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TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

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



Provided by Leslie Rowe/FOCUS

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? Because we are asking that question constantly." Asking those questions is natural and common every day, she said.

"We all take that question all the time and we offer it to other people. And because everybody has a different experience of us and a different experience of their

own lives, they all have various answers. None of them are complete — thank God for that," she said. "Anybody who loves us authentically can reveal just one part of God's love for us. It is only God Himself who can see us according to the whole, who sees us fully."

"How did you 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

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Blessed palms become ashes, symbol of repentance

BY JENNIFER BARTON

A dark smudge of ashes on the forehead sets Christians 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 Christians 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. Dirtying 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 the people did not amend their evil ways. In all these moments, God heard the cries of those who called out to Him and in His mercy, brought about a holy outcome.

Along with the use of ashes and tearing garments to signify repentance are other traditional measures, such as fasting and wearing clothing specifically meant for discomfort. Fasting is, of course, still required of most Catholics during Lent and is a



Jennifer Barton

Palms 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.

means of growing in one's faith, although the requirements have changed over the years, becoming less restrictive than in previous centuries.

Ashes have endured in Catholic tradition because of their Jewish roots. “Since the early centuries of Christianity, we have continued to use ashes in the same way, as a reminder of death and a reminder of the need to turn away from sin,” Father Shoemaker commented. He explained that in early Christianity, a person could seek forgiveness from the local bishop for serious sins and be admitted into the Order of Penitents. “The bishop would sprinkle the person with ashes and give a penance, which would be carried out over time in a public manner.”

Though public penance has fallen out of favor, even medieval rulers were often subject to it. Future Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV walked to Canossa in 1077 and stood outside Pope Gregory VII's residence for three days, barefoot and wearing a hair shirt, to implore the pope to lift his sentence of excommunication. Henry eventually invaded Rome and replaced Gregory with Antipope Clement III, however, so his status as a penitent was probably due to political reasons rather than genuine contrition.

Father Shoemaker continued: “By the sixth century, we have records of parishes marking the heads of whole congregations, not just the particular group of penitents. By the 11th century, the practice had become pretty much universal in the Western Church. As Lent began, everyone was marked with ashes.”

Where do the ashes come from?

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, where 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.

“It has been a longstanding custom to burn the palms from Palm Sunday to produce the ashes for Ash Wednesday,” Father Shoemaker stated. “The palms we use to remember the children of Jerusalem welcoming Jesus are now burned. These ashes remind us that we haven't always welcomed Him.”

St. Charles requests that parishioners bring last year's palms to the church before the start of Lent. St. Charles is fortunate to have a fire pit at the youth house, which is utilized for this purpose — teaching young Catholics about the practice of burning palms.

“After some explanation of what this is about and prayer, we begin the fire,” said Father Shoemaker. He explained that the process takes a couple of

hours, involving volunteers who help stir the fire and gather any palm bits that escape. Once the ashes are cooled, they are put in jars for the next year.

MacMichael knows of several churches that buy ashes from liturgical goods stores, though, preferring the finely-ground powder that these manufacturers can provide to the prickly ash that can sometimes result from burning palms themselves.

A new methodology

As with many things throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ash Wednesday has been subjected to adjustments. Pope Francis has asked that ashes to be sprinkled over the heads of penitents this year, rather than placed on the forehead.

“This is very reminiscent of the Old Testament stories, and I think it will be a powerful new experience,” Father Shoemaker stated.

Traditionally, in the United States, a priest chooses one of two Lenten-appropriate phrases when applying ashes on a person's forehead — “Repent and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.” This year, silence will accompany the sprinkling of ashes over a person's head.

No matter how a parish procures its ashes or which phrase the priest uses to mark a person's forehead, the significance of the ashes remains the same — a sign of contrition before the throne of God and a symbol of all people's impending departure from this life.

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 weaving clover 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 persisted 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



Sheila Stiles Jewell, a geneticist marine biologist, is seen at her home in Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 30, 2019.

CNS photo/Karen Pulfer Focht

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 Father 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 studies 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."



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Tuesday, February 16: 2 p.m. — Virtual Meeting of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Advisory Group on the Eucharistic Initiative

Thursday, February 18: 5:15 p.m. — Annual Scholarship Dinner for Ave Maria University, Ave Maria, Florida

Thursday-Friday, February 18-19: Meeting of Board of Trustees for Ave Maria University, Ave Maria, Florida

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 our 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 reli-



CNS photo/courtesy Knights of Columbus

Patrick E. Kelly is seen in this undated photo. The Knights of Columbus board of directors elected him Feb. 5 as the next Supreme Knight, succeeding Carl A. Anderson, who will retire Feb. 28.

gious 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 adviser 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.

