

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Holy Week to Alleluia!



"I felt a bone-crushing love"

Son chosen to return Fatherly love to others

Page 14

Triduum and Easter

The culmination of Lent in photos

Pages 8-9

Chrism Masses celebrated

Priests, faithful attend both Chrism Masses

Pages 4-5

Marian grad chases NFL dreams

Running back's determination led to draft

Pages 10-11



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Easter:

The most overwhelming event in human history

Following is the homily preached by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades at Easter Sunday Mass (April 17, 2022) at St. Pius X Church in Granger:

Today we celebrate the most overwhelming event in human history, an event that gives all of us new hope. When we usually speak of hope, it refers to waiting for something to happen. But Easter hope is based on something that has already happened: the Lord has risen and reigns immortal. "Christ my hope is arisen," we sang in the Easter Sequence. This is the spiritual joy of Easter.

We don't know if Mary Magdalene had hope when she went to the tomb early on the first day of the week. The Gospel tells us that she came to the tomb "while it was still dark." Mary Magdalene had stood by the cross when Jesus was crucified. Perhaps she went to the tomb to mourn. It doesn't seem she had hope that Jesus would rise from the dead since, when she saw the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, she presumed grave robbers had taken Jesus' body. That's what it seems she thought since when she ran to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, she told them: "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." Perhaps St. John gives us the detail that Mary Magdalene "went to the tomb in the dark" to indicate that she was still in the dark about what had happened. The predawn darkness symbolizes her own sadness and loss of hope since the Lord whom she loved had died.

Informed by Mary Magdalene, Peter and John ran to the tomb to investigate. Were they thinking that Jesus had risen from the dead? It seems not, since at the end of today's Gospel, it says that "they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." In any event, John ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first. He looked into the tomb and saw the burial cloths but did not enter. He waited for Peter to arrive, perhaps deferring to him as the leader of the disciples. John let Peter go in first and then he followed him into the tomb. Both saw the burial cloths lying on the shelf where the body of Jesus had been laid. It would have been strange for grave robbers to unwrap Jesus' body before taking it away. Peter and John also saw the cloth that had covered Jesus' head rolled up in a separate place. It would also have been very strange for robbers to take the trouble to leave the head cloth neatly rolled up and place it apart from the other cloths. These are interesting details. Something unprecedented-



Derby Photography

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades offers a homily at the Easter Sunday Mass in Granger.

ed had happened to Jesus.

The evangelist John had previously written about the raising of Lazarus from the tomb.

Remember when Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, Lazarus came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth, and Jesus gave the order to unwrap him. But Jesus, who is not in the tomb, is not bound by the burial cloths or face cloth, nor did He need anyone to untie Him. Something radically different had happened

to Jesus. Whereas Lazarus was resuscitated to mortal life and would die again, Jesus' resurrection was not resuscitation, but

We believe that death does not have the last word. We believe in God's immense love for us, a love that is stronger than death.

was God's raising and transforming Him to an immortal, glorified mode of existence. Death no longer has power over Him.

The best explanation I ever read of what took place in Jesus' resurrection is from Pope Benedict XVI. He wrote: "Jesus' Resurrection was about breaking out into an entirely new form of life, into a life that is no longer subject to

the law of dying and becoming, but lies beyond it – a life that opens up a new dimension of human existence." A theologian and scientist whom I know wrote about this as well. He wrote: "From the perspective of physics, the Resurrection is the elevation of matter to a new way of existing beyond what is possible in the normal state of the universe. From the perspective of biology, the man Jesus belongs totally to the sphere of the divine and eternal. Now 'in' God there is a place for bodiliness, which means that human beings now have a 'place' in God's life."

Brothers and sisters, this is our hope: to have this "place" in God's life, to be raised from the dead. This is what we profess in the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." Of course, when we speak about the resurrection, we're speaking about something new, something unprecedented, something outside the world of our experience. It's not something that contradicts science since it is something beyond science. Pope Benedict speaks of this new dimension of human existence and asks: "Is not creation actually waiting for this last and highest evolutionary leap, for the union of the finite with the infinite, for the union of man and God, for the conquest of death?"

The tomb was empty. This was the first sign that Jesus had risen from the dead. It was the only sign that St. John needed. As we heard in the Gospel, when the beloved disciple entered the tomb, "he saw and believed." Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the others only believed after they actually saw the Risen Lord. We believe based on their testimony. We believe that death does not have the last word. We believe in God's immense love for us, a love that is stronger than death. We believe that Christ who is risen from the dead will raise us up, that "He will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body." In a certain way, we have already risen with Christ by baptism. Already, we have a foretaste of heaven in the Eucharist in which we are nourished with the flesh of the Risen Christ, what St. Ignatius of Antioch called "the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ."

My brothers and sisters, Christ our Lord has truly risen from the dead. This is the fundamental core of our profession of faith. This is the cry of victory that unites us all today. Easter is the reason for our joy, our hope, and our peace as Christians. May we bear witness to this joy, this hope, and this peace in a world that is clamoring for it!

A Holy Thursday pilgrimage with Jesus

BY JENNIFER BARTON

“I remember looking up and seeing the moon – just to the right of the ever-photographical St. Peter’s – and knowing this night was going to be blessed,” Dave Bergeron said of the Holy Thursday tradition of visiting seven parishes in one evening.

This is the second year that Bergeron, along with Joe Platt, fellow choir member at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, engaged in the late-night, pre-Easter spiritual practice. Neither man could say what motivated them to begin “church-hopping” last year; it was simply something they had discussed doing for some years prior and finally started in 2021.

This year, they incorporated into their pilgrimage scripture-based reflections which they had read about in an article in the April 10 issue of Today’s Catholic regarding the devotion. According to the article, these readings “recall the seven locations that Christ visited between his arrest after the Last Supper and subsequent death on Good Friday.”

At each stop they made, the two men took turns reading a passage before entering the church, reflecting on Jesus’ last day on earth. During one of these, the two men did not have a specific passage prepared, so Platt read Psalm 22, “The Prayer of an Innocent Person,” which proved fitting for their spiritual journey. Bergeron commented, “As he read, I pondered how the Holy Spirit brought the Old and New Testaments together.” For five of the parishes visited, Bergeron also prayed a decade of the rosary.

The two men began with Holy Thursday Mass at the cathedral, where they sang in the choir. Bergeron described his love for that particular ceremony. “Since I was a child, I have found this liturgy – with its stripping of the altar and removing all its sacramentals – and then the time of prayer and adoration – unique, memorable and blessed,” he said.

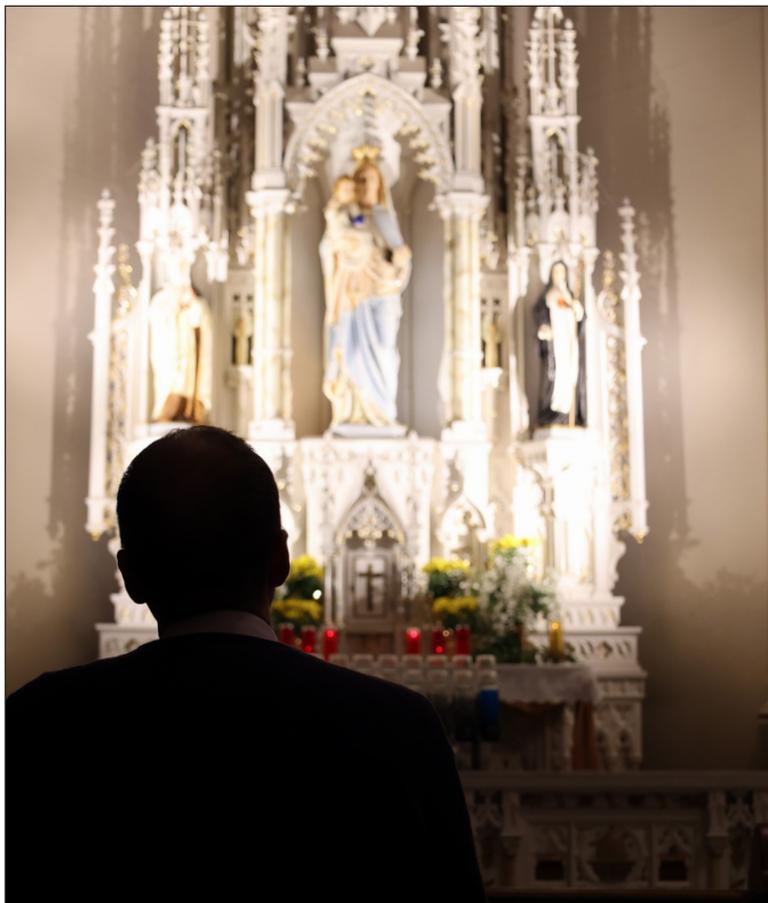
Blessed the evening certainly was. From the St. Mother Theodore Guérin Chapel at the cathedral, the two men ventured to six other churches in the southern part of the City of Fort Wayne: St. Peter, Sacred Heart, St. Henry, St. Therese, St. John the Baptist and St. Patrick.

