed each year’s Advent and Christmas liturgies, Christmas concerts, Triduum and Easter liturgies, working with the choir and cantors, and the children’s liturgies. “Actually, I loved it all,” he admitted.

“My philosophy of liturgical music is based on the mandate from Vatican II, ‘the full and active and conscious participation of the faithful,’” he said. “It’s indeed not about me. My job is to lead people in prayer. Music is the meditation.”

— Jim Didier

Most Precious Blood, this time as the parish music director.

The songs he likes — particularly those he feels inspired to create — are part of Didier’s plan for retirement. He has already released six vocal or solo piano CDs of original material: the seventh, “Spirit Wind” will be available soon.
Celebrating the feast of St. Katharina Kasper, PHJC foundress

BY BARBARA ALLISON

B eatified in 1978 and canonized in 2018, St. Katharina Kasper’s life mission was joyful, loving service to God’s children, especially the poor and the underserved.

The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ celebrated the third feast day since her canonization Feb. 1 in Donaldson.

The Poor Handmaids order was founded in 1851 in Dernbach, Germany, by St. Katharina. Seventeen years later, in 1868, eight Poor Handmaids came to Fort Wayne at the request of Bishop John Henry Luers to minister in the Hessen Cassel area to German immigrants. Although St. Katharina had solicited the eight volunteers from among the sisters, more than 200 had volunteered. “The sisters on that boat, they were very brave, courageous women,” said Sister Eileen Sullivan. “They trusted God. They didn’t know if they’d ever see their homeland again.”

Over the past 152 years, the Poor Handmaids have grown their rich history of service, especially in the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese. Current areas of ministry in the diocese include Ancilla Beef and Grain Farm, Ancilla College, MonetTree Studios, Catherine Kasper Life Center and Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center, all in Donaldson; St. Michael School, Plymouth; PHJC Volunteers Homeless Outreach; St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Plymouth; St. Pius X School, Granger; St. Adalbert School, South Bend; St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Mishawaka; and St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and HealthVisions Midwest, Fort Wayne.

The sisters celebrated St. Katharina’s feast day — the first since it was officially inscribed last year in the Proper Calendar of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The feast day since her canonization Feb. 1 in Donaldson.

Sisters of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ enter Ancilla Domini Chapel in Plymouth Feb. 1 for the first feast day Mass of foundress St. Katharina Kasper since it was formally inscribed on the Proper Calendar of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend last year.

In her reflection, Sister Linda Volk said, “Because Katharina was genuinely attentive, she could truly see; because she was genuinely aware, she could truly hear; because she was genuinely attentive, she could truly see, and to truly be. To experience the fullness of life and to share it with others we are to truly hear, to truly see, and to truly be our authentic selves as envisioned by God. This is our basic calling in life, this is God’s will for us. The flame in the lamp of that charism is still burning brightly.”

The sisters in the motherhouse then enjoyed a Zoom reunion with their other sisters at Catherine Kasper Home and Catherine’s Cottage on campus whom they hadn’t seen since the pandemic began last year. Love and laughter ensued for the next 40 minutes as they all got updates on one another’s lives.

Sister Mary Jo Shingler gave thanks for the opportunity to visit with each other. “Thank you, scientists. I’m most grateful for this Zoom visit,” she said. Sister Rosemary Jurkowski added, “Dear ones! I miss you terribly! Being with you each day in prayer meant so much. I miss that and I hold you all in my heart.”

Prior to the pandemic, the sisters would gather daily for Mass at the CKH Chapel.

Sister Deanne Blume, coordinator of sisters at Catherine Kasper Home, introduced the seven sisters gathered in the CKH conference room. Sisters Mary Carolyn Welhoefer and Florence Kuhn both wanted all the sisters to know that they’re still die-hard St. Louis Cardinals fans and can’t wait for baseball season to begin. Sister Mary Carolyn added, “Let’s all hang in there together so that we can hang together again.”

Barbara Allison is the PHJC communications content specialist.

Soup’s On!

Join us for a bowl of Ash Wednesday Soup

Your free will donation will help support St. Mary’s Soup Kitchen

which serves 600 free bowls of soup to hungry people every day.

Bring a friend for a lunch of soup and bread on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021 to St. Mary Mother of God Parish at Lafayette and Jefferson in Fort Wayne 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (Lenten prayer service with ashes at 11 a.m.) Proper COVID-19 safety standards are being asked during your visit.

