Father Phillip Widmann, ‘the good Lord’s disciple’

BY JENNIFER BARTON

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend has bid farewell to one of its beloved priests. Father Phillip Widmann passed from this life on March 16.

Father Widmann served as a diocesan priest for over 40 years, since his ordination by Bishop William McManus Jan. 15, 1977. An avid scholar of history, he was the driving force behind establishing Diocesan Museum and was instrumental in helping bring about a written history of the diocese, “Worthy of the Gospel of Christ,” by Joseph M. White, published in 2007.

According to that work, Father Widmann was inspired to begin collecting artifacts for a museum by Msgr. Thomas Durkin, rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception from 1956 until his death in 1977. Pictures, priestly vestments, works of art and numerous other objects formed the collection for the earliest museum, which opened May 17, 1981, in a classroom of the old Cathedral School. The museum is now permanently located in the former chancery building beside the cathedral.

Born in 1941, Father Widmann grew up at St. Peter Parish in Fort Wayne and attended Central Catholic High School, graduating in 1959. Prior to becoming a priest, he was deeply involved in diocesan young adult programs, including Catholic Youth Organization and Catholic Young Adults. He himself said that his vocation came late in life, when he joined the seminary at the age of 30. He graduated from Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in December 1976 with a master’s degree in systematic/...
‘Hosanna in the highest’: Palm Sunday

BY JENNIFER MILLER

Toda y, Palm Sunday, we begin Holy Week with our minds and our hearts lifted up to the Lord, focusing on the great event of our salvation: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus,” Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades preached at the Palm Sunday 9 a.m. Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral Parish, South Bend. “I encourage you to take advantage of all the graces of this week, to live these days with special reverence and devotion through prayer and participation in the beautiful liturgies of this week.”

With the cathedral’s religious art draped in purple, candles lit and incense burning, the high holy days of the liturgical year began. Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord inaugurates the holiest week of the entire year for Roman Catholics. The liturgy itself demonstrates this uniqueness with the proclamation of two Gospel accounts, one of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and another of the Passion narrative. This year, both accounts were from the Gospel of Mark and highlighted an ironic contradiction, as the same crowds that celebrated Him as the King of Kings from the nave of the church, where Bishop Rhoades began the liturgy. The families gathered had numerous children who were delighted at being given something to hold. Palm branches raised and flapping about, the bishop sprinkled them with holy water.

The Liturgy of the Word spoke to the foreshadowing of Christ by the prophet Isaiah, looked ahead to the words of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday and remembered the first Christian hymn as recorded in Philippians. Then the Passion narrative was proclaimed, with various deacons, priests, Bishop Rhoades and the faithful speaking the various voices and parts. During his homily, Bishop Rhoades opened Scripture and explained how Jesus’ actions on the first Palm Sunday fulfilled the salvific promise as foretold in the Old Testament during the time of King David.

“Jesus entering Jerusalem mounted on a donkey was a bold announcement that He was the Messiah, the new king Jerusalem had been waiting for,” he said. “He was the king who entered the city not on a horse or chariot and not carrying any weapons. He entered ‘meek’ and riding on a donkey. This was His kingship. He entered “meek” and riding on a donkey, comes to us under the humble forms of bread and wine. This is the banquet of our King. It is the sacrifice of our King.”

Jesus’ kingship is one of humility, one of sacrificial love, one of servant leadership. Following the King requires His disciples to do the same. Everything done to the least of one’s brothers and sisters is done to Jesus Himself. "During this Holy Week, may we give honor and praise to our King who reigns from the throne of the cross. His royal throne is the wood of the cross," the bishop concluded. "Jesus is our shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. He is the Son of God who loved us to the end. We are His disciples and we seek to love Him in return. We strive to follow Him along the way of the cross, the path of love. We strive to serve Him in our brothers and sisters, especially in the poor and the needy, the sick and the suffering. "The Lord says to us: ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ This week, I pray we experience anew this love that reached its climax on Mount Calvary."
WIDMANN, from page 1

dogmatic theology.
Throughout his years as a priest, Father Widmann served at various parishes in the diocese, including Holy Family in South Bend; St. Mary of the Assumption, Avilla; St. Joseph, Roanoke; and St. Catherine of Alexandria, Nine Settlement, as well as several parishes within Fort Wayne, including his home parish of St. Peter. His last assignment prior to retirement was St. Mary, Mother of God Parish in downtown Fort Wayne.

In addition to his parish assignments, Father Widmann also taught moral theology at Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, and served as chap- lain for its football team and on numerous charitable committees.

History and antiques – particularly those pertaining to the Catholic Church – were his great love. Father Widmann could often be found at the museum he built and whose collection he continued to expand.

Kathy Imler first became acquainted with Father Widmann during his 17 years as pastor at St. Peter. She volunteered as a docent at the museum and spoke of his dedication to preserving and displaying artifacts of the past. She stated that he was in the museum “all the time. He would be here at five in the morning, tacking up vestments or working on displays.”

In addition to his love of history, she said Father Widmann had a great talent for setting up displays of religious artifacts — a much different talent than typical decorating. Imler indicated that he was a man who knew what he wanted and was driven to get things done. He also had a fantastic memory for minute details about each artifact and knew how to separate them by category, she said.

Imler stated, “If there was anything historical, he would have looked it up; he would have tracked it down. He was insatiable when it comes to getting all that information.”

All of the informational cards in the museum were composed by Father Widmann, and he had a list of people he could call on for the specialized handiwork and conversion, or for others to return to the practice of their faith.

The number of people who have become Catholic or have returned to the practice of their faith simply because they saw something on display or something gave them a personal insight about the faith or a new or renewed interest in the faith, gave them the necessary push to come home.”

Father Widmann’s funeral Mass, which took place March 11 at St. Peter, was celebrated by Bishop Rhoades. Archbishop William E. Lori of the Diocese of Baltimore, Maryland, a friend and classmate of Father Widmann’s from the seminary, gave the homily. He spoke of the priest as a friend, sharing personal stories of their time together in the seminary and in the many years thereafter.

Archbishop Lori described their long friendship thus: “Through the years, through thick and thin, we remained friends. We visited one another in the summers, though in hindsight: not nearly often enough. When we spoke on the phone, it was as though the years melted away.”

Of Father Widmann’s priesthood, Archbishop Lori said, “An index of Father Phil’s priestly goodness was his resolve to serve as long as he could.” Even as his health began to decline, “Father Phil kept going, doing all that he could until his physical condition left him no other choice but to retire. Here, I think, he demonstrated a true spousal love for the Church and for his people, loving them ‘for better or for worse, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health’.”

