

# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## WYD 2023: The Journey of a Lifetime

**University of Saint  
Francis Opens Year  
with Mass**

Page 2

**Couples Celebrate  
Milestone  
Anniversaries**

Page 3

**Parish Leaders Set  
to Help with Revival**

Page 8

**30 Years after the  
Fire at St. Mary**

Pages 16-17

**Knights Find Faith,  
Camaraderie on Ice**

Page 18



Joshua Schipper

Father Paola Degasperi, Pastor of St. John the Baptist in Fort Wayne, waves an American flag to signal pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend during World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. See more photos pages 11-15.

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## TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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**PUBLISHER:** Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

**PUBLICATION DIRECTOR:** Nicole Hahn

#### Editorial Department

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Scott Warden

**ASSISTANT EDITOR/REPORTER:**

Lisa Kochanowski

**PAGE DESIGNER:** Francie Hogan

**VIDEO/SOCIAL MEDIA:** Joshua Schipper

#### Business Department

**BOOKKEEPING/CIRCULATION:**

circulation@diocesefwsb.org

**ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE:**

Erika Barron: ebarron@diocesefwsb.org

**Website:** [todayscatholic.org](http://todayscatholic.org)

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**MAIN OFFICE:** 915 S. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax: 260-744-1473.

**BUREAU OFFICE:** 1328 Dragoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

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



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University of Saint Francis students, staff, faculty, and guests attend the Mass of the Holy Spirit to open the academic year on Wednesday, August 30.

## USF Opens Academic Year with Mass of the Holy Spirit

BY ERIC PEAT

**B**ehind the encouragement of Bishop Rhoades and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, nearly 2,000 students have embarked on a new academic year at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne.

Bishop Rhoades helped the university kick off its 2023-24 school year by celebrating a Mass of the Holy Spirit at the Saint Francis North Campus Auditorium in Fort Wayne on Wednesday, August 30. This Votive Mass continues a Jesuit tradition dating back 475 years to Sicily, one that has since spread to all Jesuit universities and beyond. Father Brian Isenbarger, Father Thomas Zehr, and Deacon Daniel Avila assisted with the Mass.

"It is a joy for me to celebrate this Mass of the Holy Spirit with you during this first week of the new academic year here at the University of Saint Francis," Bishop Rhoades told the students, administrators, and guests in attendance. "We call upon the Holy Spirit to watch over and guide this university community during this year, and we ask the Holy Spirit to guide and to bless with His gifts all the individual members of this community – the administration, staff, faculty, and, of course, our students."

It was these students whom Bishop Rhoades addressed in his homily. He referenced the Gospel passage, Jesus' parable of the talents, in which a master entrusted great wealth to his servants. While some servants doubled their talents before the master's return, one servant buried his talent in the ground, afraid to lose his master's money. Bishop counseled the students against being paralyzed by such fear, refusing to take initiative, and becoming "passive recipients of His grace."

"We've received so much



Photos by Eric Peat

**Bishop Rhoades speaks to USF students, staff, faculty, and guests during his homily.**

from the Lord, and we, too, have a special responsibility to make good use of His gifts," explained Bishop Rhoades. "The Lord expects us to appreciate His gifts, the talents He has given, and to use them, not bury them. Use them for what? Use them to increase goodness in the world."

Bishop then invited the students to reflect on how they will manage and spend their time and talents in the coming school year. He advised them to work conscientiously in their studies, but to also strike a balance and not become slaves to their work.

"Be grateful for the gifts God has given you and use those gifts well for His glory and in service to others, especially those in need," exhorted Bishop Rhoades. "Then, we can expect to hear the Master say to us when He returns: 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, share your Master's joy.'"

At the conclusion of the Mass, Saint Francis Interim President Lance Richey delivered a convocation address to those gathered before releasing them for a complimentary lunch. Richey began by thanking Bishop Rhoades, the board of trustees, administrators, alumni, and benefactors for their support. He also thanked the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration who were in attendance, as their order has sponsored the university since its founding in 1890. After welcoming the students to campus, Richey announced the arrival of more than 650 new students to the university this fall. Including those enrolled at USF Crown Point and at the St. Elizabeth School of Nursing in Lafayette, Saint Francis now serves more than 1,900 students.

"God has given us the opportunity to spread the good news of our faith and learning

that will transform the lives to a large number of students," Richey said. "It's going to be an exciting year on campus."

Richey then highlighted many of the recent additions to the university, such as a new music technology concentration in hip-hop and R&B, new accredited degrees in respiratory therapy, and the new class of the Assisi Program for Discipleship and Leadership. He also mentioned the renovations to the Doermer Family Center for Health Science Education, improvements to the south end zone of Bishop D'Arcy Stadium, and the upcoming plans to renovate Trinity Hall.

However, Richey was also quick to remind students of the sacred time that occurs on campus every day from 11-11:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend Mass in the chapel, as no classes are held across the university during this time. "It's a great way to take a moment out of a very busy day of studies and classes and sports to remember the higher purpose to which we're all called," noted Richey.

"As we start the 134th year of the University of Saint Francis, the university is strong and the future is bright," he concluded. "I want to thank you all for being a part of that future. We're delighted to have you all as part of our family, and I pray – and we all pray – that God will bless everyone at USF."

This close-knit family feel is what has drawn many of these students to the university, regardless of their field of study or religious affiliation.

"Everybody's been super nice, and it's been really easy to transition into it," said freshman Mikenna Thorn. "It's made it a lot easier."

"You don't have to be Catholic to prosper here," said freshman Aidan Kill. "Everyone is super accepting. No matter what faith you are, it's easy to get along."



# Bishop Celebrates Couples Marking Milestone Anniversaries

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

It is often said that the couple who prays together stays together, and Sunday, September 3, brought dozens of spouses to St. Matthew Cathedral Parish in South Bend for the annual Marriage Jubilee Mass. Celebrated by Bishop Rhoades, 32 couples celebrating a milestone anniversary received a special blessing followed by a luncheon celebration.

Gathered for the Mass were six couples celebrating their 25th anniversaries, four marking their 40th anniversaries, eight for their 50th anniversaries, nine for their 60th anniversaries, two couples celebrating their 65th, two marking their 70th, and one couple for their 75th wedding anniversary.

"Congratulations to all of you," exclaimed Bishop Rhoades at the beginning of his homily. "Thank you for your witness of fidelity and love through all these years! We thank the Lord because He is the One who joined you together in a covenant of love and fidelity through the Sacrament of Matrimony. When you pronounced your vows, God gave you the grace, and He continues to give you the grace, to perfect your love and to strengthen your indissoluble unity as husband and wife."

## 'Always Be Understanding'

Jerald and Anna Broderick celebrated 65 years of bliss and are members of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Elkhart. Proud parents of four children, 10 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren, they keep active by visiting their family whenever possible and are hoping to celebrate with the entire family later this year.

"Always be understanding, and try to say yes," Jerald Broderick told Today's Catholic on how he has found success in his marriage. He and Anna met in college at the University of Wisconsin.

"We've been very blessed," said Anna Broderick, noting that the couple prays together each day.

Mike and Michaela Carey have been married for 25 years and are parishioners at Queen of Peace Church in Mishawaka. The couple saw the announcement for the anniversary Mass in the bulletin and felt it was a great opportunity to celebrate their special milestone. The couple has two children and



Lisa Kochanowski

Jerald and Anna Broderick attend the Marriage Jubilee Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on Sunday, September 3. They were one of two couples celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary.

hopes to be a good role model to their family on the importance of marriage and family. They feel blessed and hope to share those blessings with their children.

Michelle and Eric Szajko, also of Queen of Peace Church, celebrated their 25th anniversary. The high school sweethearts are leaders of the Savoring a Lifetime Together (SALT) marriage enrichment ministry for all couples at Queen of Peace.

"We can't ask for a better way to celebrate 25 years," said Michelle Szajko, who noted their daughter was married this year, and they hope to celebrate their 50th and the newlyweds' 25th anniversaries at a celebration Mass in the future.

"Communication is the key. You have to be on point with one another," said Eric Szajko on their key to success. "It takes lots of forgiveness."

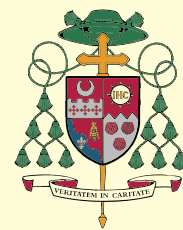
"It's beautiful, amazing, and a little messy," Michelle Szajko said about marriage.

## Resisting Temptation to Conform

During his homily, Bishop Rhoades discussed the importance of remaining faithful to the teachings of the Church in marriage.

"In the second reading today, after St. Paul exhorted the Romans to offer themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God, he wrote, 'Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect,'" Bishop Rhoades said. "How easily we can be tempted to conform ourselves to the spirit of this age, including to our post-Christian culture's attitude toward marriage and family life. Think about the changes in our culture's view of marriage through the past several decades, like since our 75th-anniversary couple got married in 1947, our 50th-

ANNIVERSARY MASS, page 5



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Wednesday, September 13: Noon – Meeting of Board of Directors of Northeast Indiana Catholic Community Foundation, St. Martin de Porres Church, Syracuse

Thursday, September 14: 4 p.m. – Meeting of Board of Directors of Catholic Charities, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne

Friday, September 15: 10:30 a.m. – Meeting with Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters Leadership Team, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne

Saturday, September 16: 2 p.m. – Mass with North Central Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher Investiture, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

Sunday, September 17: 10:30 a.m. – 125th Anniversary Mass, Most Precious Blood Church, Fort Wayne



## Forty Hours Devotion



## Parishes are Listed in Order by Date

### SEPTEMBER

Corpus Christi, South Bend: September 8-10  
St. Michael the Archangel, Waterloo: September 10-12  
Immaculate Conception, Kendallville: September 10-12  
St. Mary of the Lake, Culver: September 10-12  
St. Patrick, Fort Wayne: September 10-12  
St. Patrick, Arcola: September 17-19  
St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend: September 17-19  
St. Michael, Plymouth: September 17-19

### OCTOBER

Sacred Heart, Warsaw: October 1-3  
St. Louis, Besancon, New Haven: October 1-3  
St. Therese, Little Flower, South Bend: October 1-3  
St. Therese, Fort Wayne: October 8-10  
St. Jude, Fort Wayne: October 15-17  
Holy Cross, South Bend: October 15-17  
St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel, Fort Wayne: October 15-17  
St. Paul of the Cross, Columbia City: October 22-24

### NOVEMBER

St. Dominic, Bremen: November 5-7  
St. Aloysius, Yoder: November 5-7  
St. Stanislaus Kostka, New Carlisle: November 9-11  
St. Gaspar del Bufalo, Rome City: November 19-21  
St. Joseph, Bluffton: November 26-28  
Christ the King, South Bend: November 26-28

For the complete schedule, visit [diocesefwsb.org/eucharist](http://diocesefwsb.org/eucharist).



# Pope: Synod Won't Be Secret, but Won't Be Open to Media

BY CINDY WOODEN

**ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT FROM MONGOLIA (CNS)** – The Synod of Bishops is not a television show or a parliamentary debate, and its discussions will not be open to the public or to reporters, Pope Francis said.

"We must safeguard the synodal climate," the pope responded on Monday, September 4, when asked by journalists about access to the discussions at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will be held October 4-29.

"This isn't a television program where you talk about everything; no, it is a religious moment, a religious exchange," he told reporters flying back to Rome with him from Mongolia.

The synod process began in October of 2021 with a succession of listening sessions on the parish, diocesan, national, and regional levels focused on creating a more "synodal Church," where each person feels welcomed, valued, and called to contribute and to share the Gospel.

After so many Catholics around the world devoted their time and their prayers to the process, an initial idea was to livestream the general discussions from the synod hall or at least allow reporters some access.

Pope Francis made it clear on the plane that would not happen. An official summary of the day's discussions – without saying who said what – will be made by the synod's communication

committee, led by Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication.

Beyond the anonymous, summarized points, journalists will try to interview participants to at least get individual points of view about the day's synod work. Bishop Rhoades is one of five American prelates chosen to represent the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at the Synod of Bishops in October.

Pope Francis told reporters that each synod member – including women and laymen for the first time – would have three or four minutes to address the assembly. Each address will be followed by three or four minutes of silence "for prayer."

"Without this spirit of prayer, there is no synodality, it's just politics, parliamentarianism," he said.

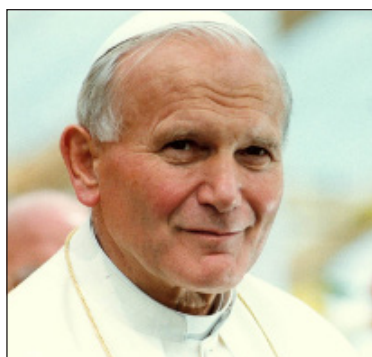
Having a committee summarize the discussions for the media is necessary "to safeguard the religiosity (of the synod) and safeguard the freedom of those who speak" but may not want to do so publicly, he said.

"But more open than that, I don't know," he said. "The commission will be very respectful of the speeches of each person and will try not to gossip, but to recount things about how the synod is progressing that are constructive for the Church."



