

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Love of God, Faith, Church Led Candidates to Large Deacon Class

BY DENISE FEDOROW

Eighteen men are set to be ordained as deacons on Jan. 7, 2023, and according to Director of Diaconate Formation Deacon Stan LeMieux, it's the largest class since the 1980s.

Their four years of formation is winding down. Deacon LeMieux said the candidates gave up 24 Saturdays each year for classes. The classes were mostly taught by theology professors from the University of Notre Dame and included topics such as liturgical time management, the married deacon, evangelization and catechesis, and homiletics. They also attended workshops and retreats.

"Academically, it has been a tough program with 15 hours of homework a week, taught at the college level," said Deacon LeMieux.

A few of the men talked about what the experience has been like for them and why they wanted to become a deacon.

Orlando Miranda, St. Joseph Parish, Fort Wayne, said, "It's been in my heart for years but it's about timing, and it happened beautifully how I said yes to the Lord."

Miranda's pastor first spoke to his wife about the program, so when his pastor asked him if he would like to join,

Miranda was surprised to learn that his wife already knew about it.

James Summers, St. Pius, Granger, wasn't thinking about the diaconate; he was considering becoming a lector. "For me, I was concerned about people who feel left out, who are treated as 'other' and I'd ask God 'why does this happen?' I sensed through prayer 'because you know what it feels like, you'll recognize when others are being treated that way and I want you to let them know they are loved.'"

That's what drives him, and others suggested to him that he should consider joining the diaconate program. "So, I thought, 'let me see what God wants.'"

Joseph Cochran, St. Paul of the Cross, Columbia City, said he also had someone approach him about joining the program. He had known about the diaconate program since the early 1980s because his father-in-law is a permanent deacon.



Denise Fedorow

Deacon candidates Joe Cochran, James Summers, Orlando Miranda, and Phil Hayes share their experiences after a day-long Saturday class at Grace College in Winona Lake, Warsaw.

Cochran had never thought about it, though he enjoyed watching his father-in-law. He added that since he's been married, he and his wife and children have had a very full prayer life.

"It's been a joy," he said. "I believe the class itself has become a form of our prayer and it's deepened every aspect."

The diaconate was not on the mind of Philip Hayes, St. Pius, Granger, but a pilgrimage he and his wife took to Fatima in 2017 changed that. On that pilgrimage, he heard a calling from all the pilgrims, saying, "Are you willing to do more for the Church instead of trying to maximize the almighty dollar at work?"

When he got home, he turned in his one-year retirement notice and four months later, saw a notice in his church bulletin about the diaconate program. "Classes started the same week my retirement happened. That was the Holy Spirit working," he said.

The men also talked about what they love about the Catholic Church. Summers said for him, it's the tradition. "I do a lot of work in the community and work with people and pastors of different denominations and faiths, and I've not seen anyone else with that tradition. Some young Catholics don't like the idea that the Mass is always the same but that's really the most beautiful thing — no matter where you go it's the same sacrifice."

He went to the Holy Land and had the opportunity to serve at Mass twice there. "The consistency and all the traditions and rituals have so much meaning, and I haven't seen that anywhere else."

Miranda loves that the Church is universal. "The diversity — (it's) for all people. You can spread God's word in any language and meet people where they are. When interacting with people, you see Christ in them, and we are all called to serve the Church with our gifts."

"I love that the Church teaches us about God," Hayes said. He's been a religious education instructor for 18 years. "I love teaching children about God, and I love passing the love of God along."

Cochran loves the tradition too, and remembers his parents and grandparents practicing the Faith. "I love the face of our faith community today with kids participating in song, parents teaching (religious education) classes, all the things that go on in the parish around us." He mentioned how the massive crowds at the Eucharistic Revival showed signs of solidarity.

Formation Experience

The four deacon candidates also shared some of their experiences during formation, including what surprised them the most.

Miranda said, "How God works — how He transforms you — when you open your heart and stop resisting and let Him do the work. What He touches, He transforms. The people He calls, He'll prepare."

The first thing that surprised Cochran, although he admitted maybe it shouldn't have, was "the complete support given to our spouses and the emphasis on marriage as our vocation." The support shown to the wives has helped them feel more confident.

Secondly, he said he was "amazed at the clear friendships all 18 of us have made." He also believes formation "strengthened marriages."

As a seventh-generation Catholic, Summers was surprised by how little he really knew about what the Church teaches and was amazed by the connection between the sacraments and Church teaching, "especially the power of the Eucharist to feed us to go out and do the work we're supposed to be doing and the amazing power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation." He went on to say, "As deacons, we can help the laity realize we can go into the community and do little things in our neighborhoods. People are hurting, they don't feel loved, don't get support. Each one of us are given gifts from God in order to do that if we recognize it and try to apply it with God's grace."

Hayes was "pleasantly surprised and pleased with the involvement of our spouses in the program and how we support each other in this new vocation as deacons and deacon spouses."

The men did admit there have been challenges as well. Getting used to being back in a classroom again was mentioned by all.

"There were some words in theology I never heard before. It took time to absorb the writing and reading," Miranda said.

By admitting his weakness and allowing God to work through him, he received graces to weather the challenges. "The discipline of prayer

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A Family by Adoption: Looking Back on a Life of Love

BY JENNIFER BARTON

There has never been a time in Emily Byers' life when she did not know that there was something special about her. "I never remember a time not being adopted. I can't pinpoint; I've had people ask me. Well, I don't know; I've always known, it was never a secret. I can't even comprehend how I was told because it was always there," she confided.

"My favorite story is the day they brought me home. Everybody just descended on my grandma's house. I mean it's funny, everybody was there, everyone came."

"It's actually kind of neat, how many people out in the world are adopted?" she speculated. "That's unique about me."

Then

Summer 1982. Linda Byers received a phone call. "We have a little girl for you if you want her," said the voice on the other end of the line. This was the day – the phone call – that she and her husband Roger had anticipated for more than four years. The nursery was all prepared and decked out in pink, awaiting the baby girl that the couple had longed for but were unable to conceive. Immediately, Linda packed her things and left her job permanently within the hour. No one in their families knew that day that they hopped into their car – with car seat already installed – and drove straight to South Bend to the Catholic Social Services office to pick up their newborn daughter.

"They talked to us for a while then this girl, this employee, she was the one taking care of the baby, she had interface with the birth mother. She brought her in, Emily, and laid her in our hands, said 'Well, would you like to take her home?' it's like what are you going to say, no?" Linda recalled with a chuckle.

From there, they drove not to their own home, but to Linda's parents' house because, as Linda explained, "they wanted to be grandparents as much as we wanted to be parents, and she was the first grandchild for them."

Aunts and uncles descended upon the house where the long-awaited child passed from the arms of one relative to another. "Then we took her home and just began our lives with Emily," Linda related.

The process toward adoption has surely changed over the years, but the mountain of paperwork would-be parents



Photos provided by Emily Byers

The Byers family, parents Roger and Linda, and siblings Emily and Bradley, is seen in a photo from 1990. Adopting Emily in 1982 opened the door for Roger and Linda to become parents, and by the grace of God, they were able to conceive Bradley shortly after Emily's arrival in their family.

face likely has not. When Linda and Roger began trying to adopt a child after eight years of marriage and five years of trying to get pregnant, the task seemed daunting. It was two years before their first evaluation took place and another two until they held Emily in their arms.

"It was a kind of a stressful experience," Linda admitted. At the time, she worried about whether they said or did the right things in the group meetings; whether they would be considered good parents or disqualified. Both Roger and Linda wrestled with doubts and questioned their faith when they couldn't get pregnant. "We did pray about it a lot, we did wonder, but you accept what happens," Roger said.

They had never been told that there was a medical reason for their infertility, so they began the adoption process expecting that they might not need it. As Linda wanted a little girl, they waited a few additional months to welcome their daughter. Even after adopting Emily, they put their names back on the long waiting list, but God intervened and Linda finally became pregnant with a son, Bradley, who, sadly, passed away several years ago.

