Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades joined Pope Francis in the Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the Solemnity of the Annunciation, March 25, at St. Pius X Parish in Granger. Msgr. William Schooler, Pastor of St. Pius X, Father Nathan Maskal and Father Matthew Coonan aided the bishop in reciting the rosary prior to the consecration.


During the March 25, 1984 consecration, Pope John Paul II first consulted with Servant of God Sister Lucia, who was present at the 1917 apparition, to ensure that this consecration would fulfill the request made by Our Lady. The pope consecrated “in a special way, those men and nations who are in special need of this entrustment and consecration” in spiritual union with bishops around the world.

The then-secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, said in 2000 that Sister Lucia personally confirmed that the 1984 consecration had fulfilled the request made at Fatima, according to Vatican News.

Pope Francis, Bishop Rhoades and the bishops of the world echoed this consecration in 2022, this time specifically mentioning Ukraine and Russia in the act. “Therefore, Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine.”

Pueri Cantores groups in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, who gathered at St. Pius X to celebrate Mass with the bishop that afternoon, provided some musical accompaniment before and after the act of consecration.

Prior to the consecration, Bishop Rhoades, Msgr. William Schooler, Pastor of St. Pius X, Father Nathan Maskal and Father Matthew Coonan led those gathered in person and those watching online in reciting the rosary.

Bishop Rhoades has been vocal about supporting Ukraine and condemning the unjust invasion by Russia. He suggests that members of the diocese who wish to help can do so through support of Catholic Relief Services.

CRS reports that they provide a range of support in Ukraine by running field kitchens to serve hot lunches and snacks, as well as transporting displaced families to friends, relatives and social services. The organization also offers reception services to provide clothing, information, referrals and more to those displaced by the invasion. They report that their local partner has received nearly 315 tons of relief items through humanitarian convoys from EU partners. Nearly 56,000 affected people have received assistance including food, hygiene items and emergency shelter.

“We ask Mary to intercede for the world today,” Bishop Rhoades said. “In fact, when we pray the rosary, we are praying this rosary for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine where so many people are suffering because of the war. As you know, Ukraine was invaded by Russia, and many people have been killed and continue to be killed even today.”
Beloved teacher memorialized at luncheon

BY JENNIFER BARTON

On March 21, a total of 20 teachers from South Bend-area Catholic schools were honored as Christ the Teacher award winners at the “You Can Lend a Hand” luncheon at the Century Center in South Bend. Teachers, pastors and administrators from the local area came together for the first time in two years to pay tribute to the good work of these humble servants of Christ and the positive influence they have on the children they give so much of themselves to educate. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades gave the day’s keynote address.

Father John Delaney, Pastor of St. Jude Church and School in South Bend gave the invocation prior to the luncheon. Dan Fitzpatrick, Chairman and CEO of Quality Dining, Inc., thanked the members of his team, the bishop and the Catholic Schools Office for their assistance, and spoke briefly about the ways that the “You Can Lend a Hand” program has helped educate students in Catholic schools for 40 years. He announced the award winners, while Dr. Joe Brettnacher, Superintendent of Catholic Schools and David Magul, Associate Superintendent, presented the Christ the Teacher icons. Mayors of South Bend and Mishawaka also attended the luncheon.

The heart of the event was an emotional video created in memory of an awardee, Nathan Cole, who unexpectedly passed away more than a year ago at 45 years old. Cole had taught at St. Joseph Grade School in South Bend and moderated the school’s Lego Robotics Club. He left behind a wife and young daughter. His wife, Sarah, attended the ceremony and accepted the award on his behalf.

Cole was chosen to receive the Christ the Teacher award, “in honor of him and all he gave both in the classroom and with the Lego Robotics Club,” said current St. Joseph principal Melissa Green.

Though he passed away last year, Green stated that “it was really the current teachers who came up with the idea to give Nathan this award.” Green began her tenure as principal this year, but recalled how Cole had taught her own daughter and she had worked alongside him as a teacher.

In the video, some of Cole’s former students, who are now in high school, eagerly returned to their grade school to pay tribute to the teacher who had such a deep influence on their lives. Green described it as “very cathartic” for the teachers and staff of St. Joseph, and stated that the passage of time had allowed the school community to process their loss. The video helped them both honor his memory and to grieve for him. In his 16 years at St. Joseph, Cole left a legacy that was remembered by his fellow teachers, students and families.

Additional awardees included Peggy Shea as the Monsignor J. William Lester Award. Shea has been instrumental in promoting Catholic education at St. Joseph High School for more than five decades.

Monsignor Lester was a bulwark of the diocese for many years, and had a passion for education, particularly Catholic education. He served as Superintendent of Catholic Schools for a time and recognized the need for four Catholic high schools, two on both ends of the diocese. Much of his time was spent encouraging Catholic athletes on the field. He also supported bringing 26 Cuban boys to Fort Wayne as a part of the Pedro Pan Project, intending to safeguard them from the influence of communist leader Fidel Castro.

According to Dr. Brettnacher, “We proudly award the Monsignor J. William Lester Award to an individual, or a couple, who has demonstrated their unflagging support and dedication to Catholic education in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.”

Shea certainly fit that bill. She and her late husband, Jim, Sr., put five children through Marian High School, and four of her grandchildren are now alumni of the school as well. Additionally, Shea has been involved in local parishes over the years, including St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend, Queen of Peace in Mishawaka and St. Pius X in Granger.

“Her reach has been very widespread,” said Alicia Redinger, Mission Advancement Director for Marian High School. She described Shea as a “champion for Catholic schools.”

Joining her to show their support and appreciation were two of her sons and additional family members.

The annual Christ the Teacher Award goes to Catholic school teachers who embody Christ’s love for others and show this through daily sacrifice and sharing of the faith with their students. Twenty teachers from Catholic schools earned this award for the 2021-22 school year in South Bend.

Peggy Shea, who has been involved in various Catholic schools in South Bend and Mishawaka for decades, happily receives the Monsignor J. William Lester Award.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Dr. Joe Brettnacher present Karen Salvador, principal of Mishawaka Catholic School – St. Monica Campus, with the Saint Mother Theodore Guerin award.
‘Hope does not disappoint,’ ABA campaign exceeds goal

BY JENNIFER BARTON

In the book of Romans, St. Paul speaks about the three virtues of faith, hope and love. Of hope, he wrote: “And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” The virtue of hope inspired the theme for the 2021-22 Annual Bishop’s Appeal: “Witness to Hope.”