"I had a passion for genetics.

Early in my career, there were

no role models in this

male-dominated field."

SHEILA STILES JEWELL

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.

"We offered safe haven for those fleeing violence or persecution and our example pushed other nations to open wide their doors, as well," he said, speaking of a political past when refugee admission was a bipartisan mission. "So, today, I'm approving executive orders to begin the hard work of restoring



A refugee rests in a tent set up by the Canadian Armed Forces near the U.S.-Canadian border in Lacolle, Quebec, Aug. 10, 2017.

CNS photo/Christinne Muschi, Reuters

our refugee admissions program to help meet the unprecedented global need."

Biden said he is directing the State Department "to consult with Congress about making a down payment on that commitment as soon as possible."

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 JRS.

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 world's most vulnerable."

Ashley Feasley, director of policy for Migration and Refugee Services at the USCCB, 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.



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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-

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

Public Education Association, which have been instrumental in school choice efforts for decades, stand in strong support of the bill.

"You can have a great quality public school but that still may not be the best choice for a particular family for their child," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "We always support what is best for the child, and families are best at making those decisions."

Parents, educators and advocates on both sides of the school choice issue gathered at the Statehouse for the often emotional, more than four-hour committee hearing on Feb. 3. Among those testifying was Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC, who spoke not only on behalf of the Catholic Church in Indiana but as an expectant father.

"We rise in support of House Bill 1005, and on a personal note, this program would certainly benefit my wife and me," Mingus said. "We are expecting our first child, a baby girl, and we would certainly fall into the category that this bill would help

in regard to expanding educational choice."

The INPEA, which represents Indiana's more than 400 non-public schools (including the state's 175 Catholic schools), emphasizes that there is common ground between proponents of public and nonpublic schools.

"All students being educated in any Indiana school are our kids," said John Elcesser, executive director of the association, which encompasses more than 7,000 teachers and close to 100,000 students in Indiana's nonpublic schools. "Students often move back and forth between public and nonpublic schools, and graduates of all types of schools in Indiana play a significant part in the betterment of their communities and the economy of our state."

"I was here in 2011 when the Choice Scholarship program was passed, and in the 10 years of this program as I travel around the state, I can say with all sincerity that this program has

changed thousands of lives," Elcesser continued. "I can also say that it has pushed both public and nonpublic schools to be better. House Bill 1005 simply makes school choice affordable to more families – whether that be a middle- or upper-middle-class family that has struggled to afford tuition for multiple children, or the family with a special-needs child who needs access to services over and above what they can receive during the school day. And then there's the active-duty military family that gets moved around so much they can't meet one of the eligibility pathways in the current program. This legislation gives them all a choice."

At press time, House Bill 1005 was scheduled for a Feb. 9 hearing in the House Ways and Means committee. Both the ICC and the INPEA encourage proponents of school choice to contact their legislators to support the bill.



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

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Recognizing their welcome of and witness to Christ, Pope Francis has approved changing the liturgical feast of St. Martha to include her sister and brother, Mary and Lazarus, on the Church's universal calendar of feast days. The names of Mary and Lazarus will be added to the July 29 feast on 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. Signed by Cardinal Robert Sarah, the congregation's prefect, the decree said Pope Francis approved the memorial for Martha, Mary and Lazarus after "considering the important evangelical witness they offered in welcoming the Lord Jesus into their home, in listening to him attentively, (and) in believing that he is the resurrection and the life. In the household of Bethany, the Lord Jesus experienced the family spirit and friendship of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and for this reason the Gospel of John states that he loved them," it said. "Martha generously offered him hospitality, Mary listened attentively to his words and Lazarus promptly emerged from the tomb at the command of the one who humiliated death."

