

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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This Lent, Let God Move You

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OSV News file photo

BY FATHER MARK HELLINGER

"You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made. You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance, and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God."

Such are the words, taken from the Book of Wisdom, with which the Church begins the Lenten season. The entrance antiphon of Ash Wednesday lays out a clear and profound theology of Lent – and reminds us of a few essential principles for our approach to this time of preparation.

For the sake of brevity, I propose a reflection on one key aspect of these opening words of Lent: God is the main actor of this season and of our lives. Notice how the subject of all the action in this short morsel from Wisdom is all God. *He* is merciful, *He* despises nothing *He* has made, *He* brings *His* people to repentance, and *He* spares them. This serves us so well as a reminder of the beginning principle of the Christian life: God loved us first. God is the One who takes the initiative – we are only responding. Thus, even in Lent, God remains the principal actor.

This draws us away from a tempting approach to Lent – what I like to call the “self-improvement plan Lent.” If we confuse the truth and think that somehow *we* are the first actors/primary movers of our Lenten pilgrimage, then we can easily fall into the trap of thinking Lent is a time to “work on myself” or to finally adopt the change proposed by the world to “be a better version of myself.” Thus, the rich communal/ecclesial task of repentance, purification, and preparation that Lent really is becomes subject to our own ideas and manipulations – and dies alone in its obsessive individualism. Ash Wednesday becomes just another experience of New Year’s resolutions – and we will likely experience the same failures of such resolutions that many of us often do by mid-January. To be clear, this is not to discourage self-improvement in a general sense but rather to ground our approach toward reliance on grace and our free will more than a Pelagian self-fixation.

Far from being a defeating realization – or an encouragement away from adopting a meaningful and practical penance

for Lent – this is a freeing and uplifting assertion. God is the One who initiates, and this remains true of every Lenten experience that makes an impact on us. After all, in one of the verses from Wisdom left out from the antiphon above, we read, “How could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?” (Wis 11:25).

Lent, then, is really about opening a space in our hearts, minds, and souls to allow God to enter anew. What are the places where we find darkness – especially darkness we want to hide from God – and what is a penance that can begin to open the door to let God’s light in? That is the worthwhile penance, precisely because it relies on God as the first mover and first lover and not on some achievement of our own that precedes his love and mercy. Even looking at what Wisdom is saying to us, God’s mercy draws us to repentance, which draws us to an even greater reliance and trust in God – after all, we are finite beings who sin against an infinite God, and there is never a point where we could “make up” for our sins. Rather, His love comes to us, draws us into true

repentance, and allows us to be taken up anew into His divine life and love.

At the onset of the season of Lent, it is helpful to remember from where we begin – these first words of the Liturgy give us a good orientation. It is also helpful to remember where we are going. So let us preview the last words of the liturgy of Good Friday: The priest will pray, “May abundant blessing, O Lord, we pray, descend upon Your people, who have honored the death of Your Son in the hope of their resurrection: may pardon come, comfort be given, holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption be made secure. Through Christ Our Lord.”

May it be so for all of us as we engage the season of Lent with a focus on God as the principal actor of our lives and His love as what draws us – through prayer, fasting, and giving alms – into a greater outpouring of grace here and now for the glory of the life to come.

Father Mark Hellinger is Parochial Vicar at St. John the Baptist Church in Fort Wayne. He will write weekly reflections throughout Lent in Today's Catholic.

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PUBLISHER: Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR: Nicole Hahn

Editorial Department

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Scott Warden

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

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Confirmation Masses Spring 2024

St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend – March 16 at 10 a.m.

Holy Family Parish, South Bend
St. John the Baptist Parish, South Bend
St. Patrick Parish, Walkerton
St. Therese, Little Flower Parish, South Bend
St. Augustine Parish, South Bend
Sacred Heart Parish, Notre Dame
Queen of Peace Parish, Mishawaka

St. Dominic Church, Bremen – March 17 at 10:30 a.m.

St. Dominic Parish, Bremen

St. Anthony of Padua Church, Angola – April 3 at 7 p.m.

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Angola

St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Decatur – April 5 at 7 p.m.

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Decatur
St. Joseph Parish, Bluffton

St. Michael Church, Plymouth – April 6 at 10 a.m.

St. Michael Parish, Plymouth

St. John the Baptist Church, New Haven – April 8 at 7 p.m.

St. John the Baptist Parish, New Haven
St. Louis Besancon Parish, New Haven

St. Joseph Church, Garrett – April 12 at 7 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish, Garrett
Immaculate Conception Parish, Auburn
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Avilla
Immaculate Conception Parish, Ege

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Fort Wayne – April 13 at 10 a.m.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Warsaw – April 13 at 7 p.m.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Warsaw

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Fort Wayne – April 14 at 2 p.m.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Fort Wayne

St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Elkhart – April 18 at 7 p.m.

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Elkhart

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Elkhart – April 19 at 7 p.m.; April 20 at 10 a.m.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Elkhart

St. Pius X Church, Granger – April 21 at 2 p.m.

St. Pius X Parish, Granger

SS. Peter and Paul Church, Huntington – April 25 at 7 p.m.

SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Huntington
St. Mary Parish, Huntington
St. Joseph Parish, Roanoke

St. Paul of the Cross Church, Columbia City
St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish, Nix Settlement
St. Robert Bellarmine Parish, North Manchester
St. Bernard Parish, Wabash

Culver Academies Memorial Chapel, Culver – April 27 at 9:30 a.m.

St. Mary of the Lake Parish, Culver

Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame – April 28 at 12 p.m.

Basilica of the Sacred Heart Parish, University of Notre Dame

St. Therese Church, Fort Wayne – May 3 at 7 p.m.

St. Therese Parish, Fort Wayne
St. John the Baptist Parish, Fort Wayne

St. Henry Church, Fort Wayne – May 4 at 6 p.m.

St. Henry Parish, Fort Wayne

Most Precious Blood Church, Fort Wayne – May 10 at 7 p.m.

Most Precious Blood Parish, Fort Wayne
Queen of Angels Parish, Fort Wayne

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne – May 11 at 10 a.m.

Our Lady of Good Hope Parish, Fort Wayne
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Fort Wayne
St. Mary Mother of God Parish, Fort Wayne
St. Peter Parish, Fort Wayne
St. Joseph - Hessen Cassel Parish, Fort Wayne
St. John Bosco Parish, Churubusco

St. Joseph Church, Fort Wayne – May 12 at 3 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish, Fort Wayne

Our Lady of Hungary Church, South Bend – May 16 at 7 p.m.

Our Lady of Hungary Parish, South Bend

St. Adalbert Church, South Bend – May 19 at 5 p.m.

St. Adalbert Parish, South Bend
St. Casimir Parish, South Bend

St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend – May 26 at 11 a.m.

Adult Confirmations

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne – June 2 at 11:30 a.m.

Adult Confirmations

St. Joseph Church, LaGrange – June 7 at 7 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish, LaGrange

St. Patrick Church, Fort Wayne – June 8 at 6 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Fort Wayne

St. Patrick Church, Ligonier – June 9 at 3 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Ligonier

Diocesan Catholic Schools Partner with Lumen Accreditation

On Monday, January 29, officials with the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Catholic Schools Office announced a new partnership with the Institute for the Transformation of Catholic Education (ITCE) at The Catholic University of America. The Catholic Schools Office and the diocesan Catholic schools will be joining the St. Thomas Aquinas cohort for Lumen Accreditation beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Lumen Accreditation advances and promotes the distinctive excellence of K-12 Catholic school education.

“The Catholic Schools Office, with approval from Bishop Rhoades, is pleased to announce that our new school accreditation will be imbued with our core values: mission and Catholic identity, academic excellence, and Gospel values, which confirms the work we continue to do with

curriculum frameworks embedding truth, beauty, and goodness in all content areas,” said David Mangel, Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

Lumen Accreditation will replace the Catholic Schools Office’s current partnership with Cognia Accreditation at the end of this school year.

The transition to Lumen Accreditation will align mission, strategic planning, continuous improvement, and accreditation, according to officials with the Catholic Schools Office.

“Lumen, a distinctly Catholic accreditation program that is centered on Gospel values with fidelity to the Church, will encourage authentic conversations and dialogue regarding Catholic identity and enable our Catholic schools to place the proper emphasis on the human person,” said Peter Kilpatrick, President of The Catholic University of America.

The aim of the Lumen Accreditation is to ignite renewal, illuminate pathways, and transform hearts to foster the full flourishing and distinctive excellence of our nation’s K-12 Catholic schools.

According to officials in the Catholic Schools Office, Catholic schools have a unique culture that is rooted in the Gospel message, which permeates the life of the school. *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Christian Education, states that “[The Catholic school’s] proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism” (No. 35).