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

**Pope Francis answers questions from journalists aboard his flight back to Rome from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Monday, September 4, after a four-day visit to the Asian country. He told reporters that discussions at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October will not be open to the public or the media.**



## The St. John Paul II Fund for Seminarian Education

Did you know that the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana manages the St. John Paul II Fund for Seminarian Education? This special fund was established for the purpose of providing ongoing funding for our seminarians. Investing in this fund supports our shepherds for years to come. To learn more about how to donate to this important fund, please call the foundation at 260-399-1436 or visit our website at [ccfnei.org](http://ccfnei.org). Thank you!

St. John Paul II, pray for us.

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For up-to-date information about Eucharistic Revival events and resources in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, visit [diocesefwsb.org/eucharist](http://diocesefwsb.org/eucharist) or [diocesefwsb.org/eucaristia](http://diocesefwsb.org/eucaristia).



**ANNIVERSARY MASS, from page 3**

anniversary couples back in 1973, or even our 25th-anniversary couples who got married in 1998. Steadily, our culture's attitude toward marriage has drifted farther and farther away from God's plan for marriage and family life.

"Two thousand years ago, St. Paul was already teaching the Christians not to be conformed to this age but to be faithful to the will of God, to follow what is good and pleasing and perfect to Him. Today, what the Church believes about marriage, based on sacred Scripture, is a minority belief in our culture. We must resist the temptation to conform ourselves to the majority, even if it brings ridicule, criticism, and rejection. Being disciples of Jesus Christ, our first duty is to follow Him and His teachings, including His teachings about the nature of marriage amid the currents that challenge the meaning, the permanence, and the indissolubility of marriage."

The Gospel reading for the day explored discipleship.

"In today's Gospel, Our Lord, who had just praised Peter, now had to rebuke him as a stumbling block to him because Peter had rejected Jesus' prediction of His passion and death. Jesus' mission to do the will of His Father out of love for sinful humanity entailed the cross, but Peter did not want to hear anything of this. After rebuking Peter, Jesus went on to teach His disciples that 'whoever wishes to come after Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him,'" Bishop Rhoades said.

"All vocations, including

marriage, are an invitation to discipleship, to take up our cross and follow Christ. On the cross, Christ showed us that love seeks to give even when it hurts. Love demands self-sacrifice. Our anniversary couples can testify to this. Jesus showed us that love involves faithful perseverance and self-sacrifice and ends in glory. In marriage, it is the love shown in patiently giving oneself to one's spouse and family," Bishop Rhoades said.

## Nourishment for the Journey

Bishop Rhoades discussed the decline in the number of people getting married in Europe and North America, along with a decline in birth rates. According to Bishop Rhoades, this is giving rise to the serious social problems associated with an aging population and fewer children and young people, threatening the well-being of society, including its economic well-being.

In discussions with young people, he found that individuals weren't interested in the sacrifice that comes with marriage. Bishop Rhoades invites all young people to understand that the sacrifices that come with marriage are life-giving and to consider how the limitations to one's individual freedom that comes with marriage open one to a greater freedom – the freedom of love.

"Anniversary couples, may the Lord bless you as you continue your spiritual journey," Bishop Rhoades said. "May you continue to walk together on this journey, helping each other, encouraging each other, caring for each other,



Photos by Lisa Kochanowski

**Dozens of couples attend the annual Marriage Jubilee Mass on Sunday, September 3, at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. Blessings were bestowed on 32 anniversary couples: six celebrating their 25th anniversaries, four their 40th anniversaries, eight their 50th anniversaries, nine their 60th anniversaries, two their 65th, two their 70th, and one couple their 75th wedding anniversary.**

and respecting each other. Remember that it is a journey with a destination. That destination is heaven. Ultimately, your task in marriage is to help each other get to heaven. Of course, you need nourishment and strength for this journey. That's why you are here today. It's why we celebrate your anniversaries at the banquet feast of the Eucharist. The food for our journey to heaven is the holy body and blood of the Lord, the holy Eucharist, and the sacrament of Christ's love.

Bishop concluded: "The holy Eucharist is the memorial with which Christ the Bridegroom loved His Bride, the Church. He loved us to the end! My dear couples, may Jesus in the Holy Eucharist increase your love and strengthen you on your journey to heaven."

## Staying Connected to the Faith

"I encourage our people to be informed by reading Today's Catholic. I hope that Today's Catholic truly helps our people to grow in their faith."

*The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend*

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**Michelle and Eric Szajko of Queen of Peace Parish in Mishawaka present the gifts to Bishop Rhoades on Sunday, September 3, at the annual Marriage Jubilee Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. The couple marked the celebration of their 25th anniversary.**





## Catholic Charities Helps Floridians Ravaged by Idalia

PERRY, Florida (OSV News) – Catholic aid workers are rolling up their sleeves to help tens of thousands of people after Tropical Storm Idalia slammed into the Southeast. “I just feel horrible for residents, that they had to go through this,” Matthew Knee, President and CEO of Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida, told OSV News. Initially a Category 4 hurricane, Idalia made landfall on Wednesday, August 30, hitting Florida’s Big Bend area – where the state’s panhandle meets its peninsula – as a Category 3 hurricane, and the largest to touch down in the Big Bend area in more than 125 years. Idalia weakened to a tropical storm August 30 as it tore through the southeast United States before heading into the Atlantic on Thursday, August 31. Idalia caused flooding, wind damage and record-level storm surges, leaving more than 400,000 customers in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina without power. Knee said Catholic Charities was working to provide both immediate emergency assistance as well as long-term recovery as part of “(keeping) people in their homes and in their communities” and “serving the poorest of the poor.” That work is “in our blood; it’s who we are and what we do,” said Knee. “We are the hands and feet of Christ.”

## U.S. Archbishop: ‘Radical Solidarity’ with Working Families Needed

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ domestic policy committee said the nation has “urgent work” to do to really show a “radical solidarity with working families” and ongoing support for the well-being of all families. “There are signs of improvement and concern regarding the economy,” with inflation slowing and workers’ wages rising, Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Philadelphia said in a statement issued on Wednesday, August 30, by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ahead of Labor Day, which was observed on Monday, September 4. Despite positive economic indicators, “more families feel like they are worse off today than the year before. ... We must do more to help families,” said the archbishop, who is Chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. Archbishop Gudziak called for a strengthened Child Tax Credit and a national parental leave policy, and underscored the anti-poverty work of the Catholic Campaign for Human

## Supreme Court in Mexico Overturns Abortion Ban



OSV News photo/Toya Sarno Jordan

A woman holds a cross as she takes part in a March for Life against abortion in Mexico City on May 7, 2022. Mexico’s Supreme Court overturned a state-level abortion ban on Wednesday, August 30, a decision observers say could hasten the removal of restrictions on the procedure nationwide.

Development. “The purpose of the economy is to enable families to thrive. This notion is deeply rooted in Catholic social teaching,” he said. “There is still urgent work needed to exercise radical solidarity with mothers, children, and families,” Archbishop Gudziak said. “Let us pray and act towards this end, always listening to the Lord who fulfills glad tidings in our hearing His word each day.”

## Alabama Priest Who Fled to Italy to Be Laicized

(OSV News) – A priest who fled the country with a recent Catholic high school graduate will be laicized, Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, announced on the archdiocese’s website, as family concerns mount over their inability to reach the young woman who is traveling with him. Father Alex Crow, who was ordained in June of 2021 and had served as a parochial vicar at Corpus Christi Parish in Mobile, abruptly left his assignment on July 24. The 30-year-old priest fled to Italy with an unnamed 18-year-old woman

who is a recent graduate of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School in Mobile, which Father Crow also attended. Archbishop Rodi, who had removed Father Crow’s priestly faculties in late July, intends to initiate the canonical procedure of dismissing Father Crow from the clerical state.

## Archbishop, Faithful Celebrate Mass after Arson Strikes Historic Oregon Church

SALEM, Oregon (OSV News) – Oregon’s Catholic archbishop joined some 300 faithful for Mass in the rain, hours after a devastating fire had heavily damaged their historic church in Salem. “My heart is really just filled with emotion,” said a visibly moved Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland, adding that he was “deeply saddened by what has happened to your house.” An overnight fire that broke out Thursday, August 31, destroyed the roof and interior portions of St. Joseph Catholic Church, the oldest Catholic parish in downtown Salem. No

casualties were reported. The fire was quickly ruled an arson, and Billy James Sweeten, 48, was apprehended and charged with first-degree arson. “This is a sad day,” St. Joseph’s pastor Father Jeff Meeuwssen told local media, speaking just before he joined Archbishop Sample and faithful for an August 31 afternoon Mass, celebrated in the church parking lot under pop-up tents and a huddle of umbrellas. Several parishioners knelt in the rain during the liturgy. Archbishop Sample reminded the congregation the fire “may have burned the building, but the church is her people.” “We will recover what we can, when we can,” Father Meeuwssen told media before the Mass. “Keep praying for us.”

## Pro-Life Supporters Ordered to Remain in Jail

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – Lauren Handy and four other activists convicted for an abortion clinic blockade in Washington in 2020 must remain in jail in Alexandria, Virginia, until their sentencing takes place in federal court. Handy’s lawyers from the

Chicago-based Thomas More Society had filed an emergency motion on Wednesday, August 30, asking for her to be released before sentencing, arguing that the violation of the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (or FACE Act) did not constitute a “crime of violence.” But Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia turned down the motion, for Handy and the others, on Thursday, August 31. “Though a point well taken, the court concludes that the FACE Act creates distinct offenses, some of which are crimes of violence,” her decision read. The five activists face as many as 11 years in federal prison, fines of up to \$350,000 each, and three years of supervised release. They were convicted on Tuesday, August 29, of the FACE Act violation and conspiracy against rights, both felonies.

## Excitement about National Eucharistic Congress Is Growing

INDIANAPOLIS (OSV News) – Scores of local and national organizers of the National Eucharistic Congress, which will take place in Indianapolis from July 17-21, 2024, met in person for the first time in Indianapolis on Wednesday, August 30, at Lucas Oil Stadium. “The Holy Spirit is inviting the United States to find unity and renewal through a grassroots National Eucharistic Revival,” said Jaime Reyna, Event Lead for the National Eucharistic Congress, quoting remarks from a letter written by Executive Director Tim Glemkowski. “This movement – discerned and approved by the bishops of the U.S. – is critical to rekindling a living faith in the hearts of Catholics across America, unleashing a new missionary chapter at this pivotal moment in Church history. ... The goal is to start a fire, not a program.” More than 25,000 people have already registered for the event, said Reyna. In addition to general and breakout sessions, the five-day event will be filled with opportunities for prayer, worship, and the sacraments, said Father Patrick Beidelman, Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis and Chair of the National Eucharistic Congress liturgy committee. “We’ll have a large Mass each day, three at the Indiana Convention Center and the closing Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium ... and opportunities for confession all over the place,” he said, adding that St. John the Evangelist Church across from the convention center “will be turned into a place of perpetual adoration starting on Wednesday evening through Sunday.” To learn more about the event, or to purchase tickets, visit [diocesefwsb.org/congress](https://diocesefwsb.org/congress).



# AROUND THE DIOCESE

## Diocesan Museum Set for 'Be a Tourist' Event

FORT WAYNE – On Sunday, September 10, the Diocesan Museum adjacent to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne will participate in the city's 24th annual Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown, where visitors who pick up a free "passport" can tour 21 museums and attractions for free.

The Diocesan Museum "is a treasure trove of religious artifacts that bring to life the Catholic faith's awe-inspiring history, especially that of northeast Indiana. Many items are significant in telling the story of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, while others reference the universal history of Christ and the Catholic Church. The displays are informative, sometimes thought-provoking, even amusing. Museum artifacts include

a mid-13th century handwritten bible, relics of St. Mother Teresa and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a collection of nun dolls, and an 85-year-old statue showing the graphic wounds of a scourged Jesus."

Other participating attractions include the African/African-American Historical Society and Museum, the Allen County Courthouse, the Embassy Theatre, First Presbyterian Church, the Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory, the Old Fort, Science Central, and more.

Passports allowing entrance to the Diocesan Museum and other participating attractions can be picked up at any Fort Wayne Kroger location or Old National Bank location. Passports can also be printed at [visitfortwayne.com/beatourist](http://visitfortwayne.com/beatourist).

If you can't make it to the Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown event on September 10, the Diocesan Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2

p.m. Admission and parking are free. Visit [diocesefwsb.org/museum](http://diocesefwsb.org/museum) for more information.

## Notre Dame Credit Union Honored

On Monday, August 28, American Banker released their annual list of the Best Credit Unions to Work For. Notre Dame Federal Credit Union finished fifth among credit unions with between \$1 billion and \$2 billion in assets, checking in at 51st overall. The list is comprised of 70 credit unions from a nationwide pool of more than 5,000 institutions. American Banker compiles the annual list by using a two-part assessment conducted by Best Companies Group, an independent research firm that identifies and recognizes great working environments, consisting of an employer questionnaire and an employee satisfaction survey.

## Priests offer blessing, Bishop Rhoades visits Bishop Luers

FORT WAYNE – On Friday, August 25, Father Paolo Degasper, Pastor of St. John the Baptist in Fort Wayne, and Father Patrick Hake, Pastor of St. Peter in Fort Wayne, visited Bishop Luers High School to offer an all-school blessing on the students, faculty, and staff. According to a news release from Bishop Luers, Father Degasper walked down the school halls sprinkling students, teachers, and staff with holy water and blessing the building. Students then processed behind him and received a final blessing in the gym.