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 often standing-room only on this day — drawing crowds just short of the Easter and Christmas congregations — will be at their pandemic-restricted size limits with members of the congregation spread out in socially distanced seating. Other Catholics will be watching the livestream Mass, as they have been for much of the pandemic, and will of course, not receive ashes. During this year's celebration of Ash Wednesday Feb. 17, many dioceses will be following the Vatican's recommendation of a modified method for distributing ashes: sprinkling them on the top of people's heads rather than using them to make a cross on people's foreheads. priests should bless the ashes with holy water at the altar and then address the entire congregation with the words in the Roman Missal that are used when marking individual's foreheads with ashes: Either "Repent and believe in the Gospel!" or "Remember that you

In Iraq, pope hopes to encourage Christians, build bridges



CNS photo/courtesy Archdiocese of Irbil

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.

are dust and to dust you shall return."

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 hosted in four camps in Tigray. The Eritreans had fled political persecution, compulsory military service and war back home. "About 5,000 managed to escape and reach the Mai-Aini refugee camp, which now houses over 20,000; 5,000 people are missing," Father

Zerai told Catholic News Service. "What happened in the refugee camps in Tigray is a cruel violation of the Geneva Convention of 1951," which relates to the status of a refugee, the priest said. "We know there have been violence and killings."

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 communication, 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 professions disrupted by the demands of distancing; to those who have lost their jobs and social contact; 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 service endowed with new creativity" whether online or at open-air venues. The international conference 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 — significantly impacted by the pandemic — dropped 6.4% or more than 111,000 students from the previous school year, which is the largest single year decline in

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 number of Catholic elementary school students declined by 8.1% from the previous academic year while the decline for Catholic secondary schools was only 2.5%. But the elementary school decline could impact secondary school numbers within the next five to 10 years. The sharpest enrollment decline was for prekindergarten enrollment at Catholic schools, which went down 26.6% this year from last year. Current Catholic school enrollment is 1,626,291 in 5,981 Catholic schools. There are 4,812 elementary schools and 1,169 secondary schools. The NCEA report points out that of the 209 Catholic schools that closed or consolidated at the end of the 2019-20 school year, elementary schools made up most of this figure — 186.

Florida bishop and Catholic school win Super Bowl food wager

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 dioceses of the competing cities in Super Bowl LV put food on the line for the victory days before the Feb. 7 game, which ended with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers beating the Kansas City Chiefs 31-9. Bishop Gregory L. Parkes of St. Petersburg and Bishop James V. Johnston Jr., of Kansas City-St. Joseph came up with their Super Bowl wager on the Feb. 2 episode of "Conversation with Cardinal Dolan" on Sirius XM's The Catholic Channel, where they were talking about the upcoming matchup with teams from their dioceses. On the show, they spoke about how Catholic schools in their dioceses — St. Elizabeth's in Kansas City and St. Paul's in St. Petersburg — were collecting cans of soup for a Souper Bowl food drive for local food pantries also had a game wager with each other. The school from the losing team would send the other school some local food: St. Paul's would send oranges and St. Elizabeth's would send barbecue depending on the outcome. When the bishops were asked if they had a similar wager, they said they hadn't yet, but they came up with one while they were on the air. Bishop Parkes said he could send some hand-rolled cigars from Tampa to Bishop Johnston if the Chiefs won. Bishop Johnston reciprocated by saying he would send along some Kansas City barbecue and when he asked the Florida bishop if he liked ribs or brisket, Bishop Parkes said both.

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 ardor, 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 grant-makers 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 offer 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

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Pro-life awareness effort in Elkhart



onathan Acierto

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.

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.

Thus far, these 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 Paxia, CEO, said "thanks to the work of commu-

nity 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.

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 Pimiento 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/signup.

Sisters to host 'The Scriptures of Lent/Spring'

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS — Join the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for the upcoming virtual retreat "The Scriptures of Lent/Spring."

Each virtual session will take place from 6:15-7:45 p.m., on Thursdays during Lent, from Feb. 18 through March 25.

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 Speth, Sister Jan Craven, Sister Janice Smith and Sister Paula Damiano.

"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."

Cost is \$5 per session or \$25 for all six sessions. The registration deadline is Feb. 15 or three days before each session. Register online at Events.SistersofProvidence.org or by calling 812-535-2952 or emailing jfrost@spsmw.org.