The foundation of Lumen Accreditation is the Catholic Church’s rich educational heri-

tage, which will renew Catholic schools in the search for truth, beauty, and goodness. The Lumen Accreditation program was developed to unify the renewal of Catholic schools nationally. As a service to Jesus Christ and His Church, Lumen integrates foundational elements of the Church’s teachings on Catholic education and seeks to meet the needs of the individual charisms of dioceses and Catholic schools.

The Institute for the Transformation of Catholic Education at the Catholic University of America partnered with the bishops of the United States and other educational leaders to create a framework of communication resources guiding principles for K-12 Catholic schools. Schools will align their goals for improvement with the Church’s vision for Catholic school mission and identity.

Bishop Rhoades: Like St. John Bosco, Anchor Your Life to Mary, the Eucharist

BY SCOTT WARDEN

Scores of the faithful at St. John Bosco Church in Churubusco gathered on Wednesday, January 31, to close out the parish's 40 Hours devotion. They came to sing and pray, to give thanks to God, and to enjoy fellowship with one another – all of which they enthusiastically did throughout the course of the hourlong Evening Prayer service.

What they didn't know they would get, however, was a history lesson from Bishop Rhoades on the Church's patron, St. John Bosco, whose feast day coincided with the conclusion of the parish's 40 Hours.

Bishop Rhoades served as homilist for the evening and offered the crowd insight into the life of St. John Bosco.

"I hope that these 40 Hours have been a time of grace for all of you and for your families and your parish family here at St. John Bosco," Bishop Rhoades began. "It is an added joy that this closing of 40 Hours takes place on the feast of your holy patron, Don Bosco, renowned throughout the Church as 'the Father and Teacher of Youth.'"

Bishop Rhoades then reflected on the reading from Vespers from 1 Peter in which St. Peter implores the leaders of the Church to tend to their flocks like good shepherds. "Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraint; and not for shameful profit, either, but generously. Be examples to the flock, not lording it over those assigned to you, so that when the chief Shepherd appears you will win for yourselves the unfading crown of glory" (5:2-4).

Bishop Rhoades reminded the community that St. John Bosco epitomized this tender care toward his own flock in Turin, Italy, in the 19th century – a time during the Industrial Revolution when many teenage boys were homeless and living reckless lives of crime.

"Don Bosco heard the Lord's call to help these young men,



Photos by Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades blesses the faithful at St. John Bosco Church in Churubusco on Wednesday, January 31.

to educate them in trades and in the Catholic faith," Bishop Rhoades said. "Beginning with a small group of these troubled youth, Don Bosco's work grew to such an extent that thousands of boys' lives were reformed and changed, thanks to his ministry. Clearly he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to lead and educate these young men, gathering them for prayer, instruction, and recreation. He did not follow the normal method of stern discipline. Instead, his way to save these young souls was the way of love. Following the way of Jesus, Don Bosco treated sinners with kindness and showed them affection. He was able to conquer their hearts by his goodness and kindness toward them. And the troubled boys were transformed. They grew in faith and virtue. St. John Bosco revolutionized the way the Church evangelized young people."

As St. John's flock – and notoriety – grew, so did his mission, as he founded an order of religious men under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales, the Salesians, which, Bishop Rhoades told the crowd, is the second largest religious order of men in the world today. With St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello, St. John

Bosco then founded a companion order of religious women, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, called the Salesians sisters. This order of women cared for and educated needy girls, just as St. John Bosco cared for and educated young men in Turin. Today, Bishop Rhoades said, the Salesian sisters are the largest women's order in the world.

Bishop Rhoades told the audience that, from an early age, it seemed God was guiding St. John Bosco through dreams. He shared one of the most well-known.

"Don Bosco saw a huge naval battle raging, as a fleet of boats, especially its flagship, was under attack by opposing forces in other boats that were trying to ram and sink the flagship. The captain of the flagship was the pope, and the other boats of the fleet were captained by bishops. ... But then John Bosco saw two huge columns or pillars coming out of the sea. At the top of one pillar stood the Blessed Mother, with the words 'Help of Christians' underneath her. On the other pillar was a very large [Eucharistic] host with the inscription underneath saying, 'Salvation of believers.' The Pope anchored the flagship to these two columns. As soon as he did so, the battle was won, and the enemy ships were sunk. John Bosco interpreted this dream as an indication of the attacks of the enemies who try to sink the Church. He saw the remedy: anchoring oneself to Jesus in the Eucharist and to the Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians. These were really the pillars of St. John Bosco's spiritual life."

Bishop Rhoades implored the faithful at St. John Bosco Parish to emulate their patron's love of the Eucharist and love of Mary.

"Amid the storms of life, the storms of this world," he said, "we find peace, joy, and eventually eternal life if we tie our ships to the two pillars that St. John Bosco saw in his dream: the Most Holy Eucharist, the salvation of believers, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Help of Christians."



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, February 12: 5 p.m. – Dinner with Indiana Legislators, Indianapolis
Tuesday, February 13: 7 a.m. – Prayer and Blessing at Servus Omnium Lecture, University of Saint Francis Performing Arts Center, Fort Wayne
Tuesday, February 13: 6:30 p.m. – Mass for Theology on Tap, St. Francis Chapel, University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne
Wednesday, February 14: 9 a.m. – Mass and Pastoral Visit, Marian High School, Mishawaka
Thursday, February 15: 10:30 a.m. – Meeting of Board of Directors of Catholic Charities, St. John Paul II Center, Mishawaka
Thursday, February 15: 5:15 p.m. – Mass and Talk for MBA and JD Students, Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame
Friday, February 16: 7 p.m. – Mass for Catholic Nursing Alliance, The Holy Spirit Chapel, Le Mans Hall, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame
Sunday, February 18: 10:30 a.m. – Mass, Queen of Angels Church, Fort Wayne
Sunday, February 18: 2 p.m. – Rite of Election, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

Saint Anne Communities Closing Victory Noll Senior Living Community

HUNTINGTON – Officials with Saint Anne Communities announced on Thursday, February 1, that its Board of Directors voted to close Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll in Huntington, effective April 1, 2024, in response to changes in the health care landscape and financial challenges, including those brought on by the global pandemic. The non-profit health care and retirement community has offered Victory Noll residents new senior living options and is assisting employees with job transitions.

"We understand the significant impact this difficult decision will have on our community," said Dan Kohnen, past president of the Saint Anne Communities Board of Directors. "Consistent with our person-centered care philosophy, Saint Anne Communities is committed to providing emotional and spiritual support to residents, families, and staff

during this challenging time."

Saint Anne Communities at Victory Noll opened in 2017 on the grounds of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters (OLVM) to provide a continuum of care and amenities for retired Sisters and seniors in Huntington County. OLVM officials said they are currently exploring alternative options to ensure that the 12 Sisters residing at Victory Noll can continue to live together after the closure. Victory Noll's 14 lay residents have been offered new homes at Saint Anne Communities at Randallia Place in Fort Wayne. Saint Anne Communities administrators said they will also assist the 48 employees with alternate job opportunities and provide them with severance packages.

Saint Anne Communities representatives said buyers with community-focused missions will be prioritized in the sale of the Victory Noll property.



Forty Hours Devotion

FEBRUARY

St. Joseph, Garrett: February 11-13

Immaculate Conception, Auburn: February 18-20

St. Charles Borromeo, Fort Wayne: February 25-27

For the complete schedule, visit diocesefwsb.org/eucharist.



CRS Rice Bowl Program Funds Vital Assistance to Poor

Ahead of the upcoming Lenten season, parishes across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will be participating in the annual Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl Program by distributing the cardboard "bowls" in which the faithful are being invited to collect money to help fund vital initiatives to support the poor in the area and around the world.

In this time of Eucharistic Revival, we are reminded that the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist commits and directs Catholics to love of the poor – all of whom bear the image of Christ. The annual Lenten Rice Bowl Program has its roots in an earlier Eucharistic Congress, and since 1975 has been a beautiful and simple way for families to share their wealth with local communities in great need and those around the world. It has grown to provide support for life to more than 250 million people in more than 120 countries. Since its incep-



OSV News photo

tells us, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." When we receive Jesus through the Eucharist, our hearts are filled with His love and the call to share that love. "During Lent, we are meant to express the love that we feel when we receive the Eucharist through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving," Martin said. "CRS Rice Bowl gives us the means to do that – to put our love into action."

"Love can be expressed in so many ways," Martin said. "Even through a small act such as giving up your daily cup of coffee and instead, donating that money to CRS Rice Bowl. That small sacrifice – that small act of love – can change the lives of so many people."

One can learn more about the stories of hope and gratitude of those abroad whose lives have been bolstered by the efforts of CRS at crsricebowl.org. Also available on that website are an abundance of free resources for families, parishes, schools, and organizations crafted to help guide those participating throughout the journey through Lent. The resources range from prayers and reflections to educational materials to recipes to the familiar cardboard rice bowl coin boxes.