Outside of St. Peter – their first actual stop – they were met by none other than the pastor himself, Father Patrick Hake, in traditional cassock and biretta, who warmly welcomed them to his beautiful church and asked them about their route. Bergeron described the church as “breathtaking” and “the perfect start for us ... to begin our Holy



Photos by Jennifer Barton

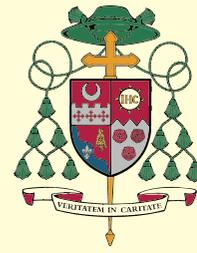
After the Holy Thursday Mass on April 13, worshippers spend time in adoration at the St. Mother Theodore Guérin Chapel at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne.



Dave Bergeron and Joe Platt, members of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, visited seven churches in the nearby area, one of which was the beautiful St. Peter, to spend Holy Thursday in adoration.



Bergeron and Platt are seen on opposite sides of the tabernacle at St. Therese Church, where the altar of repose was set up in the chapel behind the sanctuary.



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

- Tuesday, April 26: 9:30 a.m. – Mass and Pastoral Visit, Saint Joseph High School, South Bend
- Wednesday, April 27: 10:30 a.m. – Presbyterate Meeting, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw
- Thursday, April 28: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Joseph Church, Garrett
- Friday, April 29: 6:30 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Mary of the Lake Church, Culver
- Saturday, April 30: 10 a.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Fort Wayne
- Saturday, April 30: 5 p.m. – Mass, Knights of Columbus State Convention, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne
- Sunday, May 1: 3 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Patrick Church, Ligonier

Thursday journey of prayer and adoration.”

Each church had its own style for the altar of repose, adorned with candles, flowers or other ornamentation – or none at all. The fragrance of incense lingered in some of the churches while beeswax scent infused others. Some were bathed in silence, some resounded with prayerful voices, particularly St. Henry, where worshippers recited the rosary and sang in Spanish.

Last year, they had experienced something similar at St. Patrick, a parish with a high concentration of Vietnamese Catholics. Bergeron had attended 4-8 grade in the now-closed school, so stepping into the classroom-turned-chapel was a unique experience. He said that last year he and Platt had left that chapel in silence, “not being able to speak about the beauty and devotion – in a language we literally didn’t understand but in our hearts totally understood.”

The time spent at St. Henry, according to Bergeron, was the highlight of his evening. He said, “This time, it was our Hispanic brethren, praying what I instantly knew was the rosary in the

darkened makeshift chapel, the only light in the room coming from the candles adorning the tabernacle. I fell freely into the rhythm of the rosary as I said my decade. Upon leaving, I was heartened by the depth of devotion at all of the churches and the strong return from the COVID restrictions that had taken all of that from us.”

Throughout the evening, Bergeron was amazed at the numbers of families spending time in adoration together and the young adults he saw at various churches, hopefully doing the same thing he and Platt were doing. They also saw two religious sisters at many of the same churches they visited. At a couple of the parishes, he saw parish priests keeping watch with Jesus.

Whether adorers knelt on the floor before Him or sat in prayerful silence, all had come with a single-minded purpose – as Bergeron stated: “we knew we had completed another pilgrimage not just for its own sake, or as some perfunctory mission, to spend time with our Lord and with all those others doing the same.”

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Chrism Mass: Being anointed in Christ brings joy

BY JENNIFER BARTON

The majesty and ceremony of the Catholic Church is manifested in a grand way during Holy Week. The blare of brass instruments and chorus of voices singing God's praises opened the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on April 11. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades welcomed those in attendance, especially the priests who came to "renew your love and devotion" to their priestly vocation, as the bishop said.

Chrism Mass always takes place days before the Easter celebration to bless the sacred oils – the oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick and chrism oil. These will be used by parishes throughout the year for baptisms, anointing of the sick and confirmation, and by the bishop in ordination.

Bishop Rhoades' homily was delivered twofold: He spoke to everyone present about living an authentic Christian life; for the other part, he stood facing the priests seated behind the altar to speak directly to them.

"Very early on, those baptized into Christ were called 'Christians,' which literally means 'anointed ones.' At baptism, we were anointed by the Holy Spirit and incorporated



Jennifer Barton

Priests from Fort Wayne and the surrounding area listen as Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades speaks to them about the joy of their priesthood at the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on April 11.

into Christ," he began. "To be anointed is to belong to Christ and His kingdom. We have received a share in His anointing; we have been touched by His Spirit, and therefore we are called Christians."

Being called a Christian is

not enough, however. Bishop Rhoades emphasized the importance of a Christ-like life, always following God instead of belonging to the world. "How do we know if we are living our anointing as Christians? One way is if we manifest the joy of

the Gospel. The oil we have been anointed with is, as Scripture says, 'the oil of gladness.'"

"Can people tell that we were anointed with the oil of gladness?" he asked. "Gladness is the fruit of love. It is through love that we bring joy and peace to others."

He continued, "Brothers and sisters, we were anointed to bear witness to Christ, our hope, and to His love, the love that overcomes sin and is more powerful than death."

In addressing the priests, Bishop Rhoades reminded them to hold onto the joy of their priesthood, even during the hard times in their ministry, and to find joy in evangelization.

"My brother priests, we were anointed with the oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit, at our ordination. I hope and pray that you continue to experience the joy of your vocation and are renewed in that joy today."

Two of the priests present spoke afterward about their joy in renewing their priestly promises. Ordained 25 years ago this month, Father J. Steele, CSC, remarked, "It's always beautiful and it's very touching and it takes you back to the day you were ordained and you recall the people you remember who have passed. At 25 years, many of the priests that I loved in Holy Cross at that time, many of them passed on. And just the passage of time and how God is good across time ... My life is as rich, maybe even richer now than it was 25 years ago."

Brand new to his vocation is

Father Daniel Koehl, ordained last year. For him, Chrism Mass was exceptional because "the last time I was in the cathedral with all the priests around was my own ordination. So to have that sort of revisited within the year is a beautiful thing itself."

Many of the seminarians were present that evening,

More photos are available at www.todayscatholic.org



and that was special to Father Koehl as well, since in the coming years,

he will be on the other side of the ordination ceremony, laying hands on the heads of his seminary classmates. "Now I'm there watching our seminarians come forward, that was kind of the most touching part of it."

During the presentation of the bread and wine, the oils were also brought up to the altar and presented to Bishop Rhoades. Members of the Catholic community within the Fort Wayne area were chosen by the bishop to bring the oils forward. These included representatives of Catholic schools such as principals, campus ministers and one student; leaders in parish faith formation; religious sisters and Catholic business leaders.

Nancy Yorke and Jackie Oberhausen were among the group that had been invited to present the oils in 2020, but were unable to do so due to the pandemic. Both women were grateful to fill that role this year.

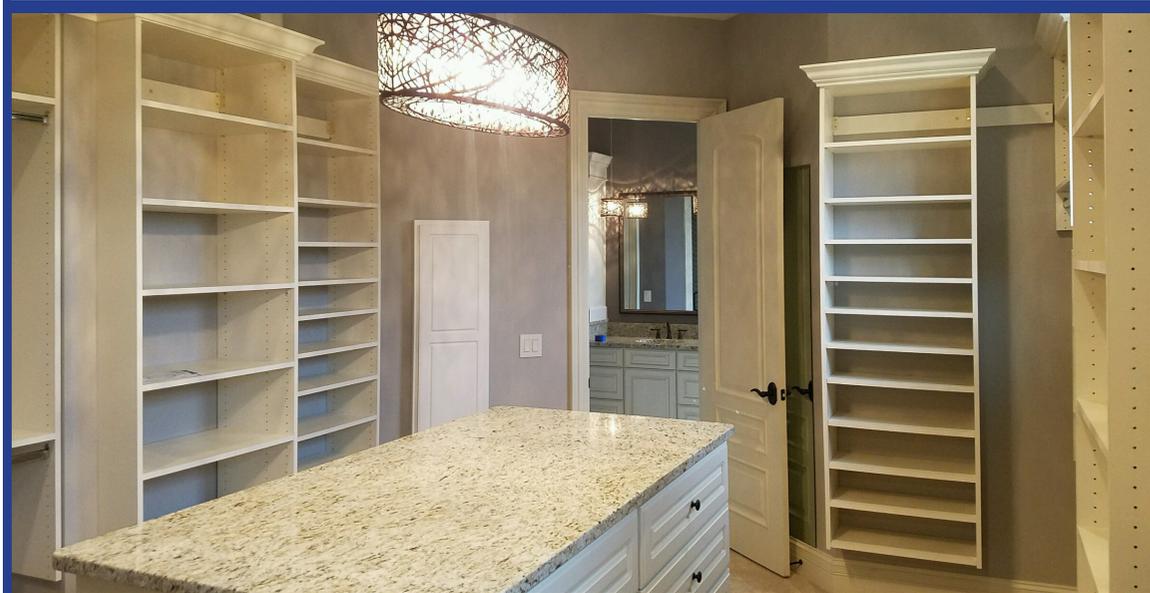
Yorke stated, "I felt so humbled, so humbled. It was such an honor." Yorke admits that she did not understand the Chrism Mass in her younger years, but has come to learn its significance and enjoys it. "I just felt like a fountain bubbling up with joy."