Raising two children so close

in age, Roger said, "we never thought anything different about either one of them. They were just our kids; we don't care where they came from, they were our children. We never treated them or looked at them or felt any different about either one of them."

Linda can't recall a point at which they explained to Emily about her adoption. "We used the word in front of people, we didn't try to hide it. We didn't blare it out all the time 'this is our adopted daughter'; this is our daughter and that's how we talked about her. The word came out a lot over the years."

She remembers a unique encounter she had when she was in the hospital after giving birth to Bradley. "The first night I was in the room, there were two of us in the room ... when everybody went home, we got talking. She was a single mother, unmarried, and was going to give up her baby for adoption." The young woman asked Linda questions about adoption, and she did the best she could to answer them, hoping to put her mind at ease about the loving decision she was making for her child. "Both sides of adopting. I got her perspective, too, and her feelings."

Roger and Linda were able



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Tuesday, Nov. 22: 10:30 a.m. – Presbyteral Council Meeting, Sacred Heart Church, Warsaw
Wednesday, Nov. 23: 2 p.m. – Meeting of Board of National Eucharistic Congress, Indianapolis
Sunday, Nov. 27: 10:30 a.m. – Mass, St. Anne Home and Retirement Community, Fort Wayne



Emily and Bradley are seen in a photo in 1987. Roger and Linda have always thought of both of their children as their own, regardless of Emily coming to their family through adoption.

to share their ordeal with others when involved in Engaged Encounter years ago. Roger hopes that their witness helped younger couples see the kinds of struggles they might face in married life and learn to navigate those with faith.

The couple knows nothing about Emily's birth mother, other than that she may have been raised Catholic and therefore placed her child with a Catholic agency, perhaps wanting her child to share a similar faith life. In awe, Linda said, "Think how much love that mother had to give her child up. I just can't imagine that."

As any parent would, Roger and Linda prefer to protect their child from pain but are willing to help Emily if she chooses to begin a search. The only things they would want to express are their gratitude to Emily's birth mother for giving them the opportunity to be parents and, as Roger put it, set her mind at ease that Emily was treated well and has a good life.

Now

Forty years later, Emily could not imagine a better life than the one that Roger and Linda gave her, raised in a large extended family, attending Catholic schools at St. Vincent de Paul and Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne. She allows that some

adoptees might feel a sense of loss or that something was missing from their lives, but she has rarely felt that. "I was very blessed. Great parents. My extended family was great. And I think that's what it came down to."

Her family has long told her the story of that first day that they met her. Even her aunt and uncle, expecting their first child, thought

to be the first grandchild, "were really great ... they almost kind of stepped back when I came along," surrendering the spotlight to Roger, Linda, and Emily. From that day on, she has always been considered the first grandchild, no matter the circumstances of how she came into the family. She and her grandmother in particular always shared a close bond.

To date, Emily has no desire to search for her birth mother, potentially opening a Pandora's box of pain. Aside from knowing her medical history, "At this point, I don't see the purpose of it," she declared.

In today's society, some people disparage adoption as a cruel option, claiming that abortion would be better for the child. As an adoptee, this hurts her to hear. "It's almost like there is no adoption choice anymore; you either abort your child or you keep it. ... Why would you want to [abort your child]? Because there are so many people out there that want kids and want to take care of them, why would you not want to give your child that?"

Her birth mother, she said, "made the ultimate sacrifice. She did what was right. Because she knew deep down that she could not take care of me, and I think that's another reason why I'm positive about it."

Priests, Seminarians Set to Renew Roundball Rivalry

BY ERIC PEAT

For 364 days of the year, our diocesan priests and seminarians stand together as brothers in Christ.

But for one night every year, they take the basketball court as opposing squads, each determined to exert their dominance and claim bragging rights over their consecrated cohorts.

The eighth installment of the Cupertino Classic is set for Tuesday, Dec. 27 at Saint Joseph High School in South Bend. The event is named after St. Joseph of Cupertino, a 17th century friar who was known to levitate during prayer. What began in 2014 as a friendly competition pitting priests against seminarians in a basketball game has grown into an annual tradition, one that is highly anticipated by diocesan clergy and laity alike. The priests lead the overall series 4-3, although the seminarians have triumphed in three of the last four meetings, including last year's 55-34 victory.

Father Daniel Niezer, Pastor at St. Dominic in Bremen, has been around since the game's inception and has experienced it from both sides – three times as a seminarian, and three times as a priest.

"As a seminarian, I remember feeling that we were obviously the 'heels' of the game with the priests garnering all of the fan support. That gave us great motivation to stick it to the priests and pull off an

upset. But now that I've been ordained a priest, it's a great feeling to be on the other end and wanting to beat up the young kiddo seminarians," Father Niezer said with a laugh.

The evening festivities will begin with Mass at 3:45 p.m. in the school chapel, followed by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament leading up to game-time. Doors will open at 5:45 p.m. for the game, with tipoff set for 6:30 p.m. There is no cost to attend, though donations are encouraged and will go towards the seminarian education fund. Seminarian Andy Barnes, who is organizing the event along with fellow seminarians Sam Martinez and Noah Isch, said the evening is all about the men and women who have given their lives to the Lord.

"The main mission of the event is to bring awareness and promote vocations to religious life and the priesthood, in particular the diocesan priesthood," said Barnes, citing that Vocations Director Father Andrew Budzinski and the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration will be present to speak with anyone interested about discernment to the religious life.

"Ideally, the people of God will be able to witness the joy of the presbyterate and future priests of our diocese. Secondly, this game is a fantastic way to bring all sorts of people from all across the diocese together to celebrate in a family-friendly, fun, and



joy-filled way. With Mass and adoration, we also hope that people will be able to experience the love of Christ in the gift of the Holy Eucharist."

The priests bring a wealth of experience to the court, with veterans like Fathers Matthew and Terry Coonan, along with Father Drew Curry, who Father Niezer said "has the gift of the Spirit and will make just about any three-pointer, as long as it's ten feet behind the arc."

Father Ben Landrigan will provide the priests with "court control and stability," and he'll be joined on the team by Father Niezer, Father Thomas Zehr, Father Paolo Degasperri, and Father Jay Horning.

In order to beat the younger and more energetic seminarian squad, Father Niezer said the priests will need to control the ball, control the clock, and keep a slow tempo. He admitted that his team's preparation will be minimal yet effective in its goal of humiliation.

"Our conditioning will include a lot of smack talk and little exercise," explained Father Niezer. "We want to do our best to be in the worst

shape possible so that the seminarians feel even worse when we beat them."

On the seminarian side, Deacon Brian Florin, who is playing in his fifth Cupertino Classic, said they key to victory is being able to play passionately while remaining under control.

"Honestly, at the end of the day, it comes down to bringing the intensity and matching their intensity," said Deacon Florin. "The priests have the crowd on their side. We've got to try and keep our composure, so we can weather a storm if Father Terry [Coonan] hits a halfcourt three or Father Drew Curry hits one with his eyes closed."

The seminarians will be led by Greenan Sullivan, who will operate as a player-coach on the floor. Deacon Florin was quick to point out that "this is Greenan's home court," as Sullivan starred at Saint Joseph High School for three years before playing college basketball at Ave Maria University in Florida. Sullivan and Deacon Florin will be joined by deacons David Langford, Jake

Schneider, and Ryan Timossi, as well as seminarians Andy Barnes and Eric Plude.

In addition to chalking up one final win as a seminarian – as "turning the jersey inside-out is going to be quite the experience" next year – Deacon Florin said he is focused on enjoying the unique nature of the event.

"I want to soak in the experience of being around 1,000 people from the diocese," said Deacon Florin. "Whether they know basketball or not, they're there to support their priests and seminarians. During the game last year, I took a moment to stop, look around, and take that in. I was overwhelmed thinking, 'This is my home; these are my people.' And as I am soon to be ordained, these people are going to be my flock."

And as Father Niezer noted, this flock relishes the chance to root on their favorite members of clergy in an environment entirely outside the normal church setting.