“Father Phil lived in this passing world with his heart set on the world that is to come. Father Phil expressed this longing for God in his daily prayer, especially the Divine Office, the recitation of the rosary and his devotion to the Eucharist. His prayers, clearly, were not formalistic but rather from the heart. He was not only the Lord’s good priest; he was also the Lord’s good disciple.”

“It was such an honor and a privilege to work with him,” Imler said. She reflected on his sense of humor and dedication, and was humbled by the opportunity to celebrate at his funeral Mass. “He had a mission and a purpose that you wanted to be a part of.”

Father Widmann was laid to rest at Catholic Cemetery, but his influence on the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will live on through the work he has done at Diocesan Museum and for the betterment of the diocesan faith community.

Plenary indulgence offered on Divine Mercy Sunday

FORT WAYNE — Through private revelation to St. Faustina, Jesus revealed, “I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the Feast of My Mercy. The soul that will go to confession and receive Holy Communion will obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.”

God’s mercy is for all. Everyone in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is invited to participate in the Divine Mercy Sunday Plenary Indulgence April 11.

Q: What is a plenary indulgence?

A: A plenary indulgence removes all temporal punishment due to forgiven sin. Temporal punishment is the making up for sin to which sinners are obliged after they are forgiven. A plenary indulgence can be applied to oneself or to anyone who is deceased. It can be gained once per day.

Q: How can a plenary indulgence be obtained this Divine Mercy Sunday?

A: Complete all three of the normal conditions for gaining any plenary indulgence: sacramental confession within 20 days of Divine Mercy Sunday, eucharistic celebration, and prayers for the pope’s intention. Also, complete one of two specific works required on Divine Mercy Sunday: in any church or chaplet, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy. Or, in the presence of the Eucharist exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus such as “Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!”

Plenary Indulgence

Jennifer Barton

Archbishop William E. Lori of the Diocese of Baltimore, a former classmate of Father Philip Widmann’s in the seminary, delivers the homily at his funeral Mass March 16. Father Widmann’s legacy in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend includes the founding of Diocesan Museum, which stemmed from his love of history.
After Bloody Saturday, Myanmar Catholics pray for peace, those who died

YANGON, Myanmar (CNS) — While Catholics in Myanmar observed Palm Sunday, many in the Buddhist-majority country were crying at the funerals of more than 100 people killed the previous day.

At least 114 people were killed by security forces March 27, the bloodiest day since the military seized power Feb. 1. The day has been labeled Bloody Saturday.

Dozens of victims were bystanders — including children — who were not taking part in anti-coup demonstrations.

Ucanews.com said local media reported a man from Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-largest city, was shot and burned alive by security forces.

Auxiliary Bishop John Saw Yaw Han of Yangon called on Catholics to pray earnestly to bring peace to Myanmar.

“As Christians, we ourselves need to practice the way of justice, and at the same time we need to fight against injustice,” the bishop said in a homily March 28.

At Palm Sunday Masses, priests prayed for those who died during the pro-democracy protests, ucanews.com reported.

Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon recently demanded a stop to the killings of protesters at anti-coup rallies.

The Tatmadaw, known as the armed forces, has killed more than 450 people and detained at least 2,000 since the nationwide anti-coup protests began Feb. 6.

The March 27 crackdown took place on Armed Forces Day, formerly known as Revolution Day and a holiday honoring the Tatmadaw, which was founded by Gen. Aung San, the father of national leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Revolution Day marks the date in 1945 when Aung San began the resistance against the Japanese occupying forces during World War II.

The Tatmadaw showed its might and weapons during a parade in Naypyitaw, the remote capital. Most Western diplomats boycotted the event, although officials from other countries, including China and Russia, attended, ucanews.com reported.

The Tatmadaw justified its coup by citing voting irregularities in November elections that Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy won by a landslide.

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the coup leader, said the army was determined to protect people from all danger. He pledged to pave the way for democracy and hold new elections without giving an exact time frame.

Bloody Saturday drew strong condemnation from nations around the world and from 12 military chiefs from democratic countries, including Japan.

“A professional military follows international standards for conduct and is responsible for protecting — not harming — the people it serves,” military chiefs said in a statement.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Myanmar’s massacre of pro-democracy protesters “absolutely disgraceful.”

The EU mission in Myanmar said “it’s a day of terror and dishonor” because the killings of unarmed civilians, including children, are indefensible acts.

Tom Andrews, special U.N. rapporteur on Myanmar, said it was time for the world to take action, if not through the U.N. Security Council then through an international emergency summit.

He said the junta should be cut off from funding such as oil and gas revenues and from access to weapons.

Ucanews.com reported politicians, activists, students, journalists and ordinary civilians have been terrorized by the Tatmadaw. Soldiers raid homes late at night, randomly shooting at the houses.

Undeterred, young people continue to march into the streets to show their defiance against military rule.

“I believe we will reach our goal through perseverance, despite the journey being tough and facing more bloodshed,” said Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng from Myitkyina, who knelt on the road to plead with security forces not to harm unarmed civilians in February and March.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Myanmar’s massacre of pro-democracy protesters “absolutely disgraceful.”

The body of 11-year-old Aye Myat Thu is pictured during her funeral March 28 in Mawlamyine, Myanmar. The girl was shot and killed March 27 as riot police and anti-coup protesters clashed in Mawlamyine.
Bill seeks to simplify health care advance planning, ease burden for patients and families

As COVID-19 continues to spotlight the importance of health care and end-of-life decision-making like never before, advance directive legislation moving forward at the Statehouse may make it easier for Hoosiers to navigate the process.

Senate Bill 204, a measure that would update and streamline Indiana law concerning health care advance directives, is the culmination of years of work by legislators as well as an alliance of numerous physicians, attorneys and advocacy groups. The Indiana Patient Preferences Coalition has sought to combine and clarify three related statutes that comprise Indiana’s current legal framework for advance directives, which are documents that allow individuals to express their treatment preferences in the event of a serious illness or life-threatening situation.

Advance directives also provide people with the opportunity to designate a representative to make decisions on their behalf if they are incapacitated and cannot articulate their wishes themselves. Although the work leading to Senate Bill 204 has been years in the making, the global pandemic has brought the need for clear advance directives into even sharper focus, according to David Mandelbaum, M.D., the chairman of the coalition.

“We have witnessed heart-breaking scenarios week after week for the past year that are going to be difficult to forget – all due to the inadequacies of existing (advance directive) documents or by the lack of documents altogether, often related to the difficulty encountered by those who should be completing them,” said Mandelbaum, medical director of palliative care services for Franciscan Health in Indianapolis and Mooresville.

