

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Volume 95 No. 12

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org



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A journey through Lent

BY JENNIFER BARTON

The end of the Lenten season is a time to reflect on the spiritual growth experienced throughout the past 40 days. It is a time to further develop those resolutions to grow closer to God, not to discontinue them. No Lenten journey is perfect, and there is always room to grow. Each person finds encouragement to push on toward the ultimate prize — heaven — through the influences of those who came before and the sojourners still toiling on the path toward eternity.

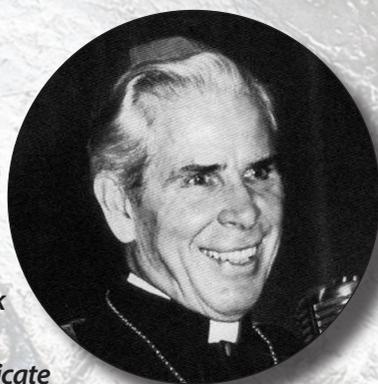
Inspired by the past, local Catholics explore what it means to carry the cross in the present and to strive for a future of sainthood through the 40 days of Lent.



Present

I always go through Ken Kniepmann's book "Lenten Healing: 40 Days to Set You Free from Sin." It is a series of daily meditations which provide a great way to see how the Seven Deadly Sins are at play in my life and how to invite Our Lord into those particular areas, specifically to help cultivate in place of them the seven heavenly virtues. I always pair this with the other sacrifices that I decide to commit to for that Lent, which makes for an excellent way to get at the root of my sins. This makes it much easier for me to recognize my sinfulness, accept Jesus' merciful love in the sacrament of confession, and to then share that love with my neighbor.

Patrick Ernst



Past

We can think of Lent as a time to eradicate evil or cultivate virtue, a time to pull up weeds or to plant good seeds. Which is better is clear, for the Christian ideal is always positive rather than negative.

Venerable Fulton Sheen



Future

I have noticed during Lent that personal persecution is particularly prevalent. Wounded, I repeatedly call out for God's mercy. In the end, I am thankful for the opportunity to reflect on what is often a revelation of truth and I ultimately become closer to God.

Barb Gropp

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TODAY'S CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
P.O. Box 11169
Fort Wayne, IN 46856

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Published weekly except for the last Sunday in December; and every other week from third Sunday in May through fourth Sunday in August, by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 915 S. Clinton St., P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46801. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Wayne, IN, and additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169 or email: circulation@diocesefwsb.org

MAIN OFFICE: 915 S. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax: 260-744-1473.
BUREAU OFFICE: 1328 Dragoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

News deadline is 10 days prior to publication date. Advertising deadline is nine days before publication date.

Today's Catholic may be reached at:
Today's Catholic,
P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN
46856-1169; or email:
editor@diocesefwsb.org



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St. Therese, Little Flower dedicated to supporting every parish family

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

Having so many people confined at home over the past year has spotlighted the importance of the domestic church. Last fall, the parish leadership team at St. Therese, Little Flower, South Bend, decided to devote 2021 to the family as well, going all out to support every member in their parish "family of families."

As they were brainstorming ways to do that, they received several confirmations that their initiative would be blessed. Two came from Pope Francis, who dedicated a year to St. Joseph, father of the Holy Family and then declared a Year of the Family to mark the five-year anniversary of his apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" — "The Joy of Love." The parish Knights of Columbus provided additional confirmation when it proposed recognizing a Family of the Month 12 times during the year.

With the encouragement of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, St. Therese has been striving to be a next-generation parish. It began by establishing a three-year strategic plan identifying its mission, vision, core values and priorities. Over the past year, a group of 12 parishioners have been praying, working together and passionately discussing this pastoral plan. They want to create a fellowship of families, equipping parishioners to walk together so intentionally that no one can slip through the cracks. They reached out to single young adults, godparents and grandparents, women and men.

"We're all part of the Catholic family," said Megan Gettinger, parish communications coordinator. "We want to live that out more fully."

Year of the Family offerings include a Frantic Family Workshop on Mondays in Lent to help each family choose a motto exemplifying its vision, plan family meetings and handle conflict. There are Family Freedom Nights featuring a talk, prayer and child care, and an opportunity to watch "The Chosen" together after praying the Stations of the Cross on Fridays, and a Sanctifying the Home workshop for women with Colleen Billing. A "Meat and Greet" men's cookout will happen on St. Joseph's March 19 feast day, and "Into the Breach" study groups on Catholic manhood have been formed.

Preparations are also currently being made to form medium-sized "households," each with its own charism somewhat like the charism of a religious order. They should be ready to launch this summer and will take the form of monthly gatherings and



Photos provided by Megan Gettinger

The Mwanza family was honored by their parish, St. Therese, Little Flower in South Bend, as a Family of the Month recently. In conjunction with the Year of the Family proclaimed by Pope Francis, St. Therese is making a conscious effort to enrich parish families through programs of recognition and support.

smaller groups for committed members. Each parishioner will be encouraged to discern membership in one of the households.

The Knights of Columbus Family of the Month program fits perfectly into this template. Members are enthusiastic and eager to fulfill their role of servant leadership. They have adopted the national Knights Family of the Month program in hope that some of the families honored at St. Therese will go on to earn recognition at the regional or even international level.

Each month, the council Family of the Month committee selects a parish family who models Christian family values and visibly lives them every day. Because St. Therese,

Little Flower doesn't have a school, the seven-member committee is eager to honor not only young families but families at different stages.

"I think it is truly wonderful how this program is witnessing that each family is called to holiness in a unique way within their unique circumstances," said Gettinger.

The Knights solicit nominations from the parish, then try to learn more about each family. At first, families often demur,

saying they serve for love of God and the Church, not to be praised.

Jerry Zent, recorder for Council 17043, reminds them that it's important for other families to have examples of what a great family looks like. Honorees are then invited to join the committee to help identify other exemplary families.

Mphasa Mwanza and her children Oyata, Sete, M'atli and Jendayi, who range in age from 8 to 23, were the committee's unanimous choice in January. They arrive early at 9 a.m. Mass every Sunday to serve as greeters and stay afterward to help sanitize the church. Even when Mom was in Zambia for 12 days visiting her mother, the four children let their light shine, sitting attentively in the front row. Pre-pandemic, the older daughters were altar servers.

Grand Knight Ben Janczewski calls Mwanza, who is a single parent, "mom of the century."

Mwanza herself said she has tried to embrace suffering as a blessing. She arrived in the United States two days before 9/11 in pursuit of the American dream of a better life. Her family joined St. Therese, Little Flower before Sete was born. She is a

family nurse practitioner, and Oyata, an IUSB graduate, is applying to medical schools.

Mphasa tries to be wherever she is needed in the parish. She loves to cook and has hosted coffee and doughnuts after Mass. She's an usher and eucharistic minister, has participated in the Alpha program and serves on several committees, including a capital campaign for church renovation. She has helped plan mini-retreats and serves with Oyata on the healing team that regularly prays for the needs of parishioners.

Mornings are hectic but the Mwanza family gathers for prayer every evening, holding hands and sharing intentions. On Sundays, they pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet. The rosary was a favorite when the children were younger.

After the 9 a.m. Mass one Sunday in January, the Mwanzas received a framed certificate, gift coupons for Barnaby's Pizza and an outdoor nativity set with a spotlight. Mwanza said she cried, she was so surprised and humbled. "

It gave me so much hope," she said, "showing me that Jesus

FAMILY, from page 2

loves each one of us. He's the one calling us; I give Him all the honor."

Photos of both families have been displayed in the church bulletin, parish website and near the entrances to both the church and the gym where weekday Masses are celebrated. Monica Markovich was surprised how much the framed certificate meant to her children Augustine, Avila and Elizabeth; it is prominently displayed on their piano. They were also thrilled to receive a gift basket for their new puppy, Bosco.

The Chip and Monica Markovich family were February's honorees. They, too, play a visible role in the 9 a.m. Sunday liturgy. Along with many other ministries, Monica serves as a lector, Gus rings the bells at the consecration and Chip is a Knight of St. Joseph, quietly taking care of things behind the scenes.

Zent calls Monica a "whirlwind." She chairs the parish finance council, participates in the healing ministry and is a presenter for Kingdom Builders, which the parish hosts every month. Chip is a member of the Knights as well and helped with their men's prayer breakfasts before the pandemic shelved them.

The family joined St. Therese when they returned to South Bend in 2014. They love the fact that it is a very welcoming parish and that it takes social justice seriously through its food pantry and utility assistance. "The Lord wants to do new things with us," Monica affirmed. "We try to be open to the way the Spirit is leading."

Coronavirus pandemic restric-



The Chip and Monica Markovich family were February's Knights of Columbus Family of the Month honorees at St. Therese, Little Flower Parish. The parents are intentional about cultivating the practice of the faith in the home, engaging the children in catechesis and family prayer.

tions have been challenging for the parish. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a hands-on experience, and the Markovich children did not do well with virtual religious education. Their parents tried to provide at-home catechesis, paying more attention

to the saints and seasons of the Church year. During Lent, they have been praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet together every night.

Both families say they're simply living their faith together to the best of their ability.



The Mwanza family is pictured with Father Terrence Coonan and members of Knights of Columbus Council 17043 after being honored as Family of the Month in January.



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Sunday, March 21: 11:15 a.m. — Closing Mass for Young Adult Retreat, Lindenwood Retreat Center, Plymouth
 Monday, March 22: 3 p.m. — Virtual Meeting of Indiana Bishops
 Tuesday, March 23: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Paul of the Cross Church, Columbia City
 Wednesday, March 24: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. John the Baptist Church, Fort Wayne
 Thursday, March 25: 2 p.m. — Blessing of Confraternity of Penitents Annunciation Women's Vocation House, Fort Wayne
 Friday, March 26: 7 p.m. — Confirmation Mass, St. Patrick Church, South Bend



Cacao Alliance creates jobs in El Salvador



Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for Catholic Relief Services

Glendy Fernández de Valle and her daughter Hazel Valle, together with their husband and father Juan Carlos Valle, run a family cacao business called Tetonalli in San Martín, San Salvador, El Salvador. CRS' Cacao Alliance project helped them start the sustainable entrepreneurship; the program provides assistance to approximately 6,500 small-scale farmers.