It is essential that Catholics place their hope not on things of the world, but on God’s saving grace. In the Bishop’s Appeal video, Catholics are reminded that: “Our hope, beyond all understanding, is in the immutable truth that the cross of Christ, rending the fabric of time and space, won our salvation.”

All three of the cardinal virtues play into the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, the fundraising arm of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend: faith in God and His holy Church, hope in the good work of His servants throughout the diocese and lovingly sharing the gifts that He has given to those members within it. The yearly campaign funds many good works in the diocese, from things like Catholic education to meeting the sacramental needs of all the people of the diocese. Through the efforts of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, the work of the Church can continue.

In 2021-22, the diocese not only met their target goal, but exceeded it, according to Jeff Boettcher, Secretary of Stewardship and Development for the diocese. “The goals are determined by the Diocesan Business Office and are based on the individual parishes’ past giving to the appeal and on their annual offerings totals,” he stated. “This year it seemed that many more of our 83 parishes and oratories reached or exceeded their goals faster than in previous years.”

Father Jacob Meyer, Pastor of St. Monica Parish in Mishawaka, was featured in this year’s Bishop’s Appeal video. In it, he expressed that with the funds his small parish raised in a previous campaign, they were able to furnish an area of the parish that would be used to help create a greater sense of community. This year, St. Monica combined their Bishop’s Appeal with a capital campaign of their own, which was directed toward restoring the church and making needed repairs to maintain the structure and its beauty.

Speaking to Today’s Catholic, Father Meyer stated that his parish successfully met their goal and “the interesting part is that it was a three-year pledge, but most people chose to give up front,” so roughly 80% of the money needed is already in hand and ready to utilize for their projects.

St. Monica’s church building is nearly 100 years old and some pieces, such as the pews, have never been restored. The funds raised in this combined campaign will go toward restoring those and the baldacchino or altar canopy, bringing in a new altar of repose and ambo, expanding the parking lot, redoing some classrooms and more. All of this should be complete in a year and a half.

“The parishioners really stepped up,” Father Meyer said. “We have a lot of new families that gave; families that have been here three years or less. They’re very invested in the mission.”

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For their part, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will likely put the additional funds toward parish ministries. Father Coonan is grateful for the financial support of parishioners, knowing with confidence that they will be able to “plan our budget and potential improvements or repairs.”

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Witness to Hope

ANNUAL BISHOP’S APPEAL

WITNESS TO HOPE

 المتحدة

Public schedule of Bishop

Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, April 4: 2 p.m. – Presentations at National Eucharistic Preachers Conference, Chicago, IL.
Tuesday, April 5: 5 p.m. – Kpee Vatican Lecture, Eck Visitor’s Center Auditorium, Notre Dame.
Friday, April 8: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Joseph Church, Bluffton.
Saturday, April 9: 10 a.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Decatur.
Sunday, April 10: 11:30 a.m. – Palm Sunday Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne.

Priest assignments

The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, has made the following assignments.

Rev. Jose Arroyo, as pastor at St. Paul of the Cross Parish, Columbia City, effective March 27, 2022.
Rev. Thomas K. Zurcher, CSC, as part-time parochial vicar at Holy Cross Parish, South Bend, effective April 1, 2022.

Ecumenical patriarch pledges solidarity with Ukrainians during visit

BY JONATHAN LUXMOORE

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) - Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople pledged solidarity with Ukrainians forced to flee their country and thanked neighbor ing Poland for showing “generosity, charity and hospitality” since the start of the Russian invasion.

“I am here to show solidarity and join in prayer with millions of refugees who’ve been displaced by this unjustifiable aggression and the violence unleashed by Russia against sovereign Ukraine,” the ecumenical patriarch said on March 26 during a visit to the Polish capital.

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WITNESS TO HOPE

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decanewsfwb.org/aba

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CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters

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Pueri Cantores make a joyful noise for Annunciation

BY SAMANTHA ROHLOFF

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord falls on March 25, precisely nine months ahead of Christmas, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. This day commemorates when the angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary and relayed to her the message from God that she was to give birth to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Of her own free will, Mary could have rejected this proposed path, but she didn’t. Her acceptance of God’s will is a powerful testimony of faith for all ages, and is cause for celebration.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades celebrated Mass for the Annunciation at St. Pius X Church in Granger, and the occasion was made even more special with the presence of approximately 200 student singers from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The group is Pueri Cantores, a charismatic musical talent, unique role in history as she had no stain of original sin. He then focused on the wording used at the beginning of the Hail Mary. “We repeat [the] words of the angel Gabriel so often: ‘Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.’ That’s exactly what Gabriel said to Mary – that was his greeting to her … If you listen to the Gospel, he said, ‘Hail, full of grace.’”

“Hail” means “rejoice,” he continued, as all Christians are called to do on that day. The Incarnation, he said, brought the faithful eternal life by delivering them from sin and damnation. “Even though she didn’t understand completely, she trusted God’s word that she received as a message from the angel,” the bishop said. This acceptance of God’s plans as well as her lack of sin is why the Catholic Church honors Mary so dearly; she is the Church’s “pillar of faith.”

Bishop Rhoades concluded by recounting his own journey of accepting God’s will. Initially, a vocation to the priesthood wasn’t his definite path, he said, and he even considered the vocation of marriage. “And I remember, I was praying and there was a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary … and I could imagine her saying, ‘Lord, do with me what You will. Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.’”

Taking this to heart, he prayed, “Mary, Your fiat, your ‘yes’ to God, which means ‘let it be done.’ It was then that Bishop Rhoades understood God’s call for him to become a priest – he experienced joy and peace with this path. “Because, you know, in God’s will is our peace,” he said. Like Mary, he instructed those present and watching over live stream to “be obedient to God’s will.” And doing just so, by practicing the charism that God had bestowed upon them, Pueri Cantores sang as Bishop Rhoades concluded the Mass.

“We are celebrating today the greatest event in human history. Why do we say that? It is because today, God became man.”

— Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Catholic students from around the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend performed at St. Pius X Church in Granger on March 25 during the Mass celebrated for the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

Fourth-graders through high school seniors displayed their musical abilities in the singing group. In addition to diocesan homeschoolers, represented schools included all four Catholic high schools, both Elkhart grade schools and a handful of schools from the surrounding areas.

Of the many pieces presented during the Mass, Hoy described one in particular as the day’s masterpiece – a rendition of Paul Manz’s “The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came,” arranged by T.A. Ohnesorge. This was sung during the preparation of the altar, as well as during the consecration.

