

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Bishop Wimal Jayasuriya Ordained in Sri Lanka



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**EPISCOPAL
ORDINATION**

RT. REV. MSGR.
DON WIMAL SIRI JAYASURIYA
BISHOP-ELECT OF CHILAW

 Commission for Social Communications
Diocese of Chilaw

Former Fort Wayne Pastor Urges Unity, Love Amid Challenges in Diocese of Chilaw

BY QUINTUS COLOMBAGE
FOR TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Bishop Don Wimal Siri Jayasuriya, the newly ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw in Sri Lanka's North Western Province, called for unity, love, and collaborative problem-solving during these challenging times, resonating with congregations amid the country's economic challenges.

The former pastor at St. Mary Mother of God in Fort Wayne, who was ordained as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw on Saturday, March 2, emphasized the need for collective effort to find solutions to the problems facing the communities. He expressed concern about the current state of the country, stating, "Politicians have made our country miserable."

He urged, "Let us shine a light without cursing the darkness, let us spread peace instead of hatred and nonviolence instead of violence."

According to the World Food Program, more than 17 percent of the population of Sri Lanka is moderately or acutely food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance, with 31 percent of children younger than 5 malnourished.

Drawing inspiration from the example of St. Joseph Vaz, a 17th-century Indian missionary who is known as the "Apostle of Sri Lanka," Bishop Jayasuriya highlighted the importance of bringing God into the midst of the community.

He stated: "I do not come to you with money in my pockets, but I come among you like St. Joseph Vaz came among us – that is, taking God into

Provided by the Commission for Social Communication, Diocese of Chilaw

Bishop Don Wimal Siri Jayasuriya stands before the faithful during his ordination ceremony on Saturday, March 2, while Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades is seated behind him.

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Catechumens, Candidates Enter Final Preparations After Rite of Election

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

At the Rite of Election, Bishop Rhoades clarified that the event wasn't "a political election – no one has voted for you." He paused, then added, generating laughter in the congregation, "Well, God has."

Bishop Rhoades celebrated the Rite of Election for South Bend area parishes on Sunday, February 25, at St. Matthew's Cathedral. The cathedral was almost completely full of candidates and their sponsors, catechumens and their godparents.

The Rite of Election was originated in the first centuries of the early Church. It is a way to formally accept those deciding to be baptized in the Catholic Church and send them off on their final preparations before entering the Church at the Easter Vigil. For this reason, the rite is generally celebrated early in Lent. After a Liturgy of the Word, the catechumens are enrolled as members of the elect, and their godparents affirm their good faith. The Rite of Election is then followed by a similar rite, the Call to Continuing Conversion, for those who are already baptized but plan to complete full initiation into the Catholic Church.

As Bishop Rhoades explained in his homily, "It's called election because the choice – the election – of our catechumens for Christian initiation at the Easter sacraments is founded on their election by God. The Church acts in the name of Christ, who has chosen you to be His disciples."

Bishop Rhoades pointed out that we may be uncomfortable with the idea of "election," that it may seem unfair to the modern, equality-minded person. And yet, in the Old Testament, God is constantly choosing some over others – Israel to be a Chosen People, Abraham to be "father of the nations," Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery. That tension, Bishop Rhoades said, is the reason the Church holds the Rite of Election.

"In the Bible, election is always for service, not for power and glory," Bishop Rhoades said, adding that the Christian's mission is to spread the Kingdom of God.

Nor does God choose people based on importance or impressiveness. "Think about the Twelve Apostles Jesus chose," Bishop Rhoades said. "If you've watched the series 'The Chosen,' it's quite clear that these men weren't chosen because of their greatness."

He added, "Catechumens, like the disciples whom Jesus



Photos by Kasia Balsbaugh

Sponsors stand with their hands on their confirmands during the presentation of the candidates for full communion into the Catholic Church during the Rite of Election at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on Sunday, February 25.



Candidates stand with their sponsors while Bishop Rhoades exhorts them to continue listening for the Lord.

chose or elected, you have not merited this election. It's a pure grace."

Dustin Philipson from St. Therese, Little Flower Parish will be entering the Church this spring. While he remembers being baptized in his Evangelical church as a high schooler, Philipson has no record or certainty of the event, so he will be baptized into the Catholic Church on the Easter Vigil as well as receive the other sacraments of initiation.

After leaving his Evangelical church in his late 20s in disillusionment, Philipson said he became a "hard partier" for several years. After having a near-death experience on his



Bishop Rhoades enters names as the catechumens from different parishes are presented to him.

motorbike, Philipson took steps to sobriety and started taking faith seriously again. "Christ had never completely vacated my heart," Philipson said.

After trying out different churches, Philipson wavered between Mormonism and Catholicism. He eventually walked out of the Mormon temple and came to St. Therese, Little Flower Parish. Philipson said that in a few instances in his life, "The voice of God was saying, 'You know you don't believe this,'" adding that those moments ended up "pulling me back to Christian orthodoxy and the Trinitarian God." Philipson said the Church's reverence for Mary was one of his main draws to Catholicism, as well as the nonpolitical nature of the Church.

Philipson attended the Rite

of Election at St. Matthew Cathedral. "Eight months of Mass have prepped me somewhat for something like the Rite of Election," Philipson said, adding, "You get a sense that this is part of a longer tradition." He said he appreciated Bishop Rhoades' message about the nature of election and found the vestments "fascinating." Philipson stressed that Catholics should not be afraid to share these unique things about Catholicism with Protestants.

Bishop Rhoades encouraged all the catechumens and candidates at the rite as they prepare for a big step in their lives. "May you prepare well during this period of purification and enlightenment, and we pledge our prayers for you during this holy season of Lent," Bishop Rhoades told them.

Bishop Rhoades Speaks on Hot Topics at Rekindle the Fire

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

On Saturday, February 24, at Rekindle the Fire, the annual conference for Catholic men in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Bishop Rhoades came to the stage as the event's fourth and final speaker for a question-and-answer session. With more than 800 men in attendance at the Memorial Coliseum Expo Hall in Fort Wayne, Bishop Rhoades fielded questions on some of the Church's most talked about topics, including the National Eucharistic Congress, his thoughts as a delegate on the synod on synodality, the challenges he faced when he first became bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the dangers of gender ideology, and the Vatican's recent document allowing for the blessing of same-sex persons. The following recap of Bishop Rhoades' Q&A has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: Can you talk about the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival and the upcoming National Eucharistic Congress? What do these events mean for the life of the Church in the United States and in our own diocese?

Bishop Rhoades: I'm on the leadership team and on the board for the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis this coming July. I've already seen fruits of the National Eucharistic Revival here in our own diocese. I've seen fruits in various ways. A lot of parishes during this second year have small groups that are studying more about the doctrine and theology of the Eucharist. We've seen an increase in Mass attendance as well as Eucharistic adoration, especially at 40 Hours, which I required to be celebrated in all of our parishes this year. I really think this is bringing us many blessings. ...

I'm really excited that this summer, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimages will take place – the four processions that will cover the whole United States, where the Blessed Sacrament will be carried in procession from California to Indianapolis, one from Brownsville, Texas, to Indianapolis, another one from New Haven, Connecticut, to Indianapolis, and then the one that will pass through our diocese, from Crookston, Minnesota, the source of the Mississippi River. ... I really want to encourage you to check it out when the Blessed Sacrament will be in your area. And I want to encourage you to come out, and invite others to come out, to give wit-



Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades answers questions during the Rekindle the Fire conference on Saturday, February 24, at the Memorial Coliseum Expo Hall in Fort Wayne.

ness to your faith by coming out to honor Our Lord, to adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament. I also want to encourage you to, if you can, to attend the National Eucharistic Congress. Hopefully we'll have 80,000 people. We'll be at the Lucas Oil Stadium. We'll be using the Convention Center and other sites. If you can't go there for the whole week, there are day passes that are available. There'll be great speakers, beautiful liturgies every day, a lot of small-group gatherings. It's going to be a really great event.