Glendy Fernández de Valle, 33 and her daughter Hazel Valle, 11, live in Altavista, San Martín, San Salvador, El Salvador, where they run their family cacao business called Tetonalli. Tetonalli means, in the Nahuatl language "A new beginning," and it really was for Glendy and her husband, Juan Carlos Valle. Juan was deported from the U.S. in 2017 and started working with Catholic Relief Services' Cacao Alliance project, which helped them with the technology to start the business and allowed the family to start a sustainable entrepreneurship.

Cacao Alliance provides assistance to approximately 6,500 small-scale farmers to help reactivate cacao production and exports in El Salvador that will increase incomes and jobs and reduce illegal immigration. "It's a family business. My grandmother used to make traditional cacao and she helped me," Glendy said.

"I started looking for clients. It was difficult at first. But after my husband went to training from Cacao Alliance, it all changed. He became interested and started learning many things about cacao. I love it. Tetonalli means family for me, love, effort, union, it means we don't have to be separated to get a better future for our family. We give thanks to Cacao Alliance because it changed our life. We have now a good and sustainable entrepreneurship. Opportunities are here, in our country with our own cacao producers," she said.

At Luis Reynaldo Tobar Public High School the agriculture baccalaureate program has also been revived with the help of CRS and its partners. Students have been taught about coffee cupping, a tasting technique used to check the quality of a batch of coffee, and how to be skilled baristas.

Information provided by Catholic Relief Services.

Bishops: Relief will help many; lack of Hyde protections 'unconscionable'

BY JULIE ASHER

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law March 11 by President Joe Biden, will provide relief to Americans in need amid the pandemic, but it lacks “protections for the unborn,” the U.S. bishops said.

Their March 10 statement quickly followed U.S. House passage of the measure in a 220-211 vote. After the Senate passed its version of the bill March 6, it was sent back to the House where members reconciled its changes with the version they approved Feb. 27. President Biden then signed the bill.

In a joint statement, Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the chairmen of six USCCB committees praised “positive provisions” that “will save people from extremely desperate situations and will likely save lives.”

But they called it “unconscionable” that Congress passed the bill “without critical protections needed to ensure that billions of taxpayer dollars are used for life-affirming health care and not for abortion.”

Unlike all of the previous pandemic relief bills, Hyde Amendment language was not included in this measure. Hyde outlaws federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

In addition to Archbishop Gomez, the committee chairmen who signed the statement are: Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, Committee on Pro-Life Activities; Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Committee on International Justice and Peace; Bishop Michael C. Barber of Oakland, California, Committee on Catholic Education; Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism; and Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of Washington, Committee on Migration.

“As the American Rescue Plan Act was being written, Catholic bishops reached out to every House and Senate office to express our support for providing additional relief to help poor and vulnerable people who are most at risk of harm from this pandemic, and our strong conviction that this relief should also protect the unborn and their right to life,” the bishops said.

“We are grateful this legislation addresses many positive provisions, including unemployment assistance, child



CNS photo/Leah Millis, Reuters

A family has dinner at their home in Pitman, N.J., Sept. 10, amid the coronavirus pandemic. The U.S. bishops have said that while they are grateful for the relief that will be given to families and vulnerable individuals because of the American Rescue Plan, it is unacceptable that language was omitted from the bill that would have prohibited using taxpayer dollars to fund abortions.



CNS photo/Tom Brenner, Reuters

President Joe Biden signs the American Rescue Plan into law at the White House in Washington March 11. The \$1.9 trillion plan includes economic relief measures to respond to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Also pictured is Vice President Kamala Harris.

and earned income tax credit enhancements, nutrition funding, vaccine distribution funding, health care funding, housing assistance, international assistance to regions stricken by COVID, conflict and hunger,” they said.

But “unlike previous COVID relief bills,” the bishops said, “sponsors of the American Rescue Plan Act refused to

include the long-standing, bipartisan consensus policy to prohibit taxpayer dollars from funding abortions domestically and internationally.”

Hyde Amendment language “was needed because this bill includes many general references to health care that, absent the express exclusion of abortion, have consistently been interpreted by federal courts not only

to allow, but to compel, the provision of abortion without meaningful limit,” the bishops said.

“The many important, life-saving provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act have been undermined because it facilitates and funds the destruction of life, which is antithetical to its aim of protecting the most vulnerable Americans in a time of crisis,” they added.

Biden said the American Rescue Plan Act “represents a historic, historic victory for the American people.”

“Everything in the American Rescue Plan addresses a real need — including investments to fund our entire vaccination effort. More vaccines, more vaccinators and more vaccination sites,” he said.

No Republican in the House or Senate voted for the bill. Two House Democrats joined their Republican counterparts to vote against it Feb. 27; in the final House vote, one Democrat rejected it.

The measure includes \$17 billion for vaccine-related activities and programs and \$110 billion for other efforts to contain the pandemic; \$130 billion for public schools; and \$143 billion to expand child tax credit, childcare tax credit and earned income tax credit mostly for one year.

Other provisions include \$45 billion to temporarily expand Affordable Care Act subsidies for two years and subsidize 2020 and 2021 coverage; \$25 billion for grants to restaurants and bars; \$7 billion to allow more loans under the Paycheck Protection Program; \$6 billion to increase nutrition assistance; and \$350 billion for states and localities.

The bill also provides for checks of \$1,400 to go to individuals who earn up to \$75,000 a year and heads of households earning \$112,500; married couples earning \$150,000 will get \$2,800. Eligible dependents, including adult dependents, also would each get \$1,400.

It expressly provides \$50 million for family planning, but as the bishops noted in their statement, and other national pro-life leaders have said, funding allocated in other provisions can be used for abortion.

It directs billions to state and local governments, \$219 billion and \$130 billion, respectively, “to mitigate the fiscal effects stemming from” COVID-19.

Because the Hyde Amendment is not applied to these funds, state and local governments could use the money to pay for abortion and abortion providers in the name of “responding to or mitigating the public health emergency,” said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, said the “sheer size” of the measure gives it “the potential to be the largest expansion of abortion funding since Obamacare.”

She urged Biden “to honor the wishes of the majority of Americans who don’t want to pay for abortions and to return to his pro-life roots by vetoing this bill until the bipartisan Hyde Amendment and other pro-life protections are included.”

Effects of veto override hits home for vulnerable Hoosier renters

While federal COVID-19 relief efforts are offering hope to the most economically disadvantaged in Indiana, hundreds of Hoosier families are still facing eviction each week following the state legislature's action on a controversial landlord-tenant bill.

Advocates for the poor, including the Catholic Church, are deeply concerned about the effects of Senate Enrolled Act 148, which became law in Indiana in February. They say the legislation severely undermines legal protections for renters, who make up about one-third of Indiana's population, and that it has the potential for increasing the state's homeless population amid the continued coronavirus pandemic.

These concerns persist even following the recent passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act – which includes \$50 billion for housing and homelessness assistance nationwide – and a December COVID-19 relief package that allocated \$448 million in rental assistance for Indiana.

Moreover, state advocates fear the potential consequences when a federal moratorium on evictions due to nonpayment of rent expires on March 31. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the national public health agency of the United States, originally called for the

temporary halt on evictions in September to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and has since extended it twice. It is unclear whether the CDC will take further action beyond the end of this month.

"More than 950 families are being evicted every week on average in Indiana despite the CDC moratorium and the federal relief efforts," said Andrew Bradley, policy director of the advocacy group Prosperity Indiana. "There is definitely a COVID-19 connection when

evicted families have to double-up and cannot distance, and when people are forced to shelter in poor housing conditions. The eviction crisis, which is especially concentrated in places like Indianapolis and St. Joseph County, has been exacerbated by SEA 148."

Critics of the measure point to the lack of tenant protections against landlord retaliation and substandard living conditions.

Among the most troubling aspects of SEA 148, according to Bradley, is the addition of seven new forms of expedited three-day evictions.

SEA 148 was the result of language added to an unrelated Senate bill in the state legislature in 2020 and passed with virtually no opportunity for public debate. It was the only bill vetoed last year by Gov. Eric Holcomb, who cited among his concerns the coronavirus pandemic, which was then beginning to profoundly alter life for

"So many of the families we serve have fallen through all of the community's safety nets – rent assistance included – which lands them on the streets and into the homeless system."

BILL BICKEL, ARCHDIOCESAN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CATHOLIC CHARITIES

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

Hoosiers.

The Indiana Catholic Conference, Prosperity Indiana and numerous other advocates wanted the veto to stand because the legislation placed an even greater imbalance in the relationship between landlords and tenants, which in Indiana typically favors landlords. However, lawmakers overturned the veto in February.

"We were incredibly disappointed by this outcome, and we are now witnessing the impact on the people already hit hardest by the pandemic and its economic effects," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "The enactment of SEA 148 is opening avenues of harm for renters at most risk of eviction, many of whom are served by Catholic social service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul."

Holy Family Shelter, a program of Catholic Charities Indianapolis, is a prime example. The facility, which opened in 1984 as the first shelter spe-

cifically for homeless families in Indianapolis, can house up to 22 families per night but due to COVID-19 has had to make other housing arrangements for some of those it serves. The shelter is currently serving 29 homeless families with a combination of the shelter itself, hotels and alternative housing.

"There is certainly an uptick in demand for emergency shelter for homeless families, which seems to be due to a combination of factors, including the overall pandemic effect with loss of jobs and loss of child care," said Bill Bickel, archdiocesan associate director for Catholic Charities. "Certainly, the override of the governor's veto of SEA 148 is causing part of this demand, but the most profound effects I think are yet to come."

At the same time, Bickel said many landlords are waiting to see how the American Rescue Plan Act may benefit them with past tenant debt assistance.

"We are hopeful that serious absolving of past rent can happen quickly and that the process is user friendly for the poorest of the poor," said Bickel, who fields 10 to 12 calls each day from families searching for help. "So many of the families we serve have fallen through all of the community's safety nets – rent assistance included – which lands them on the streets and into the homeless system. Of course, we have a particular concern considering that our largest

percentage of individual residents at the shelter are homeless children."

The Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition, an umbrella organization of various advocacy groups formed last spring due to concerns over the pandemic as well as SEA 148, is seeking input from people whose housing situation has been directly affected by either or both. One of the driving forces behind the coalition is Prosperity Indiana, with Bradley and his colleagues at the forefront of the efforts.