“If this bill becomes law, it will establish a best-practice approach to the completion of advance directives in our state, making it easier, more efficient, and less confusing for all Hoosiers.”

Indiana’s current advance directive laws are outdated, Mandelbaum told members of the House Public Policy Committee during a March 24 hearing on Senate Bill 204. In his testimony supporting the legislation, he was speaking from his experiences in the field of palliative care, which is dedicated to maximizing quality of life for patients facing serious illness.

“While there have been significant advancements made in treatments available to critically ill patients, and while the methods for documenting one’s own treatment preferences and priorities have evolved, statutes related to these matters haven’t been meaningfully updated or revised in nearly 30 years,” Mandelbaum said.

Senate Bill 204, authored by Sen. Linda Rogers, R-Granger, passed the House committee 10-0 after earlier passing the Senate unanimously on a 46-0 vote. Among other provisions, the bill would remove vague and conflicting cross references in current statutes, create one agreed-upon mechanism for appointing a legal representative, and establish general standards for advance directives.

The legislation has a broad base of support statewide that includes the Indiana Catholic Conference, which collaborated with interested parties on a similar bill in the 2020 General Assembly.

“Respect for the dignity of life is the basis of Catholic social teaching,” said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. “Respecting the dignity of those who may not be able to care for themselves is crucial. We believe that Senate Bill 204 will eliminate some of the confusion that has existed and allow for the wishes of the individual to be fulfilled. This allows for the dignity of the gravely ill or vulnerable person to be maintained and respected.”

Ascension St. Vincent ethicist Elliott Bedford, Ph.D., who calls the legislation “a major advancement,” said that a simplified and standardized process for advance directives should encourage “essential conversations” regarding health care choices.

“From the Catholic faith perspective, this is a prudent and positive thing to do and a way of witnessing to our faith,” said Bedford, director of Ethics Integration for Ascension Indiana and a member of the Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative, a collaboration among the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Ascension St. Vincent and Franciscan Health.

Bedford said he believes that the extreme challenges of COVID-19 have “opened up space” for many people to begin discussing health care planning with their families.

“COVID has certainly brought us face to face with our mortality, not only as individuals but as a society,” said Bedford, a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Ind. “And that allows us to focus on nailing down simple questions: Who do you want to speak for you? What would you goals and values and highest priorities be? Our faith is the perfect context for these conversations – and our faith actually calls us to do this.”

Ideally, he said those discussions should also occur in places like a primary care provider’s office – not in the ICU, when it’s often too late.

Bedford recognizes that these are difficult topics, but he says that simply starting the conversation is a way of acknowledging what is a normal part of life.

“Ultimately, we believe that this is not the end, and that we are called to life with God in heaven,” Bedford said. “Then this becomes a more contextualized conversation, and a natural part of how we express our faith. This is what you do as a Catholic.”

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.

What are your plans for God’s gifts?

TRIDUUM LIVESTREAM SCHEDULE

Holy Thursday
April 1, 7 p.m.
You Tube: @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
**Vatican statistics show continued growth in number of Catholics worldwide**

**VATICAN CITY (CNS) —** The number of Catholics and permanent deacons in the world has shown steady growth, while the number of religious men and women continued to decrease, according to Vatican statistics. At the end of 2019, the worldwide Catholic population exceeded 1.34 billion, which constitutes about 17.7% of the world’s population, said an article published March 26 in the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano. It marked an increase of 16 million Catholics — a 1.12% increase compared to 2018 while the world’s population grew by 1.08%. The article contained a handful of the statistics in the Statistical Yearbook of the Church, which reported worldwide church figures as of Dec. 31, 2019. It also announced the publication of the 2021 “Annuario Pontificio,” a volume containing information about every Vatican office, as well as every diocese and religious order in the world. According to the statistical yearbook, the number of Catholics increased in every continent except Europe.

**Mary comforts all those who die alone, pope says at audience**

**VATICAN CITY (CNS) —** Mary, the mother of God, has been present during the COVID-19 pandemic, and she was by the side of all those who died alone, Pope Francis said. “If someone is alone and abandoned, she is the mother and she is there, simply just as she was next to her son when everyone else abandoned him,” the pope said March 24 during his weekly general audience. “Mary was and is present in these days of the pandemic, near the people who, unfortunately, concluded their earthly journey in isolation, without the comfort of or the closeness of their loved ones,” he said. “Mary is always there, near us, with her maternal tenderness,” the pope said. During the audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis continued his series of talks about prayer by looking at prayer in communion with Mary and her role in people’s lives.

**Ramblers’ celebrated chaplain has big fan base in Los Angeles archdiocese**

**LOS ANGELES (CNS) —** By her own admission, “Sister Jean” Dolores Schmidt, who at the ripe age of 101 is still proving to be a force to be reckoned in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament, has been a chaplain for more than two decades as a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Pope Francis said during his weekly general audience March 24, “If someone is alone and abandoned, she is the mother and she is there, simply just as she was next to her son when everyone else abandoned him,” the pope said March 24 during his weekly general audience. “Mary was and is present in these days of the pandemic, near the people who, unfortunately, concluded their earthly journey in isolation, without the comfort of or the closeness of their loved ones,” he said. “Mary is always there, near us, with her maternal tenderness,” the pope said. During the audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis continued his series of talks about prayer by looking at prayer in communion with Mary and her role in people’s lives.

An arrested criminal is seen in this illustration photo. Outside the prison that housed Virginia’s execution chamber, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam signed legislation March 24 making Virginia the 23rd state to abolish the death penalty. Legislators and anti-death penalty advocates joined the signing ceremony at Greensville Correctional Center in Jarratt, where 101 people have been executed since 1991. Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington and Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, welcomed the new law, as did Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, “I urge all other states and the federal government to do the same,” said Archbishop Coakley.

**Governor signs death penalty repeal at site of 101 executions since 1991**

**ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS) —** Just before 8 a.m. March 22, nine people gathered outside St. Olaf Parish in downtown Minneapolis in a garden dedicated to St. Francis to pray that saint’s famous prayer: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.” A small, ever-changing group has been gathering to offer the prayer on weekdays since March 8, the day before jury selection began for the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who has been charged with murder in last year’s death of George Floyd. The gathering as well as praying of the Divine Mercy chaplet at 5 p.m. weekdays at the church are small but significant ways parishioners are responding to the rising tension as the March 29 start of Chauvin’s trial neared. “We’re here in the heart of it,” Father Kevin Kenney, pastor, said. The parish is blocks from the Hennepin County Government Center, where the trial will occur. The church is open but prepared to board its windows if necessary. Last summer, riots broke out in sections of Minneapolis and St. Paul — and elsewhere — following Floyd’s May 25 death. A widely seen video shows a Black man who had been arrested for trying to pass a counterfeit $20 bill at a convenience store handcuffed and lying face down on the ground next to a police car, with Chauvin, who is white, kneeling on his neck. Floyd repeatedly said, “Please, I can’t breathe” before losing consciousness. Protests surrounded ing Floyd’s death focused on the incident as an act of racism and police brutality.