Come Begin Lent Simply...

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Celebrating our anniversary with Pope Francis

It’s not often you get the pope to celebrate your birthday, even if it’s your 100th. Catholic News Service turned 100 in the midst of the pandemic, so it took us a little while to get our party hats on. Recently, Pope Francis met with our Rome bureau to acknowledge the anniversary while talking about the importance of our work and our service to the Church.

“In an age when news can be easily manipulated and misinformed, our job is to make the truth known in a way that is, in the words of your motto, ‘fair, faithful and informed,’” he told our staff.

It was a rare encounter between a U.S. Catholic news organization and our prime news-makes. The pope’s kind words paid tribute not just to the current employees of Catholic News Service, but to the hundreds of journalists and editors who have worked here over the decades.

Catholic News Service was founded in the shadow of World War I and the Spanish flu pandemic. Yet it was a time of great hope, as the Church was experiencing a rapid growth of Catholic periodicals and diocesan newspapers. From its founding, CNS aimed to provide this growing market with national and Vatican news stories. Journalists and editors who have worked here over the decades.

Since the early days, CNS has provided news coverage of national and Vatican news, including the papal resignations of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. CNS has also been involved in the reporting of major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent years, CNS has expanded its digital offerings, including the CNS News App and the CNS News Network, which provides news and analysis to newspapers, radio stations, and television networks around the world.

The CNS team is dedicated to providing accurate and timely news coverage. Our journalists and editors are committed to serving the Church and its members around the world.

We appreciate the support of our readers and supporters, who help us continue to provide quality news and analysis. Thank you for your support, and happy 100th anniversary to CNS!
Shared decision-making in medicine

In recent years, there has been a lot of discussion about shared decision-making in the practice of medicine. One of the main reasons for this is that some in the medical profession have been getting failing marks in their communication skills. I am sad to say the worst offenders can be the physicians. Unfortunately, there are some physicians who still believe they know what is best for their patients without having an open discussion about the various choices.

When a significant decision needs to be made, it is the duty of the physician to explain and discuss the diagnosis, options of treatment, risks and benefits, and explore what the patient’s preferences might be. As a Catholic doctor, I will follow the teachings of the Church, but I also need to explore the values of each patient.

People have various cultural backgrounds and experiences that will affect their decision-making. A very elderly person may prefer to live at home rather than somebody who is quite young. Gender can even play a role in what type of medical decision a person chooses.

In the area of cardiology there have been recent, well-controlled scientific studies that have proven that a conservative treatment plan for coronary artery disease can have a comparable outcome to a more aggressive approach. Allow me to better illustrate this point.

A common scenario is someone who goes to see their primary care physician with chest pain and has a stress test done for further evaluation. If the stress test is positive (abnormal), they usually get referred to a cardiologist. A positive stress test means there is likely coronary artery disease, and a significant blockage may be present. Just a few years ago, most of these patients would be told outright that they needed a cardiac catheterization. There would be a high likelihood they would end up getting a stent or possible bypass surgery.

A recent controlled study divided patients who had an abnormal stress test into two groups. One group was randomized to getting a heart catheterization, which has been the typical plan for many years. A high percentage of these people would be treated with an intervention such as a coronary stent or bypass surgery.

The second group was treated with medications, diet and exercise. When these two groups were analyzed five years later, there was little difference between them. There was no statistical difference in the heart attack rate and death rate between the two options. In other words, if my patient is willing and compliant with taking multiple prescription medications and lifestyle changes to reduce their risk of cardiac event, then they have a really good chance of being successful.

The one area where stenting or bypass did better was in quality of life — there was less angina (chest discomfort) in this group. With this new information, I feel more obligated than ever to discuss this conservative option with my patients during shared decision-making.

Some of my surgical colleagues who perform back surgery will probably not be pleased with my next analysis. Many patients who have back pain from disc disease — herniated or bulging discs — would do just as well with a trial of physical therapy before going under the knife. Multiple studies have shown that one year after having back surgery for disc disease there is no significant difference in outcome when compared to those who chose physical therapy. By avoiding surgery, you would save yourself the pain, cost and prolonged recovery time needed to recuperate from the operation. Your surgeon should be discussing all these options with you in a shared decision-making format.