The piece was a five-part harmony that was impressively comprised of two soprano groups as well as alto, tenor and bass groups. Echoing the words of both Gabriel and Mary, Pueri Cantores professed the Solemnity’s meaning through a beautiful array of angelic vocals.

Hoy spoke highly of the young vocalists. “I am amazed at what these students accomplished today,” he said. “They were very attentive the whole day and really worked hard on the things I asked of them. I am very proud of them!”

Bishop Rhoades began his homily by praising the singers’ charismatic musical talents. He then explained the importance of the day’s Solemnity. “We are celebrating today the greatest event in human history,” he emphasized. “Why do we say that? It is because today, God became man.”

The bishop explained the many ways in which God’s humble love was on display. As opposed to being born in the luxurious city of Rome, Christ was born in the small town of Bethlehem. And Mary, his mother, was no upper-class aristocrat or royalty; she was a young, newly betrothed virgin.

Transitioning from Christ’s conception to Mary’s, Bishop Rhoades further explained her unique role in history as she had
He said his three-day visit, which came at the invitation of Polish President Andrzej Duda and Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw, allowed him to “meet and encourage all those displaying the essence of Christianity, which consists of loving neighbors and seeing Christ in each of them.”

The patriarch also said that people worldwide would learn from the “true love and disinterested solidarity” shown by Poland, which has taken in 2.3 million Ukrainian refugees who have fled their homeland since the violence erupted.

Polish citizens, far from setting up refugee camps, he said, have "opened their homes" to elderly people and even their accompanying pets. "Women and children, some have fled their homeland since March 28 in St. John Climacus Orthodox Church in Warsaw, Patriarch Bartholomew said he had praised the stance of President of the Polish bishops' conference, after a March 29 prayer service for peace.

In January 2019, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew signed a decree recognizing an independent church in Ukraine despite strong criticism from the Russian Orthodox Church, which sees Ukraine as part of its church territory. Patriarch Kirill, in protest, excommunicated Patriarch Bartholomew and severed communion with him and his followers.

The patriarch has repeatedly condemned Russia's invasion. He urged an end to the "horrible war and all the accumulated calamities" in a homily in Istanbul on March 27 before traveling to Poland.

Poland's Orthodox church, headed since 1998 by Metropolitan Sawa, has 504,000 members and 461 clergy according to 2021 Polish government data. It is the country's largest non-Catholic minority.

Meeting Ukrainian refugees on March 28, the patriarch added.

"Every day, I watch the terrible images of this war on television, sympathizing with the Ukrainian nation and admiring its heroic struggle and sacrifice," the patriarch added.

Duda said that Pope Francis "as believing Catholics," were grateful to the Orthodox leader for the "spiritual support" and for "consistently and calmly indicating who are the victims in this terrible armed conflict."

In a statement, the Polish bishops' conference said Archbishop Gadecki met the pope in a private audience on March 28 at the Vatican and discussed the "panorama of actions" taken by Polish Catholic charities, parishes and religious orders to help Ukrainian refugees. He also outlined his planned meeting with the patriarch on March 29.

"It remains important for our Church to protect children and young persons from the evils of abuse. The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend remains committed to upholding and following its guidelines, policies and procedures that were implemented for the protection of children and young people. These can be reviewed on the diocese's website, www.diocesefwsb.org, under "Youth Protection." If you have reason to believe that a minor may be a victim of child abuse or neglect, Indiana law requires that you report this to civil authorities. If you or someone you know was abused as a child or young person by an adult, you are encouraged to notify appropriate civil authorities of that abuse. In addition, if the alleged abuser is or was a priest or deacon of the Catholic Church, you are encouraged to contact Mary Glosowski, victim assistant coordinator, at (260) 399-1458 or mglosowski@diocesefwsb.org; or Very Rev. Mark Gurtner, Chaujący duch i ból bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biały bóg, biał
WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – The Biden administration said on March 24 that the United States plans to welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians as refugees. This was announced while President Joe Biden joined European leaders for a meeting of the Social and Programming Committee, which involves a range of legal pathways, including the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, but it also said the Biden administration is “working to expand and develop new programs with a focus on welcoming Ukrainians who have family members in the United States.” The statement emphasized humanitarian aid as the U.S. is also sending to neighboring nations taking in those fleeing Ukraine.

Madeleine Albright is remembered as diplomat and teacher

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – Madeleine Albright, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the first female Secretary of State and longtime professor at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, died on March 23 in Washington, D.C. She was 84. “We have lost a loving mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend,” her family said in a statement, adding that Albright died of cancer. During her years as Secretary of State, Albright frequently briefed Vatican diplomats on situations from the peace process efforts in the Middle East to tensions in Kosovo. And in her nearly 40 years at Georgetown, she inspired students “not only to understand the world, but to serve the world. Generations of her students went on to do just that, a legacy that is almost incalculable in its reach,” said Joel Hellman, dean of the university’s Walsh School of Foreign Service. “For all her accomplishments, Albright always said that she was a teacher. She began teaching at the School of Foreign Service in the fall of 1982, and from that moment on, she was a fixture on campus and in the lives of our students,” Hellman said. He noted that despite her many commitments around the world, she rarely missed the class she taught on the foreign policy toolkit and always made time to meet all of her students – more than 2,000 throughout her career.

It was over in four Hail Marys', says survivor of New Orleans tornado

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana (CNS) – Michael Baiamonte took shelter with family members in a closet in their home as the strongest tornado to hit the New Orleans area in five years took direct aim at his neighborhood. “It was crazy,” he told the Clarion Herald, New Orleans’ archdiocesan newspaper. “It was over in four Hail Marys’. That’s how I know. It took me four Hail Marys from the time we got in that closet.” The tornado ripped through several Arabi neighborhoods on March 24, first one man, destroying 40 homes and severely damaging more than 100 others in neighborhoods submerged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The National Weather Service preliminarily classified the tornado as an EF-3, with winds ranging from 135-165 mph. It ripped through a two-mile swath of Arabi in St. Bernard Civil Parish, just east of New Orleans. “One death is too many, but it’s a miracle we had only one death,” said Guy McInnis, the civil parish’s president. “It seems like it should have been worse.” “It’s heartbreaking, it’s devastating,” said New Orleans Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, who toured the rubble with Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards on March 23. “We know the people of St. Bernard Parish are a resilient people, but they are more than that. They are people of deep faith.”