**Suicide bomb attack disrupts Palm Sunday Mass at Indonesian cathedral**

**MAKASSAR, Indonesia (CNS) —** A suicide bomb attack on a Catholic cathedral compound shattered the calm of Palm Sunday Mass, leaving two bombers dead and at least 20 people wounded. A destroyed motorbike and the body parts of a man and a woman were found after the bombers attacked the main gate of Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral around 10:30 a.m. March 28, reported ucanews.com. “We were suspicious because two perpetrators riding a motorbike tried to get into the churchyard, but our security guard stopped them, and several seconds later the bomb exploded,” Father Wilhelmus Tulak, who witnessed the incident, told ucanews.com. Father Tulak, parish priest of the cathedral, said five cathedral security guards and several congregation members suffered burns and injuries from the blast, but no one was killed. South Sulawesi provincial police chief Merdisyam said, “We have coordinated with church leaders in the province to tighten security for Holy Week Masses until Easter, so such an incident doesn’t happen again.”

**Italy sees worst gap between births, deaths since 1918 Spanish flu**

**ROME (CNS) —** With Italy already facing a diminishing population, low birth rates and fewer religious and civil marriages, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted those numbers for 2020, according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics. In fact, it said, Italy set new records in 2020 with the lowest number of births since its unification in 1871, the highest number of deaths since the end of World War II and the largest gap between the number of deaths and births since the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. The statistics were released March 26 in a report on Italian demographics during the COVID-19 pandemic for 2020. The first COVID-19 cases in Europe were registered in late January in Italy, and the country’s northern regions, especially Lombardy, were hit the hardest by the contagion until nationwide lockdowns and restrictions slowed the surge. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics, commonly referred to as ISTAT, more than 746,000 deaths were registered in 2020, almost 12% more than 2019 — an increase of 17.6% — and the highest number recorded since the end of World War II. There were 7,600 fewer births in Italy in January and February 2020 — the pre-pandemic phase — than the average for those two months in each of the preceding five years, it said.
BOULDER, Colo. (CNS) — Officer Eric Talley, an 11-year veteran of the Boulder Police Department, was the first to arrive at the scene of a mass shooting at a King Soopers grocery store the afternoon of March 22 and the first of 10 to be killed.

A Catholic family man who took his faith seriously, Talley often stopped by St. Martin de Porres Church just across the street from the store “and participated in its events, even though he wasn’t a parishioner there,” Denver Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila said.

“St. Martin de Porres, the patron of the patron of the parish, was someone who experienced tragedy and hardship in his life, and so, we ask for his intercession in these difficult circumstances, that God would bring good out of this great evil,” he added in a statement issued late March 23.

Archbishop Aquila said he was “deeply saddened by the tragic and sudden deaths” of the 10 shooting victims. “I have been praying for all those impacted by this senseless act of violence and want to express my spiritual closeness to them,” he said.

Police arrested 21-year-old Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa of Arvada, Colorado. He was treated at a local hospital for a gunshot wound to the leg, then booked into the Boulder County jail.

The Denver Post daily newspaper reported the alleged shooter, whom witnesses said was wearing black and shooting “a rifle of some kind,” began shooting outside one of the store’s entrances and then entered the store, shooting. One witness said he didn’t say a word.

The New York Post daily newspaper March 24 quoted the alleged shooter’s older brother, Ali Aliwi Alissa, 34, as saying: “The younger Alissa was bullied in high school for being Muslim and in the past few years had grown ‘increasingly paranoid’ and anti-social, but that he had never heard the 21-year-old threaten violence. The family had emigrated from Syria when the alleged shooter was 3.

The Post also quoted Damien Cruz, who said he has known the younger Alissa since fifth grade: “People chose not to mess with him because of his temper, people chose not to really talk to him. He was a black AR-15 and he would wear and things like that. So yeah, he was very alone.”

“Along with the rest of the community, we are waiting for more details on those who have passed away,” Archbishop Aquila said in his statement, adding that Talley “has been described as a man of character and strong faith, a loving father to seven children, a husband who cared deeply for his family and a soldier for Christ.”

In a statement released March 24 in Washington, the chairman of the U.S. Catholic bishops’ domestic policy committee said it was “heartbreaking to hear of yet another mass shooting” in Boulder while “we are still reeling from the loss of life in the mass shootings in Atlanta.”

“We pray for the families and friends of those who were lost and for their communities,” said Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. “We are especially grateful for the efforts of first responders to call for prayers and others to offer concrete support to victims of violence wherever possible.”

He said the bishops “have long promoted prudent measures of gun control to limit mass shootings and other gun homicides and suicides, and we stand by those positions.”

“We must always remember that each of us is a brother or sister in Christ, created in the image and likeness of a loving God,” Archbishop Coakley said. “As we approach Holy Week, let us continue to reflect on God’s love and mercy for each one of us and renew the call for conversion of heart.”

Colorado is no stranger to mass shootings. On Aug. 7, 1999, students Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris at Columbine High School in the Denver suburb of Littleton went on a shooting rampage, killing 12 students and one teacher and injuring 21 others before taking their own lives.

On July 20, 2012, at a theater in the Denver suburb of Aurora, mass shooter James Holmes, now 33, killed 12 people and injured 70 others.

He was tried nearly three years later. He confessed to the shooting but pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. On Aug. 7, 2015, he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On Aug. 26, he was given a 12 life sentences, one for every person he killed; he also received 3,318 years for the attempted murders of those he wounded and 18 years for his involvement with explosives, which, according to news reports, he hoped would kill police when they went to search the place.
Speakers say Equality Act ‘overly broad,’ will harm religious liberty

BY KURT JENSEN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A March 22 online webinar on the Equality Act focused on criticism that the legislation is so vaguely worded it would harm religious liberty and obscure biological reality.

The measure would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, the credit system and jury duty.

The webinar was sponsored by the archdioceses of Los Angeles and New York, the dioceses of Arlington, Virginia and Green Bay, Wisconsin, and the Catholic conferences of Colorado and Virginia.

On Feb. 25, the House of Representatives passed the Equality Act, also known as H.R. 5, in a 224-206 vote. Now it will be taken up by the Senate; the first hearing was March 17 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The webinar’s moderator, Ryan T. Anderson, who is currently president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, said of the bill: “It’s overly broad and doesn’t define all kinds of actions that are truly discriminatory.”