When I was a young man, I attended the International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia in 1976, and that had a real impact on me. The next year, I applied for the seminary. That's the power of the Eucharist. I'll never forget two of the people who I heard speak at the International Eucharistic Congress: Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who became Pope John Paul II, and who is now a saint, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who is also a saint. They were both speakers at that Eucharistic Congress.

The Eucharist is the center of our life. I just want to encourage all of you to spread the message about this amazing, awesome gift of Our Lord, the gift of Himself in this sacrament of His love, His sacrifice that becomes present on the altar at every Mass, and His body broken for us, His blood poured out for us that we receive in Holy Communion, that strengthens us and nourishes us to live as His faithful disciples in the world today.

Question: Another topic close to your heart is the synod. How are you preparing to be

faithful to Christ at the synod? There seems to be a lot of tension, so how are you seeking to remain faithful to Our Lord?

Bishop Rhoades: It was really tough to be away from the diocese for a whole month in October for the First Assembly of the 16th Assembly of the World Synod of Bishops. This was a rather unique assembly. It was the first time that the pope had laypeople there in a voting capacity. ... But I was one of five bishops of the United States who were elected to represent the bishops of the United States. The pope appointed some additional U.S. bishops. There was a whole year of preparation for the synod because the Holy Father wanted a consultation of the faithful throughout the world, and I imagine some of you participated in the local consultations. All that was put into a diocesan report that went to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops so that we had a national report. This was happening all over the world. All the national reports came together for continental assemblies, so there were continental reports, and then it all came to a summit with those of us, 350 or 400 of us, who were actually delegates at the synod. ...

You may have seen the synthesis document from our October meeting. This year, that synthesis document is being reflected upon all over the world. We had a reflection by our Diocesan Pastoral Council just a couple of weeks ago on that final report. We'll be gathering again in October; again, I'll be gone for the whole month. This will

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Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, March 11: 9 a.m. – Meeting of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine, Washington, D.C.

Tuesday and Wednesday, March 12-13: Meetings of USCCB Administrative Committee, Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, March 12: 5:30 p.m. – Mass to Celebrate Go FAR: The Campaign for Catholic Relief Services, Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, March 13: Joint Meeting of Foundation Board and Governance Board of Catholic Relief Services, Washington, D.C.

Saturday, March 16: 10 a.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend

Saturday, March 16: 6 p.m. – Saint Joseph High School Gala, Four Winds Casino, South Bend

Sunday, March 17: 10:30 a.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Dominic Church, Bremen

Sunday, March 17: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, The Holy Spirit Chapel, Le Mans Hall, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame



Forty Hours Devotion



MARCH

St. Joseph, Fort Wayne: March 10-12

St. Joseph, South Bend: March 17-19

St. Joseph, Mishawaka: March 17-19

St. John the Evangelist, Goshen: March 17-19

Queen of Angels, Fort Wayne: March 17-19

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

For information about Eucharistic Revival events and resources, visit diocesefwsb.org/eucharist or diocesefwsb.org/eucaristia.



Director of ND's Ethics and Culture Center Shares Her Vision

BY CATHERINE M. ODELL

(OSV News) – Catholic theologian and professor Jennifer Newsome Martin is honored – but won't deny that she's also pretty excited – to have been recently named the next Director of the University of Notre Dame's internationally renowned de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

In July, Martin becomes the third director – and first woman director – for the 25-year-old center that has become a model for Catholic colleges and universities seeking to promote the Catholic witness on ethical and societal issues. She succeeds O. Carter Snead, who has led the center since 2012.

"This center has always been very interested in preserving and ensuring Catholic identity across a lot of academic fields," Martin told OSV News. "And in its programming," she added, "there's always been great concern about the dig-

nity of every human person. Much of the center's outreach is based on the thinking and teaching of Pope John Paul II. He said that culture and ethics have to do with full human flourishing. That's his language from his 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*."

Martin has been teaching in both Notre Dame's theology department and in its Program of Liberal Studies for more than 10 years. But Martin has also been a fellow of the de Nicola Center. She's watched closely as the center's events and programming have successfully reached out and connected with students and the wider community beyond the campus.

Since its founding, the center has worked hard to strengthen Notre Dame's Catholic character on campus and speak out on the burning issues of the day. Its outreach has focused on its four foundational pillars or principles – student formation, research and publications, cul-



JENNIFER NEWSOME MARTIN

ture of life initiatives, and mission stewardship.

The center's annual fall conference is the largest conference on Notre Dame's campus year after year. It draws scholars from all disciplines – artists, lawyers, business professionals, as well as undergraduate and graduate students, and people from the local community. The de Nicola approach, Martin quipped, is definitely "outward turned and public facing! And that's kind of unusual, because sometimes academic centers like this tend to be narrowly focused, exclusively academic."

Student formation – that first pillar, she pointed out – may be the most important. Sometimes, Martin explained, at a university like Notre Dame, students have the mindset that they're only there to succeed academically and that the only people they need to connect with are the ones who will help

them build good resumes.

Martin explained that de Nicola's staff and faculty fellows work very hard to help students outgrow that narrow vision. In particular, the center wants all students to learn about and experience "true friendship." She called those "the friendships built on wanting what's truly good for other people and wanting to draw out the virtues in others."

That's a challenging goal, Martin admitted. But the center works constantly to lay the groundwork for those true friendships.

"We have Masses and talks just for them," she points out. "There are also student pilgrimages planned, and there are times when faculty members will invite six or eight students to their homes for dinner and conversation. It's a way of giving these students a place to develop as whole persons."

Martin says this is key for a university concerned with providing students a Catholic liberal arts education.

"We need to help prepare students to really know how to engage with other people," she said. "But, that's what the center does. It places friendship at the center of activities and events, drawing people in through relationships."

Under her tenure, Martin expects to bring forward some new initiatives to the center.

"The first director of the center was a philosopher of medical ethics, and it has always sort of leaned toward bioethics although it has also been

concerned about preserving Catholic identity across many academic fields," Martin said. "But I would now like to elevate the scholarly profile of the center in the area of humanities," she add. "What can we do to support young Catholic artists, novelists, or academics? What can we do to keep theology, philosophy, and literature healthy? We're in a cultural moment which says that everything we do must translate into a resume and a job that gets me money. I want the center to protect and witness to the value of the humanities even more strongly in the future."

Martin has taught Dante's "The Divine Comedy" for 10 years and wants to expand the center's promotion of literature, poetry, theology, history, and those studies that explore what it means to be human. She wants to promote the wonderful writing and wisdom of many Catholic thinkers, including St. John Henry Newman.

Martin may also work to revitalize some book series through the University of Notre Dame Press, bringing back forgotten Catholic authors.

Making the charism of the Congregation of Holy Cross better known is also important, she believes.

"Blessed Basil Moreau, the French founder of the Holy Cross order, the order of priests that founded and still leads Notre Dame, wrote beautiful things about educating the whole person, educating the mind and heart together," she said.

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Pope Asks Children to Make the World Better, One Step at a Time

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Making the world a better place for everyone begins with prayer and little steps like saying hello, sorry, or thank you, Pope Francis said in a letter to the world's children.

"Our world will change if we all begin with these little things, without being ashamed to take small steps, one at a time," he wrote in the letter that was released on Saturday, March 2.