Ethiopian cardinal welcomes humanitarian truce in Tigray region

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (CNS) – Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel of Addis Ababa welcomed a humanitarian truce to allow aid to reach millions of people in the war-affected region of Tigray. The government announced the indefinite and immediate truce on March 24 and urged the Tigray defense forces to desist from all acts of aggression. In response, Tigrayan military leaders said they had accepted the offer for a truce if it would allow aid to reach those in need. “We are always very concerned about the needs of people affected by the war,” Cardinal Souraphiel told journalists on March 24, during a meeting of the U.S.-led Development Commission of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. The war in Tigray — a semi-autonomous region in the north of Ethiopia — broke out in November 2020 after months of tensions between the government and regional leaders. Within 16 months, the conflict has killed thousands and displaced millions of people from their homes. Despite a warning that starvation was threatening millions, no relief aid has reached the region since mid-December, according to officials in the Diocese of Addis Ababa. The World Food Program said nearly 40% of the people in Tigray suffered from extreme food shortages.
Art and literature event honors women

FORT WAYNE – The University of Saint Francis invites the public to “Feminism: Voices & Visions” from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on March 31 in Achatz Hall of Science and John and Toni Murray Research Center on the campus, 2701 Spring Street. The event, which is part of Women’s History Month, takes place in the Parkview Physicians Group Auditorium, Room 226. The free event will feature an evening of art, poetry and literature celebrating and exploring different themes in feminism. Students, staff and faculty will read from a selection of feminist literature curated by the students in USF Assistant Professor of English Annmarie Steffes’ Feminist Literature class. Art will be on display and individual artists will also present their work. The event will feature two “acts,” with opportunities for discussion. Light snacks will be available. For more information, contact Annmarie Steffes at.astettes@sf.edu or 260-399-7700, ext. 8128.

Saint Meinrad art exhibit features two artists

SAINT MEINRAD – An art exhibit titled “Clay and Paper” will be on display from March 30 through May 14, 2022, in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Library Gallery, St. Meinrad, IN. The featured artists are David and Barbara Rodenberg of Evansville, IN. Barbara Rodenberg is a paper maker and collage artist. Nearly all of her raw material starts out as junk: junk mail, rusty junk from the street, the dusty contents of junk drawers, and junk shop discoveries. She has been showing her work regionally since 2009. David Rodenberg is a potter and sculptor, making both sculptural and functional pieces. He has won numerous awards regionally and has exhibited work in international shows in France and Germany. His work can be seen in the Evansville Museum of Arts and Science. For library hours, call 812-357-6401 or 800-987-7311, or visit the Archabbey Library’s website: www.saintmeinrad.edu/library/library-hours. The exhibit is free and open to the public. Those wishing to view the exhibit may want to arrive at least 30 minutes before closing time.

Carrying the cross of Christ

The eighth-graders at St. John the Baptist School, Fort Wayne, presented the Living Stations of the Cross to the school students and for the parish on Friday, March 18, 2022.

Taizé prayer service

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS – Join the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in person or via livestream for song, quiet contemplation and inspired readings during the ecumenical Taizé prayer service from 7-8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12. The service will take place in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Each month, the service takes place on the second Tuesday. The hour-long service includes prayer, readings, beautiful music and time for silence and reflection. For more information or to find the livestream, go to Taize.SistersofProvidence.org or call 812-635-2952.

Notre Dame Laetare Medal winner announced

NOTRE DAME – The University of Notre Dame announced this year’s honoree of the Laetare Medal will be environmental activist Sharon Lavigne, for her work in founding Rise of St. James, an organization fighting industrial pollution in Louisiana. The Laetare Medal is the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics and will be awarded at the university’s 177th Commencement Ceremony on May 15.

Services offered for seniors

FORT WAYNE – Oak Street Health Community is reaching out to parishes in the Fort Wayne area to offer senior community outreach programs to provide goods and services to older members of the community. Some of these include a senior gas-up event, warm clothing giveaway, complimentary case of water, cleaning supply package and movie night package. All programs include “freebies” for anyone who registers with their ID and Medicare card. The organization can also work with parishes to tailor packages and programs to individual congregations. Any interested parishes should contact Shea Marentette at shea.marentette@oakstreethealth.com.

Volunteers ‘Stuff the Truck’ with donations from parishioners for Catholic Charities initiative

Volunteers collect donations for refugees at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Fort Wayne on March 27 before the 11 a.m. Mass. “Stuff the Truck,” a Catholic Charities initiative, gathered cleaning and hygienic products, linens and an assortment of other items in the parish’s parking lot on both March 26 and 27.

Photos by Samantha Rohloff
St. Thomas parishioners ‘walk’ the road to the cross

BY BETHANY BEEBE

During Lent, Christians around the world remember the last steps of Christ in a particular way, meditating on His walk and its meaning. One group within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is remembering that trip with a virtual trip of its own. During Lent this year, those who wish to participate are logging their miles and working together to cover enough steps to collectively reach the legendary trek’s location, completing the steps necessary to go from northeast Indiana all the way to Jerusalem.

With a band of 25 participants, Laurie Hund-Schieber leads the Walking to the Cross program at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Elkhart. As the program head, Hund-Schieber keeps track of the miles logged and reported by participants and sends weekly encouragement and prayers. She also tries to find pictures of landmarks they might encounter along the way as the mileage moves them closer to the destination. “I think,” she said, “it offers the parish an opportunity to virtually walk together toward a common goal.”

As program lead, though, she already under her walking shoes, Hund-Schieber herself participates each time such a program is offered. “I … set a goal to walk at least 10,000 steps each day. I also listen to Christian podcasts while walking and try to be mindful of the many inspiring messages I receive on my walking journey,” she said.

Based on the book “Walking to the Cross: Daily Devotions for Lent” by Butch Odom, the parish has been logging miles based on liturgical season for about four years. Bound for Bethlehem during Advent, a group of 17 covered 3,854,083 steps, or about 1,624 miles, said Elkhart to Calvary is 7,550 miles, but “3,600 miles of that is crossing the Atlantic Ocean, so sometimes we need to take a ship across the water and a plane across the desert to have enough steps left to reach our destination by the end date.”

With nine half-marathons already under her walking shoes, Hund-Schieber herself participates each time such a program is offered. “I … set a goal to walk at least 10,000 steps each day. I also listen to Christian podcasts while walking and try to be mindful of the many inspiring messages I receive on my walking journey,” she said.

A clinical educator for Beacon Health’s physician’s offices since 2018, the nurse of 38 years said she refrains from giving medical advice. “I … set a goal to walk at least 10,000 steps each day. I also listen to Christian podcasts while walking and try to be mindful of the many inspiring messages I receive on my walking journey,” she said.