When you see your doctor, you should be armed with multiple questions to better explore the options of treatment that are available. If you are told you need surgery, then ask what the success rate will be. If it is a new type of procedure you might ask how many of this type of surgery he or she has done before, and what is going to be the estimated recovery time. Also, always ask what the alternatives to surgery are.

Talking to your Creator in prayer is a form of decision-making. As you are challenged with important decisions in your life, you would be wise to begin the process with contemplative prayer. Is your choice going to bring you closer to your salvation? How is your heavenly Father directing you? As you pray about a serious decision, listen carefully for spiritual guidance. I have had the honor of writing as “The Catholic Doctor Is In” for about six years, with over 70 articles. Next month will be the last article I publish for a while. I thank you for allowing me to come into your life through these writings.

Dr. David Kaminski is a board-certified cardiologist and member of the Dr. Jerome Lejeune Catholic Medical Guild of Northeast Indiana, www.forwaynecma.com.

POPE, from page 12

“I remember a verse we say at Prime at the end of the final Psalm; the last words are: ‘Cum dilastati cor meum’ — ‘When Thou didst dilate my heart.’” [A] person must have dwelt for a long time in the former mansions before entering these … [otherwise] all occasions of gaining merit would be withdrawn, were the soul left continually absorbed in God. [This is] the difference between sweetness in prayer and spiritual consolations. (1:3-5) In effect, she is teaching that one rarely reaches deeper prayer without the necessary waiting, as God leads us through the stages of the purgative way (mansions one through three). We must wait and cooperate as God does His work to purify us and enlarge our hearts to receive the gift of deeper prayer. And even once deeper prayer is attained, it cannot be all sweetness, for then merit and further growth would be lost.

God must increase the size of our heart, but this takes time. If we are faithful, waiting brings about yearning. To yearn is to increase our desire and to enlarge our heart. This prepares us for the greater gifts God wants to bestow upon us.

There are many reasons God has us wait. Allow St. Augustine and St. Teresa to teach you one important reason. Let God enlarge your heart through desire. Only then will it be big enough to receive the full extent of what He is offering. Wait for the Lord.

Dr. Charles Pope is the pastor of Holy Comforter - St. Cyprian Catholic Church, Washington, D.C.

Gospel for February 14, 2021

Mark 1:40-45

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: staying out of town. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.
Enter intentionally into Lent: three guides

BY JODI MARLIN

Three new books published by Our Sunday Visitor offer distinct ways to turn away from the busyness and challenges of daily life and enter into the penitential season of Lent with intention. Between the three, Catholics in any stage and situation of life are likely to find direction toward a peace-filled 40 days of reflection that unites them with Christ’s passion.

“The Way of the Cross for Loved Ones Who Have Left the Faith,” by Father Jeffrey Kirby, STD, provides hope to faithful Catholics devastated by those who are close to them having left the faith. The Lord Jesus, Father Kirby notes, suffered more than anyone else from the indifference and mockery of those who did not believe in His promise of salvation.

When a loved one leaves the Church, those who remain often despair and feel helpless to bring them back. Father Kirby suggests uniting this fear and suffering to the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

Beyond invitations and conversation, the devotional guide utilizes the most powerful tool available to reach fallen-away Catholics: prayer. A specific structure of prayers, in fact, is presented as a spiritual response to a loved one’s rejection of the faith and incorporates supplications on behalf of both that person and the one who is praying for him or her.

Although the guide delineates between the roles and responses of the leader and those of others, the stations can be prayed and reflected on by a single petitioner as well. 143 pages, $8.95.

For those with children still at home, “A Busy Parent’s Guide to a Meaningful Lent,” by Maria C. Morrow, begins by acknowledging two glaring truths in the lives of Catholic moms and dads. First, that the voluntary penance of finding time to work on their faith and incorporates supplications on behalf of both that person and the one who is praying for him or her.

Although the guide delineates between the roles and responses of the leader and those of others, the stations can be prayed and reflected on by a single petitioner as well. 143 pages, $8.95.

These new books from OSV are designed to help Catholics enter into the liturgical season of Lent with intentionality.

A Fort Wayne physician with extensive speaking experience on the physical trauma experienced by Christ during the crucifixion, Dr. Thomas McGovern is the author of “What Christ Suffered: A Doctor’s Journey Through the Passion,” Listeners of Redeemer Radio’s “Doctor, Doctor” program, now syndicated with Eternal World Television Network, will recognize Dr. McGovern from the popular show.