The letter included an invitation for the youngsters to participate in the first World Children's Day meeting in Rome, which will be held May 25-26. At a news conference after the letter was published, organizers said 57,000 children from 60 countries already had signed up and they hoped 100,000 children ages 6-12 would attend the opening event at Rome's Olympic Stadium and Mass with Pope Francis the next day in St. Peter's Square.

In his letter, Pope Francis told children that they are "a source of joy for your parents and your

families, but also for our human family and for the Church, in which each of us is like a link in a great chain stretching from the past to the future and covering the whole earth."

Children also remind everyone of their need and desire "to grow and flourish," and that all people are someone's sons and daughters and are brothers and sisters, he said. "We would not be alive unless others brought us into this world, nor could we grow without having others to love and from whom to receive love."

"The fact that we are small reminds us that we are also frail and need one another as members of one body," the pope wrote.

Pope Francis explained to the children that he chose the Bible passage, "Behold, I make all things new," as the theme for World Children's Day because it is a reminder that to make the world a better place, people need to be united with Jesus and with others.

"With Jesus, we can dream of the renewal of our human family and work for a more fraternal

society that cares for our common home," the pope wrote.

Sharing "a special secret" with the children, Pope Francis told them that if they really want to be happy, they need to pray every day, "because prayer connects us directly to God" and "fills our hearts with light and warmth."

And even the youngest people can understand that they cannot be happy all alone, "because our joy increases to the extent that we share it," he said. "Joy is born of gratitude for the gifts we have received and which we share in turn, and it grows in our relationships with others."

"When we keep the blessings we have received to ourselves, or throw tantrums to get this or that gift, we forget that the greatest gift that we possess is ourselves, one another: all of us, together, are God's gift," the letter said. "Other gifts are nice, but only if they help us to be together. If we don't use them for that purpose, we will always end up being unhappy; they will never be enough."

Contraceptive Legislation Raises Moral Issues, Health Concerns

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

A bill aimed at providing low-income women with long-acting contraceptives in the hospital immediately following childbirth has generated numerous concerns for pro-life advocates, including the Indiana Catholic Conference.

House Bill 1426 would require hospitals to offer a woman eligible for or receiving Medicaid assistance the option of having a long-acting, reversible contraceptive implanted before she is discharged from the hospital following delivery of her baby. While acknowledging that faith-based hospitals with religious objections would be exempt from the requirement, the Indiana Catholic Conference expressed concerns about the legislation and requested an amendment to have Natural Family Planning (NFP) offered to new mothers as well.

"We are grateful for the religious exemption so that a Catholic hospital could opt out of this requirement, but it's disappointing that our amendment to the legislation was not accepted," said Angela Espada, Executive Director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "If the goal is to prevent unwanted pregnancies, hospitals should also provide information about NFP – one of the most effective and least costly methods of planning a family, and the only one that

does not pose health risks to the woman."

The bill was scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor at press time, just days before the conclusion of this short session of the Indiana General Assembly. The ICC's objections to the legislation go beyond the Catholic Church's well-documented arguments against artificial contraception. Espada said that the ICC is equally dismayed by the targeting of a particular demographic: low-income women.

"Aside from the Church's position on this type of contraception, it seemed to me during testimony on this bill that people were placing a value on the types of babies who should be born," said Espada, who testified against the legislation during a House committee hearing. "It was distressing to me to hear comments like that, and I think it should be for anyone. As the testimony continued, it wasn't just about unwanted pregnancies. It was about unwanted pregnancies from a particular type of person. When you talk along those lines – that certain types of people are better off not having children – you get dangerously close to eugenics."

The proponents for House Bill 1426 argued that half of the babies born in Indiana are born to mothers on Medicaid. They also pointed to the challenging circumstances that many low-income women face and the fact that many do not seek pre- or post-natal care.

"That should be concerning also, because why would you want to implant chemical contraception into someone who is not going to see a doctor on a regular basis?" Espada said.

Dr. Michael Padilla, Co-founder of the Franciscan FertilityCare Center in Indianapolis, raised similar red

flags. He cited numerous health concerns associated with this type of artificial contraception – from cancer risk to known side effects of mood swings, pain, increased weight gain, and abnormal bleeding.

"In certain areas of medicine where it's permissible for us to use contraceptives for treatment, such as endometriosis, the language used for contraceptives in that scenario in the literature is 'suppressive therapy,' and that speaks quite well to the truth," Padilla said. "So this is suppressing female physiologic function. It is inherently inducing a disease state. A woman is supposed to have a healthy cycle."

With regard to House Bill 1426, he also expressed dismay about what he characterized as a "coercive and manipulative" approach to pushing this type of birth control on women when they are most vulnerable.

"There is something beautiful about birth, and inherently exhausting, too," said Padilla, whose Franciscan Health network clinic is one of the only hospital-based clinics in the country offering the Creighton Method of Natural Family Planning. "So, you're

approaching a woman when she's tired, she is probably in some pain, and now she has a baby she is overwhelmed with but loves completely. And humanistically speaking, you are now taking advantage of someone in impressing an ideology upon them that they are not at a place to consent to.

"Moreover, it's audacious to tell someone that you're not smart enough, or stable enough, to have someone else in your life that you can love and who will love you back," he added. "We don't need to assume things about people and make judgments about what's good for them. We can do better than this."

Padilla, the 2022 recipient of the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Respect Life Award, acknowledged that it is unhealthy for a woman to become pregnant again not long after giving birth. But he added that while "medical risks are hypothetical, moral evils are real and present now."

The Catholic Church's long history of social teaching on these issues culminated with St. Pope John Paul II's groundbreaking encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* ("The Gospel of Life"). This doc-

ument, arguably the best-known and most-quoted affirmation of the Church's moral teaching on the sanctity of life, includes numerous arguments against artificial contraception.

One especially serious concern involves instances in which hormonal birth control can actually serve as an abortifacient – that is, a drug that could cause an abortion by preventing the implantation of a fertilized egg.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) were originally included in House Bill 1426, but debate about their potential abortifacient effects led to them being eliminated from the legislation.

As leaders of the ICC await the outcome of House Bill 1426, they are also looking at pro-life legislation through a more holistic and long-term lens. They say they will continue to push for child tax credits, paid family leave, and pregnancy accommodations in the workplace to support mothers and families, especially those in challenging circumstances.

"We want look at ways to wrap mothers in need, and ways that we can be partners with the state in this," said Alexander Mingus, Associate Director of the ICC. "Let's pour as many resources as we can toward creating a culture of life."

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit indianacc.org. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

"We don't need to assume things about people and make judgments about what's good for them. We can do better than this."

DR. MICHAEL PADILLA



ST. THOMAS MORE

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Church Leaders Condemn Attack in Gaza City

JERUSALEM (OSV News) – Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem condemned a “wanton attack” by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians in Gaza City who were waiting for delivery of humanitarian aid on Thursday, February 29. Gaza health authorities said the attack left more than 100 people dead. In the aftermath of “horrifying events” and their “cruel context,” Christian leaders condemned the attack “against innocent civilians” in a March 1 statement and called “for the warring parties to reach an immediate and lengthy” cease-fire that “allows for the speedy disbursement of relief supplies” throughout the Gaza Strip, and for enacting “a negotiated release” of those being held captive and prisoners. After the October 7 Hamas onslaught on Israeli southern border communities that left some 1,200 people dead and 253 people taken hostage into Gaza, Israel launched a fierce air and land military attack into the Gaza Strip, which to date has claimed the lives of 30,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians. As the war enters its fifth month, international aid organizations have warned about increasing dangers of infectious disease spreading and starvation. Recalling “thousands of dead, wounded, displaced, and the immense destruction cause suffering” of the “small and the defenseless,” Pope Francis urged in his Angelus prayer on Sunday, March 3: “Enough, please! Let us all say it: enough, please! Stop!”