Many of the webinar’s speakers cited Pope Francis’ 2016 apostolic exhortation, “Amoris Laetitia,” in which he said, “Biological sex and the sociocultural role of sex can be distinguished but not separated.”

Anderson said the Equality Act would take a “just law,” the Civil Rights Act and add protections for sexual orientation and gender identity and also expand the number of institutions now classified as public accommodations.

The 1964 law banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

In addition, Anderson said, the Equality Act exempts itself from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, known as RFRA, which protects religious objections against government intrusions.

“If you get the nature of the human person wrong in law, then you’re going to see the consequences of privacy and safety in single-sex facilities,” he added. “We should not be using people who suffer from gender dysphoria as political pawns. Authentic compassion needs to be grounded in truth.”

Robert Vega, a policy adviser for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted: “Importantly, it does not limit its reach to those with gender dysphoria,” but also includes those who identify “any way at any time.”

Because Catholic schools, under the act, could be prohibited from receiving federal aid for needy students, he said, “single-sex schools might be completely out of the question.”

Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund, said in a recent statement that the act would “set the tone for the Biden administration’s abortion extremism if passed.”

“The idea that we should be allowing people to change their origin. That’s biology. No one can self-define into or out of biological reality from that law and one of America’s founding principles.”

In a Feb. 23 letter to all members of Congress, they said the measure discriminates “against individuals and religious organizations based on their different beliefs by partially repealing” the bipartisan RFRA, which they called “an unprecedented departure from that law and one of America’s founding principles.”

On Feb. 26, House Republicans introduced a compromise measure called the Fairness for All Act. Supporters call it a commonsense bill that differs from H.R. 5 in that it would establish “much-needed civil rights for LGBTQ persons” and at the same time provide “robust protections for religious freedom.”

Also, unlike the Equality Act, the compromise bill says RFRA can be used “as a defense in court against allegations of illegal anti-LGBTQ discrimination.”

A couple days ahead of House passage of the Equality Act, the chairmen of five U.S. bishops’ committees said its mandates will “discriminate against people of faith” by adversely affecting charities and their beneficiaries, conscience rights, women’s sports “and sex-specific facilities.”

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Black Catholic poet shares experience in verse

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Poetry is often a personal expression of one’s life – his or her emotions, experiences and worldview. For a South Bend man, poetry has become an expression of his faith as a Black Catholic.

Jenario Morgan has been writing poetry for roughly 10 years, but last year’s quarantine accelerated his writing and motivated him to self-publishing a poetry book.

“I’ve always loved poetry,” Morgan stated. “I knew I was going to develop my own as the years and life experiences went by.”

Originally from Detroit, Morgan and his wife, Leslie, moved to South Bend many years ago when Leslie had the opportunity to pursue a career as an academic librarian at the University of Notre Dame. Their two children, Gabrielle and Gelasius, both attend school there. He works as a paraprofessional at Riley High School.

For Morgan, the Catholic Church “came into my life at a critical time. My father was passing away and a lady down the street offered to take me to church with her, and I really settled in.”

That was nearly 40 years ago. Morgan was confirmed on his 21st birthday.

“I was very, very impressed with the pageantry and was very impressed with the fullness of the Church, the life of the Church, the sacraments, the Scriptures, the celebration of the Church. To me, it brought God to a totality I could really feel and see.”

Morgan formerly served as a theology teacher in Detroit and as the first diversity director of the Archdiocese of Detroit. He has been a part of the Knights of Columbus for nearly 38 years and has a great appreciation for the organization’s mission of charity and family.

He might be a convert, but he feels that a part of him was born into Catholicism. “I was always meant to be Catholic, and that’s why I came into it the way I came into it.”

Many of his poems relate to his African heritage. “The Church is really an integral part of who I am, and a lot of my poetry has to do with the Church and the life of the Church.”

This is reflected in his poems, such as one titled “Black Catholics.” It illuminates the tremendous contributions of Blacks to the Catholic faith, including the saints Martin de Porres, Benedict the Moor and Josephine Bakhita.

The poem anticipates the growth of the Black Catholic demographic within the Church community and greater recognition of the gifts they bring to it.

But saints are not the only Black Catholics Morgan wants to highlight in his work. He has one poem dedicated to Kobe Bryant, whose Catholic faith was often overlooked until his passing in 2020.

Morgan refers to many other Blacks “who hold dear to their faith,” but whose Catholicism is also unknown to society, such as Simone Biles, the most decorated gymnast in the U.S.

Two of Morgan’s poems have been published in Black Catholic Messenger, and he hopes publication of his book will open discussions throughout the diocese and beyond about the immense role that Black Catholics have played in the life of the Church throughout the centuries.

In his own lifetime, he has been blessed to meet Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA, whose cause for canonization is now open and who was elevated to Servant of God in 2018.

“What an honor that was. She was so outspoken and very much an advocate,” he said.

Twice Morgan met future Cardinal Wilton Gregory, once telling him he could be the first Black cardinal from the U.S.

Morgan referred to many other Black Catholics. He believes the Black Catholic community at Notre Dame still has strides to make. He said, “You’d think there’d be more of a foothold into inclusiveness, although since I’ve been here it has grown immensely. I think they’re doing a good job, but then, again Black Catholics have to participate more.

A sense of ownership and belonging would go a long way toward bringing more Black Catholics to the forefront of Church life, Morgan postulated. He would like to see more schools teach young people about Black Catholicism, “because our contribution is so large and yet hidden under a barrel.”

For his own part, Morgan lives his faith daily. “I’m a very spiritual person. I see God as the commandment, as the Person: so He’s always here,” Morgan shared. “Even though I wasn’t a cradle Catholic, I feel more at home with the Church than anywhere. I love the Church and its pronouncement. It’s efficacious.”

His upcoming book will be titled “Black Nouns.” He is hoping to complete the work by June, in time for his birthday.

His family has been an incredible source of support for his work, he said. His parents, William and Feltline, have been encouraging and he describes his children as “very creative,” assisting in the editing process.

His work plays a large part as well by critiquing his work.

What he loves most about the Church is its openness to all people. “Whether you are a small farmer in Australia or in the backwoods of Harlem, it’s a place for you. It’s like God’s house here on earth. ... It will prevail against the gates of hell and it will stand.”