The following Thursday, August 31, the seniors on the Bishop Luers football team received a very special guest at their weekly dinner, as Bishop Rhoades accepted an invitation to speak to the group about faith-based leadership. He also expressed interest in attending one of their upcoming games. Each Thursday, the senior football players have a dinner provided by team parents. Andy Zay, a football parent, has invited a different speaker to the dinner each week to strengthen team leadership.



Photos provided by Georgia Lieb

Surrounded by staff and students, Father Paolo Degasper and Father Patrick Hake offer an all-school blessing in the gymnasium at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne on Friday, August 25.



Bishop Rhoades poses with senior members of the Bishop Luers High School football team during his visit on Thursday, August 31. Bishop Rhoades spoke to the players about faith-based leadership.

## Well in Haiti



Photos provided by the University of Saint Francis

Members of the community in Plaine du Nord, Haiti, stand by the newly drilled well that was funded by donations to the University of Saint Francis' H2O Project during the Lenten season in 2022.

FORT WAYNE – The University of Saint Francis announced on Monday, August 28, that a community in northern Haiti now has greater access to clean, safe water thanks to donations made to the school's H2O Project during Lent of 2022.

According to the university, the H2O Project raised \$2,820.50 during the 2022 campaign, surpassing its goal of \$2,500 for help with the drilling of the well, which was completed recently through the work of Dr. Eugene Malkin, Founder and Director of New Hope Hospital in Plaine du Nord, Haiti.

"Escalating violence in Haiti in recent years has made it

more difficult to access safe drinking water, especially for people in rural areas," the school stated in a news release. "As a result, the hospital has treated more patients with cholera, which can lead to death from dehydration and electrolyte loss. Dr. Maklin identified the villages with the most cholera cases as sites for hand-pump wells to be drilled."

Additional wells are needed in Haiti, with each costing approximately \$3,000 to drill. Anyone interested in donating toward a future well should contact Saint Francis Professor of Biology Amy Obringer at [aobringer@sf.edu](mailto:aobringer@sf.edu) or 260-399-7700, ext. 8210.



An inscription on the new well reads, "A huge thank you to University [of] Saint Francis."



# Parish Revival Leaders Learn about Their Mission

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

With less than a year until the National Eucharistic Congress takes place July 17-21, 2024, in Indianapolis, the U.S. bishops have made it a priority for parishes across the country to facilitate ways in which Catholics can foster a deeper devotion to Christ in the Eucharist. To do this effectively, they have instituted the Year of Parish Revival, which began nationwide on June 11, the solemnity of Corpus Christi.

Throughout the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, each parish has identified a point person to assist priests and administrators with fostering community outreach and serve as the parish's primary contact with the diocese for the National Eucharistic Revival. On Thursday, August 31, leaders from various parishes on the north side of the diocese gathered at St. Therese, Little Flower Church in South Bend to begin their journey.



Photos by Lisa Kochanowski

## A Unique Opportunity

The designated parish leaders had the opportunity to gather information on the National Revival Team's Parish Playbook and how to implement it locally. They also listened to speaker Jason Shanks, President of the OSV Institute and a member of the National Eucharistic Revival team, share insight into making this moment more impactful for members of the congregation.

Jason Kulick from St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr in South Bend, an apostolate of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP), said he was excited to be able to collaborate at the diocesan level. He was interested in learning what other groups are doing and

**Jason Shanks, President of the OSV Institute, gives a talk on the National Eucharistic Revival Team's Parish Playbook during a training session with Revival parish leaders on Thursday, August 31, at St. Therese, Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend. Each parish in the diocese has chosen a point person to help implement ways to draw local Catholics deeper into the National Eucharistic Revival.**

exploring ways to work together between the parishes. "It's always an honor to be asked to help," Kulick said.

Abby Kyle, from St. Therese, Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend, said she is looking forward to learning more about outreach efforts by other parishes.

"I think this is a profound movement for the Church in America," Kyle said. "I'm honored to be part of it to the extent that the Holy Spirit is asking me to be part of it."

Oscar Nunez of St. Adalbert Parish in South Bend believes

being a Revival point person is a good opportunity for him personally and for his parish community. He found the August 31 session to be a terrific way to collaborate with other parish leaders about program ideas and ways to rally parishioners to get involved. His team is in the early planning stages, and he said logistics is one area that will need extra discussion and consideration.

"It's a very big responsibility," Nunez said of being asked to be a leader. "I'm very honored."

## Addressing the Loss of Belief

OSV's Shanks, the event speaker and leader for the evening, led sessions that were followed by small-group discussions. During these conversations, the parish leaders shared their personal experiences on each topic and discussed ways they can address those areas at their parishes.

The evening began with some background information about the National Eucharistic Revival and the three-year period of discernment, encounter, and grassroots response at the diocesan, parish, and individual levels that the Revival's national team hopes will create a movement across the country.

"We like to say within that movement, it was even a moment," Shanks said. "So, during the parish year, there's a moment of gathering on a

national level in the Church in Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress." The goal is to fill Lucas Oil Stadium with 65,000 faithful enjoying five days of programming, adoration, and Masses with people from all over the country.

The evening was comprised of four short talks that focused on the four pillars associated with the Revival's parish year: personal encounters, reinvigorating devotion, deepening formation, and missionary sending.

"One of the very first pillars of this year is robust formation (or deepening formation), the importance of us telling, teaching, and helping people grasp and understand the Real Presence of Jesus Christ," Shanks said. "Forty percent of the people not only don't believe in the Real Presence but believe the Church doesn't believe in the Real Presence. These are people going to church, going to Mass every Sunday with the knowledge that they do not believe that that's really Jesus, truly present – body, blood, soul, and divinity, right? That is Jesus Christ, God, man, right there on the altar, right? They not only do not believe that, but they also think the Church doesn't believe that, either."

## Bringing Catholics Back

Shanks believes part of this year should be talking about renewal and going back to the

basics of our Catholic faith. He feels this is a perfect time to teach foundational, core beliefs of the Church.

"We've got to get back a little bit to be able to catechize and evangelize, but do it where the people are at – do it where they're at and what's going to meet their questions and their needs," Shanks said.

It was recommended that the parish leaders read the document "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church" developed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, which was led by Bishop Rhoades at the time the document was written. Shanks suggested the leaders familiarize themselves with it and consider using it in their planning sessions.

"The next thing we have to think about is: How do we really enhance and reinvigorate our worship (or reinvigorating devotion)," Shanks said during the second session. "It's reverberating our worship experience, and you might think about that during this parish year, and how we can do that and contribute?"

Statistics show that COVID-19 reduced the number people attending Mass on a regular basis, and many individuals and families haven't returned throughout the past three years. Shanks said leaders need to think about ways during this time to reengage Catholics and get them back to Sunday Mass. He believes it's important to bring back the reverence and beauty of the Mass, noting Mass is not meant to be entertainment but a time of reflection and prayer.

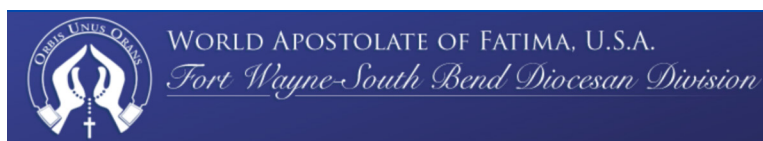
## The Need for Connection

Personal encounter is another key pillar in the year of parish outreach.

"I've come to realize that I can have all the intellectual knowledge in the world, but if I don't hear the Lord in the very recess of my heart, I might not yet have had that encounter," Shanks said. "That's where this personal encounter is critical as we move people beyond just the believing in the Real Presence to really and truly find Jesus in the Eucharist."

Shanks said the internet has made us more disconnected, and more people feel isolated and alone, but never tell anyone.

"We think this is the most connected generation ever, and I've come to realize all the likes and follows and stuff that we do on all the social media platforms is probably a cry for help, because it's them wanting to not be alone, wanting to belong, wanting to connect," Shanks said. "We're dealing with a lot of people who are



## Holy Mass and Breakfast Saturday, October 7

**7:30 a.m.:** Sacramental Confession

**8 a.m.:** First Saturday Devotions

**9 a.m.:** Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with Father Glenn Kohrman, Father Robert Garrow, and Father Stephen Felicichia at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

**11 a.m.:** Breakfast with Guest Speaker Father Stephen Felicichia

Tickets: Adult \$20 - Children 3-12 \$14

2 and younger FREE

RSVP @ FatimaFWSB.org





# St. Paul School of Leaders Prepares Parishioners to Evangelize

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

Currently in its piloting stage at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Fort Wayne, the St. Paul School of Leaders Program is an avenue for adults to learn more about their faith in order to more fully serve their parishes. The program was inspired by Bishop Rhoades' observation of the need for parishes to form and inform their communities in order to continue to flourish.

The program was inspired by St. Paul's initial encounter with Christ and how events unfolded thereafter.

"The name came about because I recalled the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus," explained Carl Loesch, Secretary for Pastoral Ministries and Catechesis in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, who was appointed by Bishop Rhoades to spearhead the program along with others.

"After St. Paul's encounter with the Lord, he did not immediately begin evangelizing others.

First, he went into a several-year period of formation so that he would be equipped to evangelize."

Others managing the program include Jonathan Kaltenbach, Brian MacMichael, Rob Gregory, and Justin Aquila.

The St. Paul School of Leaders Program at St. Vincent, which is already at full capacity, runs 11 weeks. The program's team integrated various avenues for spiritual growth into the program's agenda. These opportunities include catechetical instruction and praying the

Liturgy of the Hours.

"Since we are in the parish year of the Eucharist, we

thought it was appropriate to focus our first slate of classes on deepening our understanding of the Mass," Loesch said.

Dennis Wiegmann, Principal of Queen of Angels Catholic School in Fort Wayne, is one of the program's participants.

"I chose to participate because it was another opportunity to grow in faith," Wiegmann said. "I am always looking at ways to gain more knowledge while on my journey of faith."

Shannon Linder, another participant, is looking forward to

*The program was inspired  
by St. Paul's initial encounter  
with Christ and how events  
unfolded thereafter.*

learning more about the Mass during the program.

"I'm looking forward to going deeper with the unveiling of the Mass – when heaven and earth unite in the liturgy as revealed by sacred Scripture," she said.

As a local teacher, Linder looks forward to sharing the information she's learned with her students and family.

"I want to take my new learning from the course and share it with my family as well as my seventh- and eighth-grade students at St. Vincent's," she said.

Like Linder, Sarah Nielson, also looks forward to learning about the Mass.

"As soon as I was invited to be a participant and heard that the topic for the 11-week study was the Mass, I felt inspired to say yes," she said. "Learning about the Mass years ago through my own study with books such as 'The Lamb's Supper' and 'What Happens at Mass' was something that enlivened my worship and created a desire deep within

my heart to receive Jesus in the Eucharist not just on Sunday but every single day."

What Nielson most looks forward to, which is also facilitated by the graces of attending Mass, is deepening her relationship with God.

"Now I'm excited to revisit my study of the Mass and to go deeper, receiving wisdom from the incredible team of teachers we'll have," she explained. "What I'm most looking forward to is growing in and deepening the intimacy I have now with the Lord throughout these 11 weeks."

The diocese hopes to offer other programs focused on evangelization in the future.

"After offering this pilot program this fall, we hope to offer similar catechetical formation in other areas of the diocese," Loesch said.

For now, this single program will seek to serve surrounding parishes through participants' enhanced knowledge of the Faith.



At the meeting on Thursday, August 31, at St. Therese, Little Flower in South Bend, parish leaders for the National Eucharistic Revival discuss the event's four pillars that have been developed to make the parish year successful: personal encounters, reinvigorating devotion, deepening formation, and missionary sending.

wanting to find problems for loneliness and isolation."

He encouraged the crowd to broaden their ideas and think about what a parish can do to foster a greater encounter in prayer life and interior life.

## Missionary Sending

All of those pillars will lead to the final pillar: missionary sending.

"For me, as I think about the missionary year, I don't think what we're talking about is a new program for evangelization," Shanks said. The final step in the journey, he noted, is taking everything that is learned, encountered, and absorbed from the other pillars and committing to a future faith journey.

After the National Eucharistic Congress happens, a year of going out on mission will begin on July 21, 2024, and run through Pentecost of 2025. The faithful, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, will go out on a mission to share the Good News of our Eucharistic Lord as we enter the universal

Church's jubilee year in 2025. "I think that this diocese has the pace for what the National Eucharistic Revival looks like," Shanks said. "And I can tell you, without a doubt, when I go across the country, people are talking about Fort Wayne-South Bend. They're talking about the procession, about the programs, about our website. You guys should be very proud of the work that's happening here."

Church's jubilee year in 2025.

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To learn more visit  
[diocesefwsb.org/eucharist](http://diocesefwsb.org/eucharist)

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# WYD Pilgrims Recall Highlights of Their Epic Journey

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

**M**ore than a month after their journey to Portugal, pilgrims to World Youth Day continue to reap the fruits of their journey. Reflecting on their time in Europe, several pilgrims cite renewed perspective about the Church and a strengthened faith life as some of the numerous impacts of the trek.