"It was beautiful; I felt very humbled, but very honored to be asked, so it was quite a blessing," Oberhausen added.

A little-known fact about the sacred oils is that those blessed last year need to be disposed of properly before the new ones can be used in churches. For the last 22 years, this has been Oberhausen's appointed task for Our Lady of Good Hope Parish in Fort Wayne. She spends the day of the Chrism Mass emptying the jars, burning the oils and washing the jars to be refilled that evening. The sweet smell of chrism that lingers about her person calls to mind the sacred anointing of all Christians to live as Christ; or, as Bishop Rhoades put it, to "spread the joy that comes from our faith in Jesus, a genuine faith that is lived in love."

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Priests renew vows at Chrism Mass

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

A large delegation of priests from the South Bend area, as well as several deacons and seminarians, converged in a grand procession at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on April 12 to join Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades in celebration of the annual Chrism Mass.

During this Mass, which typically takes place during the first few days of Holy Week, the bishop consecrates the chrism oil that he and his brother priests will use in the Church's ministry throughout the diocese for the next year. Bishop Rhoades celebrated Chrism Mass in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on the day prior.

The Chrism Mass also affords concelebrating priests the opportunity to renew the vows they took at their ordination.

During his homily, Bishop Rhoades addressed his brother priests regarding these promises, and expressed his hope that, even through the demanding periods of priesthood, they may still find 'gladness' in their ministry.

"My brother priests, everything I have said about Christian anointing obviously applies as disciples of Jesus, as baptized Christians. But we were also anointed with the sacred chrism a third time, at our ordination."

"We were anointed again with the oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit, to serve God's people as priests of His Son. I hope all of you experience the gladness, the joy of being priests, even during difficult and challenging times."

"This joy from the Holy Spirit has its source in the love of God the Father. Jesus the Son wants us to have this joy, the joy that was in Him, even during His passion, the joy of His Father's love and the joy of doing the Father's will."

After his homily, Bishop Rhoades led his brother priests in the renewal of their vows.

As Bishop Rhoades and the priests concluded this renewal, members of the community presented urns of new chrism oil to the bishop, who consecrated each oil for a particular use in the ministry of the Church to its people.

Among those who presented the urns were Catholic Charities CEO Dan Florin and Virginia Muñoz, principal of St. John the Evangelist in Goshen. After consecration, these oils would then be distributed to area parishes.

Priests will use one of these newly consecrated oils during the sacrament of anointing of the sick, when they anoint someone who has a serious illness. During his homily, Bishop Rhoades recalled Jesus' healing ministry in the Gospels. He said that it is "one of the fundamen-



Joshua Schipper

Members of the Holy Cross order serving in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, along with diocesan priests, renew their priestly vows at the Chrism Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on April 12.

tal tasks Jesus entrusted to the Church."

"Our priestly mission includes healing the brokenhearted, as mentioned by Isaiah in our first reading. We exercise this ministry of healing in the confessional, the healing of souls wounded by sin. But there is also the specific healing of sickness and suffering in the anointing of the sick, the sacrament which brings comfort to those distressed in body and soul."

Priests throughout the Church use the oil of catechumens before baptisms.

Bishop Rhoades told his brother priests that they would

"anoint infants and catechumens" with this second oil.

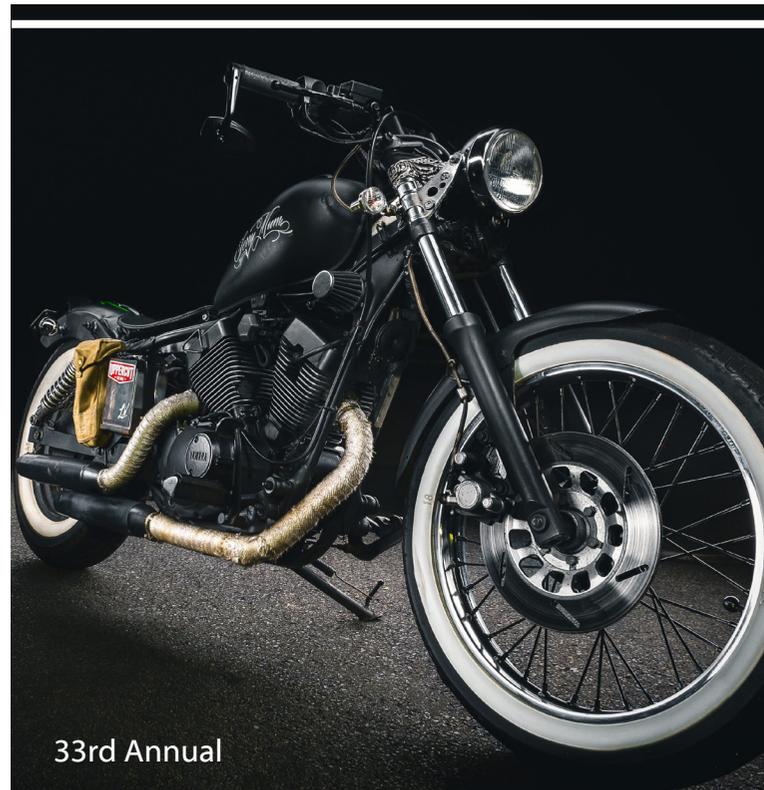
"The catechumens are people journeying toward Christ and you accompany them on this journey of searching for faith, searching for God," Bishop Rhoades said. "By anointing them with the oil of catechumens, you show that it is not only they who seek God, but that God is searching for them. When you anoint them, you will pray that the strength of Christ our Savior will protect them."

The third and final oil, known simply as the sacred chrism oil, will be used by priests both during confirmation and following

baptisms.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Rhoades expressed his excitement at how many people would experience the sacraments in the coming year, and how the recently consecrated oil would be a part of those occasions.

"When I bless all the oils and consecrate the chrism, I think of all those thousands of people who will be anointed with these oils, and they'll be distributed to the 82 parishes of our diocese, and also Notre Dame, Saint Mary's and Holy Cross College. And the motherhouses, and the hospitals and nursing homes. And we think of all those people who will be touched by God's grace through these sacraments."



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NEWS BRIEFS

Ukrainian Marine to pope: Mariupol 'what hell on earth looks like'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A Ukrainian Marine commander pleaded with Pope Francis to do everything to save the city of Mariupol, which is close to being captured by Russian forces. "I am turning to you for help because the time has come when prayers are not enough," Maj. Serhiy Volyna, commander of the 36th Separate Marine Brigade, wrote in a letter published on April 18 by the Ukrainian online newspaper Pravda. The commander's letter to the pope was also shared on Twitter by Andrii Yurash, Ukraine's ambassador to the Holy See. Russian forces have focused their attacks on eastern Ukraine, particularly Mariupol. If captured, the port city would connect the Donbas region with Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014. In his letter, Volyna said he had not read about the pope's appeals to the world on Ukraine's behalf because he had "been fighting for more than 50 days, completely surrounded, and all I have time for is a fierce battle for every meter of this city that is surrounded by the enemy."

Praying for victims, police, bishop says shooting shook all 'to our core'

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (CNS) — In his homily at the evening chrisem Mass on April 12, Brooklyn Bishop Robert J. Brennan spoke of the subway shooting that occurred early in the day, saying: "We were shaken to our core this morning, right here in the borough of Brooklyn, when violence hit us at home. Tonight, we pray very earnestly for those who were injured, passengers on the train and the police who went in. We pray for their healing and restoration of their health. We pray for all of those out there every day watching over, protecting us, in so many ways," he said, echoing a statement he issued shortly after reports that a shooting spree took place at the Sunset Park subway station. Reuters, CNN and other news outlets reported that during the morning rush hour, a man wearing a gas mask released a canister of smoke and opened fire into the crowd on a train and on the station platform at a subway stop in the Brooklyn borough of New York. A massive manhunt began immediately for the suspected shooter, later identified as Frank R. James, 62, and initially described as a person of interest. Later police said he was the only suspect. He was arrested on April 13 in the early afternoon, according to a tweet posted shortly before 2 p.m. EDT by WNBC-TV reporter Myles Miller. At least 23 people were injured. Ten of them were hit by gunfire; most were treated and released from the hospital.

Easter celebrated in the Vatican amid war, hardship in world



CNS photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters

Pope Francis arrives to celebrate Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 17, 2022.

Knights say order's evangelization training program really needed in Church

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (CNS) — Leaders of the Knights of Columbus see the Catholic men's fraternal organization as a powerful engine for evangelization, and to start that engine, they are developing a program to train members on how to evangelize. "We think it's desperately needed in the church," said Damien O'Connor, Vice President of Evangelization and Faith Formation for the Knights' Supreme Council, which has its headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut. "We're all called to evangelize," but few Catholics are comfortable with that mission, O'Connor told the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Nashville. "We take it for granted that everybody knows how to share the faith." So the Knights are developing a prototype of a training program — the Sons of McGivney Evangelization and Discipleship Training — that was unveiled during a weekend training retreat from March 17-20 at the Catholic

Pastoral Center in Nashville. "McGivney" in the title refers to Blessed Michael McGivney, who founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882. About 30 Knights from across Tennessee and 10 members of the staff at the Supreme Council participated in the training retreat, led by Sean Pott, Director of Evangelization and Education for the Knights.