“Dr. McGovern presents myriad details of the physical abuses experienced by Christ during His passion, as well as the historical details of the places, personalities and even weather that played a role — effectively placing the reader in Jerusalem for the events in a manner understandable by lay readers.”

The book also returns time and time again, in clear and relatable terms, to the inextricable relationship between Christ’s love for all men and the extraordinary suffering He endured.

A Fort Wayne physician with extensive speaking experience on the physical trauma experienced by Christ during the crucifixion, Dr. Thomas McGovern is the author of “What Christ Suffered: A Doctor’s Journey Through the Passion,” Listeners of Redeemer Radio’s “Doctor, Doctor” program, now syndicated with Eternal World Television Network, will recognize Dr. McGovern from the popular show.

“I just want, as long as I could see how such a book could help others come to love Jesus more by moving this knowledge from their heads to their hearts,” Bishop James D. Conley of the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, states in the book’s foreward that Dr. McGovern has achieved his goal, because it applies the motivation for the Lord’s suffering to the subject of the physical trauma he experienced. “(And) as we come to understand the full meaning and depth of Christ’s suffering, we begin to make sense of our own suffering and that of others.”

Two appendixes, as well as an extensive bibliography and notes section, are available for readers who wish to take a deeper dive into some of the historical research available on the Crucifixion. 327 pages, $27.95

The imprimatur on all three publications is Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades. They can be purchased at osvcatholicbookstore.com.

Confession available at every Catholic Parish Tuesday, March 9, 2021 6:00-8:00 P.M.

The Light Is On For You! One Night • Every Parish • Every Confessional
diocesefwsb.org/light
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. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

Opening-day prayer service
FORT WAYNE — A 40 Days for Life opening-day prayer service will take place Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 2900 Lake Ave., between 5:30 p.m. and 6 p.m., with Dr. Haywood Robinson, a former abortionist. Dr. Robinson and his wife share their testimony nationwide to expose the facts of the abortion industry and to be a voice for the unborn. Read more at www.ambassadorspeakers.com. An opening-day vigil will also be in the right-of-way in front of Planned Parenthood. Contact Annemarie DeVille at 260-797-3144 or annemarie-deville@gmail.com for information.

Ash Wednesday prayer service and lunch
FORT WAYNE — A lunch of soup and bread on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17, will be at St. Mary Mother of God Parish, 1101 S. Lafayette St., from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Oechtering Hall. Lenten prayer service with ashes at 11 a.m. Your free will donation will help support St. Mary’s Soup Kitchen, which serves 600 bowls of soup to hungry people every day.

Lenten carryout fish fry
WALKERTON — St. Patrick Church, 811 Tyler St., will be hosting a carryout-only fish fry on Friday, Feb. 19, from 4-7 p.m. Fish is prepared by Tyner 100F Lodge. There will be no all-fish dinners. Cost $10 per meal. Contact Vicky Krohn at 574-586-7152 or tvle2001@yahoo.com.

Catholic Diocese of Evansville

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.

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.
No phone calls, please.
and outrage. In my heart, I don't believe for a second that is what we really want.

She concluded her speech with a prayer, asking Christ for guidance:

"Jesus I pray that for each one of us You would open our hearts. ... I pray that Your attentive, kind, tender love will just melt any areas of resistance. I want to invite you, my friends, just to picture Christ in front of you, however He reveals himself to you ... ask Him 'Jesus, who do You say that I am? Who am I? ... What do You want us to know about Your love for us and who we are in Your sight? ... We surrender our hearts to You. We surrender this conference to You. We surrender every moment to You. And we pray to encounter You, Lord, so that we know who You are and that we know who we are."

Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron, founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, spoke to viewers from Los Angeles about the character of Jesus. "There is nothing I would rather talk to you about than Jesus," Bishop Barron said. "He's everything. He's the alpha and omega."

"In the singularity of His person, He is the coming together of divinity and humanity. ... Jesus is the fulfillment and culmination of all the great institutions of Israel," he explained. "Think of prophecy, think of Torah, think of law, covenant. All that was designed to bring divinity and humanity together, to reconcile God and His people.

This identity of Jesus is "why we say He is our salvation ... our salvation depends on the coming together of divinity and humanity," he said, noting that Catholics cannot be saved by one and not the other.