## 'Praising the King'

Melissa Vazquez, a parishioner at St. Patrick Parish in Fort Wayne, said that, of the many things she experienced during the pilgrimage, her visit to Fatima impacted her the most.

"I think it was just so awesome [to see] where it actually happened. And also, I just can't believe we went to where Mary was – where she appeared. It was just so amazing."

Vazquez also mentioned that the event for U.S. pilgrims with Eucharistic adoration touched her, as well.

"It was just so beautiful. When He came out, and we were starting to get prepared, when we were getting ready to see Him, I started to cry. It was so beautiful."

Exploring historic, sacred architecture also proved to be a unique internal experience for Vazquez.

"When I went to monasteries or different churches, I felt like I was – it's kind of cheesy – but I felt like I was like a princess in a castle, and I was just praising the king. It was a beautiful experience to see all these beautiful monasteries and shrines and churches."

During her travels, Vazquez met a group from Slovenia and learned about the various sacrifices they made to participate in World Youth Day.

"They had to go to different stations, like different trains and buses around Europe. They didn't have the luxury that we had. They had to sleep in a school. ... And they had no heat or anything. I just think that was impactful for me because you don't know how lucky you are until you meet other people."

Among other notable experiences she had were reading at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Robert Barron and watching Matt Maher perform in a stadium with her fellow pilgrims.

"It was so amazing to see so many people around the world praising God, and the Holy Spirit was there, and it was just so beautiful."

Vazquez said that, in order to prepare for the journey financially, she sold bracelets and applied for a scholarship from the diocese. Spiritually, she began to go to adoration and pray the Rosary more often. Reflecting on



Photos by Joshua Schipper

**Father Zachary Rathke, who brought 30 pilgrims to World Youth Day from St. Adalbert Parish in South Bend, said the difficulties and challenges faced by his pilgrims helped to build bonds between them.**

her spiritual growth after the pilgrimage, she said she has begun praying the Liturgy of the Hours more often.

## 'When You Suffer Together, You Bond'

Holy Cross Father Zachary Rathke helped to lead the biggest parish delegation from the diocese, with 30 pilgrims traveling from St. Adalbert Parish in South Bend. He said that, despite several obstacles his group encountered on the pilgrimage, this suffering helped the pilgrims bond.

"We had, by the end of the trip, of the 30, we had four couples. A couple of them were already dating before, but there were two new ones – like brand new ones," Father Rathke said.

"I was reflecting on that, and just reflecting on the group as a whole. It made me think about my family. My dad and my brother were in the military. It's a very clear experience that when you suffer together, you bond, especially when it's not like suffering against someone. You're suffering with someone."

He recalled one of the most impactful moments in Lisbon was when his pilgrims saw Pope Francis.

"Just about all of them had tears dripping down their faces, and they were hugging each other. I had seen Pope Francis back in 2013, a few months after he had become the pope. I remember it was cool to see him, but I wasn't crying. Just to witness them be so moved by this man, who's the Vicar of Christ that represents Christ Himself here on earth, and to see the youth so moved by that, brought tears to my own eyes. I didn't cry the first time I saw Pope Francis, but I did when I saw our youth see him."

Father Rathke said that, although his parish community is poor, a wildly successful fundraising campaign made the



**Melissa Vazquez said one of the highlights of World Youth Day was reading at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Robert Barron. She also noted that participating in Eucharistic adoration with all the U.S. pilgrims was particularly moving.**

pilgrimage possible. He personally invited people by phone to make donations, and the youth led food sales and a "massively successful" raffle. That, along with some help from Bishop Rhoades, helped the parish raise around \$140,000.

"I think that that generosity came from the grace of God working in people's hearts – and a sign that people desire the youth to have these kinds of experiences that will lead them to a life of faith."

## Simple Moments

Ava Mondock, a parishioner from St. Charles Borromeo in Fort Wayne, said she was "super excited" to talk to Bishop Robert Barron as part of a panel discussion about "social friendship" during one of the "Rise Up" catechesis sessions. The conversation drifted toward social media, which, unlike the majority of her peers, Mondock does not participate in. While unable to answer the bishop's questions directly, she was able to offer some unique insight, which she expanded upon in a later interview.

"I don't see other people's vibes presented on social media. Anything I hear from my friends, they directly tell me, and so it's more of a community thing," Mondock said.

She recalled that one of her favorite experiences on the pilgrimage was when her small group split up, and Father Dennis DiBenedetto led them to a monastery. They found a chapel, then started chanting.

"I think that simple moment in the simple monastery was my favorite part, because I'm definitely not one for crowds," Mondock said. "And it made it hard. It's definitely beautiful to see everyone, but it was hard to experience Mass and it was hard to experience adoration with the big crowds, because I think I like the simpler better."



**Unique among her generation, pilgrim Ava Mondock, who does not use any social media, shared observations about her peers' use of the platforms to Bishop Robert Barron on a panel about "social friendship."**

During the event to welcome Pope Francis, Mondock met a few Portuguese pilgrims who asked several questions about life in the United States. Mondock and her fellow pilgrims asked them about some unique features of Portuguese churches.

"It was really great, because they have never left the country, so they were just all curious. They were like, 'Oh, we were so excited to meet Americans,' which is also kind of a weird thing to experience."

## Universality of the Church

Elianna Noll, another panelist who spoke to Bishop Barron, said that her opportunity to speak to the bishop was her favorite part of the pilgrimage.

"I loved being able to speak with him, not just one on one, but in a more public setting, and talk about such a broad topic, especially social media, which is a really awesome topic."

She said it seemed that the crowd received the discussion very well, as did Bishop Barron.

"He also seemed like he was getting something out of it, which is also super cool, because you wouldn't expect someone as big as Bishop Barron to get something out of 'little you,' but it was just super cool, and he is so personable."

To prepare for the pilgrimage, Noll participated in a fundraiser at her parish and raised money from family and friends. Spiritually, she prepared with prayer.

"I really wanted to focus this trip on not just my relationship with God but with Mary, because of Fatima. And so, in doing that, I tried to pray a Rosary every single day. There were some days I failed with only a decade, but I would try to pray a Rosary every single day and ask for intercessions, and kind of just ask for help."



**At one of the "Rise Up" sessions, Elianna Noll talked to a local bus driver who had fallen away from the Church about why she practices the Catholic faith. The bus driver told her that while he thought he would be annoyed with the busy streets caused by World Youth Day, he expressed how beautiful it was to see people singing and dancing with joy and peace.**

Noll said that the biggest takeaway from the pilgrimage was the universality of the Church.

"It's not something you understand until you really get there. And it was so beautiful, seeing all the different people coming in and realizing how many different people God touches every single day, and how many people that He loves. And then, converse to that, you see how many people that actually love God and share in that love."

Another experience came when she greeted a bus driver at a "Rise Up" session. He spoke Portuguese and Spanish but knew very little English. Noll knows a little bit of Spanish, but no Portuguese. She said they spent around 40 minutes talking to each other. Whatever he did not know how to say in English, he would say in Spanish, and Noll could understand him and respond in English or Spanish.

"We were able to understand each other, not by our first language but by our second."

Through their conversation, she found out that he had been baptized Catholic but was no longer practicing. He asked Noll why she continues to practice her faith, and she explained. The bus driver mentioned that he thought he would be a bit annoyed by the additional traffic caused by World Youth Day, but he expressed how beautiful it was to see people singing and dancing with joy and peace.

"It was just such a beautiful thing to say with, you know, three different languages."

Reflecting on her pilgrimage, Noll said her "biggest takeaway is that there can be this peace within the world. It is possible. It just gives you a little taste of heaven. And it's so beautiful."





The journey of nearly 300 pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend was an experience of a lifetime.

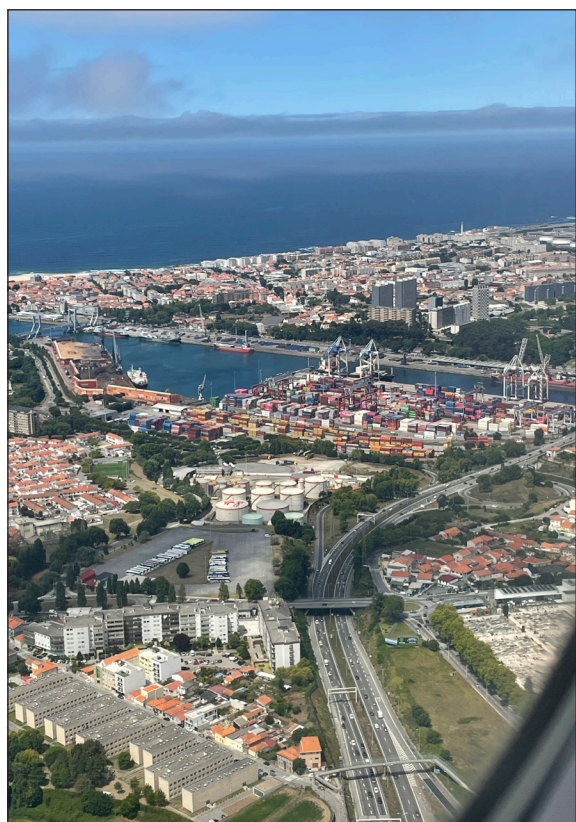


Photos by Nicole Hahn and Joshua Schipper



## Day One

Pilgrims gathered at four different locations throughout the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend on the morning of Friday, July 28, to celebrate Mass, pick up their diocesan World Youth Day gear, and make sure paperwork was in order and passports were valid. Groups then boarded buses at St. Adalbert in South Bend, St. Vincent de Paul in Fort Wayne, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Fort Wayne, and St. Vincent de Paul in Elkhart, and headed to Chicago. Though a few of the 272 pilgrims from the diocese made their way to Portugal on their own, the rest of the group split up and boarded three different flights: one to Frankfurt, Germany, and then on to Porto, Portugal, one to Zurich, Switzerland, and then on to Porto, and one to Madrid, and then on to Porto.



## Day Two

By the time the flights all landed in Portugal, it was already the afternoon of Saturday, July 29. The groups once again boarded buses and headed straight to a private opening Mass at the beautiful church, Irmandade de Santo António dos Congregados. Following Mass, the groups split up again and headed to four different hotels in Porto for check-in and a welcome dinner.





## Day Three

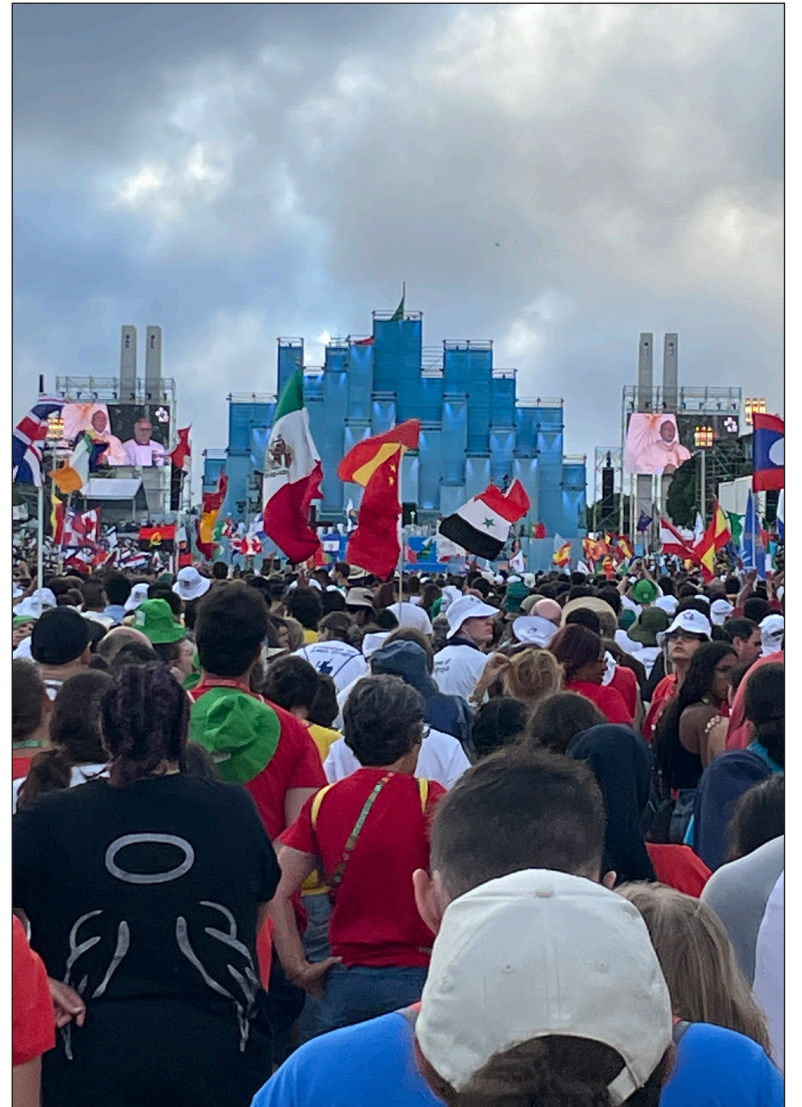
On day three, Sunday, July 30, it was Mass with Bishop Rhoades in Fátima, Portugal, and then off to explore the Shrine of Fátima, including the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary and Basilica of the Holy Trinity for the nearly 300 pilgrims in Portugal for World Youth Day.