“... But,” he added, “it’s so important, at this time, that we really become who we need to become.”
Armor of God retreats inspire men to be mission-focused spiritual warriors

BY CHRISTOPHER LUSHIS

A

lthough the current pandemic has brought many spiritual and social challenges, God’s grace remains deeply present and accessible for those searching after Him. In the face of countless efforts that have been canceled or “gone virtual,” a local group of committed Catholic men is making the intentional decision to provide an in-person retreat to rekindle hope, strengthen Christian identity and encourage masculine spiritual leadership.

The retreats are led by Armor of God, an apostolate founded by Fr. St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne. Their mission is to arm men to be the spiritual leaders that God designed them to be in their homes, workplaces and churches.

Armor of God members meet monthly for spiritual briefings, which provide fresh and relevant content for getting fortified in faith, as well as biannual retreats where men can come together, learn from one another and gain the tools, knowledge and direct experience necessary for getting fortified in faith, as well as biannual retreats where men can come together, learn from one another and gain the tools, knowledge and direct experience necessary.

Rob Gregory began the retreat by emphasizing a fundamental component of Armor of God: an apostolate founded by laity at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne. Their mission is to arm men to be the spiritual leaders that God designed them to be in their homes, workplaces and churches.

During the retreat, the priests began with a plan for each man’s life. But something that cuts a man off from life in God, jeopardizes his salvation and leaves him in grave peril, unless it is addressed immediately, before he is led further away from the Lord.

They reminded that God has a plan for each man’s life. But Satan has a plan for the same life. This is a spiritual battle every man needs to be aware of, to see where the devil is trying to gain access into his life. He has to take personal responsibility for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his wife and family, and father God is calling them to be. Such deception can lead the family in grave peril,

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Father Jay Horning and Father Benjamin Muhlenkamp addressed additional ways to become armed for spiritual battle and open to spiritual healing. They began by highlighting the necessity of going to confession regularly, rooting out evil habits and acknowledging that mortal sin is a personal catastrophe – something that cuts a man off from life in God, jeopardizes his eternal salvation and that needs to be addressed immediately, before he is led further away from the Lord.

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Diocese of Evansville
Director of Catechesis

The Diocese of Evansville seeks an energetic and inspiring Director of Catechesis.

The Director of the Office of Catechesis is responsible for continuing the mission of Jesus Christ through catechesis and evangelization throughout the diocese. This includes supporting a vision that encourages parishes to provide quality catechetical programs for all parishioners in keeping with the latest church documents, norms and directives.

Qualifications include, but are not limited to:
• Fully participating and practicing Catholic
• Advanced degree in theology, religious education or related field
• Five years of successful experience in Parish Catechetical Ministry and an awareness of diocesan needs and objectives
• Strong organizational, managerial and interpersonal skills that inspire confidence among Ordained, Religious, Catechetical Leaders, and other diocesan groups.

A complete position description can be found in the Employment Opportunities tab on the diocese’s website http://www.evdio.org

Those interested should send a cover letter and resume to hr-catechesis@evdio.org The deadline for priority consideration is March 26, 2021.

Seeks a Director of Church Music Ministries

The music director of St. Jude Parish is responsible for the planning and implementation of all liturgies, including: weekend Masses, student weekday Masses, sacraments, holy day of obligation and special Masses (such as 8th grade graduation, grief workshop Mass, etc.). Full time position with full benefits offered. Should be able to work as a member of the parish staff in a collaborative manner, as well as teach and guide cantors and an adult choir. Would also lead a children's liturgical choir made up of St. Jude School children. Experience with Catholic Church liturgical music and/or an academic degree in music required.

Interested parties should send resume to Msgr. Robert Schulte at rschulte@stjudefw.org.
How the School Choice initiative positively affects families, students

Choice expansion language in a number of state bills, most notably HB 1005, has been widely talked about in the media lately. These bills seek to expand educational options for all Hoosiers, and they further empower parents to find the best educational opportunity that fits the needs of their student through the Choice scholarship program (voucher). Teacher unions and public school proponents have been vocal about their opposition to the bill.

The opportunity to raise the voucher income limit to 300% of free and reduced lunch will not be helping the rich. Wealthy families don’t need the voucher, and low-income families already have access. What about the middle class?

Some have been painting a picture that this voucher expansion would help only the rich, and that’s simply not true. It’s going to help the families that have multiple children and work several jobs just so their children can attend a school that teaches their faith, offers smaller class sizes and where their child is known and loved. It will help the families that make just barely enough to afford tuition at the school they want to send their child to. For example, in one of the hardest-working middle-class families at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, the mom is a nurse and dad is a fire-fighter. They have six children to support and truly struggle to afford tuition at the private school, a school that is able to provide the type of discipline and educational opportunities they were unable to receive in a public school.

It is known that traditional public school students make up about 90% of school-age students in the state. However, students who receive a voucher make up only 3% of the state’s 2.7 million student population, but they receive only 2% of the funding. At most, voucher students receive 90% of the amount they would have received if they attended their local public school. They can take that amount and use it to help a school that best fits their needs. The rest stays with the public school system, on top of any local or federal funding, without the responsibility of educating that child. The money should follow the student, at the school of his or her choice.

In 2019-20, the state awarded $172,776,489.99 in school vouchers to families to choose the best school for their child. If each voucher student would have attended their district public school instead of a private school, the state would have spent $239,259,229.73 in tuition support for those students. That’s a savings of $66,462,739.74.

Currently, students who attend Bishop Luers High School receive a Choice Scholarship; that is 74% of the student body. Bishop Luers also has a diverse student body from all backgrounds and races.

JENNY ANDORFER is the director of admissions at Bishop Luers High School.

A good job — with Jesus

Right above my desk, hanging on the wall with a crumpled piece of Scotch tape, is a card someone gave me last March. You are doing a great job, the card says, in bright colorful letters.

On the back is a quick note, scribbled by my friend, Hope. She’d brought the card over to our house just a few weeks into the COVID-19 lockdowns, along with some cookies and milk for my daughter. Easter tea towels for me and a six-pack of Guinness for my husband.

The whole day, Hope had been driving around town dropping off little care packages to friends and family, just simple gift baskets with treats and a pick-me-up, to encourage folks during what was going to be a very scary, uncertain and lonely time.

I loved the font on the card so much, I hung it on my office wall, and nearly every day I see it, these bright red and yellow bubble letters shout at me that I’m doing a good job. A great job, in fact. A freaking great job.

If only I believed it.

I, along with probably the rest of the world, have had the worst year, the worst month in my life, the worst year in my life. I have done a particularly good job these past few months.

My patience has worn thin. I’ve been incredibly weary. I’ve had a bad attitude. I’ve been bad-tempered. I’ve been mean.

I’ve grown weary of the “two things we do best in times of times” language, longing for the day when we never have to again hear the words “when things go back to normal” we’ve usually spoken on a Zoom call where we’ll tell someone no less than three times, “You’re on mute.”