"Everybody enjoys the opportunity to see their priests and religious sisters in a different light," said Father Niezer. "One day, we are seeing our priests playing a great game of basketball, and the next, we get to see them celebrating holy Mass. We get to see our Sisters of St. Francis making jokes on the P.A. during the game, and the next, they are spending extra time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Who wouldn't be attracted to these vocations?"



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and following the example of our Holy Mother's humility and obedience helped me get through," he said. "We were given a Litany of Humility and I've been praying that every day and that's helped."

The extensive reading and time management were some of the greatest challenges the men faced. "I have a degree in engineering, so a lot of math and no reading," Hayes said with a laugh. "Theology and philosophy were at first a challenge, but then I enjoyed it and soaked it all in."

As husband, father of eight, and business manager, finding time was difficult for Cochran at first, "but everything fell into place and I was waking naturally at 4 or 5 a.m. to do the reading."

"I said to my wife that it's been 100 years since I've been in school and she responded, 'it's literally been 50 years'," Summers said. He admitted he

also struggled with the genealogy and the Liturgy of the Hours, but his spiritual director encouraged him to give it time. "Now it's naturally my morning prayer and a way to kick off the day."

The deacon candidates expressed appreciation for the professors and for Deacon Stan LeMieux, acknowledging they all also gave a huge time commitment. "He's been a good dad to us, a good example of how to be a deacon," said Miranda. "He's had good words of wisdom for us and has shown us such love."

Looking Ahead

Asked what they are most looking forward to once they're ordained, Summers responded, "Reading the Gospel. Serving at Mass every day. It just gets better every time, but I'm looking forward to just being able to proclaim the Gospel."

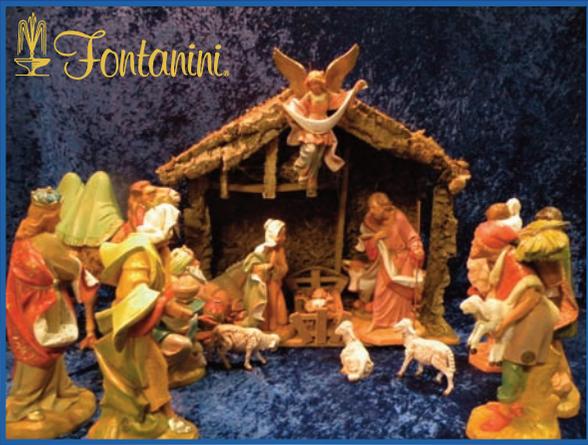
While they don't know yet where they will be assigned,

Miranda said that he looked forward to "continuing to serve the people with the grace of God. I'm excited and humbled to see where God is going to take me and what He wants me to do to serve His people."

Cochran and Hayes both agreed that serving the community is the most important part of being ordained a deacon.

Hayes stated, "In our lives, we spent 25 years in education and then work and family and providing for the family. All that time we've been blessed. Now I have the opportunity to give back to God for all the wonderful things He's given to us."

For now, Miranda said, "It feels beautiful being here with my brothers sitting next to me and hearing God's will and following His will."



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U.S. Bishops Launch New Approach to Teaching the Faith

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – Catholic Church leaders are taking a new approach to passing on the Faith, saying they recognize a pressing need to do this in a way that adapts to the modern world. This new outreach, called the Institute on the Catechism, is not a place but instead a new springboard for faith formation developed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on the Catechism. It will involve catechetical publishers working directly with the USCCB subcommittee on new ways to pass on the Faith using digital tools and aiming to reach a more diverse Church. It will also provide resources to dioceses and yearly, in-person training conferences and retreats for diocesan catechetical leaders. As Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, Chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee on the Catechism, sees it: Catholic parishes need to re-create a "Catholic culture that recognizes we're in the 21st century. We can't go back to 1950; it's gone." Re-creating what he describes as a "radically different model" for teaching the Faith is something he has been working on with this subcommittee for the past several years. The bishop announced the proposal to create the institute at the bishops' spring meeting last June. It will officially launch Nov. 10-12 just ahead of the bishops' annual fall meeting in Baltimore.

Russian Ambassador Confirms Pope Helped Facilitate Prisoner Exchanges

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Russia's ambassador to the Vatican confirmed that Pope Francis helped facilitate recent prisoner exchanges with Ukraine and said the Vatican is ready to act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia. The Italian news agency Asknews reported that the ambassador, Aleksandr Avdeyev, said the exchanges of prisoners occur in accordance with the lists of military prisoners of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; the lists are handed over by Pope Francis. "In this case, we highly appreciate the personal actions of the pontiff, who is carrying out a very important humanitarian mission that allows hundreds of people to return to their families," Avdeyev said. Returning to the Vatican from Bahrain on Nov. 6, Pope Francis told reporters traveling with him that the Vatican is "constantly attentive" to what is happening in Ukraine, and that the Secretariat of State

Hurricane Nicole Batters Florida Coast



CNS photo/Ricardo Arduengo, Reuters

An aerial view shows a flooded street in Vero Beach, Florida, following the passage of Hurricane Nicole on Nov. 10, 2022.

continues to do what is possible and has worked behind the scenes to help arrange prisoner exchanges. The pope also told reporters that he thinks the cruelty of the attacks on Ukraine and its civilians are the work of mercenaries, not Russians, who are "a great people" and have a strong "humanism."

Catholic Leaders Vow to Continue Fight After State Abortion Measures Pass

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNS) – Although Catholic leaders and state Catholic conferences had pushed for the defeat of ballot measures protecting legal abortion and urged voters to pass measures restricting abortions, state voters ultimately went the other way on Nov. 8. Voters in California, Vermont, and Michigan approved abortion

protections, while Kentucky and Montana voters rejected abortion restrictions. These ballot measures were the first time voters faced the opportunity to weigh in on abortion laws since the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision in June that overturned Roe v. Wade, its 1973 case legalizing abortion nationwide. Catholic bishops in states where these votes took place expressed disappointment and renewed their commitment to keep up the fight to end abortion and to provide support to women and families in need. "Abortion is now legal in Michigan at an unprecedented level, and millions of lives are at stake," wrote Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron in a letter to Catholics posted on the archdiocesan website on Nov. 9. "We awake today to the news that Proposal 3 has passed, altering our state constitution to allow for unregulated and unsafe abortion on demand in Michigan," he wrote,

saying that people of faith are "deeply saddened by this grave assault on the dignity and sanctity of unborn, innocent human life."

African Bishops: No Climate Justice Without Land Justice

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) – As the U.N. climate change conference unfolds in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh, Catholic bishops in Africa are warning that there cannot be climate justice without land justice. The bishops of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar said on Nov. 8 that land, natural resources, and the ecosystem were the main sources of subsistence for the people in Africa, but many did not have access to land due to perverse commercial relations and ownership. At the same time, as the people struggled

against the current global climate crisis, they were victims of land and water grabs, experienced pollution of their water and soil by pesticides, and were losing biodiversity and traditional seeds, according to the bishops. "Communities share the experience that, as they claim their rights to land, they are being persecuted, which is leading to more violent conflicts, despair, and instability," Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, president of SECAM's Justice, Peace, and Development Commission, said in a statement titled, "No climate justice without land justice." The cardinal said it was clear the communities would be better if their resources were not captured by powerful people and corporations and given away by weak public institutions.

EU Bishops' Commission Urges Action to Mitigate Energy Crisis

OXFORD, England (CNS) – The European Union's Catholic bishops urged action to protect the bloc's 450 million citizens against dramatic energy and food price hikes this winter. "The misuse of energy as a tool of geopolitical coercion that we are currently witnessing should prompt the international community to find institutional means for an effective, inclusive, and equitable global governance of energy; a real and lasting peace will only be possible on a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation," said the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, COMECE. "As winter approaches, we call on all who bear responsibility in public life not to abandon families and persons who are vulnerable or victims of socio-economic discrimination, unable to cope with soaring inflation and pay for heating or electricity." The statement was published as prices skyrocketed under the impact of war in Ukraine and international sanctions against Russia after its Feb. 24 invasion. COMECE said Europe's overdependence on Russian oil and gas imports had allowed Moscow to weaponize energy supplies, intensifying insecurity across Europe, especially for the most vulnerable. "Many people were already severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, while the energy crisis adds to their economic and mental burden; while some companies are going bankrupt, others are laying off workers, and many people can no longer cope with the rising cost of living," added the Brussels-based commission, which represents around 1,000 bishops from the EU's 26 member-states.