## Day Four

On Monday, July 31, the group of nearly 300 pilgrims visited churches and monasteries and had Mass with Bishop Rhoades at St. Anthony, the site of a Eucharistic miracle. The group visited Lisbon, Santarem, Igreja de Graca, Church of Santa Maria de Marvila, Praca Sa da Bandeira, Se Catedral, Batalha, Mosteiro da Batalha, and Alcobaca Monastery.





## Day Five

On Tuesday, August 1, the group had a few hours in the morning to explore. Later, the nearly 300 pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend visited places including Santa Maria Maior (Cathedral), Igreja de Santo Antonio de Lisboa (Church of St. Anthony of Lisbon), and more holy places before attending the WYD Opening Mass at Edward VII Park "Colina do Encontro."



## Day Six

On Wednesday, August 2, the nearly 300 pilgrims, including Bishop Rhoades, had their first day of "Rise Up" catechesis at the Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation. Bishop Rhoades and several of our pilgrims were interviewed for various national and international news outlets. The group then went to the WYDUSA Gathering for pilgrims featuring a Holy Hour led by Bishop Robert Barron at Parque da Quintas das Conchas e dos Lilases, Alameda das Linhas de Torres.





## Day Seven

On Thursday, August 3, the nearly 300 pilgrims from the diocese had their second day of “Rise Up” catechesis at the Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation. It was a wonderful surprise for the group when they learned Bishop Robert Barron would be the Mass celebrant and speaker. Pilgrims then attended the papal welcome event at Edward VII Park “Colina do Encontro.”



## Day Eight

On Friday, August 4, it was the final “Rise Up” catechesis at the Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation for the nearly 300 pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. There was a little free time before the group headed off for Stations of the Cross led by Pope Francis at Edward VII Park “Colina do Encontro.”







Day Nine

Saturday, August 5, was one of the longest days for the nearly 300 pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend who were in Portugal for World Youth Day. The group gathered in the hotel lobby in Lisbon and began the walking pilgrimage to the overnight vigil site. There was one stop for Mass with Bishop Rhoades at Igreja de São João de Deus (St. John of God). Following Mass, it was many miles of walking in the scorching sun to get to the Campo da Graça, located in the Parque Tejo-Trancão, to find a spot and set up for the night, which included a Vigil Prayer Service with Pope Francis that was attended by 1.5 million pilgrims.



Day Ten

With temperatures expected to top 110 degrees in the blazing sun on Sunday, August 6, it was a difficult but great decision for the nearly 300 pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend to get up and begin walking back to the hotel before sunrise. Although the group missed morning Mass with Pope Francis, everyone made it back safely and had one of the most beautiful impromptu Masses with the diocesan priests that many had ever experienced. The pilgrims found a spot under shade trees just outside of Igreja de São João de Deus (St. John of God), where they had Mass the day before. People walking by on the streets even stopped to join Mass. It was so beautiful! With this being the last night before heading home, everyone enjoyed a farewell dinner at their separate hotels to end the evening.



Day 11

It was still dark on Monday, August 7, when everyone boarded the buses to head to their airports in Porto, Portugal, and Madrid, Spain. For those on the flight from Porto to Madrid, it was an all-out sprint to catch the flight to Chicago. The group that took a bus from Lisbon to Madrid took time to celebrate Mass before boarding the plane to Munich, Germany, and then on to Chicago. Another group stopped in Zurich, Switzerland, to get to Chicago. Once back in Chicago, everyone boarded buses to head home. It was a whirlwind of a trip where the pilgrims experienced God in ways they never thought possible, felt the Holy Spirit move them, met and got to know people who will remain friends forever, got to know more priests, seminarians, sisters, adults, young adults, and young people from the diocese, and got to see Pope Francis in person!



# 30 Years Later: Remembering the Fire at St. Mary

BY BETHANY BEEBE

Rain and lightning came down. Fire and smoke went up.

So went the demise of the physical structure of St. Mary Mother of God Catholic Church in downtown Fort Wayne on September 2, 1993. Remembering the 30th anniversary of the inferno this year, the parish, now stronger, continues its work in the community and in the hearts of parishioners.

## The Church

According to a 2013 article in the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, 30 German families bought the property at the corner of Lafayette Street and East Jefferson Boulevard for \$1,700 in 1848. Andrea Thomas, parishioner of the church at the time of the fire, and President and Chairperson for their History Committee, said five chartering families went as far as to mortgage their farms for the endeavor. She also said the people of the new church began at St. Augustine's, which originally became the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception nearby. The church was the first German-speaking in the area and, according to the St. Mary website, was 32-by-64 feet in size.

Ten years later, for \$30,000, a new church was built and the old one converted into a school. That building was destroyed in 1886 when the boiler exploded, killing a 13-year-old passerby and the custodian, Anton Evans. On December 11, 1887, a new church building was dedicated – the very structure that burned in the 1993 fire. The \$75,000 building was Gothic Revival in style and had two spires at 128 feet in height that flanked a 238-foot main tower between them.

## The Day's Events

Andrea Thomas said Father Tom O'Connor received a security alert that there was a fire recorded by a sensor. On hearing this report, he ran to the church from the rectory, through the breezeway, and into the church, where the choir loft was in flames. She said the lighting strike had traveled down the center steeple, igniting the choir loft and the 108-year-old oak beams running between the roof and the interior ceiling.

"I don't know that anything could have saved it," Thomas said.

Reported at 2:21 p.m. and officially declared under control at 5:43 p.m., 10 pieces of fire equipment and about 50 firefighters waged war on the inferno.



Archive rendering

Mimi Wismer, a private firefighter at the time, recalls being among the first firefighters to enter the blaze. She said in a video offered by the News-Sentinel that to help assess how far a crew should advance to fight flames, water is sprayed ahead of the entering first responders. When the water flows back down on the people doing the spraying, they know it is cool enough to proceed. In the case of the fire at St. Mary, though, entering water turned directly to steam in the extreme heat of the blaze. They had to turn back because the fire had engulfed the building so completely; it was so hot that the plaster on the ceiling began to crumble and fall.

"We tried our best to get as much out of the church as we could," she said in the video. "We knew it was prob-

ably going to be a loss at that point."

"Once the steeple fell and the roof collapsed, there wasn't a whole lot for us to do," said Robert Rainbow, another firefighter. Firefighter Dennis Gear said the windows could not be broken; a clear, supportive material protected the stained glass, and they had to wait for it to melt before those portals could be used as entrance points; axes simply bounced when attempts at entrance were made.

## Immediate Aftermath

In the throes of devastation, the people of St. Mary remained focused on their purpose. This past July, Maxine Stoval shared her memories of working with purpose. The day after the fire, September

3, 1993, the soup kitchen still served its guests with a menu of food donated from the Eckrich Company's Labor Day picnic. In the days that followed, Thomas said, because the parish wanted to continue caring for the hungry, canned goods were distributed from the breezeway. Large outdoor heaters were set up to warm those who came up the rectory stairs where they normally were given soup and bread. Thomas said huge quantities of donated canned goods were given out until the old boiler house was ready to function as a soup kitchen. Sunday Mass was not forgotten. With their regular parish in ashes, people sat in the alley and parking lot as Mass was celebrated on a makeshift altar at the rectory, Thomas said.

Those served by St. Mary

were not forgotten in the time between the fire and when the current church was built. Thomas said for safety reasons, when the 1886 church was built, the boiler was put in a separate building. That structure was repurposed as the soup kitchen until the state-of-the-art, current soup kitchen was constructed. While they were waiting, a house at the corner of Clay Street and Jefferson Avenue was used for church offices and the soup kitchen. This building was used as the original Matthew 25 Dental Clinic, according to Thomas. She also said Masses for the parish were celebrated at St. Paul's Catholic Church in the ensuing years until use of the new space was possible.

## Phoenix of the Fire

Careful consideration was put into what would replace the razed structure. On March 29, 1994, then-Bishop John M. D'Arcy made public that Catholic Mutual, the church's insurance company, settled for \$6.6 million. Thomas said half the funds went to construct the current church building and the other half went to the creation of St. Mary's Heritage Fund, which helps other parishes in the diocese. An additional \$290,560 was donated for the rebuild. Bishop D'Arcy said the outcome of the building project would be a smaller but more modern worship building and larger soup kitchen. From May to August of 1994, parishioners were incorporated into strategic planning meetings, eventually resulting in the May 2, 1999, dedication of the current structure, according to the parish website.

Those most intimately involved see some silver lining in the clouds of smoke and disaster. Thomas said the 1886 structure was in need of extensive repair and that the parish had been in talks about what changes might be made to the interior. "We hated to see our old home go," Thomas said, "but very quickly we knew we ... needed to move forward, and that is what we did. ... We can't help but wonder if God made all the remodeling and repair decisions for us."

Thomas said she and others in the parish acknowledge the disaster but do not let it define them, choosing to look into the future.

Firefighter Mimi Wismer said in her interview with the News-Sentinel: "It was neat to see it rebuilt. Everyone ... chipped in and helped do that. ... Sometimes after the destruction of something, as sad as that is, it is neat to see the community coming together to rebuild. ... I think in the ashes of that, we come together, and I think that is pretty cool."





Photos by Bethany Beebe

In Oechtering Hall in St. Mary Mother of God Church, a display that includes images of the fire was created to remember the old church building. The exhibit also includes newspaper coverage from the fire. Another display in the church remembers Father Tom O'Connor, who oversaw the construction of the current structures.



Now in the Mary Garden on the grounds of St. Mary Mother of God in Fort Wayne, this statue of the Blessed Mother survived the devastating fire on September 2, 1993. At the time, the statue of Mary was located in the basement of the church.



The tabernacle from the old church survived the fire and was refurbished for inclusion in the current church building.

# St. Mary Parishioners Reflect on Past, Future

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

It's been 30 years since St. Mary Mother of God Catholic Church in Fort Wayne burned to the ground. Years later, the community continues to commemorate the event and remains committed to the parish community.

St. Mary parishioner Sue Jehl witnessed the blaze on September 2, 1993.

"I was coming home from work driving toward downtown when I saw the smoke rising above the city and wondered what was on fire," she told Today's Catholic. "It soon became clear that it was my beloved St. Mary's Church."

For Jehl, the fire had a profound impact.

"Words can't express how heartbreaking it was to see the place you called your faith home destroyed by fire," she said.

In commemoration of the 30th anniversary, a special prayer was written encouraging the community to reflect on the event. The prayer acknowledges Mary as the patron of the parish and her impact on its efforts. It also prays for the parish and their mission.

"As our 30th anniversary commemoration prayer notes, 'Like our ancestors, we are sent forth to live our faith in this

world, in this time, and in this place, holding fast to that which is good,'" said Andrea Thomas, a St. Mary parishioner who has completed extensive research on the fire event and the general history of the church.

Like tragedies often do, the fire three decades ago has facilitated further faith among its members and brought the community closer together.

"St. Mary's has a 175-year history of worship and service, and even though there have been difficult times, like the fire, our shared faith has led us rather quickly to stop cherishing the hurt," Thomas said.

Even in the fire's immediate aftermath, the parish community quickly came together.

"On [the Sunday after the fire] we held Mass in the parking lot, and I knew from the love that was on display there that our church was not destroyed and another structure would rise from the ashes," Jehl said.

And while reflecting is important, the parish understands that it must continue to act. Both the immediate parish community and those who rely on the parish's soup kitchen have continued to grow and thrive.

Thomas said: "There are liturgies and sacraments to be celebrated, soup to be made, and people to care for."



A crucifix that survived both the boiler explosion in 1886 and the 1993 fire stands near the baptismal font in the current church.





Provided by Rob Morgan

Members of the Knights of Columbus hockey team pose for a picture at the Ice Box Skating Rink in South Bend. Pictured left to right in the back row are Dave Waltman, J.P. Burford, Pat Webb, Joey Ahlersmeyer, Nic Sherk, Nate Rohrer, and Taylor Williams. From left to right in the front row are Mike Hagen, George Sphorer, Rob Morgan, and Ed Ahlersmeyer.

## Knights of Columbus Hockey Team Combines Love of the Game, Love of God

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

The idea was a simple one, according to Knights of Columbus member Rob Morgan: Why not combine things he loves – God, the Knights, and hockey – and see if there was interest in forming a team in South Bend that would celebrate all three?

In August of 2022, Morgan said he began to explore the possibility of beginning a team with some of his brother Knights and discovered “that there was more than just a little interest.” He added: “My original plan was to try and make up the team with all Knights. I had a great start, because five of the team members came from my council in South Bend, Ave Maria 5521. The other guys are from other councils in South Bend, Elkhart, LaPorte, and Mishawaka. Right now, we have approximately 16 members. Currently, nine are Knights, four are Catholic, and three are not.”