For those choosing to participate in the CRS Rice Bowl program this year, donations can be made through parishes or directly to CRS online. Contact Shawn Storer at ssorer@diocesefwsb.org for information.

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tion, CRS Rice Bowl has raised more than \$330 million for relief and development work.

Of the Lenten almsgiving donated annually to CRS, 75 percent of the money given is distributed in support of vital CRS efforts around the world, while 25 percent of this Lenten almsgiving is shared to address poverty, hunger, and need in the local diocese. In the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, a quarter of the CRS Rice Bowl donations is gifted to support the important, hope-inspiring work of Catholic Charities of Fort

Wayne-South Bend as it ministers to the most vulnerable in our region (more on this stabilizing, supportive, pro-life work can be found at ccfwsb.org).

"Ash Wednesday always marks the beginning of CRS Rice Bowl," said Beth Martin, CRS' director of Formation and Mobilization. "And this year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 14, or St. Valentine's Day, and we think CRS Rice Bowl is the perfect way to celebrate the love we have for our global family."

In the Gospel of John, Jesus

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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Tragic Fire Spotlights Faulty Safeguards for Indiana Renters

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

Despite the deaths of six children in a South Bend home where code violations are the suspected cause of a recent fire, efforts to protect Indiana renters from unsafe conditions have stalled again at the state legislature.

The Indiana Catholic Conference and other advocates for safe and affordable housing point to the January 21 blaze as a tragic example of the urgent need for increased protections for renters, who represent one-third of Hoosier households. But two bills aimed at bolstering safeguards for Indiana tenants will not be moving forward in this legislative session, following a pattern that has frustrated advocates while stirring them to press on even harder in their pursuit of reform.

"This is a clear example of one of the most egregious violations of our human right to life, where living in substandard housing leads to death – especially the death of children," said Alexander Mingus, Associate Director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

"If anyone wonders why the Catholic Church is involved in these issues, this is very clearly why. Beyond the issue of life, safe and affordable housing is a basic human right that has long been articulated by the Church.

"We are not trying to vilify landlords," Mingus continued. "There are good ones, but there are also those that are negligent. Part of what we're trying to encourage is ensuring that they are responsible and treating people with dignity."

Although the South Bend fire is still under investigation, reports indicate that the home failed a safety inspection last summer, with a house-wide electrical issue as one of the hazards cited. The property management group serving as the landlord allegedly failed to fix the problems between the previous tenants moving out and the new family taking occupancy in October. Three months later, fire engulfed the house and claimed the lives of six siblings ranging in age from 1 to 11.

Currently in Indiana, code violations are not required to be followed through once a home is unoccupied and, therefore, there is no active safety hazard. Advocates say this is one reason the state ranks near the bottom in the nation in terms of protections for tenants.

Senate Bill 243, authored by Senator Andrea Hunley, aimed to address some of these deficits, but it was focused only on

Marion County. The measure, which was heavily amended ahead of its January 31 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, stated that regardless of whether a property is currently occupied, prior violations must be remedied before a new tenant occupies the apartment or home.

"The bill does a good thing in decoupling the occupancy of the home from the code violations – that is, the violations would follow the house and not necessarily the tenant," said Judith Fox, a representative of the South Bend Tenant Association, during her testimony at the hearing.

Fox and many other advocates, including the ICC, stated that their position on the legislation was neutral after most of the original language in the bill was stripped. And although she acknowledged that the measure was a step forward for Marion County, Fox encouraged lawmakers to take a systemic, statewide approach to protecting Hoosier renters.

"Coming from one of the 91 other counties, my hope is that the committee will continue to work on this bill either now or in the next term to try to improve it and include all of us in Indiana, because tenants across the state need this kind of help," said Fox, who is also a law professor at the University of Notre Dame.

Lawmakers also heard from Angela Espada, Executive Director of the ICC, who cited the Catholic Church's commit-

ment to the poor and the vulnerable and called for greater balance in the tenant/landlord relationship in Indiana.

"We are happy that there is some movement (on these issues), but we would like for landlords and tenants who sign a contract to both have to abide by that contract," Espada said.

Committee members voted 5-5 on the bill, essentially killing the measure for this session with no majority.

A broader tenants' rights bill did not even receive a hearing at the Statehouse. Senate Bill 277, a bipartisan measure authored by Senator Greg Walker and Senator Fady Qaddoura would have allowed tenants living in unsafe or substandard situations to place their rent money into a court-ordered escrow account. The landlord would be able to collect that money only when the issues at the property were fixed.

Indiana is currently one of only five states that do not allow rent escrow accounts for uninhabitable housing.

"A good landlord has nothing to fear from the legislation that's been proposed," Espada said.

But just like a nearly identical bill introduced at last year's General Assembly that was staunchly opposed by lobbyists for property owners, the measure will not move forward.

Advocates across the state vow to continue their quest to protect renters from egregious housing violations, many of which they highlighted at a January 29 rally at the Statehouse.

"This issue is just so important that we can't afford to let it go," said Andrew Bradley, Policy Director of Prosperity Indiana, a member of the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition. "It affects tens of thousands of Hoosier families that are the most vulnerable in our communities, and we cannot give up."

Bradley, who was among those testifying on Senate Bill 243, said he is heartened by the fact that at least the measure was heard during this session.

"Even though the bill didn't move forward, it was a bit of progress," Bradley said. "The past two years, these types of bills didn't even get a hearing."

Bradley, the son of a now-retired United Methodist minister, said he appreciates his collaboration with the ICC in advocating for the needy in Indiana.

"My own personal faith does inspire and drive my efforts," Bradley said. "It's so helpful to have partners like Angela and Alexander and the ICC in this important work."

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.



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Saturday, February 17, 2024 | Winona Lake, IN
Registration and Breakfast begins at 8:30am
Hosted by Right to Life of North Central Indiana

Workshop Presenters



Mike Spencer
Project LifeVoice



Seth Drayer
Created Equal

Featured Guests



Monica Kelsey
Safe Haven
Baby Boxes



Lisa Davis
Deeper Still



diocesefwsb.org/eucharist
or
diocesefwsb.org/eucaristia

Dicastery Warns Changing Words in Sacraments Can Make Them Invalid

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Officials with the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said they continue to receive reports of Catholics, including priests, finding out all the sacraments they have received are invalid because they were baptized years earlier with a formula that was not approved. According to a note published by the dicastery on Saturday, February 3, when a priest or other minister changes the words, gestures, or material prescribed for the celebration of the sacraments, he can “rob” the faithful of what they deserve and make the sacrament invalid. The note, *Gestis Verbisque* (“Gestures and Words”), passed unanimously by members of the dicastery during their plenary assembly on Thursday, January 25, and was approved by Pope Francis on Wednesday, January 31. In 2020, the then-doctrinal congregation issued a note saying baptisms celebrated with the formula, “We baptize you ...” instead of “I baptize you ...” were invalid, setting off a large-scale effort in several dioceses, including some in the United States, to trace people who were invalidly baptized.

Pro-Life Activists Convicted of Civil Rights Charges

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (OSV News) – Six pro-life activists, including one already jailed and awaiting sentencing for a separate incident in Washington, D.C., were convicted on Tuesday, January 30, of federal civil rights offenses resulting from their blockade of an abortion clinic in Mount Juliet, Tennessee, on March 5, 2021. The guilty verdicts were announced after a six-day federal trial in Nashville. Sentencing is scheduled for July 2. They were each convicted of one felony count of engaging in a “conspiracy against rights” and one felony count of violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act, and could be sentenced to 10 and a half years in prison, three years of supervised release, and fines of up to \$260,000. The six are Chester Gallagher of Lebanon, Tennessee; Heather Idoni of Linden, Michigan; Calvin Zastrow of Kawkawlin, Michigan; Coleman Boyd of Bolton, Mississippi; Paul Vaughn of Centerville, Tennessee; and Dennis Green of Cumberland, Virginia. According to federal prosecutors, each engaged in a conspiracy to prevent the clinic employees from providing, and women from receiving, abortions, using a strategy known as a “lock and block.” In that,

Pope: Religion ‘Essential’ in Forming Minds, Hearts



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis shakes hands with Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, President of the University of Notre Dame, during a meeting with the university's Board of Trustees at the Vatican on Thursday, February 1. Catholic universities are called to contribute to the growth of the intellectual tradition of the Church as well as the hearts of their students, forming them into agents of good, Pope Francis told the officials from Notre Dame. “The educational efforts undertaken by Catholic institutions, in fact, are based on a firm belief in the intrinsic harmony between faith and reason.” Yet Pope Francis noted the task of a Catholic university “is not only to develop the mind, the head, but to expand the heart.”

activists lock doors and gates, and, after entering the clinic, block doorways either with their bodies or furniture.