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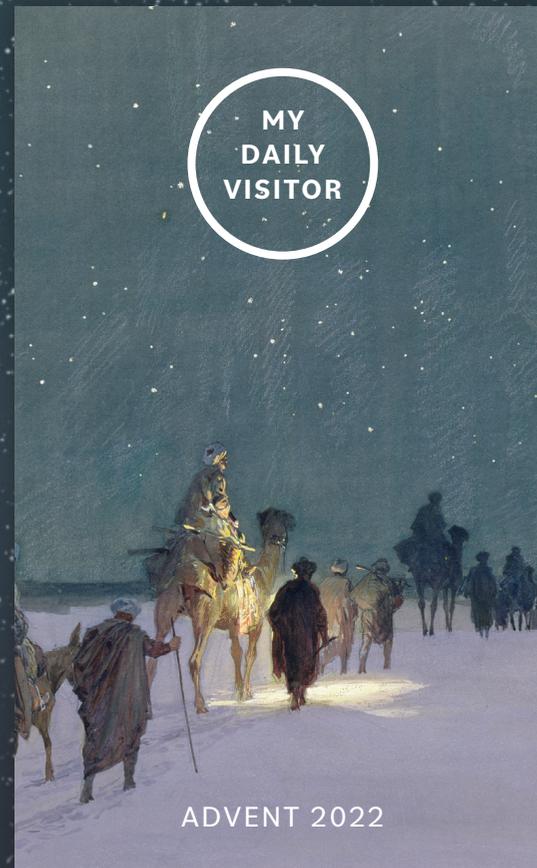
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Unity, Revival the Heart of Shema

BY JENNIFER BARTON

Embracing the Truth

Can three people change the culture of a city, a diocese? Caleb and Natali Perkins and Gloria Kohrman don't believe so. But they believe that the power of God working through their lives and their music can transform hearts and minds, and that God has called them to do so.

Shema Culture, a new ministry in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, promotes glorifying God through praise and worship music. Taken from the Hebrew Shema prayer (Deut. 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel..."), the trio hopes to bridge the Catholic and Protestant worlds and inflame hearts through musical worship. The members of the trio could not presume to inspire change if they themselves had not been changed by God.

Young married couple Caleb and Natali grew up Protestant (Pentecostal and Baptist), where praise and worship music were a natural piece of devotion to God. They were active in a non-denominational church before becoming Catholic a little more than a year ago. Caleb felt called to become a youth pastor at his church and so decided to learn as much theology as possible to better teach children the Christian faith. Desiring to worship as close to the first Apostles as possible, he began a "search for truth", whereupon "the Lord led me to the Catholic faith, and the Eucharist was the final tipping point. Once He revealed that to me, I'm like 'I have to become Catholic.'"

When he told Natali this

in the summer of 2020, she resisted joining him, but when "he started RCIA and started graciously and very gently sharing things with me and I would argue with him", eventually his defense of the Church began making sense to her. Natali decided to learn about Catholicism from those who lived it, and Caleb encouraged her to do her own research.

"I didn't even believe that Catholics were Christian for a long time before the Lord very graciously started to tear down those misconceptions and open my heart to the beauty of the Catholic Church and the ancient faith that we have," Natali remarked. The reality of the Eucharistic feast and its connection to the Passover finally drove her into the arms of the Church as well.

Both were confirmed last spring at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne, where they remain parishioners. Since then, they have been on fire for the Faith.

Gloria was raised Catholic at St. Charles Borromeo. Even so, she reached a point when she had to embrace the Faith on her own, and that came in high school. "I believe that every single cradle Catholic, even if it's small, has to have a reversion. Maybe it's a small reversion, maybe it's a big reversion, but we have to have a point where we decide 'do I want to stop doing this or do I want to keep doing this?'"



Provided Gloria Kohrman

she said. She seized the Faith, becoming what she called "the biggest Catholic nerd" at her public high school. She began writing Christ-centered music in high school and continued this into her college years.

Prior to meeting Caleb and Natali, Gloria had a desire to use her voice and guitar for

praise and worship, yet had no outlet for it. Natali had been singing since she was a child; Caleb plays guitar and cajón (a box-shaped percussion instrument). Before their conversion to Catholicism, they were involved in leading worship at their church and wanted to carry that into

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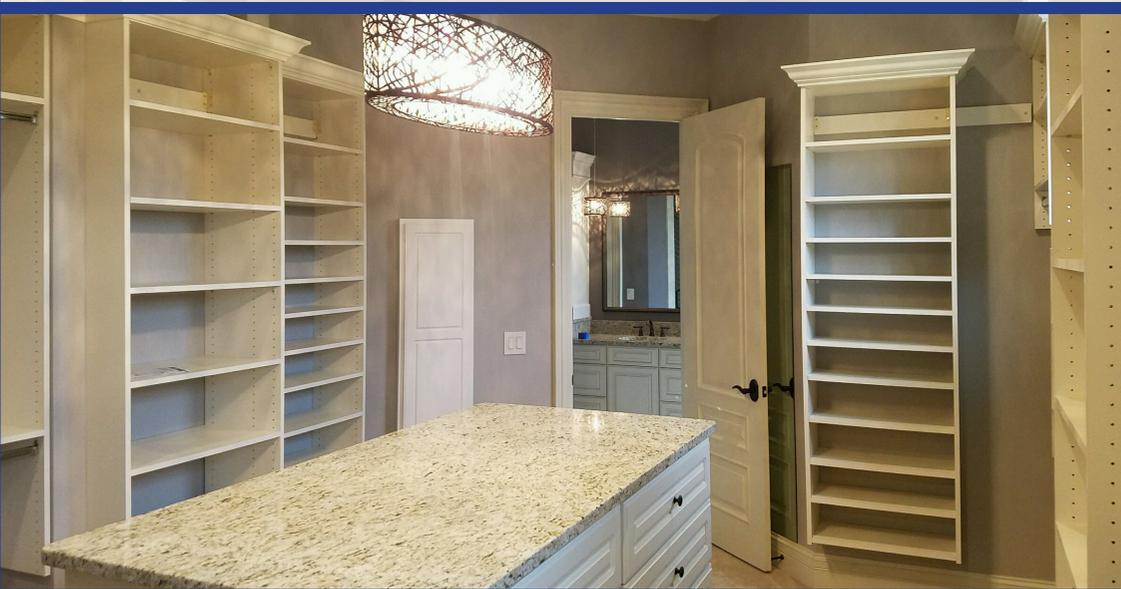
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their new faith life. A mutual friend, who knew the desires of their hearts, brought the three together, and the trio took off.

"The further along our praise and worship as a team has progressed, the stronger our friendship got," Gloria shared. Today, she and Natali appear more like sisters than friends of only one year.

'A Rock and a Sling and a Heart for the Lord'

The initial plan for Shema Culture was small, a simple music ministry to take place between Masses at St. Charles Borromeo. The three meshed so beautifully that in 2021, they began receiving invitations to play for youth retreats and events like College Crew. Natali said, "That's where it began, that small desire and dream."

At a Damascus retreat in Ohio, those dreams sprouted wings. In separate revelations, Gloria and Natali both realized that "the Lord asked so clearly and so boldly, over and over and over again" for them to surrender their jobs and focus on the ministry full-time, Gloria stated.

Caleb had just begun working for St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne and worried over the loss of his wife's (larger) income. "For the year,



Provided Gloria Kohrman

Members of Shema Culture Gloria Kohrman and Natali and Caleb Perkins bring praise and worship music to Catholics within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, performing at St. Pius X Parish in Granger. The trio began their ministry last year, believing that God has called them to renew hearts in both Catholics and Protestants, and have been much in demand since then.

my word has been fiat," he remarked, and at Damascus, he felt God calling him to emulate St. Joseph, supporting his family while remaining in the background. Trusting in God's providence, both Natali and Gloria left their jobs, believing that one day their ministry will

financially support all three of them.