Walgreens, CVS to Dispense Pills Used for Abortion, Early Miscarriage

DEERFIELD, Illinois (OSV News) – Officials with two major U.S. pharmacy chains have announced they will begin dispensing the drug mifepristone, which has been prescribed for both abortion and early miscarriage, within the coming days. Representatives of Walgreens and CVS announced the move on Friday, March 1, in an interview with The New York Times. Walgreens officials issued a news release the same day, stating that it “expects to begin dispensing within a week, consistent with federal and state laws” in a “phased rollout in select locations to allow us to ensure quality, safety, and privacy for our patients, providers, and team members.” Both pharmacy chains have received certification from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to supply the drug under guidelines the agency issued last

More Than 100 Killed Awaiting Aid in Gaza



OSV News photo/Kosay Al Nemer, Reuters

A Palestinian man who was wounded by Israeli fire while waiting for aid, according to health officials, lies on a bed at Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City, on Friday, March 1, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas.

year. At present, the chains will only provide mifepristone in person, not by mail, in select states where both abortion and pharmacy distribution of the drugs is legal. A synthetic steroid, mifepristone – introduced 20 years ago – works by blocking the hormone progesterone, which is necessary for pregnancy to continue. When used in combination with misoprostol, which causes contractions, it induces a “medication abortion” up to 10 weeks into a pregnancy; this regimen accounts for more than half of abortions today according to Guttmacher Institute data.

Alabama House, Senate Pass Bills to Safeguard IVF

MONTGOMERY, Alabama (OSV News) – Alabama lawmakers in both the state’s House and Senate on Thursday, February 29, passed similar bills to implement legal protections to in vitro fertilization clinics following a ruling by that state’s Supreme

Court that frozen embryos qualify as children under the state’s wrongful death law. IVF is a form of fertility treatment opposed by the Catholic Church on the grounds that it often involves the destruction of human embryos, among other concerns. Both chambers passed similar bills, but they must reconcile their pieces of legislation before sending one to the governor’s desk. Republican Governor Kay Ivey has signaled her support for protecting IVF in law. The ruling by the Alabama Supreme Court found that embryos are children under the state’s Wrongful Death of a Minor Act, a statute that allows parents of a deceased child to recover punitive damages for their child’s death. That ruling came in response to appeals brought by couples whose embryos were destroyed in 2020, when a hospital patient improperly removed frozen embryos from storage equipment, which they argued constituted a wrongful death. The judges found that under the law, parents’ ability to sue over the wrongful death of

a minor child applies to unborn children, without an exception for “extrauterine children.” Though limited in scope, the ruling has created complex legal questions about what it entailed for IVF treatments in the state.

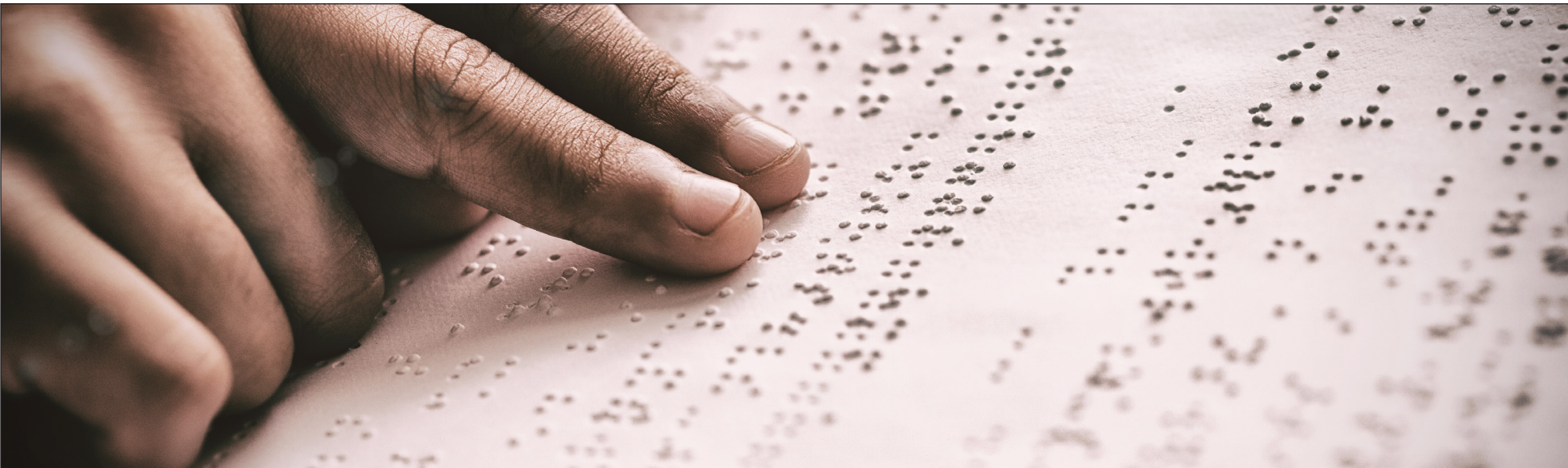
Church Calls for Participation as Divisive Mexican Election Campaigns Begin

MEXICO CITY (OSV News) – Mexican electoral campaigns started on Friday, March 1, for a historic election: The country is likely to elect its first female president as women lead the two main party coalitions. Ruling MORENA party candidate Claudia Sheinbaum would become Mexico’s first Jewish president if she wins on June 2. Xóchitl Gálvez, a candidate for a three-party coalition, is of Indigenous Otomi descent. Jorge Álvarez Máynez of the small Citizen Movement party is also on the ballot. Officials

with the Mexican bishops’ conference have urged citizens “to actively and committedly participate in the upcoming electoral elections ... as a gesture of service, justice, and peace.” But the campaigns are unfolding amid divisions in Mexico, where populist President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – who is constitutionally prohibited from seeking reelection – has overshadowed the candidates running to replace him. Much of the preelection period has been marked by political bickering and rising violence. Two mayoral candidates were murdered in western Michoacán state on Monday, February 26, reflecting the increasing incursions of drug cartels into electoral politics. “This is a completely polarized country,” said Father Raúl Martínez, a priest in the Diocese of Valle de Chalco on the southeastern outskirts of Mexico City. The bishops planned to meet with the three candidates on Monday, March 4, to sign a National Commitment for Peace, “which seeks to propose public policy strategies to stop the painful violence that has left thousands of victims.”

Pope Returns to Work After Going to Hospital for Tests

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The day after Pope Francis paid a brief visit to Rome’s Gemelli Isola Hospital for “diagnostic tests,” he had a full morning of audiences, including a meeting with bishops from Italy’s Emilia Romagna region making their *ad limina* visits to the Vatican. The bishops, including Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, had been scheduled to meet the pope on Monday, February 26, but the meeting was postponed to Thursday, February 29, because of what the Vatican press office described as “mild flu-symptoms.” Pope Francis held his weekly general audience on Wednesday, February 28, but began the gathering by telling visitors, “I’m still a bit sick,” and having aides read most of his prepared remarks. Immediately after the audience, “Pope Francis went to the Gemelli Isola Tiberina Hospital for some diagnostic tests. Afterward, he returned to the Vatican,” according to a statement from officials with the Vatican Press Office. The Reuters news agency reported that the pope underwent a CT scan at the hospital on Rome’s Tiber Island. Officials with the Vatican Press Office did not respond to a request for confirmation. The 87-year-old pope had canceled his appointments on Saturday, February 24, and again on February 26, but he led the recitation of the Angelus prayer on Sunday, February 25, without obvious difficulty.