The team plays games once a week at the Ice Box Games Skating Rink in South Bend against other recreation league teams from various businesses and organizations around

*“If you aren’t sure if you want to play, or are older, just stop by your local ice rink, watch, and talk to the guys and gals you see there. I don’t think you will find a more enthusiastic bunch of folks. I started at the age of 55 and played until I was 70.”*

– Rob Morgan

the area, Morgan said. The Knights play year-round.

According to Morgan, the rec-league teams don’t usually have a coach; it’s simply a group of guys who come together every week to play the sport they love.

“Currently, however, because of medical issues, I am the coach,” Morgan said. “I would rather be in the net and called ‘tendie’ (goaltender) instead of ‘coach’ by the guys. I do have to say that I have learned a lot about the game, being involved with activities on the bench and assigning positions, which, I must add, I get a lot of help doing so from the guys on the team.”

While the team loves the

chance to score goals and win games, the primary goal is to have fun and bond together as men and hockey players.

“Aside from the sheer joy of playing hockey with some really great people, the camaraderie – as a Knights of Columbus team, and for those of us who are Catholic and Knights – we want to combine our love of God with the game that we love. We do begin each game with a prayer,” Morgan said.

Win or lose, the time together on the ice creates memorable moments for the players.

“One of the best memories of the team was when we were only playing our third or fourth game,” Morgan said.

“We ended up tied at the end

of regulation. We went to a shootout. This is where each goalie is on the ice and takes turns taking shots from opposing players until someone scores. We were tied at the end of the first round, which consisted of three shooters per round. We were two shooters into the second round, and I called on Nate [Rohrer], one of our newest skaters, to take his turn shooting. He scored the winning goal, and his first goal, to the extreme joy of everyone on the bench,” recalled Morgan.

“The most challenging aspect running the team is getting enough players each game. We all want to play, and sometimes it is not a problem;

however, reality is what we have to deal with. Even though we all love the game, jobs, family, injuries, last-minute changes get in the way at times. So calling around and getting guys to sub is a challenge. I have a list of guys and gals who will sub if they can, which is greatly appreciated.”

Morgan said anyone interested in getting involved is invited to contact the South Bend Senior Hockey Leagues at the Ice Box, or a local ice rink, to get on a team or get a team signed up to play. If you’re interested in playing with the Knights, contact Morgan at stjcmorgan@gmail.com.

“We have a great sponsor who the guys really appreciate: Andrew Weiss, who is our local investment adviser with the Knights of Columbus and has helped steer guys my way,” Morgan said. “If you aren’t sure if you want to play, or are older, just stop by your local ice rink, watch, and talk to the guys and gals you see there. I don’t think you will find a more enthusiastic bunch of folks. I started at the age of 55 and played until I was 70. It was the best decision I ever made. Unless my wife is in the room, then it was the second-best decision I ever made.”



# Guided by Prayer, Little Flower Pastor 'Goes Out into the Deep'

BY PAULA LENT

Growing up in Nigeria, Father Julius Okojie earned the nickname “little priest” while in middle school.

Raised in a devout Catholic family who were members of the Legion of Mary, he would visit the sick at hospitals and homes and report back to his priest about who was in need of the sacraments. Eventually, it was noticed that he had a charism for healing, and he was called upon to go and pray over the sick.

“I became very personal with the Lord in terms of my prayer – not just prayer in groups, but the personal prayer” at that time, Father Okojie said.

“Even though my faith was not mature, and I didn’t understand deeper mysteries, it was working. At a very young age, the love of the Lord was ingrained in me. I would invite my siblings to pray, and we would pray together. My life has been permeated by that grace that I see. When I look back on my childhood, I see I was very committed to personal, active prayer.”

His nine years in seminary school in Nigeria provided the opportunity to learn about the deeper mysteries of the Faith and time to discern whether the Lord was calling him to the priesthood. Responding to this call, he was ordained in 2009.

After coming to the University of Notre Dame for further study, Father Okojie spent five years serving at a small parish in Lakeville, Indiana, before coming to St. Therese, Little Flower Church in South Bend two years ago. He has recently been incardinated, or formally attached, to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

“It’s been great,” he says of his time at St. Therese. “It’s a new experience for me, coming from a smaller church to a bigger one. There’s been lots of learning, challenges, and opportunities for growth. I didn’t hold an administrative position in my previous pastor assignment before now. I’m exploring the dynamics of parish administration in the United States, which is different from within my home country. This stretching me and helping me to grow is a blessing. I have learned a lot of patience – even though patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, I have grown in patience.”

“One of the things I have learned coming to Little Flower is self-effacement – learning to lean more on the Lord than my own strengths and abilities, even though my abilities are needed. I have learned to lean



Photos Provided by St. Therese, Little Flower Church via Facebook

**Father Julius Okojie, pastor of St. Therese, Little Flower Church in South Bend, a native of Nigeria, recently was incardinated, or formally attached, to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.**

more into prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help in areas that have been very difficult.”

“The decisions that I make flow from prayer. I don’t make it solely based on what I think is the best thing to do; I go to the Lord with it. Some ideas that I thought were the best have had to change, even though it hurts. That’s what leaning on the Lord does to you: it rearranges your visions and desires, if you learn to depend on Him.”

Father Okojie has also grown closer to the Lord through his relationships with the staff at St. Therese, Little Flower. Spend any amount of time with them, he said, and you will notice how easily they speak from their personal relationships with God and the role the Holy Spirit plays in guiding their work.

“Being at Little Flower has been an opportunity for growth, even in my own spiritual life,” Father Okojie said. “When you work with people who are joyful about sharing their faith, where it’s natural to talk about Jesus, it helps in one’s own faith walk.”

Father Okojie said there’s an “iron sharpens iron” effect, referencing Proverbs 27:17. “This intermingling of personal experiences and faith helps you to grow in your own faith. It was very moving for me when I got here to see that in the staff.”

Ministry to the sick and homebound retains a special place in Father Okojie’s heart, and other seeds that were planted by God in his childhood continue to bloom. He notes that he was affected by the work of Irish missionaries who came to Nigeria to

minister, making a lot of sacrifices in doing so, and that this placed within him a desire to be a missionary.

St. Therese’s strong focus on evangelization aligns with this missional desire. The parish regularly offers programming – which has included the Alpha program and the Rescue Project – with the intent to draw people into a relationship with God.

“We are no longer living in Christendom,” Father Okojie said, “so the Church has moved to an apostolic focus. It’s more of a fisherman

than a shepherd model: The shepherd takes care of sheep within the fold; the fisherman goes out into the deep. It’s a difference between maintaining versus going out to bring more into the fold. We offer the second. When programs are developed, we often have the outward-looking orientation in mind. It is not just for those within the Church, but also those outside of it – the unchurched. And our messaging reflects this.”

As part of its evangelization effort, the parish has “households”: intentional gatherings

*“The decisions that  
I make flow  
from prayer.”*

FATHER JULIUS OKOJIE



that take place in parishioners’ homes and create a community life that is also welcoming to those non-churchgoers who may be curious or seeking. The Rescue Project, held during Lent, was specifically intended for people who were not yet disciples in order to bring them to a deeper encounter with the Lord. These gatherings were held at several different times and locations, including the parish and parishioners’ homes, allowing participants to choose what worked best with their schedules and locations. Even the parish OCIA program (formerly known as RCIA) is intended to not only help to create disciples, but missionary disciples. Father Okojie said their OCIA program “intends to help those participating to be disciples so that they can bring others into the fold.”

As he looks toward the future with the parish – a future that will be guided by the Holy Spirit – Father Okojie said: “My hope is to see a church on fire with love and the Holy Spirit. I hope everyone sees Little Flower as theirs, and that they’re joyful and willing to share their story and invite others to come and encounter Jesus.”



# Being a Patient Is Slowly Teaching Me about Patience

“Patience is a virtue,” I try to remind myself as the oncology receptionist hands me the clipboard filled with five separate (and badly copied) forms I know I’ve already completed online.

“Don’t complain. Just smile and say thank you,” I whisper internally.

Truly, I am grateful these days. I’m grateful for access to excellent health care and the professionals who render compassionately. I’m grateful for family and friends who have prayed for me ceaselessly during my cancer treatment process. And I’m grateful beyond measure for my caregiving husband whose love has known no bounds during the last six months.

But I’d be lying if I didn’t also admit to being wildly impatient. This is a new trait for me.

In the past, I’ve had bouts of impatience. As a young professional stymied by a lack of experience, I felt impatient for not having been recognized by my older peers. Raising toddlers and navigating my sons’ teenage years certainly brought occasional moments of parental frustration. And I have confessed to more than one priest my ongoing impatience with my husband’s driving.

But by and large, my impatience in those moments felt like a temporary state, not the preexisting condition I carry with me these days.

My impatience with being a

patient is something entirely new.

I am impatient with the endless hours of waiting that come with various forms of medical treatment. I’m impatient with the bureaucracy inherent in the process. Terribly, I feel impatient with the well-intentioned reminders of others that I should avoid “overdoing it.” Most of all, I’m impatient with myself and my inability to more quickly bounce back to my pre-diagnosis self.

In my better moments, it’s occurred to me since I turned 60 in June that this healing process, and aging itself, provide excellent opportunities to grow in the virtue of patience.

There is a saying attributed online to Mother Teresa, and although I’ve never been able to find a source for it, it’s sound counsel: “Without patience, we will learn less in life. We will see less. We will feel less. We will hear less. Ironically, rush and more usually mean less.”

Since my decision to intentionally work on growing in the virtue of patience, those words have reminded me to pause intentionally during my moments of impatience and to see them as opportunities to learn and grow.

My first step in this process has been to recognize my problem, admit it to myself, and take it to the Sacrament of Penance, spiritual direction, and counseling. It’s hard to avoid accepting the olive branch that’s typically offered when I’m reminded,



LISA M. HENDEY

## SENIOR STANDING

“You have a good excuse for being impatient these days.”

The harm that comes to me spiritually (when I simply accept impatience as an ongoing state of mind) is one of my major motivations for wanting to grow in patience. St. Peter Damian, an 11th-century reformer and Doctor of the Church, taught his followers about the power of patience.

“The best penance is to have patience with the sorrows God permits,” he said. “A very good penance is to dedicate oneself to fulfill the duties of every day with exactitude and to study and work with all our strength.”

That helps. Slowing down helps, too – helps me to embrace the small moments each day when impatience can give way to virtue.

The proffered stack of medical forms reminds me to be intentionally grateful for our insurance coverage, and to pray for so many worldwide who go without even the most basic health care.

The extra hour spent in a

HENDEY, page 21

# The Sinful Energy of Envy – How You Incite It

A friend of Dorothy Day’s told her that her children had called Peter Maurin “ragged and unkempt.” They were sure “that he never bathed, and he seemed to sleep in his clothes.” Day asked him why he didn’t try to look better; he told her, “So as not to excite envy.”

Maurin, for those who don’t know, was Day’s friend and mentor, and the mind behind the Catholic Worker movement. He’s also quite possibly a saint. He lived a very simple life, with no place to lay his head.

It’s a question how much envy Maurin might have raised were he better dressed, given what “better dressed” would have meant to him. But he lived and worked among the very poor; wearing a nice clean suit, even if it was a cheap one, might have made people he cared for envious.

The story speaks of a certain detachment from worldly things – a cluelessness about himself and the world, which I think is rather sweet. Whether he was right about his clothes possibly encouraging others to envy him, he did not dress as he could legitimately have done, and he dressed the way he did to help others avoid a very serious sin.

Envy is one of the seven “capital,” or deadly, sins – the capital crimes of the moral life. Maurin said that envy came



DAVID MILLS

## LIFE IN THE WORLD

from greed and “makes a man consider the advantages of another as losses to himself.” The envious person feels that somehow someone else’s blessings harm him, that he’s been robbed of what’s rightly his.

The Protestant apologist Dorothy L. Sayers, in a wonderful essay titled “The Other Six Deadly Sins,” calls envy “the great leveler.”

“If it cannot level things up, it will level them down,” she writes. “At its best, envy is a climber and a snob; at its worst, it is a destroyer; rather than have anybody happier than itself, it will see us all miserable together.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church drives the point home (No. 413) with a quote from the Book of Wisdom (2:24): “Through the devil’s envy death entered the world.” Which is to say, you really don’t want to do this.

I’ve wondered about this

MILLS, page 21

# Understanding Our Roles as Disciples in the Church



## THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

## Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

For the first reading this weekend, the Church gives us a passage from the ancient Book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel’s name in Hebrew in effect was a prayer, “May God make (him) strong.” It was fitting since, as the prophet himself said and, indeed, said in complaint, his calling to be a prophet put him at odds with so many people.

For God’s people, times were hard. The Babylonian Empire, at the time one of the Middle East’s most powerful states, had destroyed much and had killed many. Then the Babylonians took back to Babylon many survivors of the

invasion. In Babylon, these exiles, or their descendants, would languish for four generations.

Ezekiel saw this disaster not as a direct punishment from God, pressed down upon the people in a fury of revenge for their sinfulness, but as the result of the people’s sin.

Although the prophet was harsh in this respect, he also consoled the people that a better day would come – if they returned to God. If they obeyed God, then God would protect them.