Working with connections at St. Charles Borromeo and St. Vincent de Paul parishes, they laid the groundwork for Shema Culture, whose mission is to teach, revive, and unite. The trio has played in Granger

and Fort Wayne and will even lead praise music for diocesan pilgrims at World Youth Day in Portugal in 2023.

"The Lord really revealed to us that it's such a need in the Catholic Church. When we're being pulled in multiple directions to play in different places

throughout the week and our calendars look insane, we need more worshippers in the Catholic church, so how can we do that?" Gloria asked.

The answer, they hope, is in establishing praise and worship teams at churches throughout the diocese, training others not in technical skills, but in "the heart posture" of praise and worship leaders, said Caleb. They have begun hosting training workshops at the University of Saint Francis along with a new ministry at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. There is an application on the parish website for anyone interested in joining.

Gloria compared their ministry to David's faith in God. "When he was just little ... all he had was a rock and a sling and a heart for the Lord." Like most ideas, Shema Culture began small but is poised to do tremendous things. The three certainly have a heart for the Lord, and while the obstacles in their path seem large, "We believe very firmly and feel it in our bones and in our souls that the Lord is doing something new in [the diocese]," and using them in His plan.

Gloria agreed. "It feels like a tipping point that's coming and it's going to be like a big boom of revival."

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Giving and Receiving Blessings Around the Diocese

The last months of the year bring a spirit of reflection and thankfulness, a time to ponder the good things of the past year, as well as consider ways to “pay it forward.” As we celebrate Thanksgiving and prepare for the holy season of Advent, Today’s Catholic asked readers to tell us what they are most grateful for and what spiritual gifts they can give to others. These are some of their responses.

What am I thankful for?

What free spiritual gifts can someone give?

Taking Holy Communion to nursing homes and to people who cannot get out of their homes. We need to love and serve our elderly and infirm.

Jill Harris

The thing I am most thankful for is becoming a Catholic this year at Easter.

The spiritual gift that I can think of is to pray daily for those that I love :)

Brittany

Thankful for God’s sweet love.

I can give my time to people who don’t want to die all alone ... hence, a hospice volunteer.

Patti Hagadorn

This year along with the gift of my faith, I am most thankful that my brother-in-law survived his massive stroke last December and that the relationship with him and my sister has gotten so strong.

The gift that I can give this year is being present to those in my life and offering them the gift of prayer for all they hold in their hearts.

Janice Martin

I am thankful for time at retreats, and the clarity that Mary has provided for my husband and I regarding our family.

The gift of listening — true listening without an agenda and with an open heart to help, if asked.

Megan Deig

Being alive after two months on a ventilator in Parkview Regional Medical Center, and my husband had COVID, mild case.

Kindness, love.

Mary Rose and David Lee Kimmel

Family health.

A spiritual gift to someone is the renewed grace to practice the Catholic Faith.

Anonymous

I am thankful that my family and I have not been directly affected by COVID.

There are so many — patience, a smile, a listening ear, understanding.

Geraldine Bryan

For my three grandkids; Jaxon was born just a few months ago.

Time with my family and grandkids; like to cook a meal.

Luke Harkenrider

My family and friends, my faith.

A visit from someone. I can pray for others or I can visit them with a small gift.

Phil and Claire Hayes

My faith, it carried me through life like a comfortable, warm blanket when I most need it.

Kindness, it is a great way to let people know they matter and are loved even in the small gesture.

Kevin Prus

I am most thankful for my husband, Tim, and the support he gives me on my spiritual journey.

The most significant gift I have received from others and the best gift I can give to others is the gift of prayer.

Amber Pavlina

I am thankful for the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation, and a wonderful gift idea is a spiritual bouquet!

Jay Burke

I am thankful for my family — good health, well-being, and the time we are able to spend together. When our daughter Lucy passed away in an accident earlier this year, we were given a spiritual bouquet from the students in the Our Lady of Good Help Homeschool Co-op, who offered Masses, rosaries, holy hours, Divine Mercy chaplets, and many more prayers for Lucy and our family — it was comforting to know we were being prayed for during that difficult time.

Sarah Hilger

I’m beyond thankful for the Lord’s consistent goodness and presence, seen in every breath I take.

In years past, I have given hand-written prayers specific to my individual friends and family members.

Alaina Ganser

I am thankful for the birth of my first child and the joy and simplicity he has inspired in

my husband and I.

A profound gift we can give others is a spiritual offering: whether it’s the daily dishes, preparation for a big meeting, an inconvenient errand, or uncomfortable back pain, all of these things can be offered for the intentions of a loved one.

Emily Rauch

Thankful that God is always with my family in sickness and health. Thankful that my mother is still with us at the age of 99 and in good health. Thankful that my sick cousin finally said yes to coming to live with us, so we can take care of her, very sweet lady.

Received “The Pieta Prayer Booklet” from my cousin when she came to live with us. I enjoy praying several of the prayers. It is so important to help everyone if possible get to heaven.

Judith Cloonan

I am thankful for the many churches in the area celebrating daily Mass and adoration. A spiritual offering I have been blessed to give is the gift of craftsmanship through the art I make for others.

Catherine Oliva

I am thankful for the infinite beauty of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, both in the ordinary and the extraordinary form. We can give the gift of charity.

Alexandr Nist

I am grateful for the gift of life — mine, my family’s, and my friends’!

It is better for my soul to give rather than receive ... love, compassion, and understanding.

Laverne Gladieux

I am thankful for my health and the gift to bring Jesus in Holy Communion to four individuals at Christmastime.

Rosie O’Keefe

Thankful for a loving community that is there in both joy and sorrow, struggle and success.

Give hope by uplifting others and pulling them out of the difficulties right now and into the reality of God’s beneficence and providence guiding our world.

Bernadette Fellows

Thankful for a deeper and more authentic relationship with my wife.

For a gift, get yourself to a retreat — it is like plugging yourself in and recharging via the Holy Spirit; it is life-changing.

Bill Parrish

Visit TodaysCatholic.org for additional responses.

Diocese

I'm thankful for the opportunity to attend daily Mass with my students.

I always appreciate prayers and it is also a lovely act of charity when people take the time to really talk to you, listen, and give words of encouragement.

Katlyn Brown

Thankful for the surprise pregnancy of our rainbow baby, Elijah Theodore, born on the feast of All Saints.

My favorite spiritual gift is when someone offers to pray with me, not just for me (although intercessory prayer is so important too!) and sets aside time where we pray together – I feel not only their love but Christ's.

Monica Markovich

I'm thankful that my children and their spouses are strong in their Catholic faith and look for ways to enrich their faith.

A spiritual gift I have received and also given is a novena prayer for special intentions, such as physical health, peace, and protection.

Katie Rohrer

I am thankful for being raised in the Catholic faith.

For spiritual gifts, my mother used to have little tubs with our names on them, and every time we prayed or did something for each other we put a slip in their tub, but we couldn't open them until Christmas.

Aidan Parrish

I am thankful for the transcendent goodness of family.

The most moving gift is when someone tells me they have offered prayers for me or my spouse or my children.

Mollie Crummey

One thing I am especially thankful for this year is the opportunity to serve as the new sacramental minister of all the good people of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Fort Wayne.

The spiritual gift that I gave a close friend is to pray daily the ancient blessing from the Book of Numbers that begins, "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may He cause His face to shine upon you..."

Father Kevin Bauman

Definitely extremely thankful for our freedoms in America, specifically being able to live my faith without fear.

I love giving spiritual bouquets and usually get a

calendar to write on certain feast days of the month the specific prayers I would offer for a loved one!

Heather Cline

I'm thankful for the gift of practicing and playing music with my four kids since the pandemic – and my wife encouraging it all the way.

A great spiritual gift I received once was when my dad died: a group of students gave me a sympathy card and alongside each signature was a description of the specific prayers and when they would be saying them for my dad and family.

Dr. Louis Albarran

I am thankful to have met and become friends with a lot of different men this year, who continue to bless me in many ways.