Bishop Seitz: End human Trafficking by Tackling Root Causes

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – Ending human trafficking requires collective action in addressing the conditions that cause it, said Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration. “It is incumbent upon all of us to unite in promoting efforts that prevent the evil of human trafficking,” he said in a statement released on Thursday, February 1. The Catholic Church marks the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking annually on February 8. Bishop Seitz pointed to the importance of legislation in eradicating traffick-

ing, which in 2021 alone saw some 50 million individuals worldwide in a form of modern slavery, according to the United Nations' International Labor Organization. “It is incumbent upon all of us to unite in promoting efforts that prevent the evil of human trafficking,” said Bishop Seitz in his statement. Like Pope Francis, he invited all “to uphold and affirm human dignity” and show solidarity with all those impacted “by this terrible evil of modern-day slavery.”

Catholic Priest and His Sister Killed in Florida Shooting

PALM BAY, Florida (OSV News) – A retired Florida Catholic priest and his sister were killed in a multi-location rampage that also took the life of another man, left two police officers injured, and ended with the death of the suspect. Father Robert Hoeffner, age 76, and

his sister, Sally Hoeffner, were found slain at their Palm Bay, Florida, residence on the evening of Sunday, January 28, as police were investigating a domestic disturbance at another area home that turned deadly. Their car had apparently been stolen by 24-year-old suspect Brandon William Kapas, who loaded the car with a cache of weapons and drove it to a family gathering nearby. Police were called to the home after Kapas became agitated and destructive, and in the course of his flight, Kapas killed his grandfather and injured two police officers before he was shot and killed. In a statement, Orlando Bishop John Noonan said the diocese is mourning the loss of life and will miss Father Hoeffner's “grace-filled presence.” Father Hoeffner had celebrated his 50th jubilee in 2023, recalling decades that included becoming a founding pastor, celebrating Mass on television regularly, and establishing a multicultural parish council at his final assignment.

Report: Vocations to Religious Life Decline in U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – A new report shows a continued decrease in the number of permanent vocations to consecrated life in the U.S., but key factors such as family life, devotional practices, Catholic education, and personal encouragement can positively impact those numbers, authors of the report state. “Women and Men Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2023” was released on Friday, January 26, by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, ahead of the Church's World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life, which was celebrated on Friday, February 2. The study – annually commissioned since 2010 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations – found that of the participating religious superiors, 87 percent reported their orders had no member profess perpetual vows in 2023, up from the 82 percent noted in last year's report. Two-parent married Catholic families, Catholic education, involvement in parish life, Eucharistic adoration, and the Rosary all helped to foster survey participants' vocations, as did discernment events and personal encouragement from priests, family, and friends, according to the researchers.

First Black Catholic School Honors Foundress Mother Lange

BALTIMORE (OSV News) – The only known photograph ever taken of Mother Mary Lange held a place of prominence during a special Mass celebrated on Tuesday, January 30, by Archbishop William E. Lori at St. Frances Academy in East Baltimore. Resting at the foot of an altar set up inside the school's gymnasium, the more than 140-year-old black-and-white image seemed to stare stoically at a congregation of more than 300 that had gathered to celebrate Mother Lange's recent advancement along the path to canonization. Pope Francis declared the foundress of St. Frances Academy “venerable” on June 22, 2023, recognizing Mother Lange's heroic virtues. Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori elicited applause when he said the recognition of Mother Lange as venerable is “something of great importance, not only for this school and not only for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, but for the Catholic Church throughout the United States.” St. Frances Academy was founded in 1828 as the first Catholic school in the country to educate Black students.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Students, Staff from Across the Diocese Celebrate Catholic Schools Week

From Sunday, January 28, through Saturday, February 3, students and staff from Catholic schools across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend participated in the annual National Catholic Schools Week, during which each school celebrates their mission through fun, creative activities and events. To learn more about the schools in the diocese, visit diocesefwsb.org/schools.

See pages 10-11 for more local photos from Catholic Schools Week.



Provided by Huntington Catholic School via Facebook

Students from Huntington Catholic School participate in a donut eating contest during Catholic Schools Week.



Provided by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School

On Thursday of Catholic Schools Week, February 1, students at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School assembled in the gym to pray with Mary Hilger, who shared her chalk drawings with the group.



Provided by Bishop Dwenger High School via Facebook

Students at Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne show off their costumes during "Western Wednesday" on January 31 during Catholic Schools Week.

Women Urged to Listen for God's Voice at Ephphatha Retreat

BY CATHI KENNEDY

“Do what God tells you to do.”

This was the refrain heard throughout the second annual Ephphatha Retreat. The retreat, held at the St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington, hosted 85 women from Friday, February 2, to Sunday, February 4. It was a time of prayer, reflection, and learning about the Catholic faith and community.

The origin of the Ephphatha Retreat was a lesson in “do what God tells you to do” for Sarah Bishop, a parishioner at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Fort Wayne. Bishop said “yes” to attending a women’s event, which led her to a Christ Renews His Parish retreat. There, on retreat, in the sanctuary with Jesus, she heard His call to offer women the opportunity to spend time with Jesus and to be open to discerning His call.

Ephphatha (“be opened”) are the words Jesus spoke to the deaf and mute man in the Gospel of Mark. Being open to hearing God’s word and then acting upon it is both the theme and objective of the Ephphatha retreat.

“Every aspect of this weekend has been prayerfully discerned to create an ambience of ‘openness through simplicity,’” Bishop said in her opening remarks to those in attendance. “Everything is stripped down to be simple yet



Nicole Hahn

Attendees and organizers of the Ephphatha Retreat pose for a photo at the St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington. The second annual retreat for women was held from Friday, February 2, through Sunday, February 4.

lovely. The weekend has been designed to let the beauty of love – love from the One who loves you most – shine through.”

Bishop worked alongside a team of other women to bring the retreat to fruition. She reiterated how the team had prayed for the retreat’s attendees long before the weekend began.

Father Stephen Felicichia, Pastor of St. Mary of the Lake in Culver, was the Retreat Master, leading retreatants throughout the weekend, teaching classes, leading the Liturgy of the Hours, hearing

confessions, and presiding over Mass.

“To be your teacher is a beautiful piece of my calling,” Father Felicichia said in his opening remarks. “I am literally at your service, all weekend. It is an honor, not lost on me, to be appointed to oversee the spiritual formation of the flock. I am grateful and blessed to step into this piece of my calling as Ephphatha’s Retreat Master.”

Father Felicichia taught several classes throughout the weekend. The first, on prayer, featured the music of



Cathi Kennedy

Attendees of the Ephphatha Retreat take notes during a session.

St. Hildegard of Bingen. He indicated how music ties us emotionally to our surroundings and can help draw us into deep prayer with Our Lord.

In Father Felicichia’s class on Our Lady Undoer of Knots, he shared the origin story of this devotion and emphasized how our Blessed Mother wants to help us with all our problems – but acknowledged that it is up to us to ask.

His third class of the weekend taught the history of St. Joan of Arc and how the faithful can look to her as an example of bravery, patience, and perseverance. During this class, Father Felicichia shared stories of growing up with a mother who exemplified these virtues and how he learned to be brave as a Field Artillery Officer in the U.S. Army.

In addition to Father Felicichia, three other priests led classes and heard confessions throughout the weekend.

Father Mark Hellinger, Parochial Vicar at St. John the Baptist in Fort Wayne, joined the retreat on Saturday and led the retreatants in a class on sacramentals, which are signs that convey the presence of God and include things such as blessings, incense, holy water,

rosaries, etc. He spoke about how sacramentals are biblically based, defined the four types, explained the historical background, and instructed how to use them well daily.

On Sunday, Father Terry Coonan, Pastor at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, led a class on St. Therese of Lisieux and how her complete and total love of Jesus was the focus of all aspects of her life, including daily encounters with people who were hard to love.

Father Jake Schneider, Associate Pastor at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, was on site to hear confessions.

Although the retreat had scheduled classes and discussion time, it was emphasized to the retreatants to “do what God is telling you to do.”

“Go to the classes you choose,” Father Felicichia said. “Pray how He moves you to pray, when He moves you to pray. Go to confession. Embrace fellowship. Visit the prayer team. Let Him lead you away from the crowd for a joy-filled retreat from the noise. We are here to set you on fire. Wherever you are on your personal Ephphatha journey, we are here to help you please God, be opened further, and moved farther in His name.”

The adoration chapel at St. Felix was open for 15 hours throughout the weekend. The retreat team also had four women from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton’s Inner Healing Prayer Ministry on site to pray with individuals for emotional, mental, and physical healing.

Most retreatants were from the Fort Wayne area, but several traveled from the South Bend/Mishawaka region. Diane Freeby, parishioner at St. Monica in Mishawaka, attended Ephphatha for the first time.