"We are working to build momentum for amendments that would address some of the worst dangers of SEA 148," Bradley said. "That's why the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition wants stories from tenants and community partners who are affected by the fallout of this legislation."

Personal stories may be directed to Natalie James, coalition builder for Prosperity Indiana, at www.housing4hoosiers.org/share-your-experience.

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



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NEWS BRIEFS

Catholic nonprofit will honor women religious who died of COVID-19

CHICAGO (CNS) — Chicago-based Catholic Extension plans to help 1,000 women religious with grants in memory of a group of sisters who died in late December of COVID-19 in Elm Grove, Wisconsin. The grants, \$1,000 per sister, have been established in the name of a group of School Sisters of Notre Dame, most of whom had been teachers and who died from complications of COVID-19 as the virus spread in the facility that cared for them. Four members of the religious community died on the same day. A total of nine sisters died in a little more than a week in mid-December. Group settings that care for the elderly, such as Notre Dame of Elm Grove in suburban Milwaukee, where the women lived, caused alarm during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many communities of men and women religious, particularly those that have members in their 80s and 90s and beyond, opted for limited contact with the public. But as the cases in Wisconsin showed, even with precautions, the virus seeped in, leaving devastation behind. Catholic Extension is making the special grants available through the Sisters on the Frontlines program. Father Jack Wall, Extension's president, said: "We are deeply honored to pay tribute to the nine School Sisters of Notre Dame who gave their lives to service in a way that will continue to help others, just as they would have wanted."

Annual collection invaluable to Christians in Middle East, cardinal says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The support of Catholics worldwide is an invaluable resource for small Christian communities in the Middle East who have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a Vatican official said. In a letter sent to bishops around the world and released by the Vatican March 11, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, asked for continued support for the traditional Good Friday collection for the Holy Land. "If this small gesture of solidarity and sharing — St. Paul and St. Francis of Assisi would call it 'restitution' — fails, it will be even more difficult for many of them to resist the temptation to leave their country, more demanding to support the parishes in their pastoral and educational work and harder to sustain the social commitment to the poor and suffering," Cardinal Sandri said. The collection, taken up at the request of the pope, is administered by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land and the Congregation for Eastern Churches, which uses it for the formation of candidates

War in Syria must end, pope says



CNS photo/Khalil Ashawi, Reuters

Abdel Razzak al-Khatoun, 84, a Syrian farmer, walks with his grandchildren at a camp for displaced Syrians in Idlib March 11. All sides need to come together to end the war in Syria and bring some sign of hope to an exhausted and tormented people, Pope Francis said during the March 14 Angelus in St. Peter's Square. The international community also needs to commit itself to helping rebuild the nation, so that once the fighting has stopped, "the social fabric can be mended and reconstruction and economic recovery can begin." March 15 marked 10 years since the beginning of war in Syria, causing "one of the most serious humanitarian disasters of our time," the pope said.

for the priesthood, the support of the clergy, educational activities, cultural formation and subsidies. The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, an administratively autonomous province of the Franciscan order, also uses the collection to carry out its mission of preserving most of the shrines connected with the life of Jesus as well as for providing pastoral care to the region's Catholics, running schools, operating charitable institutions and training future priests and religious.

Vandalism on basilica grounds prompts sorrow, forgiveness for perpetrator

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio (CNS) — Two days after the desecration of 16 statues on the grounds of the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Youngstown, parishioners who were gathered for Mass Feb. 28 expressed deep sorrow

but also forgiveness for the perpetrator. That day, Youngstown police had apprehended a suspect, Caleb Vancampen, 20, of East Palestine, Ohio, who reportedly confessed to the vandalism committed in the early morning hours of Feb. 26. Police said it helped that the suspect was caught on surveillance video. Vancampen was arraigned for felonious vandalism March 1 in Youngstown Municipal Court. The vandalism garnered extension media coverage and elicited expressions of support and concern from community leaders. Parishioners expressed their heartbreak and outrage in interviews with The Catholic Exponent, newspaper of the Diocese of Youngstown, over the sight of the destroyed statues. "I hope that everyone in this church goes forward to pray for the person who did this," said parishioner Paul Amon. "Yes, I'm upset, but my heart goes out to the young man who did this," said Therese Ivansin, parish director of religious education.

Catholic, other faith groups applaud decision to grant Venezuelans TPS

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (CNS) — Pro-immigrant groups applauded a March 8 decision by the Biden administration to protect some 320,000 Venezuelans in the United States under a temporary immigration program. The Temporary Protection Status program, known as TPS, grants a work permit and reprieve from deportation to certain people whose countries have experienced natural disasters, armed conflicts or exceptional situations so they can remain temporarily in the United States. In the case of Venezuela, political conflict and an economy in a downward spiral has caused some 5 million to flee from the once rich nation. Administration officials also said they would review sanctions put in place by the Trump adminis-

tration against the country under the control of Nicolas Maduro, whom the U.S. views as a dictator. "Venezuela is experiencing one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world, with a collapsed economy and severe shortages of food, medicine, medical supplies and fuel, all compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., based in Silver Spring, Maryland, in a March 8 news release. "We are grateful that TPS, a vital humanitarian protection, will be used to safeguard Venezuelans in the United States," she said.

Pope praises Filipino Catholics as joyful witnesses of the Gospel

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The joy of the Gospel has been an integral part of the Filipino identity since the arrival of Christianity in the Southeast Asian country five centuries ago, Pope Francis said. Commemorating the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines March 15, the pope told members of Rome's Filipino community that evangelical zeal is a "part of your genes, a blessed 'infectiousness' that I urge you to preserve. I have often said that here in Rome, Filipino women are 'smugglers' of faith! Because wherever they go to work, they sow the faith," he said. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, fewer than 200 representatives of the city's Filipino community could attend the Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica. Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, president of Caritas Internationalis and prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, thanked the pope for the celebration.

Jews, Christians can learn from their shared Scriptures, say scholars

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — Jews and Christians can learn from each other's shared Scriptures, according to two renowned academics. Such dialogue, they said, can help to move a divisive society "from polemic to possibility. At a time of tremendous incivility in the U.S., we felt it was really important to model how one could be civil in the most serious disagreements," said Bible scholar Marc Zvi Brettler of Duke University in North Carolina during a recent webinar hosted by the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations, or IJCR, at Jesuit-run St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Brettler joined fellow scholar Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt Divinity School in Tennessee in discussing their book "The Bible With and Without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently," published last October.

Development department opens at Saint Anne Communities

FORT WAYNE — Saint Anne Communities is a locally owned, nonprofit, Catholic organization. Since opening in 1967, it has served the elderly in the Fort Wayne area with an all-inclusive Senior Living Community including a rehabilitation gym, a nursing facility, Memory Care Unit and assisted and residential apartment living. It acquired an additional assisted living facility in Huntington and now serves the Our Lady of Victory Sisters and the Huntington area as well.

Saint Anne Communities' pastoral care team offers daily Catholic services as well as weekly Protestant services at both locations. Father Jack Overmyer serves as chaplain, while Sister Loretta and Sister Janet offer spiritual guidance and support. This support is in addition to a staff of over 300 employees who support residents with individual, one-on-one care in a Christ-centered environment. With the additional expenses of aging infrastructure and an increase in the need for updates to equipment and facilities, Saint Anne Communities' board of directors recognized the need to open its very own development department so that it could begin looking for opportunities to build up the organization through various funding initiatives.

Securing additional funds through a Planned Giving Program, grants through foundations, an Employee Engagement Fund as well as memorial giving will allow Saint Anne Communities to better serve its residents while maintaining low costs and staying competitive in the market of senior living communities. This new department opens the door for a future full of potential for the facility and its programs.

For more information on sponsoring Saint Anne Communities through a general donation, its Planned Giving Program, Employee Engagement Fund or memorial giving, visit www.sacfw.org or call the development department at 260-399-3232, ext. 3232. To donate, make checks payable to Saint Anne Communities and mail to 1900 Randallia Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

Bring the Sisters of Providence a smile

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS, Ind. — As the coronavirus spread across the nation, many Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, hunkered down at the motherhouse.

The sisters created a unique coronavirus program, Care Of Valuable Individuals Daily, which identifies sisters who have served in certain communities, along with some fun facts about

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Catholic Youth Organization basketball champions



Provided by Lois Widner

The seventh grade girls basketball team at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Fort Wayne won the Catholic Youth Organization basketball championship in February. They were congratulated by the school for winning the championship for the third year in a row.

their interests. They have invited friends of all ages to brighten the sisters' days by sending a note or simple greeting card.

Sisters Mary Ann Fox and Lois Ann Stoiber have ministered in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Sister Mary Ann is a native of Fort Wayne.

She entered the congregation in 1956 and spent most of her life in ministry in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. She attended the Cathedral Grade School and St. Jude School before graduating from Central Catholic High School.

She ministered as principal at St. John the Baptist School and both taught and served as assistant principal at Bishop Luers High School. Her favorite Scripture verses are those that refer to serving with love and gratitude. Her words of wisdom to others are, "It's a wonderful life!"

Sister Lois Ann entered the congregation in



SISTER MARY ANN FOX



SISTER LOIS ANN STOIBER

1946 and recalled that her favorite ministry was "working with profoundly and severely disabled children." She ministered as a teacher for nine years at St. John the Baptist School, teaching primary students.

Sister Lois Ann loves to read and watch sporting events. She is also an avid Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears and University of Notre Dame fan. Her words of wisdom are, "Joy is the echo of God within!"

Send mail addressed to each sister by name to 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876. For more information about the Sisters of Providence, visit SistersofProvidence.org. For information on becoming a Sister of Providence, contact Sister Joni Luna at 812-535-2954.

Verso Ministries hosts Holy Week virtual pilgrimage

SOUTH BEND — To mark the arrival of Easter, Catholic pilgrimage company Verso Ministries is hosting a Holy Week virtual pilgrimage March 28-April 4. Participants will receive free access to daily videos highlighting sites of the Holy Land where the events of Holy Week took

place. The videos were produced by Verso pilgrimage partner Voice of Faith exclusively for this 2021 experience. Complimentary registration is available online at www.versoministries.com/holy-week.