Mother Teresa was known for saying the most important person is the one right in front of you, therefore, the best gift I can give is love in the form of being fully present to someone in a world constantly moving.

Dylan Arango

This year, I am most thankful for the gift of continued life for myself and my family, and for the grace of being able to see my firstborn son turn one this year.

I love to teach the Faith to others, whether they are adults or children, by passing on the knowledge of Christ that has been passed to me.

Parker Zurbach

I have been thankful in 2022 for new, edifying relationships.

Regarding a gift idea, I would suggest a handwritten letter to someone in a difficult season of life to express empathy and let them know that they are being prayed for.

Tim Arnold

Thankful that with God, there is always something new around the corner if we remain open and adaptable to His will.

The best spiritual gift I've received is hope from those a couple steps further along in life during times when things get so dark and complicated that it's easy to despair.

Amelia Ruggaber

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers ... that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you" (Eph 1:16-18): truly, there has been great gratitude in getting to know persons earnestly striving to grow in the Faith and to be a part of that growth.

"Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication" (Eph 6:18): If we could only see the spiritual riches that accrue to souls when we pray, truly we would be set on praying always, and this is one of the greatest gifts people have given to me. Make holy hours for people, and gift those for Christmas.

Father LeeAllen Fortin

I am thankful for God blessing me with a beautiful wife and having the honor of celebrating the sacrament of marriage with her this year!

One can give the gift of prayer, in the sense of praying for another, their specific intentions, their growth in virtue, and the reception of graces during whatever trials they are going through.

Nick Heiny

I am thankful for the blessing of getting married and being able to begin the vocation I am called to!

The spiritual gift I can give to someone is the gift of humility, in the sense that I can give them my full time and attention to make them feel loved and valued.

Anna Heiny

Christ's love, presence, hope, and joy EVERY day of our lives!

Smiles, love, hope, friendship, and being there for them.

Glen Matthew

As flawed as it is, I am very thankful to live in this country where freedom still exists.

Prayers when I needed God most, or when others needed it most from me.

Anonymous

My family, my faith.

With the help of Jesus and Mary, I would like to deliver as many souls as possible from purgatory by attendance at daily Mass.

Anonymous

My family, wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren make me smile with beautiful memories and anticipation of the future joys they'll bring. I've been blessed with special family members. EVERY ONE.

To enjoy and feel the peace and comfort of the presence of God in the Eucharist.

David Haines

My vibrant Catholic parish. Generosity with personal time.

Beth Schwier

I am thankful for the Lord's abiding presence that has led me to people who have enriched my life in various ways.

Distraction is something we ought to tackle as we prepare for the centerpiece of God's involvement in our lives with His entrance into life among us in Jesus at Christmas; as a gift, try to be an active listener.

Charlie Ducey

I am thankful for dear friends who feel like family and family who are like close friends.

Whenever you are thinking of a particular person, say a prayer for them, and keep a count of these intentional prayers using tally marks or a similar system. Give that person your record of the times you have offered up prayers for them when they crossed your mind.

Miriam Barry

I am thankful for the opportunity to be given the charge of providing a Catholic education to all the students at Queen of Angels.

I believe the biggest spiritual gift I can give someone is the opportunity to talk about how the Lord and His love have impacted me and helped me in my spiritual journey so that maybe I can contribute to assisting in their journey.

Dennis Wiegmann

I am thankful for the seven men, ordained as Deacons for our diocese this year, who laid their lives on the ground as a gift to Jesus and his church.

I had a friend introduce me to the idea of assigning a person or family to each mystery of the rosary for any given year; knowing I was being carried by my Heavenly Mother through the heart of my friend was such a gift and a gift it has been my joy to do for others!

Lindsey

Thank God for forgiving our sins and for blessings given us even when we don't seem to deserve them.

Praying for the most forgotten soul in purgatory; it's important to that soul and when they get to heaven, perhaps they can help some other forgotten soul.

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SHEMA, from page 9

God has led them, and they will continue to follow, trusting Him to recruit additional helpers for their ministry and provide financial support for it to expand and flourish. Caleb believes that God has shown him that He will provide them with their own building in the future – a place to minister to both Catholics and non-Catholics.

Singing Love Letters to God

Some Catholics may be apprehensive about praising God in this way, but Natali said that praise and worship music can amplify one's relationship with God. "This is a way to encounter the Holy Spirit outside the Mass as well, and what better way to encounter the Lord's heart than to write and sing love letters to Him and unto His heart, and that's essentially what we're trying to do; we're trying to remind people that the Lord is your first love and expressing love to someone takes time and it takes sacrifice."

"It instills an intimate relationship or starts to fill that intimate relationship we're supposed to have with the Lord, both emotionally and intellectually. You need both, you can't have one without the other," she stated.

Caleb reiterated that, pointing out how the beauty of architecture, artwork, and even incense in the Catholic Church connects "with all of your senses. This form of worship is not the same as the Mass, but we're human beings as well as spirit at the same time, so there's nothing wrong with connecting with the Lord emotionally."

The songs they sing are contemporary in nature; Christian but not necessarily Catholic, though they ensure that each one is biblically sound and completely in line with Church teaching.

Shema Culture and Kingdom Collective (a non-denominational church) periodically host Unity Worship Nights at St. Charles Borromeo. "We really believe that through this, this is how healing is going to happen between the different denominations," Caleb commented. "Yes, we need to talk through things, but we can't talk through things if we're not getting around the table together and just being family first."

Music, Natali said, "lifts and elevates our minds and hearts to the Lord and it opens ourselves up to whatever the Spirit desires us to learn or to grow in."

The goal of these nights is to bring anyone who loves Jesus together to give Him glory, with the additional element of offering a window for

non-Catholics to see inside the Church and breaking down barriers between the faiths. They consider any conversions that may come about – such as Caleb's brothers, now in RCIA – as simply a fruit of their labor.

"That's why praise and worship is so important because it's the perfect starting point for anyone to even just look into the Church. Instead of just bringing them to the Mass, the source and summit, we have to meet them where they are and bring them with us," Gloria added. "It's the perfect place for them to see Catholics who are on fire for the Faith."

Shema Culture can be found on Facebook and Instagram (@shemaculture). As a non-profit, Shema is greatly in need of equipment and funds to continue operating. To contribute financially to their mission of building the Body of Christ or to volunteer time and talents, scan the QR code or call 260-740-4249.




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- 1** Give a compliment to a stranger.
- 2** Send a loving letter to a family member.
- 3** Help cook something lovely for a friend.
- 4** Donate to a cause you're passionate about.
- 5** Volunteer some time to help someone today.
- 6** Take the time to listen to someone you know.
- 7** Setup a 30 min financial checkup with a member of our team and we'll donate \$150 to a non-profit you care about.* 
- 8** Take the time to donate gently used clothes.
- 9** Leave a great tip the next time you eat out.
- 10** Get in contact with someone you've missed.
- 11** Take canned food to your local food pantry.
- 12** Surprise a co-worker or friend with a treat.
- 13** Hold the door for someone else.
- 14** Tell a grocery worker they're doing a great job.
- 15** Purchase a car and we will donate 1% of the loan value to a charity you care about.* 
- 16** Thank a teacher for making a difference.
- 17** Surprise someone with lunch.
- 18** Throw out the next piece of litter you see.
- 19** Offer to help someone you see today.
- 20** Write a thank-you note to your mail carrier.
- 21** Bring treats to your local fire station.
- 22** Earn 1% for a non-profit you care about using your SCRIP Credit Card.* 
- 23** Give a nice review to a local business.
- 24** Tell someone how much you love them.

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Taylor Swift, Miscarriage, and the Discussions We Too Rarely Have

In every life, there comes a moment where we find ourselves brought to our knees, a moment when we are immersed in something tragic and personally gutting, and our questions seem unending. It is a “rubber meets the road” moment, when even people of faith will ask themselves whether they truly believe all they proclaim and people who say they have no faith find themselves casting out pleas to heaven. When a popular artist seems to be saying he or she has met such a moment, fans notice.