“What a wonderful time to unplug from the daily routine and reconnect with Jesus and His Mother,” Freeby said. “I think my favorite part was spending time in adoration, especially Saturday after Evening Prayer until the beautiful midnight Benediction and closing. The theme of the weekend was ‘Do whatever He tells you,’ and I felt the gentle nudging to stay longer and ‘be’ in front of the Blessed Sacrament – something I wouldn’t normally be able to do at home. It was intimate and communal, sharing these gifts with so many other women across the diocese,” Freeby said.

Bishop said she and her team are already praying and planning for next year.

“God is already bringing us pieces,” she said. “We are currently discerning His plan for the next step in our Ephphatha journey.”



ST. THOMAS MORE

A C A D E M Y

<p>CONTACT</p> <p>574-222-9195</p> <p>Lower School 308 S. Scott St. South Bend, IN</p> <p>Upper School 312 W. Colfax St. South Bend, IN</p> <p> admissions@stmasb.org</p> <p>WWW.STMASB.ORG</p>	<p>DAILY MASS AND PRAYER the light of faith</p> <p>CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY friendship, joy, and authentic freedom</p> <p>CLASSICAL LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION the Trivium and Quadrivium strengthen the light of reason to see reality more clearly</p> <p>MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION high ideals for lives of virtue and loving service</p> <p>OBSERVATIONAL SCIENCE CURRICULUM deep roots in the reality of the natural world</p> <p>INTEGRATED HUMANITIES CURRICULUM reverence for God’s action in human history</p> <p>MUSIC, ART, DRAMA and SPEECH the love of beauty</p> <p>AVERAGE CLASS SIZE OF 16 STUDENTS</p>	 
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Holy Cross School Students Record Songs for Hallow App

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

In her role as Principal of Holy Cross School in South Bend, Annie Borjas is presented many ideas for student activities, and she doesn't always say yes. But when musical artist Amanda Vernon approached Borjas about recording songs for the Hallow app with Holy Cross students, Borjas knew it was a special opportunity.

"Having never been part of a recording session, I had no idea what I was actually saying 'yes' to, but the entire endeavor felt Spirit-led and very much like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our school community," Borjas told Today's Catholic.

When Vernon asked, Borjas had already been familiar with both the Hallow app (a Catholic app for prayer and spiritual reading and meditation) and the artist herself. Vernon is a Catholic author and musician with eight albums as well as decades of performance and recording experience. On her website, Vernon describes her musical style as "soulful pop with gospel and jazz roots." Borjas said many of the faculty and staff had read and enjoyed Vernon's book, "When God Wrecks Your Romance: Orthodox Faith, Unorthodox Story." The students, Borjas said, had also been familiar with some of Vernon's albums, which she said the school's gym teacher plays occasionally during open gym time. Some of the students even sang with Vernon years ago, when Vernon came to visit and perform at the school.

Julie VanMeter, music teacher at Holy Cross School, remembered Vernon's previous performances at the school. "When she heard us sing along with her, she was very impressed with the students' singing and told us she'd come back and sing with us," VanMeter said. "And she did!"

Father Jim Fenstermaker, Pastor at Holy Cross Parish, also remembered Vernon. "Our students, in particular, have responded so well to her prayer and praise missions in which she has invited the students to enter into her music with body, mind, and spirit," Father Fenstermaker said.

After Borjas' initial yes, Borjas, Vernon, and Father Fenstermaker had meetings to figure out logistics. They decided to have students practice songs in class during most of the fall semester for a recording date in early December. Then, students would also perform those songs in a live concert for school and parish families in Holy Cross School's annual Christmas concert. This meant coordination with VanMeter



Musical artist Amanda Vernon, left, and Holy Cross School's music teacher Julie VanMeter lead Holy Cross School students in song during a recording session for the Hallow app.

to help prepare the PreK-8 students for recording day.

VanMeter said she used her time in music class to practice with the students, which involved teaching them their parts for the choruses they would be singing. Fortunately, VanMeter said, most of the songs chosen for the recording were songs with which the students were already familiar.

"Sharing a performer's songwriting and recording process was a very new experience for my students, and it was fascinating to see the performance come together," VanMeter said.

Vernon met with the students only once before recording day. "She explained to the students what they should expect during a recording session, the fact that we might have to record a song or parts of a song over and over until it sounded just right, and the fact that she was excited to work with them," Borjas remembered.

Of course, there were still things to iron out on the day of the recording. "This came with many challenges, including not being able to hear the background music, the acoustics of the church, and the fact that the rain outside led to squeaky feet in the church," VanMeter said.

Borjas also remembered that the hourlong practice session included lots of waiting and do-overs. "It was more work than most students and teachers were expecting, helping us realize how complicated recording music truly is," Borjas said.

"Amanda handled it beautifully – she is amazing

with kids and had so much patience," Borjas added.

At the concert later that month (held at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger to accommodate larger crowds), Vernon announced the launch of one of the live songs on the Hallow app – the hymn "Sing of Mary," credited to "Amanda Vernon and Holy Cross School." VanMeter was very

pleased with the results, calling it "amazing" and "fantastic."

"It was exciting to see our school name on an international prayer app," Borjas said, "and we pray that this experience brings others closer to Christ."

Father Fenstermaker had similar hopes for the recording experience. "My hope is that the students truly internalized

Hallow



Sing of Mary

Amanda Vernon & Holy Cross School

00:00 - 03:33



HOW TO LISTEN

To hear the song "Sing of Mary" by Amanda Vernon and Holy Cross School, download the Hallow app on the App Store (for iPhone) or Google Play (for Android) and search for "Sing of Mary."

the hymns they sang with Amanda and that this experience will be a leaven in their continuing growth as young Christians in our school."

St. John the Baptist Catholic School
4500 Fairfield Avenue | Fort Wayne, IN 46807

Early Education Night

Wednesday, February 21 | 6 p.m.

Come learn about our 3-4 year old preschool and kindergarten programs, including scholarship opportunities
Now enrolling pre-K to 8th grade!



SaintJohnFortWayne.com

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK OFFERS



Provided by St. Pius X Catholic School

Staff members at St. Pius X Catholic School in Granger pose for a photo dressed as superheroes during the school's Hero and Villain Day, which they celebrated as part of Catholic Schools Week on Wednesday, January 31.



Provided by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School

Franciscan Brother Gabriel Cortez, known as the "Skateboarding Friar," races Father Terry Coonan, Pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Fort Wayne, during an event for Catholic Schools Week on Monday, January 29.



Provided by St. Louis Academy via Facebook

St. Louis Academy students in New Haven reenact the Scala Santa ("Holy Stairs") in Rome by praying on their knees while ascending the steps on Monday, January 29, during Catholic Schools Week.



GOODNESS.

TRUTH.

BEAUTY.

A TIME FOR SPECIAL EVENTS, FUN



Provided by Saint Joseph High School

At Saint Joseph High School in South Bend, students participated in a Homecoming pep rally and enjoyed cupcakes during Catholic Schools Week.



Provided by Bishop Luers High School

On Tuesday, January 30, students at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne participated in a day of service projects in conjunction with Catholic Schools Week. Above, students help to make sack lunches for the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission. According to officials at the school, students completed around 370 service hours and saved partner organizations \$11,700 that they would have needed to pay someone to do the work done by the students.



Catholic Schools
United in Faith and Community



Provided by St. Joseph – Hessen Cassel School

On "Decade Day" for Catholic Schools Week, students and staff at St. Joseph – Hessen Cassel School dressed up in clothes from their favorite decade.

St. Therese Catholic School

February 26
8:30-11:10 a.m.

OPEN HOUSE

Get ready for the new school year by coming to the kindergarten and pre-k open house. Find your new classroom and meet your teacher. Registration packets will be sent home with every student. Q&A for parents follows the 11:10 dismissal.

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Lent and the Filet-O-Fish Dilemma

Do you ever wish we Catholics could shift culture as effectively as we shift fast food menus during Lent? There's a huge billboard on my block that just changed out the advertisement to brag about the sale of the Filet-O-Fish. It will be up for roughly the next 40 days, after which it will be taken down and replaced. The question I ask is: When that billboard is changed, will my family also be changed?

Too often, I've seen Lent as this personal challenge – some sort of religious self-help proving ground trying to earn my Catholic badge so the Heavenly Father will love me. But lucky for me, that's not how God's love works. His love burns deeper than anything I can imagine, and He only waits for me to simply let Him in.

And that is exactly what I've found Lent can do for my family and me. Honestly, I can do a pretty great job of acting like I don't need God. Instead of sitting in silence around a fire like my ancestors might have, I sit in a comfy coffee shop

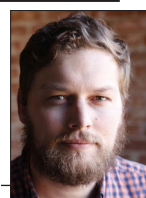
with two screens in front of me. I can spend the whole day filling up every quiet moment with self-improvement podcasts and entertainment. Life can seem pretty great until I take a moment to sit with myself. And that ache deep within me begins to stir up.

Here on earth, we are in the longing stage. We're stretching between heaven and earth. We've met the Bridegroom, and we know the ending, but

our hearts still yearn for the completion of all things. We need little tastes of the wedding party and little tastes (or healthy gulps at times) of the fasting.