Hund-Schieber yourself participating in the program to motivate personally with the journey that our parishioners grow as they interact with each other.”

He said he is also participating in the program to motivate himself to stay active “and also as a way to connect more personally with the journey that our other parishioners are on.”

Starting at the core, Hund-Schieber knows the physical being of an individual is just the surface. “The soul/spirituality of a person provides the foundation, strength, and encouragement to attain … health goals … and to achieve the best version of themselves.”

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Volunteers pack 28,000 meals for Poland

BY SAMANTHA ROHLOFF

More than 150 men, women and children gathered in St. Vincent de Paul School in Fort Wayne on March 27. There, in association with Project 216, a Christian organization dedicated to rallying communities together to feed the hungry, they worked for nearly two hours packing meals for thousands of Poles that they have never even met.

When volunteers checked in that Sunday afternoon, they grabbed hairnets and sanitized their hands. Crowding into the parish hall, they watched an introductory video explaining the ins and outs of the day’s procedures and soon got to work. Father Daniel Scheidt, Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, later paid a visit to pray a blessing over everyone present.

Vicki Welch, a St. Vincent volunteer who coordinates with Project 216 through the parish’s Stewardship Committee, explained how it was especially inspiring to witness even the youngest among the community volunteering their time. “I believe that getting children involved in service in a fun way can be life-changing. It can really kind of give them the idea that, ‘Wow, I can do fun things and help people at the same time.’”

Initially introduced to Project 216 at a friend’s Lutheran church, Welch knew she had to bring this mission closer to her home parish. This was her fourth year cooperating with Project 216 at the Fort Wayne parish, and she was very excited to reinstate this Lenten activity of almsgiving after the COVID-19 pandemic had prevented it in the past. She explained that the original plan that day was to prepare and package around 25,000 meals. In less than two hours, nearly four pallets of 130 boxes were full. With 216 meals per box, that meant volunteers packed more than 28,000 meals that day for the hungry in Poland. In addition to getting the volunteers involved by physically packing the food, they were also provided with samples of the meals – another way to connect them to those for whom they were helping.

Project 216’s Events Development Specialist Ellen Mann also focused on the community, particularly on the families. “I think the best thing is – see this family right here?” she asked, pointing at a family working together to pack meals. “This event is one of the very few where an entire family can serve together.” Including this year, as soon as the day’s packaging came to a close, a projected 109,000 meals have been prepared by St. Vincent de Paul parishioners alone, she stated.

The meaning behind Project 216’s name is threefold. Each box contains 216 bagged meals. Just one person on their own can package about 216 meals in two hours. Finally, because it is a Christian group, the organization bears a Biblical connection. James 2:16 reads: “If one of you says to those in need, ‘Go in peace, keep warm and well fed’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?”

One Nutri-Plenty meal, the name given to Project 216’s meals, contains dehydrated vegetables, soy, rice and a foil packet of 21 vitamins and minerals that is added at the end of the cooking time for the pre-packaged meal. This last element was developed by the Mathile Institute, said Mann. The group’s mathematical way of preparing their meals is very particular so as to make sure that the motif of 216 is not just another number. It is a message – a message of love and service to others, fulfilling Christ’s mission to His followers to feed the hungry, a perfect project for the Lenten season of spiritual growth and almsgiving.

To learn more about Project 216, visit project-216.org.
Three years ago, on World Autism Awareness Day – April 2 – a priest announced to the world the news of his unexpected new diagnosis. Like many people with autism, Father Matthew Schneider, LC, struggles with the social aspects of the spectrum disorder, such as reading people’s expressions and understanding verbal cues. Unlike many people with autism, however, Father Schneider lived much of his life not knowing that these issues had an underlying cause.

It wasn’t until post-ordination that he was finally diagnosed with the neurological disorder. Now that he can put a name to his social difficulties, he is more able to discern his vocation as a priest, and a part of that is in helping people with similar disabilities to carve out a home within the Church.

The main reason he received his late-in-life diagnosis instead of discovering the disability as a child was due to changes in the testing used to determine if a person has autism. Father Schneider was among the top ten students in his Canadian schools, and back then, intellectual delays were generally considered a major criterion for those with autism. Those standards have changed throughout the years.

“If the 2020 diagnostic criteria existed back in 1990, the chance I would have been diagnosed when I was in school is pretty high,” Father Schneider said. Even going through entrance evaluations for the seminary did not indicate a disability. That only came after he was suddenly removed from his post as school chaplain after one failed year.

Today, Father Schneider maintains active Facebook and Twitter pages under the handle “Autistic Priest” along with a website. He is a member of the Legionaries for Christ and is currently living in the Washington, D.C. area. On his website, he keeps an active directory of parishes throughout the U.S. that host a sensory-friendly Mass. Included on that list is St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, which began hosting their sensory-friendly Mass last year. He is also working on a doctoral thesis and searching for a way to serve God in the world of academia.

Part of the way that Father Schneider connected with his own faith was through the logical mindset of his autism. It was by reading Peter Kreeft’s and Ronald K. Tacelli’s “Handbook of Christian Apologetics” as a teenager that he began to develop a more personal faith life because of the rational arguments presented, but he admits that most people would not relate to the book in the same manner.

He explained that: “God has a whole spectrum of how we relate to Him and, obviously, if He made us this way, He will relate to us in a way that He made us. If He made me autistic, He’s going to relate to me in accord with that autism.”


The first part of the book “is kind of a systematic presentation of autistic prayer” and the second half is comprised of devotions. Though other books about autism spectrum disorder and Catholic life exist, Father Schneider is certain that his is the first one written from a first-person perspective, and definitely the first priestly perspective on autism.

Adapting liturgical and personal prayer styles and prayer postures for those with disabilities are a large part of his book. “I’m trying to provide a bunch of different tools that could help someone on the spectrum or help a family member to pray. That’s the idea of the book and that’s the goal.”

His personal experiences have led him to advocate not only for those on the autism spectrum, but all of God’s children who might learn differently or see God in a unique manner. “I think we have to see it in the sense of all the different people we have; in the sense that we want to walk with everyone because Jesus didn’t say ‘I come to save just these people or those people.’ He wants to save everyone. And in this sense, we want to be able to accommodate everyone based on their different needs,” he said.