Ever since the Beatles took the then-unprecedented step of printing their lyrics on the back cover of their “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band,” included lyrics have helped a listener to quickly become familiar enough with a new song to embrace its mood and message for one’s own. For some, a close examination of an artist’s lines has become an effort at intimacy — a hunt for hints and clues fans believe will help them better connect with what their favorite performers are saying between the lines, as it were — what deep life experiences or insights the artist may be trying to communicate specifically to those who can understand, and identify.

Such is the case with a song from Taylor Swift’s recently dropped album, “Midnights (3am Edition).” The song

“Bigger Than the Whole Sky” almost immediately had fans speculating about its meaning — specifically, as to whether Ms. Swift has lately suffered the loss of a child through miscarriage.

Unless the composer states her purpose outright, it is all but impossible to know whether such speculation is on point, but the lyrics to “Bigger Than the Whole Sky” — poignant, wistful, grieved, and spiritually confused — seem to bear out the hypothesis.

“Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye/You were bigger than the whole sky/You were more than just a short time/And I’ve got a lot to pine about/I’ve got a lot to live without ...”

Women who have suffered a miscarriage will tell you that the loss, usually inexplicable, feels like a promise left unkept, a denial of what seemed a new force of unlimited potential, and a new expression of love, taken away before the world had seen its beauty, rather like a flake of snow, melted before it ever reached the ground.

“I’m never gonna meet/What could’ve been, would’ve been/What should’ve been you/What could’ve been, would’ve been you ...”

If the song is, in fact, a grief-filled declaration of such a private loss, it is also a monologue that is inspiring online discussion of a subject that society too often greets



GUEST COMMENTARY

ELIZABETH SCALIA

with strained silence. On hearing of a miscarriage, some seem to believe the less said to a grieving parent, the better — as though this death were not a real death or, in any case, not one whose mourning should evince more than a token notice. All too often, news of a miscarriage meets responses that, while perhaps well-intended, only deepen the wound (“There must have been something wrong with that baby; nature is merely saving you from something awful”), or miss the mark completely. “You can try again,” is small comfort to a parent who knows that the child gone unmet was not interchangeable with another child, any more than any family would believe one sibling could replace another.

On Reddit and other social media platforms, both men and women have taken “Bigger Than the Whole Sky” as permission to lament their

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Mother Alfred and Women Religious

My new hero is Mother Alfred Moes. I realize that she is not a household name, even among Catholics, but she should be. She came on my radar screen only after I became the Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, where Mother Alfred did most of her work and where she lies buried. Hers is a story of remarkable courage, faith, perseverance, and sheer moxie. Trust me, once you take in the details of her adventures, you will be put in mind of a number of other gritty Catholic Mothers: Cabrini, Teresa, Drexel, and Angelica, to name a few.

Mother Alfred was born Maria Catherine Moes in Luxembourg in 1828. As a young girl, she became fascinated by the possibility of doing missionary work among the native peoples of North America. Accordingly, she journeyed with her sister to the New World in 1851. First, she joined the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukee but then transferred to the Holy Cross Sisters in La Porte, Indiana, a group associated with Father Edward Sorin, CSC, the founder of the University of Notre Dame. After clashing with her superiors, a rather typical happenstance for this very feisty and confident lady, she made her way to Joliet, Illinois, where she became superior of a new congregation of Franciscan sisters, taking the name “Mother Alfred.” When Bishop Thomas Foley of Chicago



WORD ON FIRE

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

tried to interfere with the finances and building projects of her community, she set out for greener pastures in Minnesota, where the great Archbishop John Ireland took her in and allowed her to establish a school in Rochester.

It was in that tiny town in southern Minnesota where God commenced to work powerfully through her. In 1883, a terrible tornado tore through Rochester, killing many and leaving many others homeless and destitute. A local doctor, William Worrall Mayo, undertook the task of caring for the victims of the disaster. Overwhelmed by the number of injured, he called upon Mother Alfred’s sisters to help him. Though they were teachers rather than nurses and had no formal training in medicine, they accepted the mission. In the wake of the debacle, Mother Alfred calmly informed Dr. Mayo that she had a vision that a hospital should be built in Rochester, not simply to serve that local community, but rather the whole world. Astonished by this utterly unrealistic proposal,

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Christ the King; Christ the Sacrifice



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

Feast of Christ the King Luke 23:35-43

The Second Book of Samuel furnishes the first reading for this feast, marking the close of the Church’s year. The two books of Samuel record major events of the reign of King David in Israel.

In this weekend’s reading, David becomes king. He was more than a governmental authority or political figure. His task was to strengthen the union between God and the people, but the people had free will, allowing them to choose their actions.

He was to be a good example and to inspire the people to

acknowledge God. Such recognition, David insisted, was the doorway to prosperity, peace, and life.

The second reading acclaims Jesus as the “image of the invisible God”. Jesus is the center of creation. Without Jesus, human life collapses into chaos and worse. Through Jesus, all people possess the hope of eternal salvation, sharing in the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary.

St. Luke’s Gospel supplies the last reading. It recounts the trial and execution of Jesus. Noted is the inscription placed above the head of Jesus on the cross that read, “The King of the Jews”. Roman authorities positioned this sign above the Lord’s dying body to warn potential rebels of what rebellion against Rome brought. In fact, it was a proclamation of a profound fact not connected with Roman politics. Christ is king, the Son of God, the Creator.

This title exalts Jesus in the full sweep of salvation histo-

ry. Jesus was of the Hebrews. He was a Jew. God promised the Jews salvation. Jesus fulfills this promise, bringing salvation to all.

The Gospel mentions the criminals executed beside Jesus. One bitterly blasphemed. The other beautifully professed Jesus as Messiah, proving that human faith, repentance, and trust in divine forgiveness is possible for anyone.

Reflection

When Queen Elizabeth II died, many stories circulated about her. In 1976, she, and her husband, Prince Philip, visited Washington, D.C. to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the United States. They stayed at the White House as guests of President Gerald R. Ford. As the queen was dressing for a banquet, a maid appeared, sent to assist the queen. Smiling, Elizabeth said that she was fine.

Then the maid promised to be

there when the queen returned from the banquet. Elizabeth said no. The maid needed her rest. The next morning, the maid arrived at the queen’s room. Elizabeth was already at breakfast. Her bed was made. Bath towels were neatly folded. Her evening gown was hanging in the closet.

Until old age overtook her, Queen Elizabeth II cared for herself, since during the Second World War, her mother never allowed her daughter a maid. Women were needed in the war effort. The future queen herself became an automotive mechanic.

After her death, thousands praised her lifelong personal sacrifices for the country. Serving the good of all, whatever the personal cost, giving whatever is needed, is the ideal of a monarch.

When this feast was established, many monarchies still reigned, but despots were menacing innocent human beings

and their rights.

Pius XI created this feast as response to these despots. Christ alone is the answer. As time unfolded, ignoring Christ’s teachings, the despots, Hitler, Mussolini, and others, brought unbelievable horror to humanity.

Christ the king sacrificed all, even life, for us. He is the “way, the truth, and the life.”

READINGS

Sunday: 2 Sm 5:1-3 Ps 122:1-5 Col 1:12-20 Lk 23:35-43

Monday: Rv 14:1-3, 4b-5 Ps 24:1b-4b, 5-6 Lk 21:1-4

Tuesday: Rv 14:14-19 Ps 96:10-13 Lk 21:5-11

Wednesday: Rv 15:1-4 Ps 98:1-3b, 7-9 Lk 21:12-19

Thursday: Rv 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9a Ps 100:1b-5 Lk 21:20-28

Friday: Rv 20:1-4, 11—21:2 Ps 84:3-6a, 8a Lk 21:29-33

Saturday: Rv 22:1-7 Ps 95:1-7b Lk 21:34-36

When Reentry is Rocky

I recently returned from a beautiful pilgrimage to France, but unexpectedly brought home a stomach bug to my beloved family. Talk about a bumpy reentry to ordinary life: from Lourdes to laundry heaps and Lysol wipes within 24 hours.

As I scrubbed toilets, I found myself musing about resentment, readjustment, and reunions.