Beyond 'I do': helping couples plan for a lifetime of marriage

BY TERESA BRECKLER

St. John Chrysostom once wrote about society that “there is nothing which so welds our life together as the love of man and wife.” 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 the family 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 re-promulgated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades 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 intent is to love the other 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, it is “based not on a gift of oneself but on a loan of oneself for an undetermined period.” Ultimately, between cohabitation and marriage is “the difference of



Provided by Raquel Storey

Part of the purpose of the diocesan Marriage and Family Ministry is 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. Raquel Storey of South Bend, who married her husband, Stephen, last summer, was grateful for the formation and direction. “The work of marriage — namely, getting your spouse to heaven — is an incredible privilege,” she said.

unconditional permanence versus trial 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 been 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 in is very difficult 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 ... with love above all and 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 breather 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 Caty 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 FOCCUS 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 Church. It made us feel like we were not alone on the journey ahead.

“I remember we left the program 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 gauntlet 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 ideal 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 by the profound beauty in the simplicity of it all.”

Raquel advised engaged couples to “work on cultivating wonder and gratitude. The work of marriage — namely, getting your spouse to heaven — is an incredible privilege. Allowing yourselves to be filled with wonder over one another and this mutual goal helps ground you both in what is most essential.”

“Honest conversation is a necessity,” said Jessica. “Marriage is not a magic fix for relationship or personal problems, so you must be open with each other. Also, it is never too late to begin practicing chastity and loving each other as God intended.”

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



Provided by Melissa Eastman, University of Saint Francis

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

“It’s indeed not about me. My job is to lead people in prayer. Music is the meditation.”

The soundtrack of Jim Didier’s life is liturgical. For six decades, worshippers at two Fort Wayne parishes have drawn closer to the Lord through the vocation of the musician, vocalist and composer. They might not have known to 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, choirmaster 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 decadeslong 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 accom-

pany 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

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. Whatever I do musically should invite people into a deeper relationship with their God. ... It isn’t about picking songs that I like, although I like 95% of the music the Spirit leads me to.”

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.

— Jim Didier

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 choirs



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Celebrating the feast of St. Katharina Kasper, PHJC foundress

BY BARBARA ALLISON

Beatified 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, MoonTree 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



Photos by Barbara Allison

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.

the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend calendar as an optional memorial — with Mass in Ancilla Domini Chapel. At the liturgy, Father Michael Okoro noted that St. Katharina was a poor woman from a poor background who possessed a deep faith. She was always attentive to the Spirit and the needs of her time, he said, and when the Lord called, she responded, "Let it be done to me according to your will."

In her reflection, Sister Linda Volk said, "Because Katharina was genuinely attentive, she could truly hear; because she was genuinely aware, she could truly see; because she was authentically alive, she could 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

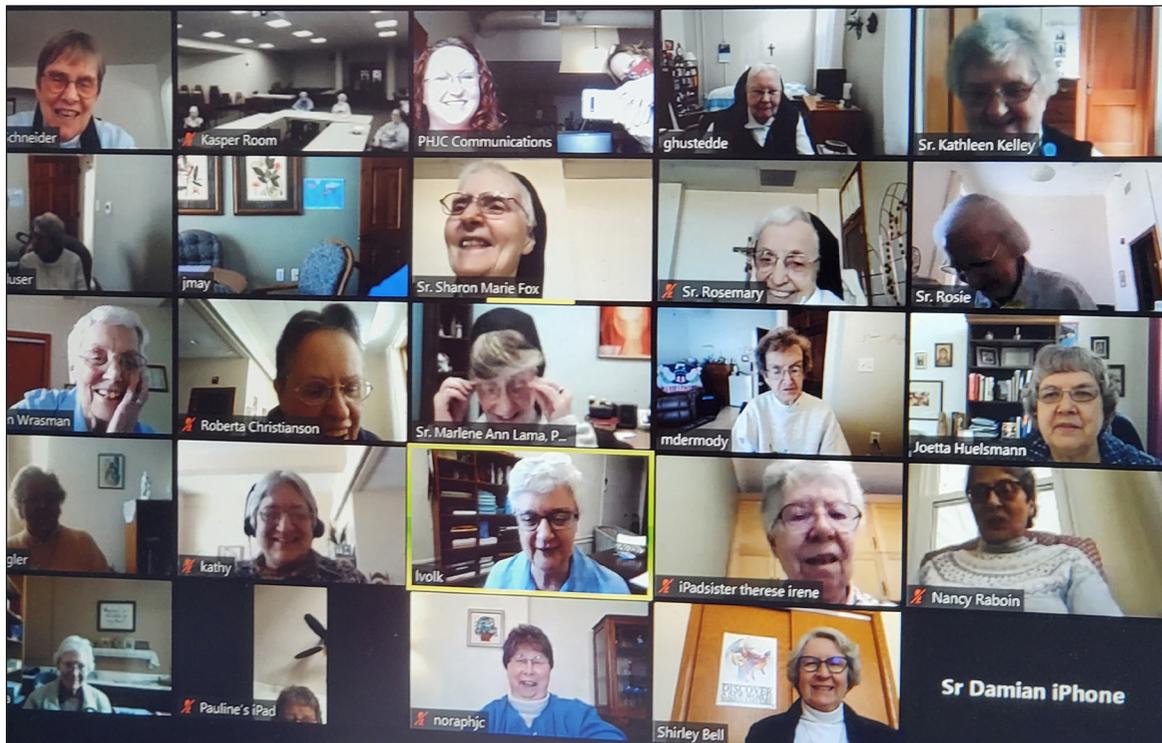
in life, this is God's will for us. The flame in the lamp of that charism is still burning brightly."