The pilgrimage will connect the events of Holy Week with the actual places where they occurred. Begin on Palm Sunday

at the Mount of Olives, the place where Jesus made His entry into Jerusalem. Over the next six days, pilgrims will visit the village of Bethany, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu, the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus agonized on the night of His arrest, the Upper Room that commemorates the Last Supper, and the Via Dolorosa — the modern-day path that remembers Jesus' way to the cross. The pilgrimage will conclude on Easter Sunday at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, site of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

"Holy Week is such a special time in the Holy Land. To visit the very places of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection makes Biblical stories come alive," said Verso founder and CEO John Paul Lichon. "Although we are unable to take pilgrims to the Holy Land in person this year, we are blessed to have the expertise, connections and technology that allow us to share this experience with far more people. For that, we are grateful," he added.

Those wishing to enter deeper into the mysteries of Holy Week may purchase an add-on VIP package. It includes a PDF download with daily Scripture readings, reflections, prayers and pilgrimage site facts to accompany each video. VIP pilgrims will also gain access to a private Facebook group and three virtual mini-retreat sessions that will serve as a time for shared prayer, contemplation of each day's theme and small group discussions with fellow pilgrims. Cost of the VIP Holy Week pilgrimage package is \$29 per family and can be reserved at www.versoministries.com/holy-week.

A journey through Lent

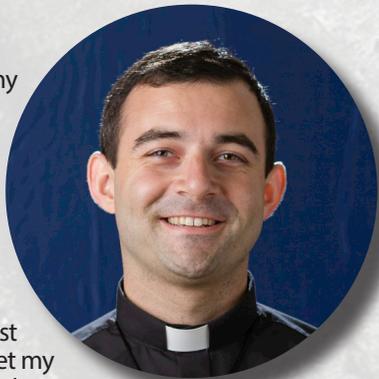
BY JENNIFER BARTON

Past

I remember Lent in my freshman year of college. My Lenten resolution was to spend at least 30 minutes a day in front of the Blessed Sacrament since it was not a habit of mine at that time. I remember being resistant to it at first because I preferred to get my schoolwork done or simply stay busy. It was really hard to get into it and I felt myself battling it throughout most of Lent. I felt as if this was bearing no fruit at all. But as I got toward the end of Lent, I felt myself feeling more relaxed in prayer and even beginning to feel God's presence.

It made me think of the sun's rays. If we stay in the rays of the sun long enough, the rays will cause a change in the color of our skin. If we stay in the presence of the Lord long enough, His rays will change the condition of our soul. That is what I felt was happening to me.

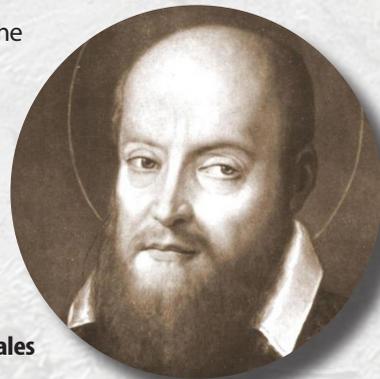
That Lent in particular helped me realize the power of the Eucharist and praying in front of the Eucharist. Its rays of grace can change us in amazing ways!



Father Ryan Pietrocarlo

Lent is the autumn of the spiritual life during which we gather fruit to keep us going for the rest of the year. Enrich yourselves with these treasures, which nobody can take away from you and which cannot be destroyed.

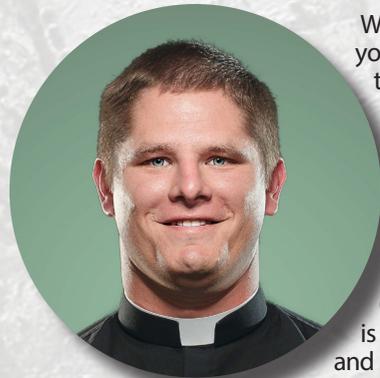
St. Francis de Sales



I observe Lent by reading the complete Liturgy of the Hours daily. I find that the discipline of prayer and the routine focus on spending time with God puts a strong focus on the true meaning of Lent. For me, doing something rather than giving something up is more impactful at this stage in my life.



James Summers



What does Lent mean to you? The word "Lent" is taken from the Anglo-Saxon word "lenctentid" which means "springtime." And since we witness the weather change from winter to spring, I look at Lent as a time of new life.

Obviously the season is meant for conversion, and so I recommit myself to openness to God's grace so that Easter may be ever more joyful with the flourishing of a springtime of grace.

Father Jonathan Norton



In my earlier years, Lenten season only meant "subtraction" – I mainly fasted, trying to pick something that I would notice, something that would clearly take me out of my daily routine. Lately, I have taken to also "adding" things during Lent; for example, adding prayer (quality time and dialogue with God). That could mean greater time, variety or frequency of prayer.

Sometimes, I try to add joyful prayers of praise or thanksgiving, rather than just a litany of petitions. It's also amazing what a brief moment of prayer to start each day (or hour) can accomplish — especially on difficult days! "Lord, thank you for the precious gift of this hour/day to walk with you. Amen."

My busy schedule seems to make adding (prayer) more challenging than subtracting (fasting); but ironically, by adding, I am actually subtracting. As I add time back to God, I inevitably purge my day of things that too often distract me from God's presence. In the process, no longer so enslaved to time, I often find myself also adding time back to my marriage, to my children, to serving others, because I now see time in a different light. It's the "new math" in my life, for which the Lenten season is a perfect instructor.

Deacon Mel Tardy



While writing a personal note to 40 different friends, family or acquaintances each day during the season of Lent, I reflected on how each had touched my life. This offered an opportunity to pray for each, giving thanks for them and to God for placing them in my life.

Kathy Olson

For me, Lent is akin to a house cleaning of my soul. In order to get my soul in good shape, I assess what needs to be cleansed and discarded. Through reconciliation, prayer and service to others, my soul is fortified to experience the beauty of the triduum.

Karen Clifford



Lent means coming home to the one place where I am accepted for exactly who I am – a sinner in need of a Savior. My aunt gave me her rosary the Christmas before she passed, telling me one day I would know what to do with it and it would bring me home. Eleven years later, at the age of 29, my aunt's beloved rosary did just that. I was blessed by the waters of baptism into the Catholic Church.



Janice Martin, WP



In making a sacrifice by not drinking coffee on weekdays, I am reminded how the Lord offered up Himself for my salvation and have a deeper appreciation. It also is an opportunity to use my small sacrifice to pray for souls who need prayers the most.

Katie

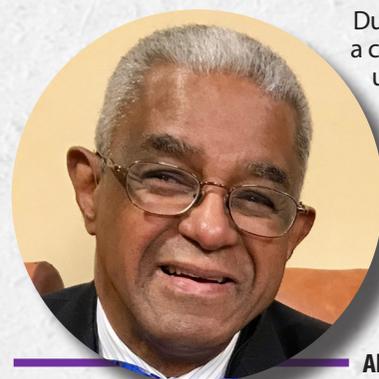
Future

The first thing that comes to mind with the question of "how has the Lenten season brought you closer to God?" is by fostering an acceptance of and embracing almsgiving. My parents always encouraged my sister and I to try "doing" more for others during Lent rather than only "giving up" things. I have learned over the years that by coming out of my own desires, even the desire to only fast and then forget come Easter, I grow in and purify the way I interact with my neighbors as God has been asking me to all along. Like the commandments and beatitudes tell us to, Lent helps me reaffirm my relationship with my neighbors, myself and with God.



Samuel Martinez, seminarian

Present



During Lent, I do not make a conscious effort to give up something. Rather it is more important and more spiritually uplifting to make a conscious effort to be prayerful. Hence, my Lenten days are centered on quiet conversations with God.

Alfred J. Guillaume Jr., Ph.D.

We have all given up so much over the last year, I didn't want to add more to that list. This year I am abstaining from a few of my pandemic habits, and replacing them with more fruitful activities. Listening to a spiritual podcast or praying the Liturgy of the Hours rather than playing my favorite music, and completing extra chores around the house instead of endless TV time in the evenings with are a couple ways I am preparing my heart, and home, for the joy of Easter.

Emma Sanders



Lent to me is like a tunnel on the road of life. We get so distracted by everyday problems around us that we need that focused "tunnel vision" on God to realign our priorities. Then after the season is over, we

Superstars of service — Abigail Ulbrich

BY TAMI DELUCENAY

From being baptized in St. Mary's Chapel at Boston College as an infant to receiving her double major in theology and philosophy at the school, Abigail Ulbrich's faith journey ultimately led her to Christ the King Parish in South Bend.

She and her husband, Shane, were married in August of 2013, shortly before she was hired to be the director of youth ministry at Christ the King. The couple have three children: John, 6, who attends kindergarten, Robert, 4, in preschool at Christ the King and Josephine, 18 months.

As a child, Ulbrich and her family lived in several areas of the country.

"I am the oldest of nine children. I have four brothers and four sisters. I made my first holy Communion at the same Mass as my brother's baptism in San Antonio, Texas," she said. "We eventually settled in Milford, Ohio, which I am proud to call my hometown."

Ulbrich was confirmed at the Basilica Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains and continued her faith journey into high school, participating in her parish youth ministry programs and retreats.

"When I was 15, I attended a diocesan retreat and had a real conversion moment in my faith life. This wonderful community of faith helped me in my walk with the Lord and led me to be able to take on leadership roles in small faith sharing groups in high school and college."

Ulbrich's faith journey took her from Ohio back to Boston to complete her undergraduate programs.

"I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do after completing my degrees, but after discussing it with my mother, I knew I wanted to work for the Church.



Photos by Jennifer Miller

Above, Father Gilbrian Stoy, CSC, parochial vicar of Christ the King Parish, South Bend, and director of youth ministry Abigail Ulbrich welcome teens to a flag football game and explain the rules of play. The youth group alternates prayer, meetings and outdoor activities throughout the year. Below, after the game, the middle and high school students play soccer.



true. The combination of a master's degree in theology and a hands-on apprentice program at a parish sounded so compelling. I felt that this was what would help me know what I want to do for the Church, so I applied."

Disappointment followed, as a letter thanked her for the application but said she was not chosen for the program.