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May We Not Be Blind, but See God’s Beatific Vision

BY FATHER MARK HELLINGER

“The Lord anointed my eyes: I went, I washed, I saw, and I believed in God.”

The Communion antiphon for this Fourth Sunday of Lent, which shares the Gospel passage of the man born blind, is striking for its echo (and turning on its head) of the famous line of Julius Caesar during his Pontic triumph – *veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered). I say “echo” because it is different in words (the Latin is *et abiit, et lavi, et vidi, et credidi Deo*) as well as in its meaning, but it reminds me of those famous words.

For Caesar, his phrase was a boast of his power and accomplishments. It had no reference to anyone (not even his soldiers who fought) but himself as the actor of the victory. Thus, Caesar takes credit for something no one person really could. It is a boast that is rooted in pride, especially a bloated ego. The Communion antiphon for this Sunday gives a summary of the various phrases of the man born blind in the Gospel in a way that is equally as impactful as Caesar’s phrase but more effectively communicates who is really responsible for this

man’s healing and actions. As the man is questioned, he tells a similar story each time he is asked: Jesus anointed his eyes, and the man followed His instructions. He simply obeyed the commands. He went, he washed, he began to see. And all that action on God’s part led to his belief.

But lest we be distracted, like Caesar, in strictly worldly concerns and actions, we are left with the question: What exactly does it mean for the man to say, “I saw.” Is this Gospel story only about the physical restoration of sight, or is there a deeper meaning to this vision? In the preface of the Mass, we pray: “By the mystery of the Incarnation, He has led the human race that walked in darkness into the radiance of the faith and has brought those born in slavery to ancient sin through the waters of regeneration to make them Your adopted children.” Thus, we see the connection of all four of the verbs the antiphon puts in front of us.

It is, in some ways, the progression of conversion. We have to begin following the command: come. Thus, we walk. But we don’t walk aimlessly; we walk following the voice that calls us. We wash in the pool of water to which we have been drawn: baptism. That sacred bath

does not aim itself at physical blindness but the deeper one: spiritual blindness by which we would otherwise be wandering aimlessly in an abyss of self-focused concerns and the illusions of the prince of this world. Then we come to see – vision made possible by the light of faith that helps us see not only the physical world in a new way but also illuminates our hearts (as the Prayer after Communion will pray: “O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendor of Your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to Your majesty and love You in all sincerity.”)

Thus, with all of that accomplished by God in our lives, and with our willing and loving response, we can proclaim with the man born blind, “I do believe, Lord.”

Because of Original Sin, we are all born blind, but Christ does not leave us to fend for ourselves. He comes to us, and He ceaselessly works to draw us to Himself so that He can anoint us with oil, command us to wash in the waters of life, and be brought to vision.

But we must remember that our faith ends in vision – specifically, the beatific vision. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us: “Because of His transcendence, God cannot be seen as He is, unless He Himself opens up His mystery to man’s immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in His heavenly glory ‘the beatific vision’” (No. 1028).

Thus, we can see that the healing of this man’s vision is not simply an earthly concern or action; it has a supernatural

goal: the vision of God for eternity. Caesar came, saw, and conquered in the earthly sense – in a way that will fade with this passing world. What he saw is of little consequence in the final calculation of what matters. But the man born blind sees in the only way that matters; he sees with eyes of faith, and that, when perfected by a life lived in union with God, is the only thing that matters. The story that matters is the story of Easter – that God came so we might follow, that God saw us so we might see Him, and that God conquered so we might be saved. It is the story of the man born blind, and it is our story, too.

Father Mark Hellinger is Parochial Vicar at St. John the Baptist Church in Fort Wayne. He will continue to write weekly reflections during Lent.



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Cardinal Grech Invites Bishops into 'Synodal Conversion'

BY DON CLEMMER

It will take work – listening to the Holy Spirit speaking in local dioceses – for bishops to experience the conversion required by the synodal model of Church espoused by Pope Francis, and this conversion is essential because of the special role bishops play in the Church, the Vatican official tasked with leading the synod process told a gathering at the University of Notre Dame the evening of Monday, February 26.

“While the vision of the synodal Church is one that invites participation on the part of all the baptized, the bishop plays a crucial role in creating a synodal atmosphere throughout his diocese. There is no synod without the bishop,” said Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, the Vatican office overseeing the yearslong journey of consultation, dialogue, and discernment that Pope Francis has made a defining project of his pontificate.

Addressing a crowd that included Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, more than a dozen U.S. bishops, and students, faculty, and other members of the Notre Dame community, Cardinal Grech asserted that it will require ongoing formation on the part of bishops to become synodal bishops.

“Ongoing spiritual formation, as an element of the bishops’ ongoing synodal conversion, will include a ... commitment to dialogue, the spiritual art of listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit,” the cardinal said. He also repeated the entreaty of Pope Francis to “listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church.”

Cardinal Grech, 67, is a native of Malta who has headed the Vatican’s synod office since 2020, the same year Pope Francis made him a cardinal. His address served as the opening keynote – and the only public portion – of a three-day conference for U.S. bishops on “The Place of Episcopal Discernment in the Synodal Journey,” co-sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



From left, Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, Cardinal Mario Grech, and Bishop Rhoades speak during a conversation regarding synodality in the Church at the University of Notre Dame on Monday, February 26.

and the McGrath Institute for Church Life at Notre Dame.

The culmination of a multi-year, global consultation process, the synod is currently between two essentially monthlong sessions in Rome, the first of which took place in in October of 2023 and the second of which will be held this coming October. In

the interim, the Vatican has asked the world’s dioceses to once again consult their people, posing the questions of: Where have Catholics experienced successes and distresses in the Church that have helped or hindered the mission; and, how can the Church help all baptized people proclaim the Gospel and live as a community of love and mercy

in Christ?

Cardinal Grech emphasized that being a synodal bishop is a matter of style, how a bishop engages his people, from a posture of listening and being present. Drawing extensively on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Lumen Gentium*, the 1964 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Grech noted that a bishop does this by promoting an appropriate sense

“Ongoing spiritual formation,

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CARDINAL MARIO GRECH



Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, speaks during his keynote address on Monday, February 26, at the University of Notre Dame.

of co-responsibility among laypeople and encouraging the practice of prayerful listening to the Holy Spirit.

Recognizing that being a bishop in a Church conceived in a synodal way is not an easy task, Cardinal Grech stressed that “I sincerely believe that the way of synodality can be energizing,” as well as empowering and liberating. He added, “I am convinced that what Pope Francis calls a synodal Church, a Church which listens, is indeed in harmony with the Gospel.”

On the need for ongoing conversion, even among bishops, he said: “I also believe that the pope’s call regarding synodality is a vision that seeks to embed more deeply into the life of the Church the personal renewal and institutional reform that Vatican II was seeking to promote. However, we are still far from realizing that conciliar program into the life of the Church.”

In a response delivered in his capacity as local diocesan bishop and a delegate to the synod, Bishop Rhoades picked

up on the call for ongoing formation of bishops. Cardinal Grech noted that the word “formation” appeared 55 times in the final report of the 2023 synod gathering, and yet the document never used the word in reference to the formation of bishops.

Bishop Rhoades expressed his gratitude for drawing on the teaching of Pope St. John Paul II on the four pillars of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

“All four areas are essential for us, for our own formation, not only in synodality but in all that we do,” Bishop Rhoades said. He added that, in addition to the teachings of Vatican II, which Cardinal Grech recommended as an authoritative guide in embracing the synod process, that the bishops also benefit from the magisterial teachings of the post-conciliar popes and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as fruit of the council.