Fasting is the space we give ourselves to feel that longing in our hearts – a time to let the ache for the heavenly banquet sink deep inside our bones.

As a dad of five boys (multiple with special needs), I find it to be a real challenge to lead them in fasting while still following Jesus' command that when we fast, "put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father." My goal is to help them feel the longing in our house and



CORY HEIMANN

GUEST COMMENTARY

still show them that it's not our work that earns His love. We love because we were first loved.

My hope for my home this year is simply to run a little slower, pull away from my digital world, and lean into being an example of love to one another – to give my boys the freedom to choose the sacrifice that will give them the space to see our family life and their relationship with God through a new lens. And hopefully, I can be an example of that to them, so we can each become, as Mother Teresa said, "a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world."

We take the next 40 days to fast so that when we look up at the billboard and it has moved on to Shamrock Shakes or whatever the next thing is, we're able to see past the advertisement into the heavens and recognize our place there and have a new vigor to find our rightful place beside the Bridegroom.

Cory Heimann is the Creative Director at Likable Art (likableart.com) and a parishioner at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Fort Wayne.

Experiencing Our Tangible Faith with Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Catholic faith is a faith of the senses, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist. We taste Our Lord Himself, receiving Him into our mouths at holy Communion; we listen to God's word; we smell incense; we touch holy water to our skin; we see the priest elevating the body and blood during the consecration. It is through our senses that we encounter our incarnate God, where we come to know Him and worship Him.

But the great history of our Church allows our senses to be fully engaged outside of Mass, too. One of those places that is most effective at this is at the Marian apparition shrine in Lourdes, France, where I had the great fortune to visit at the end of January. There, in the quiet off-season at the holy site, where hundreds of millions of pilgrims have come since the latter decades of the 19th century, the faith is brought to life through sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.

At the famous Grotto of Massabielle, where Our Lady appeared to the 14-year-old French peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous 18 times in 1858, pilgrims can see the serene white Carrara marble statue



NO GREATER JOY

GRETCHEN CROWE

of Our Lady with its famous blue sash standing in the place where Mary did. They can touch the dark, wet rock of the cavern, smoothed by those who have rested their fingers, hands, arms, and faces upon it through the years, begging for the heavenly intercession of our Blessed Mother for healing of body, mind, or spirit. They can hear running water of the mountain stream that bubbled from nowhere out of the earth when Bernadette dug at Mary's direction. They can smell the wax and smoke of the tower of candles blazing next to the stone altar. Nearby, at the baths, they can participate in a "water gesture," where they drink from the same mountain stream. It is a literal feast for the senses, an experience in which a pilgrim can become fully immersed.

It is to this kind of place

CROWE, page 13

We Yearn to Be with Jesus, the Source of Life and Peace



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The first reading for this weekend comes from the Book of Leviticus. In sequence, Leviticus is the third book in modern translations of the Bible. As such, it is part of the Pentateuch, which includes the five books of the Bible attributed to Moses. These five books are the Torah.

The Pentateuch forms the fundamental law and philosophy of Judaism, both in current understandings and in ancient practices as well.

In this reading, God speaks to Moses and to Aaron, the brother of Moses. The topic is leprosy. Today, it is not known whether these references to leprosy in the

Scriptures referred to Hansen's disease or to some other illness. Regardless of the exact scientific nature of what the ancients called leprosy, however, the problem was chronic and severe.

An entire social system developed around the disease. The victims were outcasts. They were totally shunned. Often, they literally had to forage for or steal food and search for any shelter they could find.

Ancient Jews would never blame God for intending such a serious malady. God was regarded as good, loving, and merciful. The ancient Hebrews saw human sin, ultimately, as the cause of all earthly misery.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, this weekend's second reading, includes the great apostle's counsel that Christians should do everything with the purpose of glorifying God.

He admonished the Christians of Corinth never to offend either Jew or Gentile. Paul urges that the Christians follow his example because Paul says that he imitates Christ.

The reading therefore sets Christ as the supreme example and insists that believers ignore this example at their own risk.

For its last reading, the Church gives us a passage from the Gospel of Mark. In this reading, a leper approaches Jesus pleading for a cure. Jesus cured the man, the Lord being "moved with pity," according to Mark.

This cure came when Jesus touched the man. (As an aside, but nevertheless instructive: Touching is very important in the liturgy. Touch creates contact and enables transference. In ordinations, the ordaining bishop lays his hands upon the candidates to be ordained bishop, priest, or deacon. At weddings, the bride and bridegroom hold each other's hands.)

Jesus transmitted the healing power of God to the man through this touch. Then, Jesus spoke the miraculous words of healing.

The Lord ordered the man to go to the priests. The man had been completely exiled from the community because of his ill-

ness. If the priests saw that he was free of disease, he would be re-admitted to society. He could live again.

The reading closes by noting that great crowds pursued Jesus.

Reflection

Vivid in this reading from Mark is the image of desperation on the part of the leper. It is no wonder. While modern scientists debate exactly what the Bible means by "leprosy", this much is clear. It was an awful disease. Fearing contagion, people avoided to the extreme anyone suffering from this disease. "Leper" lived miserable, hopeless lives.

In the minds of the ancient Hebrews, somehow "leprosy" resulted from sin.

Mark recalls that Jesus was moved by pity. He cured the man. He accepted the man. He loved the man. He touched the man.

An interesting sidebar in these "miracle narratives" from Mark's Gospel is that people so yearn for Jesus. Elsewhere in Mark, a paralytic so wanted to

find Jesus that others let him through the very roof of the house where Jesus was. When Jesus withdrew into the desert to pray, the apostles spontaneously followed, unwilling to be without the Lord. This reading says people came to Jesus from everywhere.

These reports all reveal something very basic and true: Jesus alone is the source of life and peace.

READINGS

Sunday: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45

Monday: James 1:1-11; Psalms 119:67-68, 71-72, 75-76; Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday: James 1:12-18; Psalms 94:12-15, 18-19; Mark 8:14-21

Wednesday: Joel 2:12-18; Psalms 51:3-6a, 12-14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalms 1:1-4, 6; Luke 9:22-25

Friday: Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalms 51:3-6a, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday: Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalms 86:1-6; Luke 5:27-32

Surrogacy and the Selfish Commodification of Children

At the beginning of 2024, Pope Francis offered strong public criticism of surrogate motherhood. His willingness to speak out on this important topic has helped to pull surrogacy out of the shadows, where it has often been relegated, and shine some much-needed light on the children at the center of the process and their rights.

Surrogacy is often framed as a generous act, since the surrogate mother seeks to offer her own body to help another woman unable to carry a pregnancy. Judith Hoechst, who hired a surrogate to have a son, was quoted in a National Catholic Register article as declaring: "There's nothing more selfless and more loving than a woman who says, 'Let me share my uterus with you. Let me do for you what you cannot do.'"

When you examine it more deeply, however, surrogacy offers only the veneer of a selfless act. It relies on evil means to achieve a good end. It tends to be driven by the selfish slant of "entitlement thinking." It often involves a coercive financial angle, as wealthy individuals offer significant remuneration to secure poor women as "volunteers."

Pope Francis cut through much of the duplicity around this issue when he provocatively observed that surrogacy involves a form of "trafficking" of children, implying that children are being bought and sold, treated as property, and often transported across international borders, which, all in all, sums up many contemporary aspects of surrogacy.

The whole process of surrogacy typically begins with the creation of children for implantation through in vitro fertilization (IVF), a practice that itself raises numerous moral objections.

Most fundamentally, IVF misappropriates the generative powers we have received from God that are ordered to procreating new life.

The powers we have are not meant to be used any way we wish. For example, we have the power to use our hands to

pick things up, to write, and to reach out to help others. But that same power in our hands can be used in reckless and improper ways to hit people, to choke them, or to otherwise harm them.

Just because we have the power to do something — or the fact that science may open up a new power to us — does not automatically mean we should utilize it.

Our power to procreate is a very special gift, meant to be shared in collaboration with God and our spouse in an exclusive manner. That we have the technical prowess to take hold of our sex cells and manipulate them to manufacture a new life constitutes a misuse of our God-given powers. We fail to respect our children's dignity when we turn them into "projects" to be engendered in laboratory glassware and implanted into third-party carriers. By such an approach, we end up twisting the designs of human sexuality and turning what is meant to be an act of love into an act of production.

Yet many people today have accepted the notion that children are a kind of "entitlement" or even a "right" to be claimed for themselves. This flawed thinking enables a facile movement into the twin evils of IVF and surrogacy, and ultimately encourages the trafficking of unborn children. Clearly, a child — or any person — is never a "right," or a possession, or a piece of property to whom we are entitled.