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 Welhoelter 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.



Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ sisters visit with one another over Zoom to celebrate the feast day of their foundress, St. Katharina Kasper.

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 Join us for a bowl of Ash Wednesday Soup
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**Bring a friend for a lunch of soup and bread on
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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 misinformation spread, you seek 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-maker. 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 international news of interest to Catholics.

In turn, Catholic media provided the Church with its own voice as it resisted anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic forces at home and abroad while also speaking up for the rights of

labor and the poor and providing formation in the faith.

Over the decades, CNS evolved as new technologies developed, adding functions such as photo and video services, opening a Rome bureau and assuming responsibility for movie, television and now video game reviews. It also began an adult catechetical feature called "Faith Alive!" Through the Great Depression and World War II, Vatican II and now the pandemic, it continues to serve Catholics around the world.

Wire services are the invisible workhorses of the news media. Secular agencies like The Associated Press and Reuters provide much of the breaking news copy on national and international events, allowing local dailies to focus their attention and resources on stories close at hand.

Catholic News Service does the same for Catholic media. While they focus on local issues and the activities of their own Church leaders, we supply them with national and Vatican news stories, often giving these stories a context missing in secular news reporting.

News agency stories are often only identified with their initials after the dateline — for example, Washington (CNS). They aren't designed to attract attention to themselves, but simply to provide readers with the information they need to decide if it is coming from a trusted source.

In a time of fake news, alternative facts and disinformation



GREG ERLANDSON

AMID THE FRAY

of all types, Pope Francis again reiterated in his talk to CNS the importance of "a clear and unbiased presentation of the facts."

Journalists in both the Catholic and the secular press are under more pressure now than perhaps ever before. For Catholic journalists, the sex abuse scandals have been particularly trying, and the growing divisions in the Church often means there is pressure to report propaganda, not news, or to satisfy one ideological side or another.

That's why having a moment to reflect with the pope on our history and our mission to serve the Church was a rare and privileged opportunity.

Now it is time to get back to work. In our second century, Catholic News Service will continue to honor that trust that the bishops, our clients and our readers have placed in us. In the words of Pope Francis, we will always strive "to serve the truth with humility and responsibility."

Greg Erlandson, director and editor-in-chief of Catholic News Service, can be reached at gerlandson@catholicnews.com.

Why does God make us wait?

In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus healed many people at Capernaum. But the next day, though many were looking for Him and wanted healings, He said to His apostles that it was time to move on to other towns. In other words, He left some to wait for another day when He would return. Let's get a word from the saints and further ponder the mystery of waiting on the Lord.

Indeed, one of the most common frustrations in the spiritual life is the fact that God often makes us wait. Many of our requests are made with an elevated sense of urgency. Frankly, we are in a big hurry about many things — but God is not. Although He could fix every problem in an instant, He does not, and He has His reasons for this.

While the reasons for God's delay may be somewhat mysterious, we can certainly understand some of them. For example, any parent knows that giving a child whatever he wants precisely when he wants is to spoil him. Learning to wait is beneficial. It humbles us, keeps us vigilant, helps us to clarify our desires, and aids us in developing self-control.

St. Augustine beautifully describes another reason that God would have us wait:

"The entire life of a good Christian is in fact an exercise of holy desire. You do not yet see what you long for, but the very act of desiring prepares you, so



MSGR. CHARLES POPE

COMMUNITY IN MISSION

that when he comes you may see and be utterly satisfied.

"Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, therefore, you increase the capacity of the sack.