Bishop Rhoades also expressed gratitude for the cardinal’s role in shaping the synod journey.

“Your faith, kindness, and affability – and humility – guiding us this past October in Rome really illustrates the important qualities that you spoke about for synodal bishops,” said Bishop Rhoades. He recalled how Pope Francis opened the synod by inviting the delegates to open themselves to the Holy Spirit, the protagonist of the journey on which they were embarking, and noted, “One of the best parts of the experience I had there was really the atmosphere of prayer, conversations in the Spirit.”

Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine and leader of the U.S. effort to implement the synod, said the exchange between Cardinal Grech and Bishop Rhoades would benefit the entire Church in navigating and embracing the synod process.

“We should not lose sight of the importance of the local groundwork that goes on in deepening our perceptions of the way the Lord and His mystery operates amongst us,” Bishop Flores said.

Julia King, an alumna of Notre Dame’s Master of Divinity program, currently serving in parish ministry in South Bend, said she appreciated the spirit of co-responsibility – of laypeople having an important role in the life of the Church in cooperation with clergy and religious – that ran through Cardinal Grech’s talk and the response from Bishop Rhoades.

“It was just really beautiful to hear that,” she said.

Photos by Don Clemmer

BISHOP Q & A, from page 3

be more crucial, because this is when we'll make the concrete recommendations to Pope Francis regarding the whole idea of being a synodal Church.

What does that mean? It means that we are all on a journey as the People of God together, everyone – bishops, priests, deacons, religious, laypeople. All the baptized, all brothers and sisters in Christ, have a co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, the mission of evangelization, the mission of spreading the Kingdom of God. To try to encapsulate it, some of the principal themes that we're looking at is how do we live this synodality? The three main topics were communion, participation, and mission.

Communion, the idea of the unity of the Church, is so foundational. Sadly, there are divisions. There are obviously those who are separated from the Catholic Church, going back to the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago or 1,000 years with the separation with the Orthodox. But we are all called to unity as the baptized. So, we are to walk in communion. One of the challenges we face today is polarization within the Catholic Church itself. That's no surprise to any of us. We have the left and the right. We have political divisions that have kind of come into the Church as well. That's not good for our mission, because if we're divided, we're less convincing examples in the world of the truth of the Christian faith. So, communion is really important.

Next is participation. I kind of talked a little bit about that, how everyone is called to participate. There shouldn't be any idle members of the flock. When all of us were baptized and confirmed, it was for a mission. We were united to Christ. We received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We became members of His body, the Church, and we're called to live our faith, to spread the faith. We're called to the mission of transforming the world with the Gospel of Christ. ...

So, all of this is oriented toward mission. How do we do this? The pope feels that we need to have a much more synodal approach. And synods were part of the Church's history from the beginning. In the early centuries of the Church, there were synods. But they were generally synods of bishops of a region who would get together to deal with issues in their particular regions of the world. But now, the pope wants to put more emphasis on the participation of the laity – or non-bishops, I should say – also priests, deacons, and religious consecrated men and women. And that's where there's some debate. How is this supposed to work? That's the kind of stuff that we're talking about. I think it's

important that we maintain and be careful about the distinction between the ministerial and the common priesthood, that we shouldn't play down the necessity of the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the life of the Church. Obviously, Jesus chose apostles to lead the Church. We can't do away with the distinction, otherwise it's really a big problem. ... Some of us are very concerned, and I've given my input on this issue at the synod.

The other thing I worry about is the *sensus fidei*. That term is bantered about a lot. ... We understand or we know the word of God, which comes to us through Scripture and Tradition. Also, there is a certain instinct of the whole People of God for the truth of the faith, but we have to discern that very carefully, because it's not like a majority opinion. Let's say a majority of Catholics could be, for example, in our country, in favor of abortion rights. Well, maybe it's like 52 percent or something. Well, the majority thinks this, so this must be what the Holy Spirit is saying. No. Pope Francis has said this is not a parliament. This is not an electoral body. This isn't like Congress where the majority rules. But some of that is filtered into this, which makes me nervous, but some of us are speaking out against that. You can't judge the truth by majority opinion. And that's where the role of bishops comes in, and we have to remember the role of the magisterium. So, the *sensus fidei*, the idea of the sense of the faithful, has to be very carefully discerned. So where do we see, really, the truth coming through the faithful? We see it in those who are active in their faith, who are men and women of prayer – most especially the saints. They lived the truth in the Gospel. ... Synodality can be a very good thing, but it has to be done correctly in continuity with the Tradition of the Church.

Question: When you were first appointed Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, what was your biggest challenge?

Bishop Rhoades: I would say vocations. Vocations were very low when I got here, and I remember seeing those low numbers and thinking to myself, "Wow, if we don't get the numbers up, we're not going to have enough priests for all of our parishes." As you know, in some dioceses, for financial reasons and population movement, etc., a lot of parishes have been closed. And there was a plan when I got here for the merging and closing of parishes that Bishop D'Arcy had worked on. And when I received that plan, I thought, well, I'm going to put it on hold. Let's see what we can do. Let's pray hard and



Scott Warden

try to increase, by God's grace, the number of priests so that all this won't have to happen, unless necessary. ... I think we're in much better shape right now.

What would be some of the other challenges? At the beginning, I just had to get to know the diocese. I didn't know anything about the diocese. You know, there were some challenges. We have Catholic colleges and universities that there were some challenges that I had to deal with – and still do – but to try to strengthen Catholic identity as much as I can, because I really don't have authority over our institutions of Catholic higher education. They are not directly connected to the Church, to me, or to the diocese. ...

Question: Someone wrote in to thank you for getting involved with the decision by Saint Mary's College to allow transgender women into the school.

Bishop Rhoades: This is one of the biggest problems we face. Gender ideology and the rejection of Christian anthropology, I think, is one of the greatest challenges to the Church today in the West. ... What I worry the most is the influence of this on our young people. This isn't just an attack on masculinity. This is also an attack on femininity. This is an attack on the person, created male and female. This is saying no to God the creator, Pope Francis is saying. Now, we can distinguish this from those who genuinely struggle with gender dysphoria. We need to show love and care for those who are having a difficult time, for whatever reason, identifying with their God-given sex. We always should show compassion and love and give all the assistance we can. But that shouldn't be equated to saying, "Oh, that's OK, you're having a difficult time, you can change and become the other sex." ... We bishops have been fighting the present administration because they're trying to force us to do

things like provide for these kinds of procedures in our Catholic hospitals and health care facilities. I'm the Chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Religious Liberty. Believe me, this is one of the things on the top of our list. We're being forced in our Catholic schools to address people by pronouns that they choose, and we've said no to that. What happens when we get sued?

We're in this battle for our religious liberty. The underlying thing is this secularist, relativist culture that we live in. It's no longer one that has the fundamentals of Christian anthropology. What is the human person, created body and soul? This body and soul is a unity. You can't be a male body with a female soul. It's impossible.

We also have to deal with this in the intellectual world, because in many of our colleges and universities, this is really not only taught, but you're really excluded – you're persecuted, discriminated against – if you don't go along with it. Not only are you called a bigot ... but they're saying, well, the Church just isn't up to date with the science. That is so false. When you look at biology, you look at science, even when they do some of these procedures, there's not even proof that it really helps the psychological well-being of the person. We have increasing numbers who have transitioned, and now are trying to detransition, because they realize they were making a mistake.

Question: With the release of the *Fiducia Supplicans*, there has been a lot of confusion. How would you clarify that? How are we to understand the blessing of those persons who hold same-sex attraction?