But maybe it’s a good thing that I know I’m not doing a good job. Maybe it’s perfectly fine that I am struggling. Maybe there’s some good to be had in feeling like I am drowning, floundering, even sometimes failing. Because it’s in recognizing that things have been (and are really hard that I can cry out for help, beg for assistance and lean on Jesus.

I find that when “I have it all under control,” I am tempted to boast about my success, my ability to do everything. I find that when I feel like I have everything under control, I am tempted to think that I am God, or that I can control the world around me.

We cannot predict or control everything. The ultimate fact is that we need Jesus, and Jesus is with us. He lives.

The Savior, risen from the dead, is with us today

For Easter itself, the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. Speaking on behalf of all the Apostles, Peter capitalizes the life and mission of Jesus. More than a biography, it is a testament of God’s love for humankind, given in Jesus and in His sacrifice. It is an invitation to people to follow the Lord, a reassurance of God’s love with us still alive and well in Jesus, the risen.

For the second reading, the Church offers a passage from the Letter to the Colossians. This reading tells us, as it told its first audience, that we have been raised with Christ. We usually associate resurrection with death, because resurrection is re-vivification after physical death. In the Pauline writings, resurrection also meant an event on earth while physical life is present. It is a resurrection over sin, voluntarily chosen by each disciple.

St. John’s Gospel supplies the last reading. It is the familiar story of Mary Magdalene’s early morning visit to the tomb where Jesus had been buried after being crucified. She found the tomb empty. Immediately, she hurried to Peter and the other disciples to give them the news.

Peter and the others took her word. At once, they went to the tomb and saw for themselves that it was empty. “The disciple whom Jesus loved,” long thought to be John, saw the empty tomb. Strong in faith, he knew that Jesus had risen.

Reflection

The readings for this feast, as well as the feast of Easter itself, are overpowering in the richness and depth and breadth of their message. Jesus is the Savior! He lives forever! Belief in the resurrection and trust in the everlasting life Jesus has uplifted, guided and inspired human hearts for 20 centuries. Awareness of, and commitment to, the Lord have brightened lives regardless of the darkness and cold surrounding them.

An old legend says the edge of the garden that contained the tomb of Jesus were large, tall plants, considered to be eye-sores, weeds. They were cut. On Jesus’ arrival, blossoms rose at the top of each stalk, but it was dingy and colorless.

These humble, detested plants witnessed the Resurrection. The blinding, brilliant, divine light of the Lord’s victory over death bathed them. For all time thereafter, their blossoms are wonder-fully yellow, transformed by the light of Christ, all the ugliness bleached from them.

The legend continues. Since that miraculous Easter morning, these plants, their blossoms ablate with the golden reflection of the Lord’s power, follow the light from dawn to dusk. It is the bright noonday sun? Or is it Jesus, returning in glory? Is Jesus near? The plant was the sunflower.

After Lent, purified and empowered, Easter is our moment to absorb the light of the Risen Lord. Do you allow to change us as it changed the sunflower? Do we intently search for the Lord, seeing the mercy of Jesus in every sunbeam of grace and goodness that falls upon us?

Peter and the Apostles eventually gave their very lives for Christ, radiant in their faith. We cannot predict or control everything. The ultimate fact is that we need Jesus, and Jesus is with us. He lives.
St. Joseph, migrant spouse and father

Pope Francis has invited Catholics to focus our attention this year on St. Joseph, patron of the universal Church. I commend him for this invitation. I have always been fascinated about how much Christians have said throughout the centuries about someone for whom we have no record of having said anything. Our Catholic imagination is creative. I have been reading some books and articles about St. Joseph and have arrived at two conclusions.

On the one hand, we must not assume that the silence of the Scriptures about his words means that Joseph did not say anything. As I meditate upon the few scenes in the Bible that mention Joseph, I bet he said a lot in prayer, his interactions with his beloved Mary and their discernment about building a life together.

I am sure he had much to say when anxious to find shelter as his wife was about to be born. When he had to flee to Egypt to protect his family and in the everyday interactions at home raising the Child Jesus. On the other hand, most of what we know and can infer about Joseph comes from what we extrapolate from his relationships with Mary and Jesus, as well as his actions toward them.

In my own reflection about Joseph, I want to be cautious about not idealizing him to a point at which one cannot relate to him at all. There are so many reflections about Joseph, all written with the best intentions, that tend to downplay his humanity.

Projecting Joseph as an almost angelic being or nearly perfect human takes the inspiration away from him. His relationships and actions reveal a man in love with his wife and child, ready to do anything possible to ensure their well-being. Life throws us curveballs all the time, and Joseph had to handle quite a few in the handful of scriptural passages where he appears.

I am particularly drawn to the events associated with the flight to Egypt (Mt 2:13-23). There Joseph, spouse and father, becomes an immigrant, a refugee. As an immigrant myself and as someone regularly working with immigrants in ministry, the story hits home.

In his December apostolic letter “Patris Corde” ("With a Father’s Heart"), Pope Francis wisely brings our attention to this moment in the life of Joseph as he risks everything in order to protect what he loves most, his family: “The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. In this regard, I consider St. Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty” (No. 5).

Contemplating the lives of many immigrant men who are part of my life, fathers and husbands, I grow in my appreciation of St. Joseph and what he could have said.

BLESSED MICHAEL RUA

FEAST: APRIL 6
1837-1910

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MCGRDY, from page 12

think very highly of myself. And while confidence and recognition of one’s gifts is not a bad thing, there is danger in assuming I’ve done it all on my own. It’s easy to believe I don’t need Jesus. But in the midst of the storm and these “unprecedented times,” when things seem to be falling apart all around me, I find myself turning to the Lord much more frequently.

Perhaps I need to see that I am an immigrant myself and that Joseph, who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger.

As a youth in Turin, Italy, Michael was drawn to the work and vision of St. John Bosco, his school’s chaplain. In 1854 he helped Don Bosco found the Salesian Congregation, dedicated to practical charity and inspired by St. Francis de Sales. After his ordination in 1860, Michael personally assisted Don Bosco, becoming his vicar in 1865. Following Don Bosco’s death in 1888, Michael led the congregation, sending missionaries to 23 countries. By the time he died in 1910, the congregation had grown to 341 houses and 4,000 members. He was beatified in 1972.

Hoffman Ospino is professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.
TODAY'S CATHOLIC

April 4, 2021

Son of Man, son of
Krypton: DC trilogy takes
cues from Christ’s
passion

BY JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Many Catholics rely on passion
plays or films to aid in their reflection on Christ’s passion
and death.