Bishop says diocese is present for Haitians forgotten by government

JÉRÉMIE, Haiti (CNS) — The third bishop of Haiti's Jérémie Diocese must be the only Catholic bishop in the world whose cathedral roof has collapsed twice in earthquakes and was ripped off once by a Category 4 hurricane. "We are alive," Bishop Joseph Gontrand Decoste told the Jérémie radio station JCOM in an April 14 video interview. "Depi tet ou pa koupe gen espwa mete chapo," the 64-year-old bishop said with a smile, peppering the interview with Creole proverbs. "As long as your head's still on your shoulders, you can hope to put a hat on

it." Many locals will be preparing their finest hats for the mid-April diocesan golden jubilee, which also honors Bishop Carl-Édouard Peters, the first bishop, whose heart failed in 1975 as he cheered on Jérémie's winning soccer team. The St. Louis Cathedral, whose roof collapsed for a third time in the August 2021 earthquake, has been temporarily patched up for the occasion. "We cannot fail to celebrate," said Bishop Decoste, as he waits for a recommendation by engineers engaged by PROCHE, Partnership for the Reconstruction of the Church in Haiti. The 1901 cathedral, considered a national heritage, has always been an emblem of the remote coastal outpost of Jérémie. At one time, the city was connected to the rest of the country only by boat or a rocky, mountainous winding dirt track prone to flooding. A new road connecting Jérémie to Les Cayes, 60 miles to the southeast, was completed in 2015. Today, the region is cut off from capital city, Port-au-Prince, by armed gangs who control Martissant, a poor suburb on the only road leading to Haiti's southwestern peninsula.

Random detentions cast pall on high holy days in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (CNS) — The statue of Jesus, blindfolded and cuffed, ubiquitous during Holy Week processions here, hit close to home for Gabriela Rivas. Like many women in El Salvador, Rivas spent Holy Week looking for help for her husband, detained without cause by government authorities on April 10, Palm Sunday, she said. "We don't know what condition he's in, we have access to nothing, there's no communication, no visits," and no way to get him out, said Rivas, a Catholic mother of two, in an April 15 interview with Catholic News Service. Rivas' husband is one of more than 12,000 Salvadorans the government has detained since March 27, the day legislators approved an emergency law that made detentions in the Central American country easier. Government authorities said the move was necessary to battle gang violence following a weekend that set a record number of homicides in late March. "More than 12,000 terrorists captured in just 21 days," Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele tweeted on April 15. But Rivas said her husband was not a terrorist or a gang member. He was a bus driver trying to provide for his family when the government unjustly detained him using the emergency law. The measure suspends for 30 days constitutional freedoms, such as the right to assemble, due process and privacy in communications, and it threatens to detain suspected gang "collaborators."

Tropical storm continues to inflict damage on Philippines

MANILA, Philippines (CNS) — Tropical Storm Megi continues to inflict damage in the Visayas and Mindanao regions of the Philippines after making landfall on April 10. By April 14, the death toll surpassed 120, with dozens remaining missing. Landslides and street flooding forced 140,000 people to seek refuge at evacuation sites in Northern Mindanao and Eastern Samar provinces, reported ucanews.com. On April 13, the Vatican sent a telegram expressing Pope Francis' condolences as well his prayers for the dead, injured, displaced, and emergency personnel involved in recovery efforts. The Philippine army has joined the rescue efforts but is facing difficulties in the movement of its personnel, reported ucanews.com. "We are racing against time to rescue those who are hit by landslides but cannot advance in some areas because the ground is still moving ... it is dangerous," Col. Noel Vestuir told the media on April 12. "Our rescue teams are having difficulty in locating missing persons due to the mud deposits in flooded areas. We need to act fast, as many could die due to suffocation," Gary Escaler, a member of a rescue team, told ucanews.com.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

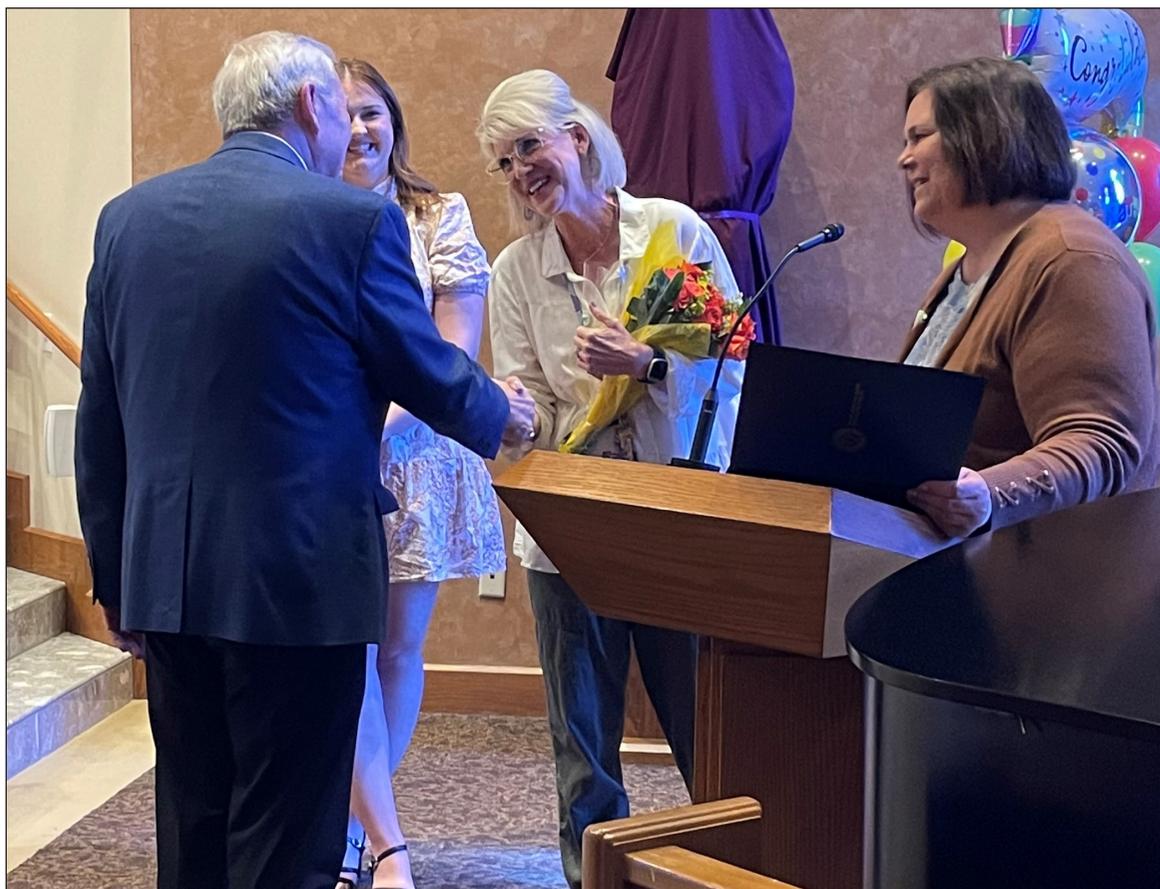
Easter baskets assembled for the needy



Provided by Immaculate Conception Parish

At their March meeting, the Immaculate Conception Ladies Guild in Auburn assembled and donated Easter baskets to St. Martin's Clothes Closet in Garrett, which serves all of DeKalb County. A total of 66 baskets were put together – 12 for infants and 54 for children ages two through 10. The baskets contained clothes, pajamas, toys, books and candy. Also, approximately 40 treat bags were filled and donated to Catholic Charities of Auburn.

Assistant Principal honored by mayor



Provided by Theresa Carroll

Chris Schuhler, Assistant Principal at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Fort Wayne, was honored by Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, who presented her with a Certificate of Excellence for displaying the qualities and dedication of a servant-leader committed to making a positive difference in her community. Schuhler has been involved at the school for 25 years and began as a resource teacher before moving into the role of Assistant Principal.

Middle school students celebrate Seder meal



Provided by Jeanne Hohenstein

Tony Henry visited St. John the Baptist School in Fort Wayne and led the sixth-graders through a Seder celebration on Tuesday, April 12. Students read the story of the Exodus, commemorating the Hebrews being freed from slavery in Egypt. Henry explained the symbolic meaning of the foods on their plate and led them in traditional Passover songs.

Pysanky egg painting workshop offered

FORT WAYNE — Karen Eckrich will be offering a workshop for those interested in learning how to create Pysanky eggs at St. John the Baptist Parish in Fort Wayne on April 23 from 9 a.m. to noon. The cost is only \$10 to make these traditional Ukrainian decorative eggs and overages will be donated to Catholic Relief Services' Ukraine efforts. Only ten spots are available, so reservations must be made via email or phone: ParishSecretary@SaintJohnFortWayne.com or 260-744-4393.