This accommodation means churches providing for individual needs, whether that entails wheelchair accessibility, a sign language interpreter for the deaf or a dedicated Mass for Spanish-speaking. For people with autism or those who have sensory issues, Father Schneider endorses sensory-friendly Masses and has celebrated these himself. But for those who live in areas where it is not offered, he recommends “trying to work with both sides to find the accommodations” needed to prevent sensory overload, such as asking the pastor for dimmer lighting in one area of the church at a particular Mass. He also advises those with disabilities like autism to know the diagnoses that if a person has autism, then we have to deal with and so it’s how do we create a circumstance that we can help this person, these people to really understand the faith, and that’s kind of the goal I’m working at,” Father Schneider stated.

“God Loves the Autistic Mind” will be available in late May through Pauline Books and Media. To learn more about Father Matthew Schneider, LC, visit his website: fmatthewlc.com.

After discovering later in life that he has autism spectrum disorder, Father Matthew Schneider, LC, has become an advocate for those on the spectrum as well as others who live with disabilities.
Marian finishes record-setting season as state runner-up

BY ERIC PEAT

A
n entire season often is decided by a handful of moments. However, as the Marian High School boys basketball team can attest, those moments don’t have to define the season.

Marian’s first-ever trip to the IHSAA Boys Basketball State Finals ended in defeat, a 55-43 loss to Beech Grove in the Class 3A Championship Game on Saturday at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. The Knights (24-4) led throughout the first half, and after a third-quarter run gave the Hornets (22-6) the lead, Marian fought back in the Class 3A Championship record for fewest points allowed, just 43 points, a Class 3A State championship record for most field goals attempted in a game (36%). In the process, Marian held a 12-3 advantage, helping them overcome a subpar shooting night (36%). In the process, Beech Grove held Marian to just 15 points, three assists and three steals, while senior Kaleo Kakalia pulled down a team-high 10 boards. Junior Jackson Price chipped in nine points on 3-of-4 shooting from long range.

Despite coming up short, Kakalia said the experience of playing in a state championship game was unforgettable.

“It was great, we got treated well,” said Kakalia. “All of us, I think, got closer together – even closer than we were before, and I’ll remember this for the rest of my life.”

“They’re really strong on the inside,” agreed Berger. “They really pounded the glass, and they’re very active defensively. We’ve got to tip our hats to them because I thought they definitely deserved the win tonight.”

But Marian wasn’t finished. A battle-tested bunch all season, the Knights had already made game-saving defensive stops in both their sectional championship win over top-ranked John Glenn and their regional title-clinching victory over Culver Academies. A buzzer-beating three-pointer from Brooks to end the third quarter brought the Knights within two, and they would tie the game in the opening minutes of the fourth.

However, that was as close as the Knights would get, as Beech Grove connected on its final six shots to pull away. The Hornets iced the game at the free throw line, where they held a 12-5 advantage, helping them overcome a subpar shooting night (36%). In the process, Beech Grove held Marian to just 15 points, three assists and three steals, while senior Kaleo Kakalia pulled down a team-high 10 boards. Junior Jackson Price chipped in nine points on 3-of-4 shooting from long range.

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“It was great, we got treated well,” said Kakalia. “All of us, I think, got closer together – even closer than we were before, and I’ll remember this for the rest of my life.”

Those are my brothers, and it was just so good to do this with them,” Brooks added. “I wouldn’t rather do this with anyone else. Those are the guys I’ve been with for over a year now. I just love them.”

Berger was quick to put a positive spin on the outcome, refusing to let those final few minutes or the difficult emotions of the moment define his team.

“It hurts, but it doesn’t take away the season and the careers that my two seniors here have had at Marian High School, which took our program to a new level – a level that will be tough for the guys to sustain, but we’re going to try.”

That new level produced a record-setting season for the Knights, who won a program-best 24 games this year and captured the team’s first-ever semi-state title. For a team that only graduates two seniors and returns three starters – including its leading scorer in Sullivan – there’s reason to believe that Marian basketball isn’t going anywhere.

“I think it will make them hungry,” Berger said of his underclassmen. “Once you experience coming down here and playing, I think it would be addictive. It would be something you’d want to try again. We know it’s not easy, it’s obviously tough to get down here. We’ll take a little time off and get back to work for the next season.”

Following the game, the IHSAA announced the recipient of the Arthur L. Trester Mental Attitude Award, which is presented annually to a senior who has demonstrated excellence in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability during his four years of high school. Brooks was brought to tears as he heard his name called and was joined by his parents at midcourt to accept the award.

“Just all the emotions came out from all the work we’ve put in all season – they had to come out at some point,” said Brooks. “I just saw my parents, and that’s when I lost it, because they do everything for me. They support me through everything, and those are good shoulders to cry on.”

These are the defining moments for Brooks and company, not the turnovers or missed shots. This Knights squad will forever remember what they accomplished because of the journey they took as a team – and how they walked together with the Lord.

“Thank God has a big part in what we’re doing,” Brooks said. “We pray a rosary before every game, we go to Mass sometimes before games; we just pray a lot. I guess he didn’t have the outcome we wanted, but it was probably for a reason. I think God just helped us get here all the way.”

The Marian Knights finish the 2021-22 boys basketball season as State Runner-Ups in Class 3A, after a school-record 24 wins and their first-ever trip to the State Finals at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis on March 26.
Think you’re ‘failing’ at Lent? Think again.

I really wanted the Sonic drink. It had been a very long day— with grocery runs and sniffling kids and two hours on the radio and attempting to keep a house moderately less filthy — and all I wanted was to drive into a spot at Sonic and order a large Coke with lime, easy ice.

It’s my weakness, that drink. Occasionally I’ll add cherry flavor, but generally, just the lime.

But it was the first Friday of Lent, and I gave up Sonic for Lent. So there I was sitting at the stoplight, fighting myself on whether or not I would turn left to Sonic or right to get home.

The honking pickup truck behind me snapped me from my momentary battle back to reality. “You cannot fail at Lent already” bounced through my mind.

Right I turned. To home I went. No Sonic Coke with lime in hand.

I wasn’t happy about it. Who would be? But I did honor one of my Lenten commitments. I’d convinced myself I was somehow displeasing to God and a disgrace to the Lenten season. But I wasn’t a failure because my Lenten sacrifice was small. If anything, I was “failing” because I was beginning to think of Lent as a competition, with myself and others (though I hadn’t told anyone else what I was doing for the season).

I had, only two full days in, turned Lent into this liturgical March Madness that needed to happen for me to make the right way, or I’d be kicked out of the bracket I’d made for myself.