"It took me a few weeks to get over the initial rejection. I wanted to know why I wasn't accepted. The program is the only one I had seen that gave information on how to contact them regarding their decision, so I called the number they provided. I had a great conversation with the director who told me honestly

I didn't have a set plan in mind; however, I knew that I needed some practical experience," she shared. While completing her degrees, Ulbrich heard about a master's program that interested her.

"I learned of the ECHO program through Notre Dame and thought it was too good to be

why I had not been accepted. However, soon afterwards I was invited to fill an opening (in the program) and was told it was because of this phone call that they gave me a second chance. The process taught me great humility and to trust in God's providence and timing."

Ulbrich's journey to Camden, New Jersey, through the ECHO program continued to teach her to trust in God.

"When I arrived at my first parish assignment, I told them I would do just about anything, but that I didn't feel qualified for working with teenagers. Well, that's what they needed, someone to start a youth ministry program. At my second parish assignment, again I said I would do just about anything, and what they needed was someone to start a youth ministry program."

When Ulbrich was hired at Christ the King, that parish's youth ministry program also needed a renewal.

"If you stay open to God's will, you will see how He prepares you for what He is calling you to do," she said. "I now had the confidence to build another youth ministry program, and we have a strong and healthy ministry here at Christ the King."

Students in seventh-12th grade meet every Sunday evening September through May from 7-9 p.m. The evenings are filled with games, snacks and time for bonding and hanging out, but especially discussions on faith topics important to the teens.

Youth Ministry Leaders

"Our evenings also include guest speakers, YouTube videos, small group discussions and time for reflection," detailed Ulbrich. "We conclude each evening with prayer: sometimes the Liturgy of the

Hours, sometimes silent prayer, sometimes intentions. I encourage the teens to be specific and make a plan for their prayer life. How, when and what are you going to do for your prayer time?"

"I find this so helpful for my own prayer life; it gives me structure to my day."

The teens at Christ the King plan monthly social activities. A parish favorite is apple pie-making; the pies are then sold to raise funds for the program.

The teens also have an annual flag football game usually played on Super Bowl Sunday. This year's cold temps in February postponed the event to March, but it's always great fun for the teens, said Ulbrich.

She has a core team of students who help with the planning of events and keep her up to date on the current needs of the teens.

"One of the most amazing things the teens ask for is time to spend in adoration," Ulbrich shared. "They crave quiet to reflect and to listen to what the Lord has to say to them as they grow and learn in their faith."

"The teens inspire me every day, with their energy, creativity and passion for the world. It means so much to me to be a part of their lives. I'm privileged to see their faith, pray with them and be someone who can encourage them to reach out to God, who loves them so very much."

emerge with a greater understanding of the world and life all around us, suddenly radiant in God's light.

Trisha Trout



Before this year of pandemic, each Lent I would read a daily devotional, say a daily rosary, attend daily mass, stations of the cross, and spend time in prayer at adoration. But not this year. I'm still isolating at home, so in addition

to reading my daily Lenten devotional and saying my daily rosary, I am doing a total consecration to St. Joseph. I've discovered the best kept secret of our faith. There is no better person to journey through Lent with, than with our spiritual father, St. Joseph. If I want a life of holiness, I must fuel it with prayer and what better way than daily praying the Litany of St. Joseph. He was predestined by God to be my spiritual father. What has God predestined me to be?

Wendy Summers



As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst ... 'Repent and believe,' Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor - He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you.

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A heart opens to truths of the Catholic Church

BY JEANNIE EWING

Raised as a Christian in an evangelical denomination, Peggy Kastner recalled that, as a young girl, her parents took her and her brother to church on a regular basis. This foundation was crucial, she believes, in her faith formation.

As she grew older and ventured on her own, she continued to call herself a Christian.

"I traveled quite a bit, as I was in the military," Kastner explained. "Moving around a lot made it difficult for me to maintain consistency in expressing my faith. But what I enjoyed about that was the experience of meeting people of all different religious and ethnic backgrounds."

When she was in Germany, Kastner had the opportunity to grow in awareness of Germans' Christian perspective. This exposure became a vital piece of her faith journey.

Once Kastner returned to the United States, she joined a Christian church in Texas and became a schoolteacher for about 15 years. Then she and her husband, Rob, moved back to Indiana, where she chose to sink her spiritual roots a bit deeper.

Her exposure to Catholicism had been sporadic while growing up. "But I had strong Christian roots in the churches I attended, so I stayed with what I knew,"



Provided by Peggy Kastner

Peggy Kastner wanted to share the faith of her husband, Rob, but also wanted a faith she could support fully and practice faithfully. She will be received into the Catholic Church and receive the sacraments of initiation at St. Bernard Church, Wabash, at the Easter Vigil Mass.

she shared.

"This changed after I married Rob. He's a cradle Catholic.

Because he is very faithful to the tenets of the Church, he would attend Mass weekly. But I didn't go with him at first."

Kastner continued her daily devotions and prayers, but felt she wasn't getting enough spiritual nourishment from these alone. She looked to her husband and his practice of faith and started thinking about the importance of being committed to what one values.

"I believe in being involved in something that you care about 100%. So, I wanted to share my husband's faith."

Coming from an evangelical faith that was spontaneous and not as structured as Catholicism, Kastner discovered delight and joy in the liturgy of the Church. In fact, it was an aspect that attracted her. While traveling worldwide during her service in the military, she noticed the consistency of the celebration of Catholic Mass. She found comfort in knowing that no matter where she would travel, the structure of the liturgy would be the same.

Kastner had changed her workplace when she and Rob

married. She found new employment at Residential and Family Services, a 170-year-old Christian ministry that takes in children who have entered the juvenile corrections system and places them in programs to counsel the teens.

"I'm accountant, so when I was hired at this organization, I became a big part of this ministry, including being prayer partners with one of the children," Kastner explained. "I got to build a relationship with these kids. As part of our monthly routine, we have staff chapel. This was the first work environment I've ever been in that was so Christ-centered."

Kastner said the experience led her further to act on her decision to join the Catholic Church.

At one point in time, she approached her pastor because she had some questions about a book she was reading. He told her, "Peggy, you know right from wrong. When you read these books by Christian authors, chew up the meat and spit out the bones. Know what's good and what's not." She remembered this piece of advice as she continued her journey toward Catholicism.

She began preparation classes for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and realized how much she enjoyed studying the faith. "I appreciate that I'm able to learn the background of Catholicism and Church history — why everything is done the way it's done and its purpose," Kastner shared.

"You have the opportunity to continue studying about the Catholic Church if you'd like to once you complete RCIA, which adds to my confidence that I'm following God's plan."

Kastner described her relationship with God in terms of attunement to the Holy Spirit's movements. She believes her evangelical roots contribute to her ability to determine how and when God is calling her to do something important.

"I look at the world as a whole and realize that secularism doesn't have a place in my spiritual walk," she explained. "I am at peace and confident in where God is leading me."

Father Levi Nkwocha at her parish, St. Bernard in Wabash, gives homilies and his own commentary in a way that Kastner feels are relevant to the parishioners. It was his inspirational and encouraging delivery of God's word that had strengthened Kastner on her journey to joining the Church, she said.

"I'm most excited about learning more as I approach my entrance into the Church," she reflected. "We are always learning and growing, no matter where we are in our spiritual walk. I feel as if this is a new chapter for me, a new beginning that will open my heart in a way I haven't yet experienced."



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'I knew I was in God's presence'



BY JEANNIE EWING

Bill King never thought much about faith while he was growing up.

"I believed in God but didn't have a strong conviction in a specific religious belief," he shared. "I would feel things and attribute them to something other than God, then go my own direction. Sometimes when I did go to church, I'd get a thought that I needed to listen to and follow God, but I blew it off and rationalized it as something else. I got easily distracted with life, even while I was praying."

King's parents didn't talk that much about God or religion. No one in his home thought church attendance was necessary, he recounted. His father once shared that he attended church every Sunday as a young boy, but as a family, they only went together occasionally.

When King was a little older, he recalled his mom getting baptized, but he doesn't have any recollection of a specific denomination that appealed to them.

One of King's good friends growing up was a Baptist minister's son. The family frequently invited him to join them on Sundays for worship service and King accepted most times. He attended church with them often, up until the age of 13.

"At that point, I rebelled and

didn't feel I needed to continue attending church."

King joined the military after high school. He tried attending different Protestant services from time to time, but nothing ever stuck or felt right.

In 1993, he was exposed to Islam after being sent to Saudi Arabia during service in the U.S. Air Force.

"This made me realize that Muslims, while acknowledging Christ as a prophet at most, are very ritualistic in their prayer structure and worship. I knew there was a deeper meaning to God's existence and wanted to find out what it was," he remembered.

This was another small step toward his decision to enter the Catholic Church. He realized how much freedom there is in Christianity, for different expressions of spirituality and formats of prayer. He appreciated that there are a variety of ways to pray, such as spontaneous prayer or something more structured, like the rosary.

To King, Catholicism didn't seem as rigid in its religiosity as other major world religions. He began studying the history of religions, reading about different faiths and watching historical documentaries, including a history of the Catholic Church.

Because King's wife is Catholic, he decided to attend Mass with her.

"I felt comfortable – more so than in other churches – at Mass," he shared. "It felt very much like the right place to be. I knew I was in God's presence."

A turning point in King's faith journey occurred when his 4-year-old daughter was born.

"I wanted to be a good example for her. At that time, I started talking to God about my life. This was when I started opening up my heart to Him. Her life felt like the biggest blessing, so I started paying more attention to what really mattered," he said.

What initially attracted King to the Catholic Church was the liturgy, because it was consistent in Catholic churches around the world. He had been confused at the different denominations of Protestantism, with their various messages and formats.

The Catholic Church felt unifying to him. He could worship at Mass in Indiana, but he could also travel to France and know he was attending the same Mass.

"There is a sense of inclusion in Catholicism," he said.

He remembered a particularly special Palm Sunday when he was stationed in Arkansas with his family.

"During Mass, the priest was doing the Rite of Sprinkling with a palm branch. When he sprinkled me, I felt something in my heart, an overall sensation of welcoming. I was overwhelmed with joy. It was almost like God

was welcoming me back, welcoming me home."