New Editorial Director named

NOTRE DAME – Josh Noem has been named Editorial Director for Ave Maria Press. Noem serves as Senior Editor at Grotto Network, an initiative of the University of Notre Dame that is pioneering new approaches to digital evangelization. He is the author of "The End of Ending," which took first place in the Catholic Media Association book awards in 2021. He and his wife, Stacey, are active parishioners at St. Joseph Parish, South Bend. Noem officially will join Ave on May 20.

'THIS IS HOW MUCH GOD



"The Eucharist is the wondrous sacrament that makes manifest that 'greater love' which led Jesus to 'lay down his life for his friends.' Jesus did indeed love us to the end. Jesus continues, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, to love us to the end, even to offering us His body and His blood."

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES
GOOD FRIDAY HOMILY



Mikel Hogan
Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades washes the feet of a young woman at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend during the commemoration of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 14.

John Martin



Mikel Hogan

Derby Photography

...THE FATHER LOVES ME'



John Martin

"In this Good Friday liturgy, we heard the prophecy of Isaiah about the man of suffering who bore our infirmities, who endured our sufferings, who was pierced for our offenses and crushed for our sins, who was like a lamb led to the slaughter, who gives his life as an offering for sin. We heard this prophecy fulfilled in the Gospel of the passion and death of Jesus."

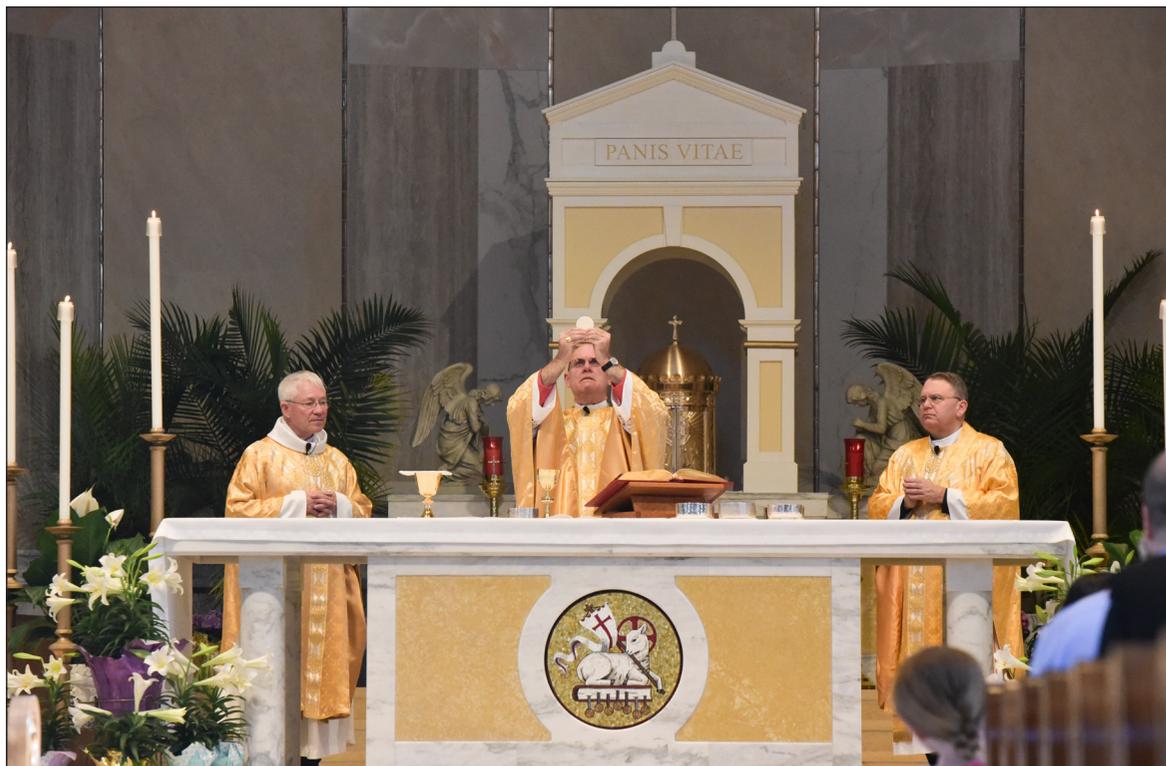
BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES
GOOD FRIDAY HOMILY



John Martin



Jennifer Barton



Derby Photography



Jennifer Barton

Father Tyrell Alles, OSB, Parochial Vicar at St. Therese Parish in Fort Wayne, begins the solemn and beautiful celebration of Easter Vigil with the traditional fire and lighting of the Easter candle.

From the diocese to the draft: Football journey fueled by hard work, determination

BY ERIC PEAT

It was a Sunday afternoon in autumn, and the Mishawaka Catholic Saints' middle school football team was locked in an Inter-City Catholic League contest. The opposing offense lined up and ran a quick pass play against the Saints defense. In a flash, a burst of purple and gold came streaking from the opposite side of the field, shedding blockers to make a jarring hit on the receiver.

"In the back of my mind, I can still see him coming out of nowhere, and just drilling the guy out of bounds," remembers Tony Violi, head coach of the Saints at the time. "And I was just thinking to myself, if he could do that every single play, with that athleticism and that desire – wow, there's something there."

A decade later, Zander Horvath is still thriving on that same athleticism and desire. After a record-setting career at Marian High School, Horvath walked-on to the Purdue University football team, earning his way onto the field with unmatched determination and drive. Now, he is preparing for the NFL draft, primed to be the first Marian football player ever selected. Horvath's football journey is a testament to what can be achieved with a tireless work ethic and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

'He had to be first at anything'

Athletics were always a part of the Horvath household. Zander's parents, Brian and Zita, introduced him and his siblings to multiple sports growing up. With four boys each playing different sports at the same time, Zander's parents were often running back and forth, catching a few innings here, half a game there.

"It was definitely like another job for them, but I'm very appreciative of that," recalled Zander. "They've shown support from when I first started playing sports, up to where I'm at now."

In grade school, he decided to start going by Zander to help differentiate himself from several other Alexanders in his class. However, he had no trouble distinguishing himself from his peers on the football field.

"Ever since he was a little kid, he was determined," said Brian. "It was his way; he had to be first at anything he did. He is determined like nobody I've ever met before."

This determination served Zander well once he suited up for Mishawaka Catholic. By the time he'd reached seventh grade, Zander was a running back and a starting linebacker for a middle school team loaded with talented eighth-graders that won the Diocesan Championship. The following year, it was Zander's turn



Zander Horvath led the Marian Knights rushing attack in both his junior and senior years. Horvath began his football career at Mishawaka Catholic Grade School and is preparing for the upcoming NFL draft from April 28-30.

Provided by Ray Derucki

more year when he started to see the field in key moments. Horvath entered his junior year as the team's number two running back, but that changed in a blink.

"Our starting running back got hurt at the beginning of the season, so then I had to step up," said Zander. "And from that point on, I kind of showed that I could play at that higher level."

Zander topped 1,000 yards rushing as a junior, but that was nothing compared to his senior campaign, in which Horvath broke essentially every school rushing record while also starting on defense at linebacker. He finished the year as one of the top rushers in the state, amassing 2,215 rushing yards and a staggering 34 rushing touchdowns.

"He was just bigger than all the kids, running them over," recalled Zita. "It got to the point where he made so many touchdowns, I couldn't even stand up to cheer anymore."

Violi, who watched Zander play on Friday nights, said he was blown away by Horvath's development and transformation at the next level.

"Of all the kids I coached in 36 years, his change from grade school to high school is the biggest jump I've ever seen," said Violi. "He went from a very good player to an exceptional, superb high school athlete who is now on the brink of becoming an NFL player. He's the poster boy, as far as I'm concerned, for hard work paying dividends if you continue to stick with it."

"I've seen a lot of kids that have the same ability," Glon echoed. "It was his work ethic and his attention to what he needed to do and how he needed to do it – those were all things that really set him apart."

Zander, who still keeps in touch with both Violi and Glon, credited them for helping to shape him as a player and as a person.

"They've been great to me and helped me excel on and off the fields," said Zander. "They're almost like father figures. I also know they will go out of their way to help me, no matter what it is. It was great to have a strong foundation with coaching growing up."

Zita said she believes this modesty is a product of Zander's Catholic schooling.

"The Catholic faith and bringing him up, I think it's just made him more humble," said Zita.

"It was definitely good staying in Catholic high school," agreed Zander. "Keeping up the faith is always going to be crucial. The students that I was around, too, were a lot of people who are my best friends still now."

to lead.

"In eighth grade, he was one of our captains because he was that good of a leader," said Violi, who coached the Saints for 36 years and still serves as Mishawaka Catholic's athletic director. "He definitely led by example. Always a quality kid – quiet, respectful, just a good kid to coach."

'The biggest jump I've ever seen'

When Zander arrived at Marian, head coach Reggie Glon knew exactly what he was getting.