We do this far too often— make Lent a competition. Or we sit in our sacrifices and compare ourselves to others. “They’re praying the Stations of the Cross as a family. My kids barely sit still through grace before meals.” And we assume we’re losing Lent.

There’s no way to lose at Lent. I guess the only way to “lose” at it would be to ignore it completely.

But if there’s effort at all—even if we think it’s measly or small— we are acknowledging that these 40 days are set apart in our year, a time to focus on what we can do to more fully pay attention to the Lord’s movement in our lives, and prepare for the greatest move He ever made: dying for our sins and defeating death with His resurrection.

If a few weeks into Lent you are thinking, “I’m not doing enough,” then perhaps add in more. If you are grumbling and hating every second of your Lenten days, then perhaps pivot to find something more fruitful.

But above all I remember you can’t fail, not if you try even a little. Even if the trying just includes not buying the Sonic drink.

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Catholic entrepreneurs take the leap

Matt Martinussen lost his job at a precarious time. His wife was a stay-at-home mom, and had just had their third baby.

The non-profit Matt had been working for was running out of money due to COVID-19. They had to let him go. It was the day before his birthday.

“Losing that full-time income was scary,” said Matt, now 27, a father of three who belongs to the Church of St. Paul, Minnesota. They had enough money saved up to support the family for four months.

More importantly, they had a dream. For the last two years, Matt had been running a little side business as a hobby: the Catholic Card Game. It was a Catholic version of the popular game Cards Against Humanity.

And with the help of two successful Kickstarter campaigns and a lot of inspiration from Lisa, Matt had started selling games.

They were a hit.

But his work on the game had been limited to small pockets of time.

So there I was sitting at Sonic and order a large Coke with lime in hand.

But I wasn’t a failure because I was “failing” because I was beginning to think of Lent as a competition, with myself and others (though I hadn’t told anyone else what I was doing for the season).
A mess of our own making

Every parent has heard his or her child cry in the night and rushed to find out what is wrong. “There’s a monster in the corner!” your daughter says, and to calm her down and reassure her, you turn on the light so that you both can see. There is no monster, you explain; just the clothes that she was supposed to put away piled on the floor, gathering dust and wrinkles.

Children have active imaginations, and darkness, in particular, seems to put those imaginations to work. Light can reveal the truth, but if you turn the light back off without putting the clothes away, your child’s fear that the misshapen pile in the corner has a less mundane explanation may be quick to return.

As we grow older, we convince ourselves that we’ve left monsters behind, but in the shadowy corners of our minds lurk misapprehensions and even outright lies, the detritus of an untidy culture that too often fears the light more than the monsters of its own making.

As the linguist and philosopher Owen Barfield, friend of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, reminds us, because we are in the world, we can only see it from the inside out. And here on the inside, our common language and cultural experiences shape our understanding of just what, exactly, it is that we are seeing. The widespread loss of belief among even practicing Catholics in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is at least in part at the reality that we look at the host through different eyes than did previous generations — or less suffused with the light of faith.

The flipside of children’s active imagination is the reality that, as the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies once wrote, children are “literally-minded toughs.” Turn out the light without putting the clothes away, and the monster, as I said, is likely to return. Once it has taken root in his or her mind, the mistaken apprehension becomes the child’s literal reality. That the misshapen pile in the corner is, in truth, a sign of something else — of clothes, certainly; of bad habits, maybe; and perhaps of outright disobedience of the mother who told the young boy to take his clean clothes to his room and put them away — is something that can only be explained while the light is on.

In a world suffused with the light of faith, we can more easily see the body of the bread and the blood behind the wine. In the twilight of our God, we see only bread and wine, while the corners of our mind are increasingly marked “hic sunt dracones” (“Here there be dragons”). We are convinced that we can see things that our ancestors could not, that the shadows that have crept slowly across the shared landscape of our minds reveal rather than conceal. The light of old truths fades away, replaced by the darkness of new lies.

St. Paul knew that he saw “indistinctly, as in a mirror;” but he longed to see one day face to face. That longing stemmed from faith, was fed by hope and cultivated in love: love for the one true God, whom he would one day “know fully, as I am fully known.” We, too, see indistinctly, but we prefer the darkness to light, the lies of our own making to the truth revealed by the maker of the world.

Yet truth still cleaves the darkness like a sword, and it cuts through our hearts, too. The problem today is not that so few people defend the truth because the truth, since it is true, needs no defense. The problem is that so few of us are willing simply to proclaim the truth, finding it easier to go along with those who see a monster in the corner than to explain that what they’re seeing is nothing more than a mess of our own making.

Scott Riehert is the publisher of OSV. Visit OSVNews.com.
God ‘protected us,’ says Myanmar family after Kentucky tornado

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (CNS) – Ben Ghung Awm’s Catholic faith has always sustained him – from escaping the turmoil of his home country, to being imprisoned and beaten, to resettling in the United States as a refugee, to surviving a tornado that severely damaged his house.

“I don’t know how people who do not believe in Christ could manage such circumstances,” said Ghung Awm at his home in Bowling Green, which he and his family have been repairing ever since a series of tornadoes devastated western Kentucky and surrounding regions during the night of Dec. 10.

“God protected us and saved us,” he said.

Ghung Awm was born in Myanmar. The Southeast Asian country, previously called Burma, has been beset with political turmoil for decades. Most recently, a February 2021 military coup overthrew the elected government and swept the country into deeper havoc as the military cracked down on citizen protests and resistance.

The years of humanitarian crisis resulting from power struggles between the military and democratic leaders have led to a mass exodus of Myanmar citizens to other countries. Ghung Awm is one of the thousands of Myanmar people who received refugee status to come to the U.S.

He arrived in the U.S. in 2011, but not before living without legal permission in Malaysia for a period of time after escaping from Myanmar.

His interval in Malaysia included being arrested, imprisoned and beaten due to his status. His father back in Myanmar even thought he was dead until Ghung Awm could send a message that stated otherwise.

After finally attaining refugee status, Ghung Awm arrived in Buffalo, New York, where he lived for a bit. A chance encounter with Father Timothy Khut Shing Ling, a priest from Myanmar who was at the time serving at Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green introduced Ghung Awm to the large population of Myanmar Catholics residing in western Kentucky.

Ghung Awm moved there shortly thereafter, and has since settled in Bowling Green and gotten involved at Holy Spirit – even buying a plot of land in a local subdivision and building a house. He and his wife, Margaret Myu Mang, were married in 2017 and have two sons: Anthony, 3; and Nicholas, 1.

Then in December, the tornadoes came.