The only "entitlement" or "right" operative here would be the right of the child to be conceived uniquely through the marital act. Rather than being summoned into being in glassware and implanted into surrogates by fertility clinic employees in exchange for valuable consideration, children have the inalienable right to be conceived through the one flesh, body-to-body spousal communion of their parents' marital embrace.

Having a sense of "entitlement" about children and imagining that I "deserve" a child corrupts the delicate



FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

order of our receptivity toward the mysterious gift of new life in marital sexuality.

Whenever we turn to IVF and surrogacy to satisfy the desire of adults for offspring, we override that delicate order of receptivity and arrogate to ourselves the right to control and even dominate our children. We pay to have them implanted into strangers who act as "gestational carriers." We impose on them a multitude of "parental-role figures," ranging from the surrogate mother who becomes pregnant, to the woman who receives the baby afterwards, to the third-party egg donor. We multiply father figures, depending upon the source of the sperm. We trap our leftover embryonic children, potentially for decades, in the wasteland of frozen orphanages connected to fertility clinics. We carry out genetic testing and discard less-than-perfect embryos. We selectively reduce children when multiple pregnancies arise.

The use of the term "deplorable" by the pope is not excessive; it is spot-on when it comes to describing these offensive aspects of surrogacy. His observations help refocus our attention on the runaway train that IVF and surrogacy have become, and he invites us to push back against the problematic but widely endorsed approach that seeks to satisfy adult desires for children while largely ignoring the consequences to the kids.

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

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for February 11, 2024

Mk 1:40-45

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: No privacy about this cure. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

BEGGED	MAKE ME	CLEAN
HIS HAND	TOUCHED	LEPROSY
LEFT HIM	WARNING	SEE THAT
TELL	YOURSELF	OFFER
SPREAD	JESUS	ENTER
A TOWN	OPENLY	OUTSIDE
PLACES	PEOPLE	EVERYWHERE

TELL NO ONE

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

CROWE, from page 12

that believers come in throngs in the warmer months, bringing their troubles and worries — and praise God for this faith. But it occurred to me, as I experienced this feast of the senses at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, that this is also exactly the place where we should be encouraging as many nonbelievers as possible, whether they be those who have fallen away from the faith, or those who may doubt in the existence of God, or those who may have never encountered Him at all.

I thought of the story of Doubting Thomas from John's Gospel, in which the beloved apostle wrote: "Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed'" (Jn 20:26-29).

Indeed, we must have faith to believe what we cannot see. But we also know that sometimes, as was Thomas' experience, belief is easier when there is something to see,

something to touch. We know that faith is sometimes more easily embraced when we can see where Mary stood or drink the water from the same place that has brought about the healing of thousands of people.

Many replicas exist of the Lourdes grotto. There are statues of Our Lady of Lourdes in churches and pilgrimage sites around the world. Novenas and prayer cards are in gift shops, churches, and homes of the faithful. Bottles of Lourdes holy water can even be supposedly purchased on Amazon. But to visit the actual sanctuary, to experience its blessings and richness wholly with one's senses, is an experience beyond comparison.

Because of Jesus' great love for us, and because of the love of His Blessed Mother, Marian apparition sites exist around the world. But I would argue that perhaps none engage the senses quite as fully as that of the peaceful grotto in southern France. And perhaps none might be quite as powerful for those who struggle to believe. May Our Lady of Lourdes, whose feast we celebrate on Sunday, February 11, pray for all our hearts to cry out "My Lord and my God."

Gretchen R. Crowe is Editor-In-Chief of OSV News.



OSWALD OF WORCESTER

992 FEAST: FEBRUARY 28

Descended from a Danish military family, Oswald was educated by an uncle who was the Archbishop of Canterbury, in England. He was a canon at Winchester Cathedral before becoming a priest and dean there. After continuing his studies and becoming a Benedictine in France, he returned to England and was named Bishop of Worcester in 961. He founded monasteries, promoted scholarship, established a great musical tradition in Worcester, replaced secular canons with monks, and also administered the Diocese of York from 972 until his death. Devoted to the poor and revered for his sanctity, Oswald died after washing and kissing the feet of 12 poor men, his annual Lenten custom.



OSV News photo/Vidangel Studios

Actor Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus in the streaming series "The Chosen," is pictured in a scene depicting the Sermon on the Mount. The first episodes of Season 4 of "The Chosen" recently debuted in theaters across the country.

Lent with 'The Chosen'

BY SISTER HOSEA RUPPRECHT

(OSV News) – Season 4 of "The Chosen," the wildly popular series on the life of Jesus that began its existence as a crowd-funded streaming series, is finally here, much to the delight of fans around the world. This time, all episodes will enjoy a theatrical release before debuting on streaming and broadcast outlets.

At nearly the same time as Season 4 is released, Catholics begin the liturgical season of Lent. "The Chosen" provides much inspiration that could kick start your Lenten reflection on how God might be inviting you to *metanoia*, or conversion, during this penitential season.

The first episode deals with the death of John the Baptist (David Amito) and the fallout of that for Jesus (Jonathan Roumie) and the apostles, especially Andrew (Noah James), one of John's early followers. John's faithfulness to his God-given vocation, even through imprisonment and death, encourages us to reflect on our own responses to God's invitations. How have we responded to God's prompting? How do we even recognize how God summons us to follow Him on a daily basis? Are we courageous in the face of persecution, whatever form

that may take, or do we shrink from it?

In Episode 2, things heat up for Jesus following John's execution. More than that, though, there is dissension in the ranks when Jesus declares that Simon (Shahar Isaac) is no longer Simon but Peter, the rock upon which His Church will be built. That night around the campfire, the apostles start to bicker with comments such as, "Is Peter the best?" and "He doesn't act like a rock." Have you ever felt disappointed in those in leadership positions? How did you respond? What place does humility have in your life? How might God be inviting you to deepen your humility?

Fans of the show will remember that Matthew (Paras Patel) is depicted as having some form of autism. He's extremely precise – that made him a good tax collector – and he really doesn't like physical contact. There's a small scene in Episode 2 when Matthew encounters his old friend, the Roman, Gaius (Kirk B.R. Woller). Gaius observes that Matthew seems different, more relaxed and at peace. Matthew's response is all about trust in Jesus and surrender to God's will. He says: "I have only one thing to do today: Follow Him. The rest takes care of itself." What if every Christian could have that

attitude? What would happen if we could let go of the problems that worry us and give them all over to God? Is there one thing in my life right now that I need to let go of and relinquish to God? How might I do that this Lent?

Lent is a time to think about the need for reconciliation and forgiveness. In "The Chosen," the ongoing tension between Matthew and Simon (now Peter) started way back when Matthew almost turned Peter over to the Romans for unpaid taxes. Matthew has never apologized for his actions, and Peter holds onto his resentment. With hostility increasing all around them, Matthew feels unsettled and seeks out Jesus, who helps him to see the need to own up to his actions and reach out to Peter. Jesus tells Matthew that one apologizes to repent, but that forgiveness is a gift from another person. It cannot be demanded.

The thing is, neither Matthew nor Peter is ready to reconcile. Jesus is gentle in His prodding, saying, "There is no peace when two of my followers hold resentment against one another." Since there are more than 2 billion Christians in the world, it can be assumed that there are enough resentments to displace the peace that comes with following Jesus. What is one resentment

that you could let go of this Lent? Do you need to apologize to anyone? Do you have the power to offer the gift of forgiveness to someone who has hurt you? What's holding you back?

Yes, "The Chosen" is a made-up television series and not the Gospel itself. Yet, the power of media stories is that they show real, flawed humans – just like you and me – interacting in an imaginative way.

"The Chosen," in particular, can inspire us to take what we see on screen and prompt us to look at our inner selves and the quality of our own following of Christ, especially during this season of Lent.

Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the Associate Director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies.

The Servus
Omnium Lecture
February 13, 2024

Enjoy a Mardi Gras breakfast and receive a blessing from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades to kick off the Lenten season. Deacon Larry Oney to present "Called and Sent for Such a Time as This."

For More Info & to Buy Tickets: bit.ly/ServusOmnium



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. For additional listings of that event, please call the advertising sales staff at 260-399-1449 to purchase space.

Knights of Columbus Council 1790 to Host Blood Drive
GARRETT – The K of C Garrett Council 1790 is cooperating with the American Red Cross to host a blood drive on Tuesday, February 13, at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 300 W. Houston St. Whole Blood and Power Red appointments are available from 1-6 p.m. All are welcome to participate. All donors will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card by email from the American Red Cross. Visit redcrossblood.org and search for kofc1790 to register.

St. John, Fort Wayne, Fish Fry
FORT WAYNE – St. John the Baptist will host a fish fry on Friday, February 16, from 4-7:30 p.m. in the gym, 4500 Fairfield Ave. Drive-through carry-out is available or in the gym for dine-in. Adult tickets are \$12, children 13 and younger are \$7, and children 2 and younger are free. Contact Karen Glotzbach at 260-744-4393 or parishsecretary@stjohnsfw.org for information.