"What's the warrant for claiming the divinity of Jesus?" Bishop Barron asked. "Jesus speaks and acts in the very person of the God of Israel, which makes Him qualitatively different than any of the other 'sent' figures who came before Him." Referencing the Gospel of Matthew, Bishop Barron quoted: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away." ... "Unless you love me more than your mother and father, more than your own life, you are not worthy of me." The emphasis here is that Jesus is "the eternal word ... the highest good" and a complete representation of divinity and humanity, he said.

"We can understand the famously weird question that Jesus poses: 'Who do the crowds say that I am?'" Bishop Barron said. "It makes the point that the Gospels are not first and foremost interested in the moral teaching of Jesus. They are interested in who He is." He added: "This means that Jesus compels a choice, a decision in a way that no other religious founder or figure does. It that this choice defines a Catholic's devotion to Christ as an authentic voice of God, noting what a choice opposing Jesus would mean.

"You have to make a decision. The Gospels compel it. And doesn't Jesus Himself say it? 'You're either with me or you're against me.'"

Discussing the humanity of Christ, Bishop Barron said, "The two natures of Jesus come together without mixing, mingling or confusion. In other words, God's coming close does not result in the suppression or eradication of Jesus' humanity, but in the enhancement and elevation of it. ... Look at the claim of Christianity that God in Christ comes close but does not overwhelm the humanity to which He comes close, immediately comparing Jesus' closeness to the forever burning bush. "As God comes close to a creature, the creature's beauty and integrity is enhanced, not overwhelmed. So we say Jesus is true God and true man."

"There is no philosophy, ancient or modern, that proposes a greater humanity than Christianity." BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

Mary Kate Zehr attends a virtual SEEK conference on the St. Charles Borromeo Parish campus last week. The conference consisted of talks, discussions and the opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation.

**Diocesan young adults find semi-virtual conference ‘uplifting’**

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

Several young adults in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend participated in the four-day semi-virtual conference hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students ministry Feb. 4-7. The young adults, scattered across different college campuses, listened to the well-known Catholic speakers, participated in small-group discussions and seized the opportunity to celebrate Mass and partake in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Local attendees also had the opportunity to participate in a worldwide prayer vigil with televised adoration via a conference livestream late Saturday evening. A handful of music groups performed praise and worship songs for participants throughout the week's conference, including the well-known vocal group Voices of Service, who finished fifth on the NBC talent show America's Got Talent.

2021 marks the first time that FOCUS Ministries hosted the annual conference virtually, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Catholic campuses around the world tuned in online for live talks and to interact with the worldwide conference.

Mary Kate Zehr, a young adult participant at one of the St. Charles Borromeo SEEK watch groups in Fort Wayne, said she believes FOCUS ministries executed the virtual aspect of the conference well.

"Overall it was a very uplifting experience," she said. "It was thrilling how many people were involved in this all around the country. Sometimes you don't really think about that. You don't think about how many people are on the same side that you are — that have the same faith as you have — because of what the media says," Zehr said. "You know, they cover up all the good stuff."

And then when you realize how big the Catholic Church is, that's very thrilling. This conference opened my eyes to that."

Anna Laisure, a SEEK conference participant at the University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, expressed that the virtual format allowed for unique and catered experiences for some audiences.

"They provided such a variety of talks that facilitated those experiences," Laisure said. "We have access to those talks for the next like six months. I'm going to be going back and watching different ones. I think they did it very well."

While Father Mike Schmitz, host of the popular "Bible in a Year" podcase, gave the keynote speech, Zehr journaled about how she connected with a speech given by Catholic author and speaker Chris Stefanick.

"It was so eye-opening," she said. "I really liked [his] little analogy that religion is like a frame in which you look at life."

Zehr also found the speaker's definition of "wokeness" memorable, describing it as a "frame of power between the weak and the strong."

"That's what people really do focus on these days, especially like after the election. People think about who's in power right now. We know that us humans, we're not in power. It's God who's in power."

Laisure added that while she experienced unity and connectedness as a participant at the virtual conference, the unique experience that each individual campus had was also important.

"It's really interesting to ponder: 'What are the people who are watching halfway across the country or halfway across the world doing? What's happening on the campus three states over as they're watching this?'"

Registration is open for the 2022 SEEK conference in Salt Lake City Lake City. To register or for information on the SEEK series in general, visit seek.focus.org.

Beaulieu is on the staff of Florida Catholic Media, serving Florida dioceses.