"If you could ask for the ideal kid, he would be it," said Glon, who coached at Marian for 24 years and is now head coach at Trenton High School in Michigan. "He's a tremendous hard-worker, he was always one of the hardest workers in the weight room, and he's one of the best kids academically that I've had in 36 years."

Weightlifting was a major focus for Zander, who said he came into high school bigger and stronger than most of his freshman classmates. This physique helped Zander find his way to the varsity squad his sopho-

Congratulations

to

Zander Horvath

former Knight

Good luck in the
draft into the NFL

FROM

MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL



'This is a different kid'

While Zander's success on the field caught the attention of colleges, most recruiters saw him as a linebacker at the next level. His goal was to be a Division I running back. The United States Military Academy (West Point) offered him a full scholarship to play running back, but Zander didn't have a passion for the military. Next, Indiana University gave him a chance as a preferred walk-on at linebacker, but the university didn't offer engineering, which was his intended major at the time. Two weeks later, the running backs coach at Purdue messaged Zander on Twitter and invited him to visit.

"I instantly knew that I was going to switch over from there," said Zander, who had been considering IU's offer up to that point. "I scheduled a visit, loved the school; they were great coaches. I would say it's definitely been a great choice to get me to the point I'm at now."

Brian still recalls a conversation with Purdue's running backs coach when they visited the university.

"I told the running back coach, 'Sir, this is a different kid. Nobody's more determined.' And he said, 'You know, I hear that from a lot of parents.' And about two years later, he said to me, 'You know what? You were right.'"

However, Zander was one of ten running backs on the roster when he arrived in West Lafayette. He knew he was facing an uphill climb to see the field.

"Coming in as a walk-on, I definitely knew I was going to have to work," said Zander. "I knew it was going to take time and more effort than some of the other guys that may have been more talented. I always did extra when I came in with workouts. I'd stay after practice, do extra drills, come in early, watch more film."

Zander began seeing action on special teams and as a blocking fullback as a freshman. He earned a scholarship as a sophomore, along with additional playing time when Purdue's starting running back sustained an injury. But Zander broke out his junior year, emerging as the team's top running back by rushing for 442 yards.

Most importantly, it was also a time of renewed faith for Zander.

"My running back coach kind of incorporated [faith] into every one of our meetings," he said. "He was really big into it, so I started getting a deeper dive into it, too, once I got to college. At the end of every practice as well, we'd gather up, do a prayer and everything. So, he was just trying to not only build us on the field, but our faith was something he just really wanted to focus on. I'm definitely appreciative of that."

Unfortunately, Zander's senior season was interrupted when he suffered a broken fibula in the second game of the season. After surgery, he decided to prepare for the NFL draft, forgo-

ing an additional season of eligibility at Purdue.

"I already had my mind made up before the season that this was going to be my last year, so I kind of leaned towards that," Zander said. "And I just knew, from how I'd been over the past years, that I'm willing to make it work, no matter what the obstacle is."

'I'm just not one to settle'

"You have no idea how proud I am," said Brian. "I just hope he gets a chance in the NFL, because I know his determination will get him a spot somewhere."

Zander certainly helped solidify his draft stock at Purdue's Pro Day on March 29. In front of agents from nearly every NFL team, Horvath put up impressive numbers at multiple drills, most notably recording 31 repetitions of 225 pounds on the bench press – more than any of the running backs attending the NFL Combine.

"I knew it was definitely a solid day, but there were some numbers that I'd been doing better for a month, so I was kind of mad that I didn't get the numbers I wanted," said Horvath. "Even though it was still good, I'm just not one to settle."

Nevertheless, Zander's versatility is getting noticed. He's hearing positive feedback from scouts on his speed, agility and receiving skills, and he's already begun meeting with NFL coaches ahead of the draft, set for April 28-30 in Las Vegas. He is hoping to become the seventh NFL draftee from one of the four parochial high schools in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. However, no football player from Marian has ever heard his name called on draft night, giving Zander yet another opportunity at school history.

"I've never really thought about that until now, but it would definitely be an honor," said Zander of being the first Marian graduate selected in the NFL Draft. "I'm kind of astonished that I would be the first one."

"He's been part of the legacy, part of the history, of a pretty proud program," said Glon, referencing the school's eight regional titles and three state crowns. "He's the number one rusher in school history, so you couldn't ask for a more deserving kid."

'This is just a stepping stone'

As important as reaching the NFL is to Zander, his aspirations go far beyond the football field. He has been drawn to art for as long as he can remember.

"During grade school, I just started taking all the art classes I could," recalled Zander. "It was just something I enjoyed doing and didn't feel like an actual class."

Glon remembers seeing



Provided by Brian Horvath

Zander worked his way onto the field at Purdue University, eventually becoming the team's top running back. Here he is seen with his father, Brian.

Zander working on art between two-a-day practices at Marian, and he once again picked up the hobby while home during the pandemic. Zita, who also has an artistic background, offered Zander her art supplies and began posting his drawings on Facebook.

"And all of a sudden, people were like, 'Draw me one,'" said Zita. "So, he started drawing them, and people were calling to have them commissioned."

It's turned into a side business for Zander, whose medium of choice is marker and colored pencil. He continues sending his

artwork to Zita for her opinions, sharing his progress at each step. Zander said he envisions art as part of his future in some capacity.

"Outside of football, I would love to do something with my art," Zander said, "whether it's drawing for a company or just doing stuff on the side like I've been doing."

Zander also wants to eventually design and build custom homes, an endeavor that he hopes can be financed in part from his professional football earnings. But first, he's got wedding plans to make, as Horvath

is engaged to be married on July 1, 2023.

It's clear that football is just part of his future – a future that's fueled by his drive and determination.

"This is just a stepping stone," said Glon of Zander's football career. "I think he's going to do something special not just in the football world, but I believe he is going to do something special in the world of art and what he contributes back as an individual. He's such a good person, such a quality individual, that whatever he pursues, he's going to have success there."

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Palms and ashes

My wife has a Palm Sunday habit of weaving her palm into the shape of a cross. I keep mine straight and tuck it behind the crucifix in our kitchen. I've been thinking since the beginning of Lent about why these observances have such a hold on us.

Ashes fall into the same category. Even in Washington, D.C., not a particularly Catholic city, everyone gets them on Ash Wednesday. And many leave them on all day, some with a discreet bindi-sized smudge, others with the full-on crusader look.

We've been going without palms and ashes for a couple of years due to COVID-19 – and it's nice to have them back. Holy water fonts are full again too. I had begun to wonder whether COVID would mean the end of that devotion.

I shouldn't have worried. I have seen online an Automatic Touchless Holy Water Dispenser with adjustable volume controls – one to five drops. (Prices are falling fast.)

I think I understand the theology of this better than I do the emotional pull. In popular usage, sacramentals are objects blessed by the Church whose good effects are the result of the Church's prayer. Think of palms, ashes, holy water, rosaries, medals, candles and crucifixes.

We have a practice with our grandchildren that we call "rosaries for life." Each child gets a starter rosary to be carried at all times in a pocket or purse. If it is ever lost or broken, we replace it free of charge.

It's the Church's blessing

that really matters. Whenever we move to a new home, we have our house blessed. One of our young friends got a new (well, used) car and had it blessed. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy ("Sacrosanctum Concilium") says that "there is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward (our) sanctification ... and the praise of God."

But what explains the gravitational pull that ashes, palms, holy water, rosaries and medals exert on us? Why do people turn out in bigger numbers on Ash Wednesday than they do on the Feast of the Assumption, a holy day of obligation?

Part of the explanation has to be that we get stuff on some of those occasions. This is so obvious we might overlook it, but it's surely part of the explanation. It's not just stuff. A rosary is not a rabbit's foot. It is blessed; it has the prayers of the Church behind it; and it is something we use to pray ourselves. But it is a thing, and a reminder that we can use everything to praise God.

These things are also stuff we carry with us – ashes and holy water on our foreheads, rosaries in our pockets, medals around our necks. My wife has her palm in her purse. The point is not that they're compact. It is that we are able to keep them as constant reminders to repent and believe in the Gospel.

The other thing that makes them sacramentals and not good luck charms is that they are part of a practice we share with other believers. We say the rosary with our grandchildren. Our ashes mark the Church's observance of



JOHN GARVEY

INTELLECT AND VIRTUE

Lent. The holy water font stands at the doorway to bless everyone who comes in.

I don't want to get too mystical about it, but this is the virtue of faith in action. As Pope Francis says in "The Joy of the Gospel" ("Evangelii Gaudium"), it expresses our belief "more by way of symbols than by discursive reasoning." Palms and ashes are acts of faith that lay more stress on "credere in Deum" than on "credere Deum."

John Garvey is President of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

When your time is up, how would you want to exit this world?

On July 25 of last year, the Church celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. It was a fitting addition to the life of the Church by Pope Francis, who from the early days of his pontificate has spoken clearly about the great gifts that the elderly bring to family life and society in general.

On one such occasion, during a general audience address in March 2015, Pope Francis said: "The Church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less of indifference and contempt, toward old age. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, of hospitality, which makes the elder feel like a living part of his community. Our elders are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. They are men and women from whom we have received so much. The elder is not an alien. We are that elder: in the near or far future, but inevitably, even if we don't think it. And if we don't learn how to treat the elder better, that is how we will be treated."