After the experience in Arkansas, King started praying more regularly and listening to God. He felt God's presence more often than before. Though he still wasn't yet attending Mass every Sunday, he continued to feel an overwhelming pull toward the Catholic Church. It seemed the Holy Spirit was speaking to him.

"[At the beginning of the pandemic,] I kept asking God what direction I should go, and I watched videos on YouTube about Church history, from the beginning of the establishment of Christianity through the current, modern day," King shared. This helped clarify for him some of the debates Protestants and Catholics have about baptism, such as full immersion versus sprinkling. He began to study Catholicism even more.

"I love the idea that Catholicism encompasses everything," said King. "Other faiths

tend to only focus on a personal relationship with Jesus, but they ignore prayer to saints and angels. The Catholic Church encompasses all of these spiritual elements."

He decided to formalize what he believes was a call from God. King will receive the sacraments of initiation — baptism, first Communion and confirmation — at the Easter Vigil at St. Bernard Church, Wabash.

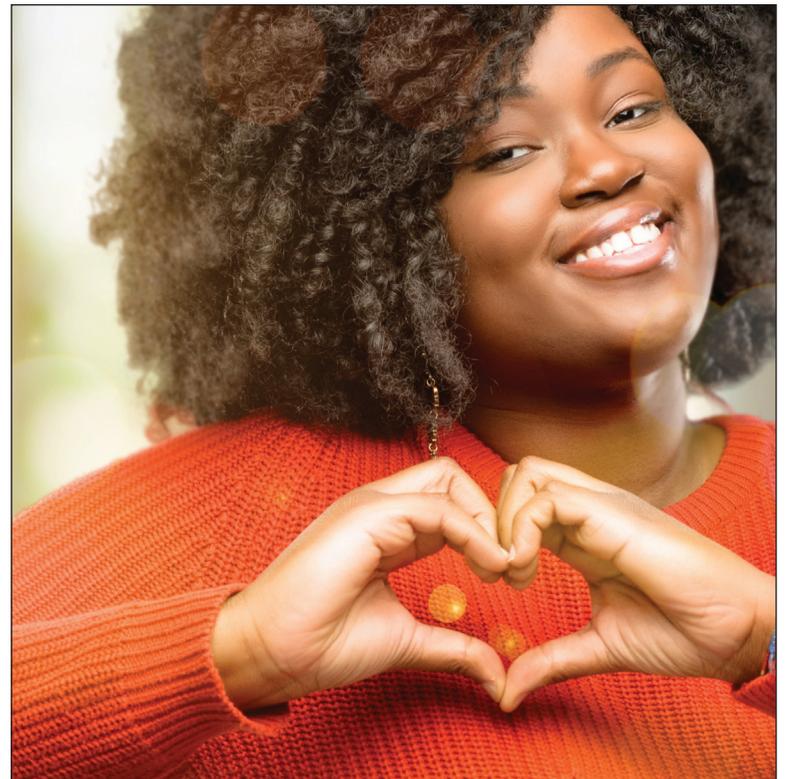
King said he has found his family to be very supportive of his conversion to the Catholic Church. He appreciates that his parents never judged a person by his or her religious beliefs or background, and that they feel this step in his life is a worthwhile endeavor.

"I am most looking forward to the sense that I will be included as a new family member, and the unity in the liturgy," he said. He also looks forward to exercising the call to serve others through becoming involved with a particular ministry.



Provided by Bill King

Bill and Catherine King meet Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades following the Rite of Election Feb. 21 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne, at which Bill affirmed his intention to practice the Catholic faith. He will join the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in his home parish of St. Bernard, Wabash.



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How badly do we want to return?

What if you were a Catholic who had not seen a priest in 60 years? What if you had not seen a priest in one year?

Jesuit Father Anthony Corcoran was visiting an old folks' home in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan when he met a man who had waited six decades to see a priest.

"Priest! I'm Polish," the old man yelled excitedly when he saw Father Corcoran. For those six decades, he had no contact with the Church. He had prayed the rosary on his fingers. Now, he was begging for the sacraments.

A lot of us today in this country may not have seen a priest or attended Mass in person in almost a year. What will our level of excitement be when we have the opportunity to return? Will we return?

As our country considers what a post-pandemic society will look like, many priests and bishops are worried that their people might not all come back.

In a recent survey of a sampling of bishops, Francis X. Maier found that they predicted a 25% to 40% "permanent falloff in Mass attendance and parish engagement" after the pandemic recedes. If true, over time, this will mean less lay involvement, fewer marriages and baptisms, declining school enrollment and of course a decline in revenues supporting Church ministries.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported recently that all sorts of sacramental and religious education efforts in Catholic parishes

were very impacted by the pandemic, ranging from baptisms to funerals to Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Many parishes livestreamed Masses during the pandemic closures. It was a blessing then, but it may have a downside now. One priest told me that if people have grown used to sitting in their bathrobes and drinking coffee while watching Mass livestreamed, they might ask, "Why go back?" If the homilies are better on TV and the timing is flexible, it could be easy to justify.

Worse still, in the privacy of one's home, it might be easy to skip one week, and then two, and then more.

But all should not be doom and gloom. The Church has had two opportunities to break the mold with this pandemic. The first was the opportunity to respond creatively to the shutdown itself. Drive-by confessions, parking lot Masses, outreach to families in need, the quick reopening of schools — all are examples of parishes responding to challenging situations.

The anecdotes suggest such efforts varied from parish to parish, but I'm willing to bet that the parishes that made an effort to respond creatively will be rewarded by a better-than-average return of parishioners.

The second opportunity is coming up. We have all been starved for community and fellowship in this lost pandemic year. Our Catholic parishes can now respond to this hunger, but only if they make an effort.



AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

The moment is arriving when parish and diocesan staff must use all the tools available to them to create a welcoming community, giving people a reason to come back as soon as they feel safe to do so.

It is also likely that people will want to retain parts of the pandemic lockdown that appealed to them: more time with family, more quiet and prayer time.

The Church can speak to that need, too. From the pulpit and in its media, at the door of the church and in encounters with parish ministries, the Church has a rare moment for a reset.

We need to embrace a new normal, one in which parishes don't just talk about community but live it.

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

Intolerant relativism

Once upon a time, many people assumed that dogma, especially religious dogma, was the enemy of freedom and friendship. If only we relaxed and let each person live by his or her own truth, we could love each other and the world would be a paradise. John Lennon's "Imagine" was the anthem of this belief.

Here we are, decades later, in the age of diversity and inclusion. Relativism, the claim that all claims to objective truth should be questioned, is the religion of our intellectual elites and has spread through our culture.

And in case you hadn't noticed, Americans are at each other's throats.

Our politics seem like war by other means. Groups at both political extremes have become violent. A "cancel culture" favors attacking the legacy and tearing down the statues of Americans we have honored as great thinkers, leaders and even saints.

Social media giants censor or exclude people whose ideas they judge offensive, including people whose crime is to defend Christian teachings on sexuality and marriage. Our universities establish speech codes and "safe spaces" to ensure that students will not encounter offensive speech from professors



A MORE HUMAN SOCIETY

RICHARD DOERFLINGER

or other students — which may include simply speech that disagrees with them.

How to account for this?

The problem with each person having his or her own "truth" is that it leaves nothing to be reasonably debated. And, in practice, being secure in my reality requires support from other

people, each of whom has a personal version of truth to advance.

One example is the increasingly contentious issue of what Pope Francis calls gender ideology. If I, a biological male, identify as a woman, others must use what I see as the appropriate pronouns, provide access to women's rest-

rooms and locker rooms, even let me use my physical advantages to win women's athletic contests. If others refuse to do these things because they believe differently about gender, they are my enemies.

Another way and better way

DOERFLINGER, page 13

Our politics seem like war

by other means. Groups

at both political extremes

have become violent.

If we follow Jesus to Calvary, eternal life awaits us



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Fifth Sunday Of Lent John 12:20-33

The Book of Jeremiah is the source of this Lenten weekend's first Scriptural reading. Jeremiah ranks among the greatest of the ancient Hebrew prophets. He wrote at a very difficult time for his people.

Outside pressures had come to be so strong that the very future existence of the nation, and indeed of the Hebrew race, was at risk. Nervous and uneasy, many blamed God for all the misfortune.

Jeremiah insisted that God had not delivered the people into peril. Instead, they had decided for themselves to pursue policies

and to move along paths that inevitably led to their situation.

These policies were dangerous because they were sinful. They ignored God, and they rejected God. Nothing good could come of them. Great trouble was inevitable.

Through all these acts of rebellion, God was true to the Covenant. The people broke the Covenant. God, forever merciful, forgiving and life-giving, promised a new, perfect Covenant. If the people would be faithful to this new Covenant, and if they would sin no more, they would survive.

Being faithful to the new Covenant and sinning no more meant more than verbal pledges and vague, imprecise good intentions. It meant living fully in accord with God's revealed law.

For its second reading, the Church offers us this weekend a selection from the Letter to the Hebrews.

This reading looks ahead to the Passion, the centerpiece of next Sunday's liturgy of

Palm Sunday. The Passion will surround the Church as it celebrates Holy Thursday. It will envelope the Church on Good Friday. Then, fully alert to all that the passion of Christ meant, the Church will rejoice at the victory of Jesus over death in the Easter Vigil and at Easter.

Perfectly obedient to God, Jesus was the teacher of genuine obedience. Because of obedience, Jesus attained life after death. He promises life after death to us, if we are obedient ourselves.

St. John's Gospel provides the last reading.

John's Gospel is a masterpiece of eloquence and instruction. This weekend's verses are no exception. Indeed, quoting Jesus, they are nothing less than jewels of literary and theological exposition.

Jesus is clear. His hour is approaching. It will be the hour of the Passion. The cross meant intense suffering for Jesus. He was a human, as well as Son of God, subject to human suffering.

Yet, Jesus freely accepted the cross. He died, as all humans

must die, but in glory, Jesus rose. He lives!

All believers must walk in the Lord's footprints. All must die, literally, but also all must die to sin. Death in either case will be hard in coming. If confronted in the love of God, resurrection will follow.

Reflection

The Church directs us toward the last remaining two weeks of Lent. For four weeks, we have been living through this season. It may not have been easy. We may have been distracted. Our intentions may have weakened.

As inspiration, and as encouragement, the Church reassures us in these readings that if we are faithful to God, eternal life awaits.