No matter the people’s disobedience, Ezekiel wrote, God would never forsake them and never desert them in the face of peril.

St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading. It continues the pattern for these weekends of the summer, so many of which have presented readings from Romans.

A highly educated, sophisticated and wealthy Jew, fully versed in the teachings of Judaism, Paul knew the Commandments well. While he

saw a special vocation in his outreach to gentiles, he knew that God had acted through Hebrew agents in the past. The Commandments were from God, given to Moses, for example.

Paul set the Commandments in context. People should obey God because they love God. People should treat others well, according to the Commandments, because they love others. This urging echoed the teaching of Jesus.

For its last reading, the Church this weekend offers a passage from the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus told the disciples to admonish anyone among them who somehow is at fault.

The Lord gives a progression of steps. First, a Christian should call a wayward brother or sister to task. This step failing, the Christian should seek the aid of others in calling the wayward to task. Finally, this step also failing, the disciple should go to the Church.

If the wayward will not reform, the Church should dismiss the wayward.

(The reading reminds us of the teachings of the Church regarding how to read the Gospels. We should remember that the Gospels were not written at the time of Jesus but rather years later. By the time Matthew was written, the Church had formed.)

Being a follower of Jesus is serious matter. The Church, representing Christ, has the right to judge a member’s behavior, even a member’s sincerity. Christ is in the assembly of disciples. The Church is not simply a convenient, occasional gathering of people of like minds or good intentions.

## Reflection

For weeks, we have heard advice about being good disciples. We hear advice again this weekend about discipleship.

Ezekiel gives us a clear message. All humans are inclined to sin. Bad results follow when we forget God. Searching for excuses, we blame others or some unwelcomed coincidence, saying that actually we are helpless in the face of tempta-

tion, or we did not understand the seriousness of our sin.

We are responsible for what we do. We are weak. We are myopic. We are afraid. Even so, if we ask, God will strengthen us.

God speaks and acts through the Church. So, the Church acts with God’s authority. It guides us, and it warns us. Frank and straightforward, it reminds us that we must love God above all else.

## READINGS

**Sunday:** Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

**Monday:** Colossians 1:24-2:3; Psalms 62:6-7, 9; Luke 6:6-11

**Tuesday:** Colossians 2:6-15; Psalms 145:1-2, 8-11; Luke 6:12-19

**Wednesday:** Colossians 3:1-11; Psalms 145:2-3, 10-13; Luke 6:20-26

**Thursday:** Numbers 21:4b-9; Psalms 78:1b-2, 34-38; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17

**Friday:** 1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-14; Psalms 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 11; John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35

**Saturday:** 1 Timothy 1:15-17; Psalms 113:1-7; Luke 6:43-49



# Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria and the Seduction of Our Daughters

In recent years, the number of young people with gender dysphoria, or extreme discomfort in one's biological sex, has skyrocketed in the United States and Western Europe. Professor Lisa Littman, a researcher at Brown University, was the first to publish a report that indicated that many transgender-identified children experience "rapid-onset gender dysphoria," a clustering phenomenon in which one, several, or even all the friends in a group become transgender-identified within a similar timeframe. Other researchers have since published similar findings. Littman proposed the hypothesis that this transgender identification could involve a novel form of peer or social contagion that contrasts with our classical understanding of gender dysphoria dating back about a hundred years. Some of the novel aspects of the phenomenon include:

The initial age of onset has markedly shifted, from pre-school aged kids to the teenage years, typically around the age of 16.

The sex ratio has flipped from mostly young boys before 2010, to now more than 75 percent adolescent girls.

The prevalence of the phenomenon has risen dramatically in recent years, both absolutely and relatively, leading some to suggest we are facing an "epidemic" in rapid-onset gender dysphoria.

In other words, teenage girls with no prior history of gender dysphoria are now the predominant demographic identifying as transgender.

Discussing the phenomenon in *Psychology Today*, Christopher J. Ferguson, Ph.D. notes that the "sudden surge in the number of teen girls identifying as trans boys is due not to gender dysphoria or transgenderism but rather to girls with other mental conditions who are mistakenly self-identifying as trans because there is social capital built into marginalized identities."

When surveyed by Littman, more than 60 percent of parents reported that the announcement of their child's coming out had resulted in a popularity improvement at school and in other settings.

These young people appear to be escaping into a victim group into which they don't actually fit, in part because, within the broader culture, gender dysphoria has become one

of the few victim identities one can choose.

Many of these youth reportedly had one or more psychiatric diagnoses, and almost half were engaging in self-harm before the onset of gender dysphoria. There is evidence that transitioning can worsen mental health and correlate with suicidal thoughts. Claims that gender transitioning reduces the risk of suicide remain highly controversial and unsupported by well-designed and properly controlled scientific studies.

The surge in transgender-identifying adolescents might also be partly explained as a maladaptive coping mechanism for teens struggling with the challenges and stresses arising from their adolescent journey through puberty and their explorations of sexuality in a hypersexualized society. Prior trauma, whether sexual, peer, or family, may also play a role.

The steep spike in the phenomenon of rapid-onset gender dysphoria appears to be connected to other social factors, as well.

For example, YouTube influencers and internet advocates of gender transitioning often have charismatic personalities and offer compelling personal testimonies and confessional stories that draw the attention of youthful audiences. These entertaining and well-produced videos strongly encourage young people to transition, promising happiness and a new lease on life. Before announcing their new transgender identity, more than 65 percent of the teens were reported by their parents to have spent extended time, sometimes even several weeks of total immersion, watching YouTube transition vlogs and other trans-oriented social media.

A second relevant factor is that various authority figures in the lives of teens, including teachers, therapists, and doctors, have started encouraging and affirming the idea of gender transitioning. These respected individuals might energetically advocate for a young person to transition, claiming they know best what the young person needs, and it is virtually always to "transition."

When parents are hesitant to go along, these authority figures may adopt a savior posture by bringing up a coercive suicide narrative, asking them whether they prefer to have a live son or a dead daughter, while actively seeking to re-educate the alleg-



## MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

edly naive and transphobic parents.

Gender-affirmative advocacy applies powerful pressure on impressionable youth and vulnerable parents. These approaches can tragically seduce our adolescent daughters, resulting in permanent and irreversible damage through hormonal treatments, mastectomies, and mutilative genital surgeries.

Thankfully, medical professionals in several European countries are beginning to change course. Treatments for youth with gender dysphoria have become decidedly more cautious. The paramount importance of psychological care is being recognized, with transitioning becoming restricted to research protocols.

We need to begin promoting a more wholesome and balanced perspective to girls, namely, that being a woman is good and beautiful. Therapists need to counsel patience in the face of adolescent claims of discomfort with their biological sex, recognizing that some may be seeking gender transition as an escape from other emotional difficulties. Many who have transitioned are now regretting their choice, with "detransitioning" occurring at an accelerated rate among the same females who presented during adolescence with gender dysphoria.

Young people facing rapid-onset gender dysphoria need authentic support and encouragement, rather than surgeries and hormones, especially in the face of data revealing that most of them, if not offered "affirmation therapies," will outgrow their dysphoria and come to accept their birth sex once their turbulent adolescent years have passed.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

HENDEY, from page 20

waiting room is a chance to pray what I've come to refer to as a "waiting Rosary." I count the heads of my fellow patients and use them as my "beads," praying a Hail Mary for each

of them and their needs in the silence of my heart.

My frustration with my own exhaustion and inability to focus reminds me to pray for the souls of my parents, to give thanks for the progress I have actually made, and to recognize that

this new stage of my life offers many blessings I am only just beginning to realize.

Lisa M. Hendey is the founder of CatholicMom.com, a bestselling author, and international speaker.

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for September 10, 2023  
Romans 13: 8-10 / Matthew 18:15-20

Following is a word search based on the Second and Gospel readings for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A: How to treat each other. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

LOVE	FULFILLED	SHALL NOT
SUMMED UP	NEIGHBOR	SINS
AGAINST YOU	FAULT	ALONE
LISTENS	ALONG	WITNESSES
REFUSES	YOU BIND	EARTH
BOUND	HEAVEN	LOOSE
AGREE	FATHER	GATHERED

### SUMMED UP

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

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MILLS, from page 20

principle, that we should live so as not to excite envy. Almost all of us face the problem when we share good news on social media.

Every time you share good news about your spouse, or your children, or your work, or something you did, you risk exciting envy among those who don't have what you have. We can't avoid exciting envy without shutting up entirely, because someone will always envy whatever blessing we have, but shutting up entirely means not sharing news we should share with our friends.

I think, for example, of an older man taking care of a very sick spouse. He'd always expected that at the end of his career, when the kids were all out of the house, when finally they had a little extra money, he'd be out and about with his wife enjoying things they hadn't been able to enjoy together before.

Now they can't, and won't ever. He sees all the posts on Facebook of people his age or much older having the time of their lives. He tries not to feel envy, at least of the leveling-up kind, but it's hard not to envy people with healthy spouses who can enjoy life in a way he can't.

The social media system itself encourages envy and our unthinking use of it encourag-

es envy even more. But what to do? I have four suggestions of practical ways to do this.

First, don't try to avoid the problem by making a point of how lucky you are and how unworthy you are. In other words, don't humble brag. It's not humble. It's annoying. As Jesus might have said, let your brag be a brag and your silence, silence. If the news is news you feel (after thinking about it) you should share, just share it.

Second, without saying things you shouldn't share in public, make clear that you have your own struggles, disappointments, and failures.

Third, make a smaller grouping among your Facebook friends for real friends, for friends who want to hear good things about your life and won't feel envious, even if that aspect of their own lives pains them.

Fourth, take a cue from Romans 12:15, and rejoice when others rejoice and weep when they weep. Care for others' lives in a way that subverts the temptation to envy them.

David Mills is columnist for OSV News. He writes from Pennsylvania.





# The 'Religion' of Football: Searching for the Rightly Ordered Soul

BY TIMOTHY P. O'MALLEY,  
OSV NEWS

During my doctoral studies in Boston, my wife was a youth minister. Because she was supporting me in the lifestyle to which I had grown accustomed (that is, the only source of actual revenue in our home), I, therefore, also functioned as a de facto youth minister, especially on annual summer service trips. This privileged position meant spending a week each summer sleeping on the ground in a non-air-conditioned public school, painting homes each day, and then enduring nondenominational religious programming each evening.

One such evening, the youth were asked to reflect on the idols in their lives. They stood before money and were queried: Where do you choose mammon before the kingdom of God? A young man (not from our parish) who took a dollar from the pile of cash answered that question not only in word but in deed. If you can't serve God and mammon, you can at least serve mammon.

The young men of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish were more attracted by the collection of sports equipment. Where in your lives have sports become an idol? I saw them pick up the football, and then immediately shed tears! At last, I thought proudly to myself. They recognize that their obsession with athletic prowess exceeds what is necessary for human flourishing. They understand the need to re-order their desires.

We assembled in the room after the session, and I waited to hear about their Augustine-esque religious conversion precipitated by the evening devotional. My hope was at once dashed when the first young man, holding a football in his

hands, began to cry out: "Men, make sure that you never forget how brief your high school football career will be. How I wish that I could go back and start again." Sigh, I thought to myself. What could have been an occasion of memento mori, recognizing the brevity of our lives, became an act of nostalgia.

These young men, of course, were not born with such idolatry. It was passed on, the result of Sundays watching the then-dynastic Patriots and participating in the obsessive commentary that followed each game during the season. Sports radio in Boston could take a three-hour contest and analyze each moment as if it was sacred Scripture itself. Remember when Bill Belichick took that one timeout right before halftime? What was revealed in this moment? What meaning did it possess for your life? How might it foreshadow what is to come?

Of course, the young men and women of Boston are not unique. American football functions to many citizens in the United States as a de facto religion. In 2022, the NFL made \$18 billion while occupying our collective attention on Sundays, Mondays, and not a few Thursdays. Individual college football programs make hundreds of millions of dollars, while also offering us a spectacle to watch on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays (and Sunday and Monday during Labor Day weekend). What would high school be without a football game on Friday night under the lights, young men clashing with their neighbors

across town, while dreaming of future revenue made from playing a game they love?

Now, this kind of commentary might lead you to presume that the author is yet another academic incapable of understanding the lives of ordinary Americans. This guy, Tim O'Malley, probably sits in a library every Saturday and Sunday reading and writing books that no one cares about. While I do, in fact, read and write such tomes, I reflect on football in American life as a full, conscious, and active participant in the annual autumn carnival. I have done so since I was in high school at a public school in east Tennessee. I still vividly remember the moment in which William Blount High School (zero state championships in football) defeated Maryville High School (17 state championships in football). We (note the use of the collective pronoun, despite the fact that I did not play football) beat Maryville on a two-point conversion in overtime. We rushed the field. We would later lose in the playoffs that season to Sevier County High School on some atrocious calls by referees who I presume were paid to make these decisions by boosters of Maryville High School (who would later go on to win state that year, but I digress).

My love of football didn't stop in high school. As a student and later faculty member at the University of Notre Dame, I can mark the time of my undergraduate, graduate, and professional career through some fairly remarkable games, not a few of them losses. I

am so committed to attending these games that I shape my entire fall travel schedule around Notre Dame football.