How true. Old age, if we are fortunate, comes for us all. How will we want to be treated when our time comes?

For the second time in less than a year, our family lost



GRETCHEN CROWE

GUEST COMMENTARY

someone special. On St. Patrick's Day, my husband Michael's grandmother, Betty, who had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease, passed away after a year and a half in a memory care facility. Her deterioration was both mental and physical, and she spent time in three different nursing homes as her decline continued. For much of that time, with COVID in control, we were unable to visit her in person, save for through a window — visits that sometimes only literally lasted seconds because it was too cold for her. Thankfully, she had some wonderful nurses who would call us regularly on video chat, and Nanny, whose ability to speak was declining, at least would be able to hear us talking to her and see the kids running around and waving.

When she was moved to the third facility, this one very close to Michael's parents' home, health restrictions were starting to loosen, and visitors were permitted under certain conditions.

CROWE, page 13

Divine Mercy Sunday provides opportunity to turn to God



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Second Sunday of Easter John 20:19-31

Last week, with great joy and hope, the Church celebrated Easter. This week, the Church begins to tell us what the resurrection of the Lord means to us here and now. It is about God's loving mercy.

This weekend's first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles. Important to understanding Christianity and the Church itself is realizing that Acts continues St. Luke's Gospel. This fact is not that apparent since for centuries biblical translators have inserted St. John's Gospel between Luke's Gospel and Acts, blurring the connection

between Luke and Acts.

The link shows that the redemption secured by Jesus did not end with the Lord's ascension, nor did the Lord's miracles, nor preaching. Vitally important is the fact that all these realities associated with Jesus were continued by the Apostles in the context of the infant Church.

Thus, this weekend's reading describes a time not very long after the Lord's ascension. His Apostles, quite obviously led by Peter, continued the Lord's mission of redemption.

His mercy acted through them. It lived through them. This weekend's reading tells of the sick and the weak being brought to Peter, who healed them just as Jesus had healed the lame and the mute.

The Book of Revelation provides the second reading. It shows us the ongoing place of divine mercy in life. First, God inspired John to write this Scripture, that future generations, such as our own, might know God. Divine revelation in itself is an act of God's mercy.

Second, John wrote some time after the ascension. He wrote not in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and rose, but on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea, now part of Greece. Years had passed. The site was distant from the Holy Land. God's mercy is confined by no borders, distances or by time.

The message is that God always reveals to anyone, wherever, whenever. God always reaches to us.

St. John's Gospel provides the last reading. It is a very familiar Resurrection narrative, the story of the reluctance of the apostle Thomas to accept that Jesus truly had risen to life after having been crucified, and then of the great faith of Thomas.

The Apostles assured Thomas. He was unconvinced. Then, dramatically Jesus appeared. He invited Thomas to believe. In awe and the uttermost faith, Thomas declared that Jesus not only is teacher and Redeemer but is God.

The Lord then conferred upon the Apostles that most divine of powers, the power to judge what

is sinful and to forgive sin. It is a divine power, since sin affronts God, and so, only God can forgive sin. Jesus forgave, being the Son of God. He transmitted this power to the Apostles, men who would form the Church and bequeath this power to the Church for all the generations to come.

Reflection

Two points in the readings support the theme of divine mercy. The first is the absolute love of the Lord, seen in the readings.

The second point is that God's call, spoken in every age, comes to us through the Apostles. They were so much more than the Lord's companions and students. They represented the Lord, receiving the Lord's authority and power. They bore this authority and power after the Ascension.

Majestic among all these powers was their ability to forgive sins, an ability expressly conferred upon them by Jesus, as

the Gospel indicates.

Be consoled. No one is alone. Granted, as humans we are limited, no matter how impressive "progress" may be, but Jesus comes to us with strength, knowledge and life. He lives! His mercy lives, as freshly now as ever.

We must only turn to God honestly and humbly.

READINGS

Sunday: Acts 5:12-16 Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 Rv 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

Jn 20:19-31

Monday: 1 Pt 5:5b-14 Ps 89:2-3, 6-7, 16-17 Mk 16:15-20

Tuesday: Acts 4:32-37 Ps 93:1-2, 5 Jn 3:7B-15

Wednesday: Acts 5:17-26 Ps 34:2-9 Jn 3:16-21

Thursday: Acts 5:27-33 Ps 34:2, 9, 17-20 Jn 3:31-36

Friday: Acts 5:34-42 Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14 Jn 6:1-15

Saturday: Acts 6:1-7 Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19 Jn 6:16-21

Providence and vocation found in ‘Father Stu’

Mark Wahlberg’s new film “Father Stu” is one of the most theologically interesting films to come out in a long time. It considers some of the thorniest and most puzzling themes in the sacred science, including the nature of vocation, the purpose of suffering in the divine plan, the role of supernatural agency, the dynamics of redemption and perhaps most thoroughly, the mystery of God’s providence. In the course of this article, I would like to say just a few simple things about the first and last of those motifs.

Let’s take providence first. I have argued for years that most people in the modern world are functionally deist in their understanding of God. This means that they consider God a distant cause, important perhaps in bringing the universe into being, but now essentially uninvolved with His creation. This might have been the philosophical perspective of the leading minds of the eighteenth century, but it is most assuredly not the perspective of the authors of the Bible. For the writers of the Torah, for Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Peter, John and Paul, God is personally and passionately implicated in His creation, especially in the affairs of human beings. The God of Israel pushes, pulls, cajoles, corrects, punishes, leads and lures His human friends into fullness of life. Psalm 139 gives classic expression to this Biblical intuition: “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, You know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me” (Ps. 139:1-5).

Wahlberg’s movie tells the unlikely story of Stuart Long, a burnt-out boxer from Montana who tried to make his way in Hollywood and ended up, to everyone’s enormous surprise, including his own, a Catholic priest. The journey commenced in the LA grocery store where Stu was working as a clerk. He spied a beautiful woman and was smitten. Inquiring after her, he discovered that she was a faithful attendee at the local Catholic parish, and so one Sunday, Stu went to Mass. Not a Catholic, not even a believer, he had no idea what to do or say at the liturgy, but he was intent upon getting to know the girl. After some awkward courting, she frankly informed the boxer that she would never consider dating someone who was not baptized. And so, with decidedly imperfect motivation, Stu entered the RCIA program and received

baptism. In accord with Catholic theology, the sacrament had a truly efficacious effect on Stu, awakening and deepening his faith, and it ultimately prepared him to face a terrible trial. A motorcycle accident, depicted in the film with horrific realism, left him bedridden for months, but his Catholic faith and the support of his girlfriend sustained him. In time, he came to the realization that God wanted him to be a priest.

I wonder, again, how many devout Christians understand that the discernment of their vocation is the most important psychological and spiritual move that they will ever make, that every other decision they make in their lives is secondary.

I won’t rehearse any more of the details of the story, but suffice it to say that, even as Stu was planning a life of movie stardom and marriage, God was about something else entirely. In fact, the Lord of the universe was so interested in the former boxer from Helena that, by careful steps, He led him, first to the Church, then to the faith and finally to the priesthood. I wonder, honestly, how many devout Christians truly believe that God is so interested in them that He supervises their lives, drawing their freedom at every turn. Thomas Aquinas said, simply enough, that God’s providence “extends to particulars,” which implies that He knows and guides everyone individually. St. Paul told the Ephesians that the “power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20). How our lives would change if we learned to trust that power and watch for the signs of His providence.

A theme deeply related to providence is that of vocation or calling. Our culture highly privileges the rights, freedom and prerogative of the individual. We celebrate, accordingly, those people who stand against the expectations of their families, friends or traditions and make their own decisions, following their own chosen path.

But this is repugnant to the



BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

WORD ON FIRE

Bible. The scriptural authors are interested, not in self-determination, but in the process by which a person awakens to God’s call. They celebrate those who enact, not the ego-drama, but the theo-drama; who abide, not by their own voice, but by God’s. They furthermore know that God’s call, once discerned, is practically irresistible. Once someone knows what God wants for him, he will do anything, overcome any obstacle, face down any opposition, in order to follow that divine directive. For biblical examples of this principle, think of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Jeremiah or Paul.

Stuart Long belongs, in his own way, in that great tradition, for having discerned that God wanted him to be a priest. He faced down the opposition of his mother, his father, his girlfriend, many of the people in his parish, the seminary rector and even some of his seminary classmates. Moreover, he remained faithful to his calling when he was afflicted with the degenerative muscle disease that would eventually kill him. “Here I am; send me” (Isa. 6:8), said the prophet Isaiah, and Father Stu said the same thing.

I wonder, again, how many devout Christians understand that the discernment of their vocation is the most important psychological and spiritual move that they will ever make, that every other decision they make in their lives is secondary. And I wonder how many have experienced the real joy and excitement of surrendering to God’s call? What I sensed, especially in the second half of “Father Stu,” is how this man, despite everything, retained the joy of knowing he was cooperating with a divine purpose. That is the joy that, as the Bible says, no one can take from you (John 16:22).