Lent, and our response, reflect human life. Life can be dreary. It can be threatening, as the pandemic showed us. Life can mean for any of us, often for many of us, a daily carrying of crosses to personal Calvaries.

The Church this weekend

therefore speaks to us about life, as earthly life truly is. If we follow Jesus to Calvary, by obediently consenting to God's will, and by putting God first, the glory of eternal life awaits us.

Lent has been a time so far to focus ourselves upon being faithful to God. The Church urges us today to recommit ourselves to God and to measure the sincerity of our intentions.

READINGS

Sunday: Jer 31:31-34 Ps 51:3-4, 12-15
Heb 5:7-9 Jn 12:20-33

Monday: Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30,
33-62 Ps 23:1-6 Jn 8:1-11

Tuesday: Nm 21:4-9 Ps 102:2-3,
16-21 Jn 8:21-30

Wednesday: Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95
(Ps) Dn 3:52-56 Jn 8:31-42

Thursday: Is 7:10-14; 8:10 Ps 40:7-11
Heb 10:4-10 Lk 1:26-38

Friday: Jer 20:10-13 Ps 18:2-7
Jn 10:31-42

Saturday: Ez 37:21-28 (Ps) Jer 31:10-13
Jn 11:45-56

When are you really dead?

Part 1 of 2

In 1968 a consensus opinion paper was published called "A Definition of Irreversible Coma." The purpose of the paper was to define death by neurological criteria. It came to be known as The Harvard Criteria since this group of scholars was brought together by Harvard Medical School. Interestingly, this was at the same time that organ transplantation began to take off. The medical community needed guidelines to follow as to when a person could be declared dead even though their heart was still beating and their vital organs were still functioning.

Death had previously been clear — the heart stops beating, respirations cease and all the vital organs of the body stop functioning together.

On Aug. 29, 2000, the Holy Father, St. John Paul II, addressed the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society. He felt obligated to help guide these physicians from a Catholic perspective. Here are some excerpts from that address.

"Transplants are a great step forward in science's service of man, and not a few people today owe their lives to an organ transplant. Increasingly, the technique of transplants has proven to be a valid means of attaining the primary goal of all medicine — the service of human life.

"Acknowledgement of the unique dignity of the human person has a further underlying consequence: vital organs which occur singly in the body can be removed only after death, that is, from the body of someone who is certainly dead. This requirement is self-evident, since to act otherwise would mean intentionally to cause the death of the donor in disposing of his organs. This gives rise to one of the most debated issues in contemporary bioethics, as well as to serious concerns in the minds of ordinary people. I refer to the problem of ascertaining the fact of death. When can a person be considered dead with complete certainty?

"In this regard, it is helpful to recall that the death of the per-

son is a single event, consisting in the total disintegration of that unitary and integrated whole that is the personal self. It results from the separation of the life-principle (or soul) from the corporal reality of the person. The death of the person, understood in this primary sense, is an event which no scientific technique or empirical method can identify directly.

"It is a well-known fact that for some time certain scientific approaches to ascertaining death have shifted the emphasis from the traditional cardio-respiratory signs to the so-called "neurological" criterion. Specifically, this consists in establishing, according to clearly determined parameters commonly held by the international scientific community, the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity (in the cerebrum, cerebellum and brain stem). This is then considered the sign that the individual organism has lost its integrative capacity.

"With regard to the parameters used today for ascertaining death — whether the 'encephalic' signs or the more traditional cardio-respiratory signs — the Church does not make technical decisions. She limits herself to the Gospel duty of comparing the data offered by medical science with the Christian understanding of the unity of the person, bringing out the similarities and the possible conflicts capable of endangering respect for human dignity.

"Here it can be said that the criterion adopted in more recent times for ascertaining the fact of death, namely the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity, if rigorously applied, does not seem to conflict with the essential elements of a sound anthropology. Therefore, a health-worker professionally responsible for ascertaining death can use these criteria in each individual case as the basis for arriving at that degree of assurance in ethical judgement which moral teaching describes as "moral certainty." This moral certainty is considered the necessary and sufficient basis for an ethically correct course of action. Only where such certainty exists,



DR. DAVID KAMINSKAS

and where informed consent has already been given by the donor or the donor's legitimate representatives, is it morally right to initiate the technical procedures required for the removal of organs for transplant."

Many believed that in this address Pope St. John Paul II had, in essence, accepted the concept of death by neurologic criteria. Let us take a closer look at what St. John Paul II said: "The death of a person is a single event, consisting of the total disintegration of that unitary and the integrated whole that is the personal self. The death of a person, understood in this primary sense, is an event which no scientific technique or empirical method can identify directly."

The living human being has been defined by many scientists to require the integration and cooperation of all the major organs. This also appeared to be what St. John Paul II was intimating as he goes on to say: "the complete and irreversible cessation of all brain activity (in the cerebrum, cerebellum, and brain stem). This is then considered a sign that the individual organism has lost his — and I emphasize this phrase — "integrated capacity."

The Harvard Criteria was a paradigm shift. It basically declared that the brain is in control and if the brain is dead, then the person is dead. It is true that in most cases of whole brain death, it is not long before the other organs deteriorate and stop functioning and one can be reassured that the patient has indeed died.

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

DOERFLINGER, from page 12

to advance equality and diversity was recently outlined by Daniel Philpott, a professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame. Writing Feb. 25 in the student-run newspaper, The Observer, he presented 10 theses — only a few of which I can paraphrase here.

First, it is the Bible and the Christian tradition that provide a firm foundation for the equal worth and dignity of everyone, by insisting that we were all made by a loving God in the divine image and likeness. Every ideology, such as racism, that

treats some people as having less value is intrinsically evil.

That basic truth is not only for Christian believers, as it is enshrined in our nation's Declaration of Independence. All of us have the same unalienable rights.

Second, because of our innate dignity, each of us must be free to seek out the truth for ourselves. We are committed to religious freedom not because there is no objective truth, but because arriving at the truth has little meaning if it is coerced by others. That grounds a commitment to academic freedom as well, without compromising a Catholic institution's ability to propose

and live by the truths it has learned by pondering reason and revelation over the centuries.

Third, if we can agree that some truths transcend personal desires, we have something to discuss and even argue about without losing respect for each other. We are looking in the same direction and disagreeing about what we see. But we're doing it together.

Richard Doerflinger worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Washington state.

THE CATHOLIC DOCTOR IS IN

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for March 21, 2021

John 12:20-33

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B: Jesus addresses His Father. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

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|---|--|---|
| GREEKS
TO SEE JESUS
GLORIFIED
PRODUCE
HONOR
CROWD
ANGEL | WORSHIP
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DEATH |
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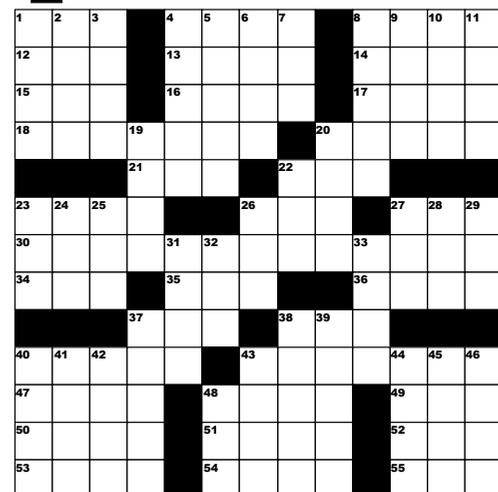
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N S E Z U J O H Y O R T
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The Cross Word

March 21 and 28, 2021



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Readings: Jer 31:31-34; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33 and Mk 11:1-10; Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11

ACROSS

- 1 Nothing
- 4 Self-righteous
- 8 Jab with knife
- 12 Single
- 13 Ripped up
- 14 Corn bread
- 15 Consumed
- 16 Remove from office
- 17 Small particle
- 18 "___ in the Highest"
- 20 Cove
- 21 Animal friend
- 22 School group
- 23 Rock of ___
- 26 Charge
- 27 Alphabet

DOWN

- 30 Green melon (2 wds.)
- 34 Total
- 35 Compass point
- 36 "The ___ are coming..."
- 37 Farm credit group
- 38 ___ Lanka
- 40 Bird's "thumb"
- 43 "I did not shield my face from"
- 47 Southwest U.S. tribe
- 48 Vinegary
- 49 ___ you! (call)
- 50 Economics (abbr.)
- 51 Made music vocally
- 52 Adam's wife
- 53 Montana (abbr.)

- 54 Every one shall bend at Jesus' name
- 55 Center

DOWN

- 1 Built the ark
- 2 Not out of
- 3 Dregs
- 4 Kill with rocks
- 5 "___ of Olives"
- 6 ___ Minor (Little Dipper)
- 7 Gain
- 8 ___ bifida
- 9 Working implement
- 10 Wager
- 11 "To those who ___ me"
- 19 Altar area
- 20 Detail
- 22 Church bench
- 23 Expression of surprise
- 24 "The form of ___"
- 25 Cease
- 26 Not many
- 27 Wing
- 28 Male child
- 29 Central nervous system
- 31 Young Women's Christian Assoc.
- 32 Deoxyribonucleic acid
- 33 Rewrite
- 37 "Face set like ___"
- 38 Backbone
- 39 Where slopes meet
- 40 Excuse me!
- 41 South of the border "crazy"
- 42 "___ this rock"
- 43 Look over
- 44 Not us
- 45 The tribe of Aaron
- 46 Looked at
- 48 Question

Vatican says no blessing gay unions, no negative judgment on gay people

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While homosexual men and women must be respected, any form of blessing a same-sex union is “illicit,” said the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The negative judgment is on the blessing of unions, not the people who may still receive a blessing as individuals, it said in a statement published March 15.

The statement was a response to a question or “dubium” that came from priests and lay faithful “who require clarification and guidance concerning a controversial issue,” said an official commentary accompanying the statement.

The response to the question, “Does the church have the power to give the blessing to unions of persons of the same sex?” was “Negative.”

“It is not licit to impart a



CNS photo/Jim Urquhar, Reuters

A same-sex couple is pictured in a file photo exchanging rings during a ceremony in Salt Lake City. The Vatican's doctrinal office says in a new note that any form of blessing of same-sex unions is “illicit,” but that the negative judgment is on the blessing of unions, not the people, who must be respected.

blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage — i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life — as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex,” the doctrinal office said in an explanatory note accompanying the statement. Pope Francis approved both the statement and the note for publication.