Should I really be doing this? Is this a good use of my time? Tim, shouldn't you get a life apart from watching Notre Dame? These are the questions that I ask myself (and I suspect my Notre Dame alum wife also asks of me). Especially with all the problems with football today. College coaches who pledge lifelong fidelity to a team, only to depart when the right offer comes along (names need not be mentioned but Brian Kelly). Players who transfer schools when playing time doesn't come along, or if there's more money to be made through Name, Image, Likeness deals at other institutions. Schools that discourage students from getting the kind of degree that could change their lives in the long term, preferring that they put all focus on athletics. Concussions. Hazing. Racism. Fans who get blitzed out of their mind before the games, spending three hours yelling profanities at 18- to 22-year-old men. How can I keep watching in good conscience? How can I participate?

I have no great answer to these questions, which continue to haunt me. At the same time, I recognize the gift of college athletics. I admire the way that Marcus Freeman at Notre Dame, for example, is calling these young men toward excellence on the field and in the classroom, while simultaneously providing a formation into virtue. The kind of virtue that will benefit them when they

have careers, but most importantly, when they are husbands and fathers.

Maybe, for me, the way forward is to properly order my love of this game. I've been known, during really important games, to turn to opposing fans to mock them (I apologize to fans of Clemson, in particular, for anything I said to you in 2022). After Notre Dame lost to USC in 2005 (when USC cheated, but that might not be specific enough to help you remember), I couldn't sleep for a week. My mood was too often affected by what happened on Saturdays, causing me to be a rather grumpy husband and father.

During one of these grumpy moments, my son turned to me and said, "Dad, it's only a game." That's true. It's only a game. Its merits are a deeper connection to something larger than yourself, a community of past, present, and future fans of a beloved school, institution, or team. But it is a game.

Maybe, those of us at Catholic institutions in particular need to underline this to the young men and women who play football and attend our institutions. Even if there is a particular delight to being in Notre Dame Stadium on a Saturday afternoon, it is not the highest or even the most excellent of delights.

It's a lesson, perhaps, that I might need to remember when Ohio State visits Notre Dame this fall. Go Irish! But, if we lose, then the sun will rise again. The beauty of existence will continue. And all of us are made for something more important than this game, however beloved it may be. Communion with God and one another.

*Timothy P. O'Malley, Ph.D., is the Director of Education at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame.*



# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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

**Ege Chicken Dinner**

LAOTTO – Immaculate Conception Parish in Ege, 7046 E 400 S., will have a chicken dinner on Sunday, September 10, from noon to 5 p.m. Enjoy the homemade pies, mashed potatoes, noodles, and chicken. Carry-out available. Kids' games and Country Store also offered. Contact 260-693-9578 or [saintjohn.bosco@gmail.com](mailto:saintjohn.bosco@gmail.com) for information.

**Intentional Discipleship Series**

SOUTH BEND – St. Therese, Little Flower Church, 54191 Ironwood Rd., will offer The Intentional Discipleship series focused on the next steps for your own spiritual journey beginning on Monday, September 11, from 7-9 p.m. This 11-session weekly series utilizes a book (provided), training videos, and additional presentation material. Reading assignments and homework exercises are involved. Space is limited, and registration is required. Learn more and register at [ablazemission.org](http://ablazemission.org).

**Most Precious Blood 125th Anniversary Celebration**

FORT WAYNE – All alumni, families, friends, past and cur-

rent parishioners and staff will celebrate 125 years with festivities on Saturday, September 16, at 10 a.m., with pickleball at Hamilton Park continuing to Most Precious Blood School and Church, 1529 Barthold St., at noon with kids' games, food trucks, music, and an alumni tent full of class pictures and memorabilia. Bingo, a silent auction, and school and bowling alley tours will be offered. Dinner, drinks, and DJ will begin at 6 p.m. in the school gymnasium. On Sunday,

September 17, Bishop Rhoades will celebrate the 10:30 a.m. Mass at Most Precious Blood. Following Mass, a breakfast will close out the celebration. Visit [preciousblood.org](http://preciousblood.org) for information.

**St. Joseph Parish Festival / Kermes**

FORT WAYNE – The St. Joseph Parish Festival / Kermes will be held on September 16 and 17, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the school parking lot, 2213 Brooklyn Ave. Delicious tacos and other food will be for sale



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### Coordinator of High School and Catechetical Ministries

*Under the direction of the pastor, this coordinator is responsible for the ongoing management of the catechetical and spiritual formation with primary focus on high school and secondary focus on adult parishioners. While this position may perform some events directly, the position will more often coach and oversee teams who assist with the various ministries.*

**Essential Functions/Job Responsibilities:**

- Oversee and direct CORE teams for youth ministry and adult groups with emphasis on high school youth ministry
- Organize bi-annual summer high school retreat (Damascus, Steubenville, NCYC, etc.)
- Interface with junior high youth ministry and assist with annual Confirmation Retreat Day
- Interface with children's ministries such as Vacation Bible School and Mass readings for children
- Assist with Religious Education two Sunday mornings to open, close, and substitute teach
- Assist with preparing an annual calendar of events and liturgies such as HS graduation Mass

**Specific Job Skills/Qualifications:**

- Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills including public speaking
- Ability to foster trust and respect among parish staff and volunteer teams
- Collaborative work style, initiative, and flexibility

**Preferred Education and Experience:**

- A degree in teaching, catechesis, theology, religious education, or related field is helpful
- Live according to tenets, teaching, and practice of the Catholic faith
- Model Catholic and Gospel values as basis of actions
- Support and foster Catholic identity

Part-time position (evening and weekend hours)

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## REST IN PEACE

<b>Arcola</b> Sophie Wormcastle, 84, St. Patrick	Patricia Spychalski, 79, St. Pius X	<b>New Haven</b> Rita Burnham, 84, St. John the Baptist
<b>Fort Wayne</b> Elvin White, 66, St. Vincent de Paul	<b>Mishawaka</b> Mary Ann Wozniak, 77, St. Bavo	<b>South Bend</b> Josephine Pecina, 90, St. Adalbert
<b>Granger</b> Thomas J. Ahearn, 58, St. Pius X	<b>Monroeville</b> Carolyn Butler, 75, St. Rose of Lima	MaryAnn Ross, 90, St. Casimir

Send obituaries to [obituaries@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:obituaries@diocesefwsb.org).

along with kids' games, silent auction, beer tent, piñatas, and more. The beer tent will be open from 6:30-9:30 p.m. for those 21 and older on Saturday with a live band.

**Elkhart County Catholic Open Golf**

ELKHART – A fundraiser for the St. Vincent de Paul Elkhart Cemetery will be held on

Sunday, September 17, from 2-6 p.m. at The Bent Oak Golf Club, 3610 Bent Oak Trail. The fundraiser will benefit the new columbarium and meditation garden project in the St. Vincent de Paul cemetery. Visit [catholiccemeteryelkhart.org](http://catholiccemeteryelkhart.org). Cost is \$400 per four-some. Contact Jeff Kendell at 574-320-2566 or [Jeff.Kendell@Comcast.net](mailto:Jeff.Kendell@Comcast.net) for information.

## SUBMIT EVENTS at [TodaysCatholic.org/event](http://TodaysCatholic.org/event)



### St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Middle School Math Teacher

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Fort Wayne is seeking a dynamic Middle School Math Teacher to join the middle school faculty and math program. The school seeks a candidate with strong math skills, experience, and differentiated instruction. This candidate will work collaboratively with the other middle school math teacher. This is a full-time position.

### Licensed Resource Teacher

- Coach/mentor other professionals/peers who work with children with disabilities
- Collaborate with the support staff (e.g. school counselors and speech therapists) to create holistic intervention plans
- Work on a regular basis with the school's LEA to coordinate child studies, case conferences, and annual case reviews
- Coordinate all team meetings regarding student concerns (parents, classroom teachers, support staff, LEA)
- Serve as a liaison between parents, classroom teachers, and outside resources
- Provide direct instruction to students
- Create data-driven lessons that support individual learning
- Provide ongoing progress monitoring on students' goals

This is a full-time position.



# In Mongolia, Pope Offers Message from 'Heart of Asia'

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Being a Catholic does not destroy or replace a person's culture, and wanting to share the Gospel message does not mean wanting to take someone's allegiance away from their nation.

Visiting Mongolia from September 1-4, Pope Francis encouraged the nation's tiny Catholic community to grow in faith and charity, but the visit also was designed to reassure the government that it has nothing to fear from the Catholic missionaries who arrived in the country in 1992.

The pope's speeches in Ulaanbaatar, the national capital, repeatedly referenced positive contacts between Mongolians and the Vatican going back to the 1200s, when Pope Innocent IV sent an emissary to Güyük Khan, the ruler of the Mongol Empire and grandson of Genghis Khan.

Pope Francis used the ger, the traditional round house of the nomadic Mongolians, as a symbol of warmth and unity. And he made repeated references to the "big sky" of Mongolian poetry as a sign of the Mongolian people's constant attention to the transcendent.

At the end of Mass on Sunday, September 3, the pope praised Mongolians as "good Christians and honest citizens," and told them to "go forward, gently, and without fear, conscious of the closeness and the encouragement of the entire Church, and above all the tender gaze of the Lord, who forgets no one and looks with love upon each of His children."

Earlier, meeting with the missionaries in the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, Pope Francis told them, "Closeness, compassion, and tenderness: Treat people like that, personally caring for them, learning their language, respecting and loving their culture, not allowing yourselves to be tempted by worldly forms of security, but remaining steadfast in the Gospel through exemplary moral and spiritual lives."

And while the focus was on Mongolia and its 1,400 Catholics, China – and perhaps Vietnam – was never far from Pope Francis' mind.

The Catholic Church is registered as a "foreign NGO" in Mongolia, not as a Church. Individual parishes are registered separately. Missionaries receive visas that must be renewed each year. And for every foreign missionary granted a visa, the Church must hire at least five Mongolians.

The bigger challenge, Catholic missionaries told reporters covering the trip, is convincing Mongolians that



CNS photos/Lola Gomez

**Pope Francis is welcomed by children dressed in traditional Mongolian attire as he attends the inauguration of the House of Mercy in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the final event of his four-day trip to Mongolia before returning to Rome on Monday, September 4.**



**People arrive at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, for a meeting with Pope Francis on Saturday, September 2.**

Catholic missionaries are not some kind of advance team preparing for a Western invasion of their country.

Similar suspicions exist in China, and to a lesser degree, Vietnam.

Pope Francis flew over China early on Friday, September 1, before landing in Ulaanbaatar and again on Monday, September 4, on his way back to Rome, sending courtesy telegrams to Chinese President Xi Jinping, thanking him for allowing the papal plane to

enter Chinese airspace and offering his blessings and good wishes to the nation.

Throughout his stay in Mongolia, Pope Francis was accompanied by bishops from Central Asia and beyond. They included Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-Yan of Hong Kong and the city's retired Cardinal John Tong Hon.

At the end of Mass on September 3 in Ulaanbaatar's Steppe Arena, the pope called the two over to him and told

the international congregation, "I want to take the opportunity of their presence to send a warm greeting to the noble Chinese people."

To Chinese Catholics, he added, "I ask you to be good Christians and good citizens."

Mao Ning, Spokeswoman of the Chinese foreign ministry, was asked about the pope's remarks at a September 4 news conference.

"We noted the reports," she said. "China is positive toward improving the relations, and

we are in contact and communication with the Vatican."

Bishops and priests from mainland China were not permitted to travel to Mongolia, but several small groups of lay Catholics from China did manage to cross the border to see the pope.

A large group of Catholics from Vietnam also were present and were hopeful that the pope could visit their country soon.

"I don't know if I will go, but John XXIV certainly will," the pope, using the name he has invented for his successor, told reporters on his flight back to Rome.

The Vatican and Vietnam's communist government have a joint working group focused mainly on bilateral relations and trying to reach an agreement on establishing diplomatic ties. And since the 1990s, a Vatican delegation has made annual visits to Vietnam, getting government approval for the nomination of bishops and seeking permission on issues such as establishing or expanding seminaries.

"I am very positive about the relationship with Vietnam; good work has been going on for years," Pope Francis told reporters on the plane on September 4.

"I remember four years ago, a group of Vietnamese parliamentarians came to visit. There was a nice dialogue with them, very respectful," the pope said. "When a culture is open, there is possibility for dialogue; if there is closure or suspicion, dialogue is very difficult. With Vietnam, the dialogue is open, with its pluses and minuses, but it is open and slowly moving forward. There have been some problems, but they have been resolved."

Pope Francis and his predecessors have been betting on a similarly patient dialogue with China for decades. And Pope Francis shows no sign of giving up.

"The relationship with China is very respectful, very respectful," he told reporters on the flight back to Rome. "I personally have great admiration for the Chinese people."

While some priests and Catholic intellectuals have been invited to teach at Chinese universities, promoting a cultural dialogue, the pope said, "I think we need to move forward in the religious aspect to understand each other better and so that Chinese citizens do not think that the Church does not accept their culture and values" and to dispel the idea that through ties with the pope, the Catholic Church in China "is dependent on another, foreign power."

"Relations are moving forward," he repeated.