"And this is how God deals with us. Simply by making us wait he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it able to receive what is to be given to us.

"So, my brethren, let us continue to desire, for we shall be filled!" (Tract. 4: PL 35, 2008-2009)

St. Teresa of Avila said something similar in her spiritual work, "The Interior Castle." In her reflection on the fourth mansions, she introduced the first stages of contemplative prayer.

POPE, page 13

Jesus is the cure for our sinfulness



MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Mark 1:40-45

The first reading for this weekend comes from the Book of Leviticus. In sequence, Leviticus is the fourth book in modern biblical translations. As such, it is part of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch includes the five books of the Bible attributed to Moses. They are called the Torah in Hebrew. The Torah forms the fundamental law and philosophy of Judaism, both in current understandings and in ancient practices as well.

In this reading, God speaks to Moses and to Aaron, the

brother of Moses. The topic is leprosy. It is not known whether these references to leprosy in the Scriptures referred to Hansen's disease or to some other illness. Regardless of the exact scientific nature of what the ancients called leprosy, the problem was chronic and severe.

An entire social system developed around the disease. Victims were outcasts. They were brutally shunned, and they most often virtually had to forage or beg for food and search for any shelter they could find.

Ancient Jews would never blame God for such a serious malady. God was seen as good, loving and merciful. The ancient Hebrews saw human sin as ultimately the cause of all earthly misery, including illness.

St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians furnishes this liturgy with its second reading. In the reading, the great Apostle counsels the Christians of Corinth never to offend no one, Jew or Gentile. This advice reveals that the Corinthian Christian community involved both Jews and Gentiles. Jews

lived in places throughout the Roman Empire, not just in the Holy Land.

Paul urges that the Christians follow his example, because Paul says that he imitates Christ.

For its last reading, the Church gives us a passage from the Gospel of Mark. In this reading, a leper approaches Jesus, asking for a cure. The same attitude about leprosy, whatever this disease was, clinically speaking, applied among Jews at the time of Jesus as it did among Jews in the days of Moses.

Jesus cured the man, the Lord being "moved with pity," according to Mark. This cure came when Jesus touched the man.

Symbolic touching was important in those days, as it today is important in the liturgy. It represents contact and transfer. In ordinations, the ordaining bishop lays his hands upon the candidates to be ordained bishop, priest or deacon. At weddings, the bride and bridegroom hold each other's hands.

Jesus transmitted the healing power of God to the man through this touch. Then, Jesus spoke the miraculous words of healing.

The Lord ordered the man to go to the priests, since the priests could reinstate him in society, but they had to see that he was free of disease.

Reflection

In these weeks after Christmas, in the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord and the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Church has continued to introduce us to the person and ministry of Jesus and to explain the marvel of the coming of the Son of God.

This weekend, the horror of leprosy, as it was regarded by Jews long ago, is critical to understanding the readings. It is necessary to apply basic implications to ourselves.

Like leprosy, sin leads to death. Furthermore, it separates us from the one community of faith in the Lord. We sinners are outcasts and strangers, left to struggle in the best way that we

can. This is the problem.

Living in sin is to be in a world in which selfishness reigns. Jesus, always moved by love, cures us and reinstates us, as it were, by forgiving our sins. Forgiven, we enter again the family of God. Life, not death, is our destiny.

The key is having faith, repenting and living according to the Lord's model.

READINGS

Sunday: Lv 13:1-2, 44-46 Ps 32:1-2, 5, 11 1 Cor 10:31—11:1 Mk 1:40-45

Monday: Gn 4:1-15, 25 Ps 50:1, 8, 16bc-17, 20-21 Mk 8:11-13

Tuesday: Gn 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10 Ps 29: 1a, 2, 3ac-4, 3b, 9c-10 Mk 8:14-21

Wednesday: Jl 2:12-18 Ps 51:3-6b, 12-14, 17 2 Cor 5:20—6:2 Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday: Dt 30:15-20 Ps 1:1-4, 6 Lk 9:22-25

Friday: Is 58:1-9a Ps 51:3-6b, 18-19 Mt 9:14-15

Saturday: Is 58:9b-14 Ps 86:1-6 Lk 5:27-32

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 have different wishes 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



THE CATHOLIC DOCTOR IS IN

DR. DAVID KAMINSKAS

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 Kaminskas is a board-certified cardiologist and member of the Dr. Jerome Lejeune Catholic Medical Guild of Northeast Indiana, www.fortwaynecma.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 dilatasti 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 enjoy the full extent of what He is offering.