If you want to see a concrete and contemporary enactment of these two great biblical principles, you could do a lot worse than to watch “Father Stu.”

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for April 24, 2022

John 20:19-31

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Divine Mercy Sunday, Cycle C: the Second Sunday of Easter. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

EVENING
JESUS CAME
HIS HANDS
SENT ME
RETAIN
THE LORD
A WEEK

DOORS
PEACE
HIS SIDE
BREATHED
THOMAS
NAILS
BLESSED

FOR FEAR
SHOWED
AS THE FATHER
FORGIVEN
DIDYMUS
FINGER
NAME

FINGERS

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

CROWE, from page 12

Michael went as frequently as he could, given the two-hour drive, but Michael’s father, Bob, went to visit his mother-in-law nearly every day. Those were not easy visits, and his devotion was truly remarkable and yet, for him, unsurprising.

When Nanny died on March 17, Michael and both of his parents were at her side, and she passed from this life as Michael prayed the Church’s prayers for the dying for the second time, during the Litany of Saints in particular. She had been anointed just the day before. It was as peaceful a death as one could hope for. Michael told me later that he just wanted to do right by the woman who had meant so much to him, and who had

witnessed the Faith so well to him while he was growing up.

I half-joked with Michael that I hope I die before him, because I need him right by my side praying me from this world into, God-willing, the eternal life He has prepared for us. But while I was looking for a smile, I was also perfectly serious. When your time is up, how would you want to exit this world?

“The elder is not an alien.” Do we live with this truth in our hearts? Old age, if we are fortunate, comes for us all. How will we want to be treated when our time comes?

Gretchen R. Crowe is Editorial Director for Periodicals at OSV.

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A father receives call to the Father's love

BY JENNIFER BARTON

When Steve and Doree Bush, parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Fort Wayne, followed their daughter Jessica into the Catholic Church several years ago, that made three members of their family to enter the fullness of the faith. Not long after, God began working on their oldest son.

"My story's really crazy," said Dan. Dan lives in Arizona, is married to a Catholic and has two children, yet he was not a happy man when his incredible tale began. He describes himself as "a taker; I lied, cheated and stole." Never did he feel a "heavenly accountability" for the way he used people. Yet something began to change inside of him. He said, "There was a moment that I came to realize I wouldn't go to heaven."

After that, Dan became depressed. "I was falling apart, hollow spiritually. I felt like I was drowning."

Doree told of how she and Steve visited Dan and his family in Arizona periodically, attending Mass with them after she became Catholic. Dan would ask her if she got anything out of it and she responded in the affirmative. "And then he said, 'I want what you have,'" Doree shared. "So we were just praying for him, and Hollie, his wife, she was praying for him."

Those prayers came to fruition one day when Dan was driving around and came to a Catholic church where he wanted to pray. "This time I wasn't praying for selfish reasons. I wanted to get out of my sins."

Since the church was locked, Dan prayed before the life-sized statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe outside, asking that she intercede for him. Then he stopped at a McDonald's parking lot and offered his life to God if only God would set him free from his selfishness and despair.

Three days later, Dan remembered rocking his infant son to sleep in the darkened nursery, praying and asking God how He could love such a selfish human being as himself. After laying the baby down, Dan received an utterly divine answer. A sensation came over him as if someone suddenly embraced him from behind and in his heart, he felt the words: "Because I love you."

The encounter was nearly impossible to describe; it was something too big, too extraordinary for this world. "I felt a bone-crushing love," he remarked in awe.

Falling to his knees, he could only later say that the paralysis he experienced probably lasted only a matter of seconds, though it felt like hours, and he remembered not breathing. Somehow, he understood it as a father-son kind of love; similar to the instant love he had felt when his first son was born, but thousands of times



Provided by Doree Bush

Dan Bush, seen here with his young son, received a very powerful message of conversion as well as personal tasks to bring God's love to others.

greater. "It was too much for my physical body to endure."

Even years later, he remains astonished by those moments. Dan said, "It was like I shed my skin and was reborn. My past was stripped from my body."

That phenomenon left him desiring the one thing the Catholic Church had that no other denomination could claim – reconciliation. Dan knew he needed to repent of his formerly sinful life and he wanted to do so immediately, but his priest informed him that he had to become Catholic first. Without hesitation, Dan signed up for RCIA.

Dan's life was completely transformed, but God wasn't done. He had been called and was about to be sent forth. After that first miraculous encounter, Dan experienced four other astounding events. God chose Dan to be an agent of His love to others in a powerful way through what the Bush family calls "God assignments."

Some years before his conversion, Dan's grandmother, Doree's mother, had passed away. This was the impetus that had launched Doree's journey to the faith. During that time, she had a dream that, with the help of religious sisters from Uganda, was interpreted to mean that her mother might be in purgatory and needed prayers.

After Doree began fervently praying for her mother, Dan had his own dream. In it, he saw his grandmother – young, beautiful and happy. They embraced and she disappeared. It was only after telling Doree about this dream did she reveal to him her dream and how her mother always

wore clothing similar to what Dan described from his dream. The family believes that this was confirmation that Doree's prayers had been answered and her mother was now in heaven.

The other three occurrences involved prayer and words "spoken to my soul, not my ears," as he said. Once he was told "Hug him" and knew somehow that God wanted him to hug his neighbor. Dan fought this. He was not a people-person and barely knew the man. It took more prayer and two more signs from God to convince Dan to approach his neighbor and ask if he could hug him.

When they hugged, both men sobbed "like children." It turned out that his neighbor had been going through a rough time and had even tried to take his own life. All he wanted was a hug; a comforting embrace to know that someone cared about him. Dan provided that.

The next "assignment" involved visiting a coworker who went to prison for a couple years for reasons beyond her control. Aside from her parents and children, Dan was her only visitor. His presence made her feel loved.

Though he no longer questioned the voice inside even when things seemed off-kilter, his last commission was somewhat more complicated. This time, he was asked to go to a young man with bipolar disorder, spending around three hours in a mental hospital talking to him. In that time, he learned a great deal about the condition.

However, that young man did not benefit from that encounter. Dan did. The real mission came

at a band concert that Dan, as a music professor, was leading a couple of weeks later. Another young man, a drummer, showed up late after not having attended the earlier practices. Dan recognized the symptoms of bipolar disorder in the young man. "The Holy Spirit filled me with what to say." Through Dan's words, the young man became stable enough to perform well in the show, something that astonished his grandmother, who thanked Dan afterwards.

Dan often asks himself why he was chosen to receive these duties. It is both frightening and amazing. "I was probably the most callous one of our family," he stated, the least likely one to be rewarded with such tasks. The only conclusion he reached is that God is still changing him from the inside out. "Each instance, it became very clear why He wanted me to do these things. They always ended in love. It has taught me to love my neighbor."

To date, he hasn't had another mission and wonders when or if he will. Either way, because of these personal encounters, Dan says he has "grown stronger in my faith, in my church. I'm forever grateful for the gift He's given me."

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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.

St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish Mission with Father Jewel Aytona, CPM
NEW CARLISLE — St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, 55756 Tulip Rd., will begin a parish mission on Sunday, April 24, with Father Aytona, who is a priest from the Fathers of Mercy. Confessions will be offered at 6 p.m. with adoration. At 7 p.m., the presentation on various topics will include: 1) Confidence in God and St. Joseph, Patron of the Church, 2) God's Divine Mercy, 3) Lukewarmness is the devil in disguise, 4) The 4 Last Things, and 5) Humility, the path to heaven. The parish mission concludes on Thursday night with Holy Mass.

have a fish and tenderloin dinner with two sides and homemade dessert on Friday, April 22, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. in the gymnasium. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$6 for children ages 6-12, and free for children 5 and younger. Dine in or carry out. Contact Mary Till at mandmtill81@gmail.com.

Tickets include sandwiches and beverages and a chance in a \$1000 drawing. Contact Jim Niespodziany at 574-250-7836 or niespo48@sbcglobal.net. Lic#001289.

Holy Family Las Vegas Night
SOUTH BEND — The Holy Family Ushers Club, 56405 Mayflower Rd., will be holding a Las Vegas Night on Saturday, April 23, from 6-11 p.m. in the parish center. Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door.

Blessing of the Bikes
ARCOLA — St. Patrick Church, 12305 Arcola Rd., will host the annual Blessing of the Bikes on Saturday, April 30, at noon. Free admission and all bikes welcome! Event held rain or shine! 50/50 raffle, T-shirts, food and drinks served with proceeds going to the youth group.

Armor of God spiritual briefing - arming men to make the case for life
FORT WAYNE — Armor of God was created by laity with the direct purpose to arm men to be the spiritual leaders that God designed them to be. Abigail Lorenzen from Right to Life of Northeast Indiana will speak to the group on Wednesday, April 27, from 6:45-8:30 p.m. at the St. Vincent de Paul Parish Msgr. Kuzmich Life Center, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. Contact Robert Gregory at 317-502-6201 or rob@fwjls.com for information.

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