One of the unlikeliest of places to find echoes of this piv-
ottal moment in Christian history is director Zack Snyder’s
trilogy based on the beloved DC Comics superheroes.

Snyder’s version of Superman’s journey, which culmi-
nated March 18 with the release of his four-hour cut of
“Justice League,” brings the paschal similarities full
circle with Superman’s resurrection and his defeat of
an evil villain that threatened to turn Earth into a wast-
eland of fire and ash.

While the parallels between the fictional “son of
Krypton” and the factual “Son of Man” are widely known,
Snyder’s trilogy uses visual cues, plot points and even
dialogue that further highlight those parallels with Christ’s
life that Christians commemorate each year.

In “Man of Steel,” actor Henry Cavill’s Superman goes to
a church and seeks counsel from a priest before facing the
villainous General Zod. Behind him is a stained-glass win-
dow of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Snyder’s follow-up movie “Batman v. Superman: Dawn
of Justice” depicts Superman’s death by sacrificing his
life to save the world from the genetically altered monster
known as Doomsday.

Snyder himself revealed the connection to Christ’s pas-
sion and death in a 2018 post on his Vero social media
account in which he explained that Batman’s use of a kryp-
tonite spear was inspired by the lance used by the Roman
soldier Longinus to pierce the crucified Christ.

“By using this religious imagery, by telling a story that
resonates with prior stories but by couching it in what I
think we could claim is the 20th-century American mythol-
ogy of superheroes, what Snyder is doing is responding to
a deep-seated need on the part of moviegoers and on the
part of cultural consumers for meaning, for relationship, for
story.”

Just like the Hebrew midrash or Jesus’ parables in the
Gospels, Clanton said, comic book stories and films are
“stories that help explain ourselves to ourselves, that help
us understand who we are, where we come from, who we
want to be.”
WHAT’S HAPPENING

Knights of Columbus fish fry
ELKHART — The Elkhart Knights of Columbus council 1043 will host a fish dinner Friday, April 2, from 5-7 p.m. in the Knights hall, 112 E. Lexington Ave. Dinner includes scalloped potatoes, coleslaw and bread. The cost is $10 adults, $5 kids 5-12, under 5 free. Contact Tom Sibal at 574-520-9711 or thomas.sibal@gmail.com.

Little Flower Holy Hour
FORT WAYNE — St. Vincent de Paul Parish will host a Dyngus Day meal at Knights of Columbus council 1043, 1102 S. Clinton Ave., Monday, April 5, from 5-7 p.m. Meals are $10 and will be served in the Knights hall, 112 E. Lexington Ave. The meal includes polish sausage, pierogis, noodles, cabbage and boiled eggs. Meals are $10 and will be served until the food runs out. Contact Tom Sibal at 574-520-9711 or thomas.sibal@gmail.com.

Organ concert planned for St. Charles Borromeo Parish
FORT WAYNE — Vincent Carr, associate professor of organ at Indiana University will present an organ concert Friday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m., at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 4916 Trier Rd. There is no admission fee however, a free-will offering will be received. A socially distanced ice cream “meet and greet” will take place following the program. Contact Tim Robison 260-446-3118 or trobison@scbfw.org for information.

Easter hope, healing and hymns
In Nigeria, a typical Mass can last over three hours. “Worship in Africa is often intense, with profound joyful singing and dancing, voiced prayer and fellowship with one another sharing the Gospel of Jesus.”

— Father Sunday Akuh

In Nigerian Catholic families, the faith is lived out joyfully. Daily life revolves around family prayer. The rosary, adoration and visits to the Mary grotto are all common deviations within the family.

The Church in Nigeria is also considered family, Father Akuh continued. “Preparation for the faith and catechism is very thorough and intense in Africa, this accounts for the deepening of the lived sacramental life in Nigeria. Both the parents and the entire faith community share in this pastoral and faith formation from conception through birth, baptism and until burial. “Parish life is very engaging and the faith is a shared experience in Nigeria.”

Father Akuh pointed to numerous parish groups and sodalities that engage the faith of all ages. These carry out multiple functions within the parish and involvement in one of these groups is required, ensuring “that no one is expected nor permitted to be an anonymous parishioner.”

In Nigeria, a typical Mass can last over three hours. “Worship in Africa is often intense, with profound joyful singing and dancing, voiced prayer and fellowship with one another sharing the Gospel of Jesus,” said Father Akuh. “During the Mass is ended to the workplace and the public sphere, for as the Mass is ended in church, the Mass continues in the lived experiences in the communities.” The Angelus is often recited publicly, and priests are invited to say Mass in workplaces.

According to Father Garrow, the presentation was “excellent and well-received.” Not only did Father Akuh’s talk give parishioners of St. Stanislaus an opportunity to learn about the vibrant faith life of Nigerian Catholics, but it also gave them a chance to assist them financially. Despite the economic growth that Nigeria has seen in recent years, 46% of the population still lives in poverty. Father Akuh admits that individual resources are scarce, but the faithful are generous and give much to build and fund churches and financially support their priests.

Father Garrow had wanted to find a way to support Father Akuh’s parish in Nigeria, St. Michael Catholic Church located in Kogi State, Diocese of Idah.

He explained, “During the Lenten season, I always have my parish take up a collection for agencies or organizations that are helping spread God’s love.”

He was proud to report that “This year, we helped the Christ Child Society, the Women’s Care Center, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Share Foundation, the New Carlisle Food Bank, along with Father Sunday’s parish.”

Through a collection taken up over the weekend following Father Akuh’s talk, the parish raised over $3,500 for St. Michael. This money will be used to purchase seven new stained-glass windows, one of which will feature St. Stanislaus Kostka in honor of the donor. Signs will be placed within the windows asking members of St. Michael to pray for the parish of St. Stanislaus.

St. Stanislaus parishioner Angela Schroeder has previously attended Masses said by Father Akuh at Holy Family Parish and enjoyed his joyful and vibrant personality, particularly his singing. She was enthused about his witness at her church.

“The event prompted many conversations in our family and with co-workers about Catholic life in Nigeria,” she said. “It’s not often we have a first-hand account of how our ‘one Catholic’ faith is celebrated halfway around the world.”

She continued, “The talk helped us recognize our blessings, explained the impact our generosity can make to our brothers and sisters in Christ and offered constructive ideas for growing closeness in our parish family.”

Schroeder is hopeful that Father Akuh will hold similar talks in the future.

“Father Sunday has an inherent joy that represents the energy of his home congregation and his faith in God. His description of African culture and how the Catholic faith is celebrated in Nigeria was simply fascinating.”