Wait for the Lord.

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

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

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.

BEGGED	MAKE ME	TOUCHED
LEPROSY	LEFT HIM	WARNING
SEE THAT	BUT GO	SHOW
YOURSELF	THE PRIESTS	OFFER
MOSES	SPREAD	JESUS
ENTER	A TOWN	OPENLY
OUTSIDE	PLACES	PEOPLE

CLEAN EFFECTS

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

FEAST: FEBRUARY 15
1641-1682

Born in southeastern France, Claude entered the Jesuits at Avignon and completed theology studies in Paris. After ordination, he preached in Lyon. In 1675, he was named rector of the college at Paray-le Monial and became confessor of the visionary Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque. He helped her spread devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1676 he was sent to London and reconciled many Catholics to the church they had abandoned. He was arrested and expelled in connection with an alleged plot to kill the king, and died upon returning to France.

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.

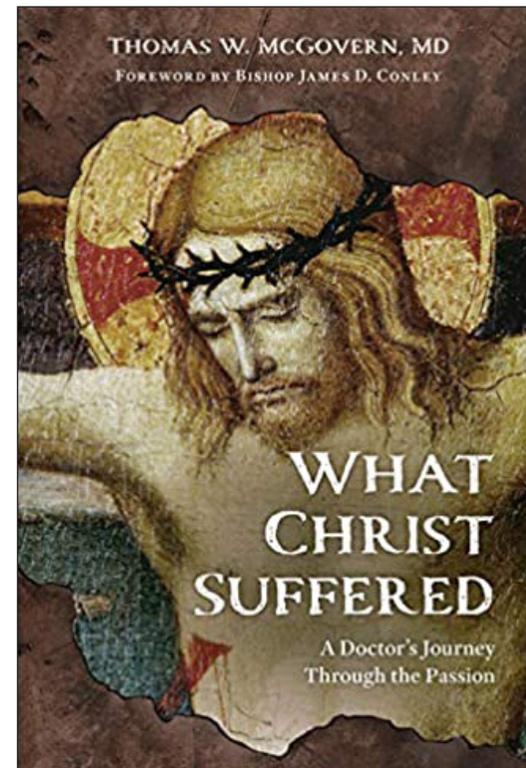
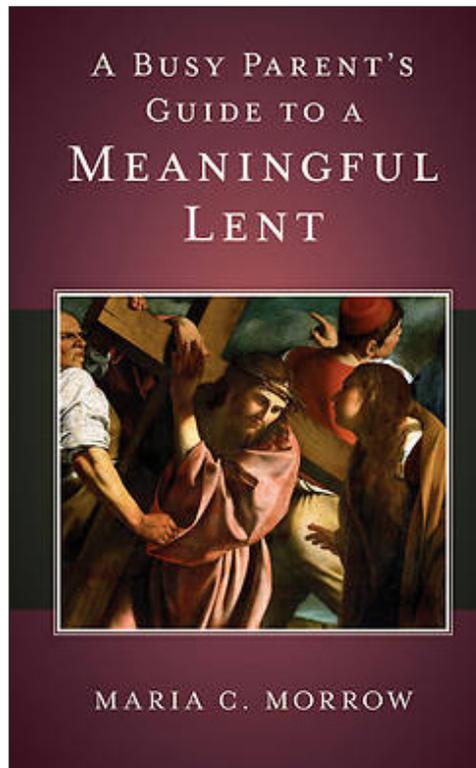
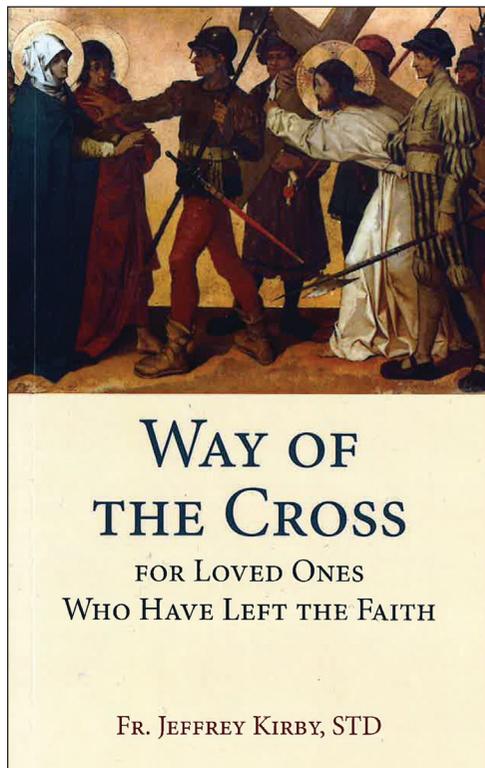
When a loved one leaves the Church, those who remain often despair and feel helpless to bring them back. Father Kirby suggests uniting this fear and suffering to the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