St. Paul Chapel's Fish Fry
FREMONT – St. Paul Chapel, 8780 E. 700 N., will have a fish fry on Friday, February

16, from 5-7 p.m. Dine-in and carry-out available. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$5 for children 6-12, and children 5 and younger are free. Contact katie@stpaulcatholicchapel.org or call 260-665-2259.

St. Patrick, Walkerton, Fish Fry
WALKERTON – St. Patrick Church in Walkerton will host a fish fry at Letko Hall, 811 Tyler St., on Friday, February 16, beginning at 4 p.m. until the fish is gone. The cost is \$12 for adults, \$8 for kids ages 6-10, and kids younger than 6 are free (dine-in only for kids). Carry-out is also available. No all-fish carry out. Contact Lisa Myers at 574-586-7152 or info@saintpatricks.church.

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne Joseph Alter, 95, St. Charles	William "Bill" Thomas, 84, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Monroeville Linda Brames, 73, St. Rose of Lima
Sally Miller, 88, St. Charles	Jerry Clayton Elder, 74, St. Joseph	South Bend James Szekendi, 73, Christ the King
Stephen Potosky, 66, St. Charles	Robert Schowe, 103, St. Vincent de Paul	Barbara Joan Jurek, 91, Holy Cross
Suzanne Wyss, 86, St. Charles	Nancy Taylor, 82, St. Vincent de Paul	James Terry Riordan, 89, Holy Cross
Nancy Dowling, 64, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Granger Kathryn Agnes Houk, 94, St. Pius X	Walkerton LeRoy S. Dudeck, 76, St. Patrick
Maryellen F. Favory, 93, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Mishawaka Jimmy Walenga, 92, St. Joseph	

Send obituaries to obituaries@diocesefwsb.org.

St. Vincent Boy Scout Fish Fry
FORT WAYNE – A fish dinner will be held on Friday, February 16 at St. Vincent de Paul School, 1502 E. Wallen Rd., from 5-8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7 for children. Drive-up or carry-out are available. Contact Jan Moore at 260-489-1763 or svboyscouts@svboyscouts.org.

Rosary Rally for the Fatima Children
GOSHEN – A Rosary Rally for the Fatima Children will be held on Saturday, February 17, from 4-5 p.m., at St. John the Evangelist Pro Life Cross, 417 S. Main St., in collaboration with Caballeros del Rosario in honor of Sts. Francisco and Jacinta of Fatima. Contact Patrick Wheeler at 574-312-9942 or pjmariawheeler16670@gmail.com.

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6 p.m. Dinner

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Diocesan Seminarians Reflect on First Semester of New Program of Priestly Formation

BY ERIC PEAT

You don't have to ask seminarian Paul Cline twice about the highlight of his first year of religious formation.

"We have Mass every day, and life revolves around Jesus and receiving Him," Cline told *Today's Catholic*. "First and foremost, it's the thing you do, and I think that's amazing."

Such is life at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, where two first-year seminarians from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend are among the first to experience the Church's new model for shaping future priests. Paul Cline and Thomas Bundy have just begun the second semester of their Propaedeutic year – one of the most significant recent changes to priestly formation, according to Father Jonathan Norton, Diocesan Director of Seminarians.

"The Church saw a need to have a more focused time at the beginning on the spiritual and human formation of seminarians," said Father Norton, who also serves as Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Warsaw. "During this first year – Propaedeutic means 'introductory stage' – there are 12 months of formation, separate from the rest of the seminary. It comes with its own program and its own hours of prayer to focus more on the guys' spiritual and human formation. They get to know themselves, accept their weaknesses, learn to be humble in their strengths, and develop a good prayer life."

The sixth edition of the Program of Priestly Formation, which was drafted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and approved by the Vatican in 2022, has reshaped the education and formation of seminarians across the country. Under the new model, priestly formation is now divided into four stages: the Propaedeutic Stage, in which seminarians spend one year building a foundation of human and spiritual formation; the Discipleship Stage, in which seminarians study philosophy and grow as faithful disciples of Jesus; the Configuration Stage, in which seminarians study theology and configure themselves to Christ as shepherds and spiritual fathers; and the Vocational Synthesis Stage, in which seminarians are ordained as deacons in their home diocese and are placed in a parish for six months to help transition into the priesthood.

"It's hard," Father Norton said of transitioning to parish



Provided by Thomas Bundy

Seminarians Thomas Bundy, left, and Paul Cline prepare to serve Mass together at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis. Both are in their Propaedeutic year – a new addition to priestly formation in the United States.

life, as he reflected on his own journey from Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, to his first priestly assignment at St. Vincent de Paul in Fort Wayne. "You go from living with 150 men in community and prayer and sharing meals, to St. Vincent with two other priests, and you're thrown into ministry – it's quite an adjustment. We've worked with having a mentor system in the diocese, and that has borne some fruit, but this is a very intentional way that the Church is approaching it."

Although the major seminaries that currently house our diocesan seminarians – including Mount St. Mary's, Saint Meinrad in southern Indiana, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome – offer all four stages of formation, they are designed for young men discerning the priesthood who have already received college degrees. Those entering the seminary without a degree are required to first attend college seminary. Enter Simon Bruté, which Bishop Rhoades handpicked as the college seminary choice for such seminarians from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The building, which was originally built for the Carmelite

Sisters of Indianapolis in 1932, is known for its medieval architecture, including turrets and arched doorways.

"It's a really cool place; it's pretty much a castle," Cline said with a laugh. "I get to live in a castle, and it's really awesome."

While seminarians already part of the Church's prior model are essentially "grandfathered in" and will finish their formation as planned, new seminarians began their Propaedeutic year this past fall. That meant Bundy and Cline were among the first to attend the program at Simon Bruté, which Bundy said has had both its benefits and drawbacks. For example, the intentionally lighter workload in the classroom during the Propaedeutic year has presented him with ample free time, which can be a double-edged sword.

"That free time has really freed me up to find a structure of prayer in my life," said Bundy, whose home parish is Our Lady of Good Hope in Fort Wayne. "With that lower class load, it's easy to find yourself in lulls, so you have to find out how to navigate through the free time. Finding structure has also really helped me to make the transition from high school to college."

In addition to being "guinea pigs," members of this year's Propaedeutic class – affectionally referred to as "Propadudes" by the other seminarian classes – have their own Masses and formation nights. However, Cline and Bundy have quickly gotten to know their classmates, thanks to the smaller class sizes. In fact, they have particularly bonded with the handful of other seminarians hailing from outside the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

Though classmates now, Cline and Bundy took vastly different paths to Simon Bruté and to religious formation. After graduating from high school, Cline spent time searching for direction as he discerned between college and trade school. He ultimately decided to listen to the Lord's prompting and was the final seminarian accepted by former Diocesan Vocations Director Father Andrew Budzinski. Although he said he didn't know anyone when he came to Simon Bruté, he's been able to connect with his younger sister, who is studying nursing at nearby Marian University. Cline admitted it was "a little weird" at first being simultaneously a first-year seminarian and one of the oldest in the

seminary, but he said he's just trying to follow God's will for his life.

"I want to do what God wants me to do – or at least, I want to want to do what God wants me to do," explained Cline, whose home parish is St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend. "I felt like I was being called to go to the seminary, to discern the priesthood, and God led me here for a reason. If, in three years, He is calling me to do something else, I will do that. Taking that extra step and going through formation has been really good. I think it's a step that more people should take in terms of discerning. Time in the seminary helps you desire God's will in that way."

Meanwhile, Bundy – who called himself a "lifer" and applied for the seminary straight out of high school – began to hear the call to the priesthood as early as second grade, when he received his first Communion.

"I remember receiving the Lord in the Eucharist," Bundy recalled. "A thought occurred in my head out of nowhere: the Lord was pressing on my heart, saying, 'Thomas, I want you to be a priest.'" The Lord continued to press this thought on his mind through the years as he witnessed the faith being lived out by his parents and priests, particularly Father Daniel Whelan. "My vocation is always something I prayed about, and whenever I did, I continued to get that affirmation: 'Priesthood is the path.' That draw has never really gone away."

It finally culminated during a high school retreat at St. Charles Borromeo in Fort Wayne. "I was lying prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, and an image came into my head of me looking down on hands that were bearing the stigmata," Bundy said. "A couple days after, as I was kneeling in Mass during the elevation as the priest held the Eucharist, I knew that priest was bearing the marks of Christ. I made the connection that those hands bearing the stigmata were my hands. The Lord was calling me to bear the marks of Christ, to be His priest."

As Bundy and Cline journey through their Propaedeutic and Discipleship Stages – both of which they will complete at Simon Bruté before transferring to a major seminary for the Configuration Stage – they continue to grow in relationship with each other, as they have done since meeting at orientation last July. "We've gotten a lot closer," Cline said. "Building that relationship with Thomas has been really good."