Over the years, I've learned that reentry can be rocky when my husband or I travel for work. We end up with a day or two upon arrival when everything feels off and everyone has to readjust to being together again.

Thinking about jet lag has helped me: If it takes our bodies one day per time zone crossed to acclimate, little wonder our hearts and minds need time to readjust upon reentry too.

Reuniting can be hard, like returning to reconciliation after years away from the sacrament or getting honest about our hardest hurts. But even happy reunions can cause ordinary obstacles as we struggle with the shifting dynamics within families and the stress brought by homecomings.

What can we do to prepare for our family holidays this year? We could pray for gentler hearts turned toward compassion, or try to set aside picture-perfect ideals to make more space for the real flesh-and-blood humans around us.

But we can also borrow a page from Scripture and remember the parable of the prodigal son. The younger child

chose selfishness and greed over family, treating his father as dead by demanding his inheritance before his time.

Yet Jesus tells of a father willing to overlook foolishness for forgiveness, running down the road for everyone to see, arms flung wide to embrace his estranged son "while he was still a long way off" (Lk 15:20).

If a rejected father could cast aside every care and rush to forgive his beloved child, couldn't I do much less for the ones around me? Couldn't I forgive their ordinary sins and shortcomings as I pray they will forgive mine?

Too often I have been the older brother in Jesus' parable, bitter that I stayed home, did the right thing, and kept it all together during disruption or absence. I have missed out on the joy when I let resentment rule reentry.

Better to soften my knees like standing in a jostling subway car and brace for the bumps I know are coming rather than risk further rupture by souring the reunion.

As we turn toward Thanksgiving and Christmas, perhaps we could pack extra empathy and forgiveness for our holiday reunions this year. Expecting a bit of turbulence doesn't mean ruining the whole ride.

Instead, preparing for the probable makes more space to receive the grace of God that is waiting to pour out, just like the forgiving father sprinting down the road to meet us while we were still a long way off.

Our God taught us every-



FAITH AT HOME

Laura Kelly Fanucci

thing about returning, a God of resurrection who came back to His friends transformed. How hard it was for those closest to Him to recognize Him; how challenging to set aside their expectations.

But how incredible their epiphanies too: over a meal in Emmaus, behind locked doors in Jerusalem, or in a garden with an empty tomb.

After Easter, Jesus sat with Peter on the lakeshore and offered him the chance to reconcile. He does the same for us: drawing us away from the crowd to reconnect, giving us the grace to accept and offer forgiveness, and feeding us with a feast of grateful celebration.

With every reunion we ask the same question Jesus posed to Peter: "Do you love me?" Every time we embrace each other, even within a rocky reentry, we are saying yes.

Laura Kelly Fanucci is a writer, speaker, and author of several books. Her work can be found at laurakellyfanucci.com.

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own losses. They are sharing their experiences of miscarriage but also of the ongoing ache attending the deaths of parents, siblings, and friends, abortions regretted, and even of relationships that ended without the closure of questions answered.

"Divorcing after 12 years of marriage — I'm the one who's being left. Sobbing on repeat," writes one commenter.

"I lost my mom to cancer just three weeks before this album came out," says another. "... The lyrics fit too well to what I am feeling right now. All the things that should have been but now won't. She was just way too young to be gone already."

If death and loss are subjects too seldom discussed in society, or spoken of only in hushed tones, the thread at Reddit has encouraged some to broaden their first impressions: "I can't hear this as anything

but a song about miscarriage [but] after hearing this, that interpretation totally hits different."

"I had an abortion. ... I regret it, and I'm grieving so much and this song is making me bawl my eyes out." Regret over choosing an abortion is something else we don't talk enough about.

While Ms. Swift does not claim to be pro-life or a theologian, "Bigger" nevertheless touches on feelings and questions that are common to all of us in the first thrust of wrenching loss, and which we instinctively direct heavenward:

"Did some force take you because I didn't pray/Every single thing to come has turned into ashes/'Cause it's all over It's not meant to be/So I'll say words I don't believe ..."

Loss is the great leveler of humanity, the thing that takes us outside of all that we think we know of ourselves. In the bewildering realization of what is gone, those who believe in

an all-loving God will sometimes catch themselves stumbling into questions about whether their sins, or their sins of omission, have somehow invited the actions of an angry, vengeful God in whom they don't actually believe. Likewise, unbelievers, against all of their stated doubts, may find themselves unguardedly crying out in surprised prayer, begging that their pain be neither real nor inescapable.

That common sense of disorientation and vast unknowing is something worth talking about; it is theology worth exploring, together. Whatever Taylor Swift is indeed writing about, she's given us all a worthwhile conversation.

Elizabeth Scalia is the Culture Editor for OSV News.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for November 20, 2022

Luke 23: 35-43

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesu Christ, King of the Universe, Cycle C. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

LET HIM	CHOSEN	GOD
SOLDIERS	KING	OF THE JEWS
SAVE YOURSELF	INSCRIPTION	ONE OF
CRIMINALS	SAYING	CHRIST
OTHER	FEAR	CONDEMNATION
JUSTLY	THIS MAN	NOTHING
COME INTO		TODAY

THE KING

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C S A Y I N G J G Y N S
O O N E O F N N A N A L
M D N G O D I C N V M A
E M J D R K H A E T S N
I I K E E R T Y S O I I
N H H C I M O L O D H M
T T J S F U N I H A T I
O E T E R L W A C Y U R
J L A S P J U S T L Y C
S R E I D L O S Y I W H
G L S W E J E H T F O K
F I N S C R I P T I O N
    
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BARRON, from page 16

Dr. Mayo told Mother Alfred that she would need to raise \$40,000 (an astronomical figure for that time and place) in order to build such a facility. She in turn told the doctor that if she managed to raise the funds and build the hospital, she expected him and his two physician sons to staff the place. Within a short span of time, she procured the money, and the St. Mary's Hospital was established. As I'm sure you've already surmised, this was the seed from which the mighty Mayo Clinic would grow, a hospital system that indeed, as Mother Alfred envisioned long ago, serves the entire world. This intrepid nun continued her work as builder, organizer, and administrator, not only of the hospital that she had founded, but of a number of other institutions in southern Minnesota until her death in 1899 at the age of 71.

Just a few weeks ago, I wrote about the pressing need in our diocese for priests, and I urged everyone to become part of a mission to increase vocations to the priesthood. With Mother Alfred in mind, might I take the occasion now to call for more vocations to women's religious life? Somehow, the last three generations of women have tended to see religious life as unworthy of their consideration. The number of nuns has plummeted since the Second Vatican Council, and most Catholics, when asked about this, would

probably say that being a religious sister is just not a viable prospect in our feminist age.

Nonsense! Mother Alfred left her home as a very young woman; crossed the ocean to a foreign land; became a religious; followed her instincts and sense of mission, even when this brought her into conflict with powerful superiors, including a number of bishops; inspired Dr. Mayo to establish the most impressive medical center on the planet; and presided over the development of an order of sisters who went on to build and staff numerous institutions of healing and teaching. She was a woman of extraordinary intelligence, drive, passion, courage, and inventiveness. If someone had suggested to her that she was living a life unworthy of her gifts or beneath her dignity, I imagine she would have had a few choice words in response. You're looking for a feminist hero? You can keep Gloria Steinem; I'll take Mother Alfred any day of the week.

So, if you know a young woman who would make a good religious, who is marked by intelligence, energy, creativity, and get-up-and-go, share with her the story of Mother Alfred Moes, and tell her that she might aspire to that same kind of heroism.

Bishop Robert Barron is the Bishop of Rochester, Minnesota, and the Founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.



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in our adult children" will take place on Thursday, Dec. 1, from 7-8:30 p.m. at St. Thérèse Little Flower Parish, 54191 Ironwood Rd., South Bend, on the lower level of the church in Payne Hall. The evening will include a presentation and discussion on steps to rekindle faith in young adults from Brandon Vogt's book, "Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church" and copies of the book will be available at no cost. Refreshments will be provided. The evening is free of charge, but we are asking people to register so that we know how many participants to expect. For more information and to register, please visit www.ablazemission.org/holidays.

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