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 Dr. 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 becoming holier parents often seems impossible; second, that, as Morrow puts it, "whatever the challenges of our state of life, we are still being called to participate in this season of Lent."

Morrow proffers several easy-reach ideas to help parents choose a Lenten resolution that increases solidarity with the poor and hungry, but notably most of the book is a day-by-day guide complete with suggested short readings, a reflection and a pray-ponder-do section that lays out an appropriate and achievable response to the message presented. Each day's material is just enough to infuse sanctity into the messiness of everyday life with children and present a model to them of living differently during Lent. 243 pages, \$16.95



Today's Catholic/OSV

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.

In "What Christ Suffered," 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.

It's insight Dr. McGovern nearly didn't publish, however. The introduction explains how an inability to determine a definitive and complete set of details unchallenged by other hypotheses derailed for years the interest he had developed as a young medical student in the physical experience of the Crucifixion. After years of reflection and some encouragement, he acquiesced.

"I said I would, 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 foreword that Dr. McGovern has achieved his goal, because he 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.

How long has it been since you felt all the pieces were in place?

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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. View more Catholic events and submit new ones at www.todayscatholic.org/event. 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 2930 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 annemariedeville@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 tvie2001@yahoo.com.

REST IN PEACE

<p>Fort Wayne John M. Hull, 61, St. Vincent de Paul</p> <p>Robert Vodde, 91, St. Charles Borromeo</p> <p>Goshen Bernice M. Sibal, 91, St. John the Evangelist</p>	<p>Granger Ronald Lemieux, 92, St. Pius X</p> <p>Angie Zajac, 59, St. Pius X</p> <p>South Bend P. Michael Feters, 67, St. Matthew Cathedral</p>	<p>Deaths elsewhere Sister Charles Van Hoy, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Sister served at St. John the Baptist Parish, Fort Wayne</p>
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St. Vincent de Paul Scouts fish fry

FORT WAYNE — The St. Vincent de Paul Scouts will have a drive-up only fish dinner Friday, Feb. 19, from 5-8 p.m. Serving fish, mac and cheese, cole slaw, potato, roll and dessert for \$11. Enter drive on Auburn Road south of Wallen Road. Contact Jan Moore at 260-489-9509.

Forever Learning Institute Trivia Night

SOUTH BEND — Forever Learning is going virtual for

its Trivia Night fundraising event. Contestants will log on and face off on Saturday, Feb. 20, at 7 p.m. Interested trivia buffs can test their knowledge by registering online at ForeverLearningInstitute.org. Individuals may register on their own – without a predetermined team – and join the fun. The event will be hosted by TriviaHub via Zoom. Contact Eve Finnessy, executive director, at 574-282-1901 for more information.

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260-422-4611 X-3335 or showe@diocesefwsb.org
Applications available at <https://theapplicantmanager.com/jobs?pos=df322>



Catholic Diocese of Evansville

is seeking
Human Resources Director/Manager

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

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

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

A complete position announcement is available online at
www.evdio.org/employmentopportunities.html

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.
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SEEK, from page 1

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 temple, 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 is this choice that 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."

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 humanism than Christianity," Bishop Barron said. "We claim the divinization of our humanity ... is raised up, enhanced, rendered more beautiful and radiant by the presence of God."

In closing, Bishop Barron had encouraging words for Catholics regarding oppressing situations of current times.

"Go forth with this incarnational confidence, that it's when you proclaim the divinity of Jesus that you are also, by the same token, proclaiming the greatest possible humanism. ... Don't be ashamed of Jesus, everybody," he said. "Proclaim Jesus with divine and human with confidence, with joy, with panache, and you will find your missionary vocation fulfilled."

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



Joshua Schipper

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 had 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" podcast, 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 "wokeism" 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, Utah. To register or for information on the SEEK series in general, visit seek.focus.org.