Ghung Awm had just gotten home from work and was aware of a tornado watch in the area. He said it was strange to hear of this in mid-December, since Kentucky tornadoes were supposedly more common in warmer months. Neither he nor his wife had experienced tornadoes when living in Myanmar.

A tornado warning came on Ghung Awm’s cellphone.

“I picked up Nicholas,” he said; his wife picked up Anthony and, frightened, asked Ghung Awm, “What’s going on?”

The family gathered in the master bedroom “covered in a blanket. Then we heard the sirens,” said Ghung Awm.

“Then 40 seconds later, it blocked my ears,” said Ghung Awm of the pressure change common in tornado conditions, and I was holding my little boy close.”

The high winds tore off their windows with pressure. The makeshift coverage of blankets ended up protecting the family from glass shards flying across the room. “There was broken glass all over the blankets,” said Ghung Awm.

But “we got lucky,” he said. “I think God saved us.”

The three houses beside them were flattened, as was much of the subdivision. Ghung Awm described the scene as looking as though the tornado had come along a path leading to his home, but when it nearly reached his house, the tornado abruptly turned and went around it.

Ghung Awm’s sister, brother-in-law and their three children lived on the other side of Ghung Awm’s house. After the storm passed, he ran over to check on them and was thankful to find that while their house was damaged as well, all family members were fine.

Father Stephen Van Lal Than, Associate Pastor of Holy Spirit Parish, drove out to the area the following day.

Father Van Lal Than also was born in Myanmar. In fact, he is the first Myanmar-born priest ordained in the U.S. He is the leader of Myanmar Catholic ministry in Bowling Green and celebrates a monthly Mass in Burmese at Holy Spirit Church.

He told The Western Kentucky Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Owensboro, that his ordination will be during a national conference of thousands of Myanmar American Catholics.

The Neighborhood happens to be home to many Myanmar families, as well as other immigrant groups who had come to the U.S. hoping to start their homes of people who had been impacted. Holy Spirit parishioners Mary Ellen and Chris Kohn volunteered their time and resources to help with repairs.

The school team brought over a generator and Shop-Vac, and a group came from out of state to purchase Christmas gifts for Ghung Awm’s family. Holy Spirit helped Ghung Awm pay the mortgage for a month, which he said “helped a lot.”

It is now more than three months since the tornadoes.

Today Ghung Awm and his family are back in their house, which has a new roof. He said their insurance has been good – even putting them up in a hotel immediately after the tornado – but the influx of claims has slowed the process of getting everything repaired.

Overall they are just grateful to have survived and to be rebuilding.

Ghung Awm observed that “we always receive blessings from God” but sometimes a person might “move away” from God.

“Then things like this happen,” he said, “and you turn back to God.”

Amid the suffering and aftermath of the tornadoes, Ghung Awm said “this was God trying to bring us closer to Him.”

Seeing how God’s providence once again did not fail him, Ghung Awm looks forward to the future with hope.

“A lot of Burmese moved here because of the Burmese Mass and ministry of Father Stephen,” said Ghung Awm, using the colloquial term for people from Myanmar.

Ghung Awm has been involved at Holy Spirit, helping “to keep our culture within our faith and to work on more unity and integration between different ethnic groups.”

In July, Deacon Martin Na Ma Ling will be ordained a priest of the Diocese of Owensboro and the second Myanmar-born priest ordained in the U.S. His ordination will be during a national conference of thousands of Myanmar American Catholics who will gather in Owensboro.

The diocese also plans to welcome two more Myanmar seminarians in the near future.

“We are very happy that the Diocese of Owensboro is willing to have priests and seminarians from our country,” said Ghung Awm. “It will make a strong faith for us for the future.”

Barnstead is editor of The Western Kentucky Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Owensboro.

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WHAT’S HAPPENING

FORT WAYNE — The St. Peter K of C Council No. 17466 will have a carry-out and drive-thru fish fry on Friday, April 1, from 4-7 p.m. at the church, 518 E. DeWald St. Tickets are $10 and include fish, tartar sauce, cole-slaw, baked beans and roll/butter. Contact Kevin Workman at 260-715-5990 or striderkev@hotmail.com for more information.

OTHER EVENTS

Immaculate Conception rummage sale
KENDALLVILLE — Immaculate Conception Parish, 319 E. DeWald St., will have a rummage sale on Friday, April 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the church. On Saturday, April 2, the sale will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a bag sale for $2.50.

Belonging Catholic schools meeting:
Ministry with Persons with Disabilities FORT WAYNE — A meeting is offered the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. via Zoom to connect with others interested in helping children with disabilities attend Catholic schools. To get the link, call 260-399-1452 or email asturm@diocesefwsb.org.

Sacred Heart Cemetery spring cleanup
SOUTH BEND — The Sacred Heart Cemetery, 24947 Western Ave., will conduct the spring cleanup from Monday, April 11, through Saturday, April 16. Please have all fall and Christmas decorations removed from the graves by this time. Contact Patrick Nowak at 574-287-7125 or naranhaz@aol.com.

Little Flower Holy Hour
FORT WAYNE — Little Flower Holy Hour for Vocations will be Tuesday, April 5, from 7-8 p.m. at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel, 1102 S. Clinton St. The April holy hour will be led by Father Keeton Lockwood. Contact Christine Nix at 260-422-3262 or cnix4692@gmail.com for more information.

WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. View more Catholic events and submit new ones at www.todayscatholic.org/event. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

St. Joseph Garrett School seeks part-time Teacher Aide

Responsibilities:
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- Assist classroom teacher in any way possible
- Prepare and set up activities
- Implement portions of daily program/lesson as directed by the classroom teacher
- Assisting in keeping the classroom, storage and playground orderly and organized
- Attend field trips
- Supervise students in the cafeteria and on the playground
- Other duties as assigned by the principal
- Attend staff meetings and trainings as needed throughout the school year
- Be familiar with state regulations for supervision
- Be familiar with the “School and Staff Policies for St. Joseph School and Preschool"

Qualifications:
- Must have a High School or General Education Diploma
- Must be able to lift and carry up to 40 lbs.
- Must acquire CPR and First Aid certifications

Applicants can apply at diocesefwsb.org/careers

Music Director
St. Therese Catholic Church
2304 Lower Huntington Road, Fort Wayne

PART-TIME

St. Therese Parish is seeking a part-time Music Director to be in charge of liturgy, cantors, choirs, weekly and Sunday Mass, school functions, funerals and weddings.

For more information or to apply, visit diocesefwsb.org/careers/