Bishop Rhoades: For those who don't know what *Fiducia Supplicans* is, this is the document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is led by Cardinal Fernandez, and it created a lot of confusion. The way the secular media presents it is that

the Church is allowing blessing of same-sex marriages, which the document said, explicitly, the Church cannot, will not, bless same-sex marriages. But it did create confusion, because it talked about the blessing of homosexual couples. Now, probably two weeks after it was released, Cardinal Fernandez had to come out with a clarification, because a lot of us, especially us bishops, were like, what are you talking about?

There is no blessing allowed of homosexual unions. There cannot be a blessing, which is what the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith said two or three years ago. So, this document was very unfortunate, because it gave confusion to what was a clearer issue. Now, what did the pope and Cardinal Fernandez want here? This is where it gets confusing. They're saying you can bless a homosexual couple but not the union. Well, we kind of scratch our heads and say, "OK, now what does that mean?" Clearly, we can't say, "May God bless your union together," because that union most likely is not just a friendship; it's a sexual – homosexual – union.

Now, on the other hand, we can always bless persons. That's never been a problem. A homosexual comes up and asks for a blessing – yes, of course. We're all sinners. First of all, I wouldn't even know if someone was homosexual or not. I kind of look at it like this: If a couple came up, I could bless them as individuals, but I would never do it in a way that would suggest that I was blessing their union. And that's where it's really problematic: in the sense that we have some countries where they are interpreting this as [being allowed to bless unions]. What bothers me, and many bishops in the United States and in Africa, is that Rome is not disciplining them. It came out in the clarification: You cannot bless unions. Well, then why ... are the bishops in Germany and Belgium not reprimanded? That's the problem I have with the whole thing. They clarified it, but then it's going on. ... But how do you have order in the Church if you have something going on in Germany and Belgium and they're ... turning a blind eye to it?

Here in the United States, most of us U.S. bishops are not doing that – and won't do that. ... So, we're looked upon like we're anti-Pope Francis. That's the media narrative: The U.S. bishops are anti-Pope Francis, which isn't true! But it would be good for us if we were supported by the Vatican more. That kind of hurts. We're faithful to Rome. ... I wish they never would have put out this document, because it just created what I would call unnecessary confusion.

Bishop Rhoades Visits Huntington Catholic School

BY NICOLE HAHN

On Thursday, February 22, Bishop Rhoades made a pastoral visit to Huntington Catholic School, where he engaged with students and teachers in their classrooms and celebrated Mass for the children, staff, and community.

It was fitting that the homily during Mass focused on St. Peter, as his visit came on the feast of the Chair of St. Peter, and Mass was held in the church of SS. Peter and Paul, one of the two churches in Huntington that support Huntington Catholic. "So, today, we ask St. Peter to pray for us, especially for us at Huntington Catholic, because we worship here in the house of SS. Peter and Paul, and the house of St. Mary just a street away."

Bishop Rhoades explained that Peter's original name was Simon, but Jesus changed it. The bishop then asked the students if they knew why Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter and what the name Peter means. One student proudly answered, "rock." Bishop Rhoades said: "Yes, rock. That's what Peter means. Jesus made him the rock of the Church." He went on to explain to the students that, though Jesus is the original rock of the Church, He was going to be crucified, rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, but He still needed someone on earth to continue His mission, and that was the job He gave to Simon Peter. The job was to be the rock of the Church, the leader of the Church, to continue Jesus' mission of teaching, and to be the Shepherd. "Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. In other words, He gave him the authority to teach and lead the Church." Bishop Rhoades explained that February 22 is the day to celebrate the Chair, which he said was "a symbol, because someone who sat in the chair to teach had the authority to teach."

At the end of Mass, Huntington Catholic Principal Derek Boone thanked Bishop Rhoades for visiting the school and having Mass with the students. The bishop was then presented with a gift of a rendering of the Last Supper that was created by Denise Zahm, a teacher at the school.

After Mass, Bishop Rhoades was on a mission, as he made it a point to go to every classroom from preschool through fifth grade at Huntington Catholic, which is supported by the churches of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Mary. His first stop was the kindergarten class, and



Photos by Nicole Hahn

Bishop Rhoades speaks about St. Peter to Huntington Catholic students during his homily at Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Church in Huntington on Thursday, February 22.



Bishop Rhoades receives an artwork rendering of the Last Supper from every-one at Huntington Catholic School following Mass on Thursday, February 22. The piece was created by Denise Zahm, a teacher at the school.

the children were more than delighted to see him. They could not wait to answer his questions. Julie Ramp has been the teacher of the kindergarten class for more than 15 years. As she's building these children to be future saints, she is guiding them in the Bible

every step of the way. One young man had questions and answers that forced Bishop Rhoades to ask if he should be a future priest. He told the bishop that he would either be a priest or an astronaut. Bishop Rhoades told him that he should lean toward the



Bishop Rhoades speaks to a fifth grade student at Huntington Catholic School during his pastoral visit.

ABOUT HUNTINGTON CATHOLIC

Address: 820 Cherry St., Huntington

Phone number: 260-356-1926

Founded: 1984

Number of students: 180

Nickname: Rams

Principal: Derek Boone

Website: huntingtoncatholic.org



Bishop Rhoades talks to preschoolers about their fun pajama day during his pastoral visit to Huntington Catholic School on Thursday, February 22.



Bishop Rhoades enjoys lunch with the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders during his pastoral visit to Huntington Catholic School.

Below, Bishop Rhoades speaks to third graders at Huntington Catholic School about what they are learning in religion during his pastoral visit.



priesthood and come talk to him later. That brought smiles to the faces of everyone in the room. Along with Bishop Rhoades, the group that went to each class included David Mangel, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Principal Derek Boone, Assistant Principal Brandy Aschliman, Father Tony Steinacker, Pastor at SS. Peter and Paul Church, and Father Thomas Zehr, Pastor at St. Mary Church.

Bishop Rhoades then went to the preschool class. They happened to be in their pajamas that day. When the bishop asked why they were in their pajamas, they all clamored that it was pajama day, and they asked him why he wasn't in his pajamas. He said that if he would have known that it was pajama day, he might have changed his clothes. He asked them what they were learning in religion class, and they told him that they were learning prayers and knew how to pray. They then prayed the Glory Be with Bishop Rhoades to end their time with him.

First grade was a lively session with Bishop Rhoades, as the children were full of energy and thrilled to be with him. The kids were surrounding him and talking over one another, and they couldn't get close enough to him. It was so exciting that Bishop Rhoades told everyone that this was why he could never be a schoolteacher, because these children were wonderful but a little hard to calm down. They were squirming and clapping and could barely be contained to listen to the lesson that Bishop gave to them. They did eventually calm down enough to listen to him, and he held their attention. When he left,

Bishop Rhoades said he was probably more impacted by them than any other class.

"It is always a joy to see Bishop Rhoades have facetime with our students," Father Zehr said. "We could clearly see the excitement and joy on both of their faces as they interact. We had a hard time getting the bishop to leave whichever classroom he was visiting because he was enjoying himself so much with each group!"

The visit to second grade was much quieter. The children were so attentive to Bishop Rhoades and answered every single question. He asked why it was a completely different atmosphere than the lower grades. They explained to him that the big thing for them is that this was a time to focus on learning. The students were excited to share that they had already done their first reconciliation in preparation for their first Communion. Bishop Rhoades told them how excited he was for them to be doing their first Communion during this year of focus on the Eucharist with the National Eucharistic Revival.

Bishop Rhoades went on to visit the third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade classrooms, where he asked the students what they were learning in their religion studies. The students in each classroom were thrilled to share what they knew and what they were learning. Bishop Rhoades was able to add to what they were learning by giving a small lesson of his own based on the particular subject. It was in the fifth grade classroom where the bishop was able to use the aid of a computer and screen to show pictures of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Chair to which he had referred earlier

in his homily at Mass. The students loved getting to see firsthand what the bishop had been speaking about.