“The Christian community and its pastors are called to welcome with respect and sensitivity persons with homosexual inclinations and will know how to find the most appropriate ways, consistent with church teaching, to proclaim to them the Gospel in its fullness,” the explanatory note said.

The clarification “does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to

the revealed plans of God as proposed by church teaching.”

“Rather, it declares illicit any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such. In this case, in fact, the blessing would manifest not the intention to entrust such individual persons to the protection and help of God, in the sense mentioned above, but to approve and encourage a choice and a way of life that cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God,” said the doctrinal office.

The statement came days before the launch March 19 of a yearlong reflection on “Amoris Laetitia” that will focus on the family and conjugal love.

The date marks the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), which affirmed Church teaching on

UNIONS, page 16

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Young adult missionaries sought

FORT WAYNE — The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is seeking young adult missionaries who would like to be a part of our Totus Tuus summer missionary team for the months of June and July. Missionaries will receive a week of training, a summer stipend and the experience of a lifetime sharing the joy of the faith with parishes across the diocese. Learn more at diocese.fwsb.org/totus-tuus. Completed missionary applications can be submitted to jmartin@diocesefwsb.org. Application deadline is March 29.

Mass for the feast day of St. Joseph
FORT WAYNE — Our Lady of Good Hope Parish will celebrate the feast of St. Joseph with Father Daniel Whelan Friday, March 19, at Our Lady of Good Hope Church, 7215 Saint Joe Rd. Sacred Music will be provided by Jessica Schuster and the young adult choir. The order of the evening is as follows: Stations of the Cross at 6:30 p.m.; prelude music at 6:50 p.m. and Mass at 7 p.m. Following the Mass there will be a consecration to St. Joseph and an opportunity to venerate a second-class relic of St. Joseph.

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p.m. using a video from a different tradition of the Church. Visit www.stanthonyangola.com.

Career Ministry

FORT WAYNE — A career ministry will meet Monday, March 22, at St. Vincent de Paul Parish Spiritual Center, Rooms A & B, on the corner of Wallen and Auburn Roads, at 6 p.m. for one-on-one job search assistance and presentation by Valerie McKain. In this presentation, she will discuss how to switch gears in a person's career, how to make skills transferable, resumes tips, job search strategies and more. Dress is casual. Contact Molly at Career.Ministry@saintv.org with questions.

40 Days For Life closing prayer service with Dr. Haywood Robinson

FORT WAYNE — A closing day prayer service with special guest Dr. Haywood Robinson, a former abortionist, will be Thursday, March 25, beginning at 5:30 p.m. on site in front of Planned

Video Stations of the Cross

ANGOLA — St. Anthony de Padua, 700 W Maumee St., will pray the Stations of the Cross on Fridays of Lent from 6:30-7:30

The CrossWord
 March 21 and 28, 2021

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REST IN PEACE

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Shirley M. Miller, 84, St. Mary of the Annunciation

Joseph C. Serafino, 93, St. Mary of the Annunciation

Decatur

Mary A. Braun, 87, St. Mary of the Assumption

Dorothy J. Murphy, 96, St. Mary of the Assumption

Fort Wayne

Sharon Gajdos, 73, Our Lady of Good Hope

John J. Klingenger, 69, St. Joseph Hessen - Cassel

Elmer Lauer, 92, Our Lady of Good Hope

Richard Noll, 82, Our Lady of Good Hope

Frank Rzepka, 78, Our Lady of Good Hope

Evelyn Till, 82, Our Lady of Good Hope

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Sister Mary Josephine Maes, OLVN, 91, Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel

New Haven

Michelle A. Bell, 50, St. John the Baptist

Notre Dame

Father Kenneth E. Grabner, CSC, 86, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

South Bend

Dolores Ciesielski, 91, St. Adalbert

Stanley Jurek, 94, Holy Family

Stanley Nawricki, 76, St. Adalbert

Johanna Starczewski, 87, Holy Cross

Julius J. Szabo, 93, Sacred Heart

Due to a source error, the name Ray Jurek, Holy Family Parish, South Bend, was mistakenly included in the Today's Catholic March 7 obituary listing. The correct name of the deceased is Stanley Jurek.

Parenthood, 2930 Lake Ave. Contact Annemarie DeVille at 260-797-3144 or annemariedeville@gmail.com.

Women's retreat at Queen of Angels

FORT WAYNE — A brunch, along with a talk on confession and forgiveness, will be Saturday, March 27, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., in the activities center at Queen

of Angels Parish, 1500 W. State Blvd. Participants will leave with a person praying for them, a saint to call upon and a virtue to work on. The last half hour of the day will be spent in adoration. RSVP by March 23. There is a cost of \$5 per person with max of \$10 per family. RSVP to Samantha Reitman at 260-482-9411 or jesusallthethings@gmail.com.



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family life and marriage, but also underlined the importance of the Church meeting people where they are in order to help guide them on a path of discernment and making moral decisions.

The doctrinal congregation said in its note that some Church communities had promoted “plans and proposals for blessings of unions of persons of the same sex.”

“Such projects are not infrequently motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons, to whom are proposed paths of growth in faith,” it said.

In fact, the question of blessing same-sex unions arose from this “sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons” as indicated by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the two synodal assemblies on the family, it said.

That invitation, it added, was for communities “to evaluate, with appropriate discernment, projects and pastoral proposals directed to this end,” and in some cases, those proposals included blessings given to the unions of persons of the same sex.

The doctrinal congregation said the Church does not and cannot have the power to impart her blessing on such unions and, therefore, “any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such” is illicit.

That is because a blessing “would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial

blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of matrimony,” it said, citing paragraph 251 of “Amoris Laetitia,” which reiterated the synod members’ conclusion that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.”

“Only those realities which are in themselves ordered to serve those ends are congruent with the essence of the blessing imparted by the church,” it said. As such, it is illicit to bless any relationship or partnership that is outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open to the transmission of life, it added.

Declaring “the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not therefore, and is not intended to be, a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite and of the very nature of the sacramentals, as the church understands them,” the doctrinal office said.

The Church teaches that “men and women with homosexual tendencies ‘must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.’”

As such, the doctrinal note makes a “fundamental and decisive distinction between persons and the union. This is so that the negative judgment on the blessing of unions of persons of the same

sex does not imply a judgment on persons,” it said.

Such blessings are illicit for three reasons, it said:

— In addition to such a blessing implying “a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing” imparted to a man and a woman united in the sacrament of matrimony, there is the nature and value of blessings.

— Blessings belong to “sacramentals, which are ‘liturgical actions of the church’ that require consonance of life with what they signify and generate,” so “a blessing on a human relationship requires that it be ordered to both receive and express the good that is pronounced and given by the blessing.”

— And, “the order that makes one fit to receive the gift is given by the ‘designs of God inscribed in creation, and fully revealed by Christ the Lord.’” The Church does not have power over God’s designs nor is she “the arbiter of these designs and the truths they express, but their faithful interpreter and witness.”

“God himself never ceases to bless each of his pilgrim children in this world, because for him ‘we are more important to God than all of the sins that we can commit,’” the congregation said. “But he does not and cannot bless sin: he blesses sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him. He in fact ‘takes us as we are, but never leaves us as we are.’”

USCCB Administrative Committee’s pastoral message marks year of pandemic

WASHINGTON (CNS) — U.S. life has “dramatically changed” due to the yearlong pandemic, and alongside it, racial injustices and political divisions have shaken the nation, yet there is “comfort in God’s promise,” the U.S. bishops’ Administrative Committee said in a March 9 pastoral message. There also “is much to learn from this global suffering,” it said, adding that going forward, people must build on the many acts of sacrifice and kindness exhibited amid the scourge of COVID-19. March 11 marks one year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, “ushering in immense suffering,” the pastoral message said. This was WHO’s first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009. To date, 525,000 lives have been lost to the disease just in the U.S., according to data from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Worldwide, the death toll is 2.6 million. “Many have endured extraordinary hardships: sickness, death, mourning, a lack of food, unstable housing, loss of work and income, struggles with education, separation, abuse, isolation, depression and anxiety,” said the message, approved

by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Administrative Committee during its virtual meeting. “We also saw countless acts of sacrifice by health care workers, first responders, chaplains, those who work in our soup kitchens and homeless shelters, mail carriers, agricultural and grocery store workers, friends and even strangers,” the committee said. “Countless acts of kindness were offered by so many people, which served to remind us that we are all in this together. For all these acts of sacrifice, we are very grateful. We are also very grateful to our priests, deacons, religious, teachers, catechists and lay ecclesial ministers who have ministered to the people of God during these difficult times.”

“There is so much to learn from this global suffering,” the pastoral message continued. “We must build on the kindness and openness that we have witnessed on the local level by creating more social structures that not only heal the fractures and isolation felt by so many during this pandemic but will prevent such divisions from occurring again. ‘As Pope Francis has implored, ‘Let us dream, then, as a single human family,’ to a horizon where we are more caring of one another. Let us keep this sense alive and continue the work of promoting the common good.”

HOLY WEEK LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE

With Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades



Palm Sunday

March 28, 9 a.m.

YouTube:
@StMatthewCathedral



South Bend Chrism Mass*

March 29, 7:30 p.m.

YouTube:
@StMatthewCathedral



Fort Wayne Chrism Mass*

March 30, 7:30 p.m.

YouTube: Cathedral Immaculate Conception FW
Facebook:
@cathedralfortwayne



Holy Thursday

April 1, 7 p.m.

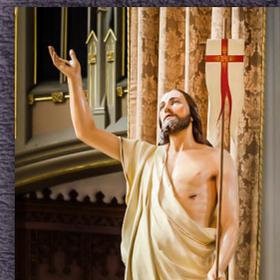
YouTube:
@StMatthewCathedral



Good Friday

April 2, 1 p.m.

YouTube and Facebook:
@diocesefwsb



Easter Vigil

April 3, 8:45 p.m.

YouTube and Facebook:
@diocesefwsb

diocesefwsb.org/holy-week

*Due to distancing requirements and seating capacity, the Chrism Masses are not open to the public.