"Bishop Rhoades' visit was an opportunity for him to see all of those he has impacted through the generosity showed to Huntington Catholic with new textbooks and funding through OSV for important IT upgrades," Boone said. "His joy was present in our beautiful church during the morning and continued to shine while visiting with our students and staff members. Today was a truly special day that will be a long-time cherished memory!"

Following his classroom visits, Bishop Rhoades went to the cafeteria to enjoy lunch and time with the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The students all gathered around and listened intently to what the bishop shared.

During his visit, Bishop Rhoades not only made time to speak with the students but also the teachers to thank them for what they do, and then to take photos with each class.

"We are blessed to have a bishop who is so engaging with our young people who are ever so inquisitive," Father Steinacker said. "Bishop Rhoades is a true teacher at heart. It was inspiring to watch him interact with the students in each of the classrooms he visited and then visit with our eighth graders whom he will confirm in just two months here at SS. Peter and Paul. It is always a joy to be in the bishop's presence. With so many responsibilities in the diocese, it is extra generous of him to make the time to visit each school in the diocese every so many years."

'You Will Never Wash My Feet!'

Soon enough, we will be celebrating Holy Thursday, also known as the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Gospel reading for that Mass is John 13:1-15, which is not specifically about the Last Supper itself as it is in the other three Gospels. Rather, it is about the washing of the feet of the apostles by the Lord.

In dusty Palestine, the washing of one's feet was a necessary hospitality, but a humbling, even humiliating, task delegated to slaves. At this dramatic moment, the Master, the Teacher, the Son of God, is stooping to perform such a task. This explains why Peter resists so strenuously: "You will never wash my feet."

Peter, as was often the case, was slow to get the point. Jesus explains: "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

Which brings me to the Super Bowl.

In the midst of athletic prowess and celebrity ads, there was a 60-second spot that showed a series of images of individuals washing another person's feet. It was the images themselves that were so arresting: The pairings were intended to appear at first oppositional: a cop and a young black man. A young woman and an older woman outside an abortion clinic with pro-life protesters. A cleric and a young, apparently LGBTQ man. A white woman

and an immigrant. The message of the ad: "Jesus didn't teach hate. He washed feet." It was sponsored by a group called He Gets Us. (You can watch the ad on YouTube.)

This group has run similar ads, often involving social justice themes, but always stressing that "Jesus gets us."

According to the group's website: "With an upcoming election year that will be filled with division and derision, we decided to focus on one of the most important directives given by Jesus – love your neighbor."

True to expectations in an election year, the ad was viewed as hugely controversial in some quarters. The left has criticized it, with Americans United for Separation of Church and State calling it "a front for Christian nationalism."

Daniel Walden, writing in the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, lambastes the ads as "insufficiently revolutionary," criticizes the funders (which include the founder of Hobby Lobby), and said the messaging "fails to wound us."

This may come as news to some folks on the right who were equally offended by the ad, even calling it heretical. "Putting out an ad that invites narcissistic, prideful, unrepentant sinners to come and get their feet washed is bad ... and also completely unbiblical," tweeted Matt Walsh.

Walsh may have forgotten that Jesus washed Judas' feet. Jesus apparently forgot to add a footnote explaining that His



AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

example did not apply to the narcissistic and prideful.

So, insufficiently revolutionary or completely unbiblical – take your pick.

In fact, in our highly polarized society that has divided everyone into "us" and "them," the apparent incompatibility of the washer and the washee is exactly the point of the ad. Father Aaron Wessman, in his book "The Church's Mission in a Polarized World," says discipleship means crossing over to the other, and that this is the challenge now facing us as Christians. We don't need more ideological debate. We need to reach out to the leper, the hypocrite, the tax collector – the other – just as Jesus did.

The New York Times columnist and conservative Christian David French summed up the ad's impact on himself and others: "We asked ourselves if we were adequately loving and serving our neighbors."

And who is our neighbor? Well, Jesus answers that question, too. It's everyone.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic Publisher, Editor, and Journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News.

The Painting Beneath the Painting: Faith That Endures



TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

I was a first grader when I made my inaugural trip to Disney. This month – decades later – I returned with a first grader and a fresh set of eyes.

So much came back to me. My favorite ride then remained my favorite ride now: Pirates of the Caribbean. I remembered not only the sight of the swashbucklers but the feel of the bobbing boat winding through water and the smell of the dank walls.

It had been there all along, tucked in an inner recess of my 6-year-old heart. The experience had stuck, like an old photo captured on the sticky page of an album. I just hadn't realized.

I've tended to think of my memory bank as static, always accessible in equal supply. But the older I get, the more dynamic it seems. Parenthood amplifies this, offering another go-round, layers of nostalgia as soft and warm as an old patchwork quilt.

So much that is learned in childhood endures. The songs. The prayers. The prayers turned into songs. The wispy, wistful soundtrack for "Anne of Green Gables" that sounds like growing up. The parts of the Mass, as familiar as your parent's hand. The welcome that invokes our Triune God in

one breath: "The grace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The drama of the consecration and Jesus' direct invitation: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it." The marching orders at closing to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Pick up a beloved childhood book and be amazed. The story is still there. The Wild Things still dangling from tree branches with Max, their wild rumpus in full swing. Richard Scarry's mice still zipping along in their pencil-mobile. The old man still resting on "The Giving Tree," now a stump.

The things we forgot we'd forgotten. Memories that never left us, though decades have passed without a single thought. Invisible but not erased.

I've been searching for the words to describe this happy,

CAPECCHI, page 13

Rejoice! The Resurrection of Christ Is Drawing Near



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Second Book of Chronicles provides this first reading. Chronicles was written about 1,000 years before Jesus. The identity of its author is unknown. As the title of this book implies, its purpose is to record the history of God's people, but the most important aspect of their history always was religious.

A constant refrain, and source of grief, among the prophets and the devout of ancient Israel was the sinfulness of the people and most particularly that of the kings. God caused or willed no distress or hardship. Rather, by disobeying God, the people themselves upset the order

of life, bringing trouble upon themselves.

This reading insists that God again and again has sent messengers to call the people to piety. Inevitably, these messengers met rebuke.

As an example of all this, Babylonia overtook the Holy Land because sin had weakened the Hebrew kingdoms. Then the conquerors took many Hebrews to Babylon where the Hebrews' lives were miserable.

A pagan king, Cyrus of Persia, freed these sad people when he overcame Babylon. The Hebrews saw Cyrus as an instrument of God's mercy.

The Epistle to the Ephesians furnishes the second reading. It teaches critical facts about God, the source of all goodness. Salvation is God's merciful gift. No one deserves it. God lavishly extends it to us as an expression of eternal, divine love.

St. John's Gospel gives this Liturgy of the Word its final reading. In this reading, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, a prominent and pious Jew from

Jerusalem. The Lord refers to an event that occurred during the Exodus when Moses lifted high a serpent. All who looked upon this serpent were rescued from death.

Serpents were important in ancient iconography, although more important among pagans than among Jews. Serpents symbolized eternal life since they shed their hides and seemingly were reborn to new lives.

Jesus predicts being lifted, as Moses lifted the serpent. He was referring to the crucifixion. All who look upon Jesus will have everlasting life.

Even so, Jesus is not a conqueror of people who make their own choices. People must freely choose to follow Jesus by renouncing their own sin.

This is important. God "so loved the world." God desires life for us and, therefore, sent Jesus to lead us to life, even if, on occasion, we prefer darkness and, indeed, doom ourselves.

Reflection

This weekend often is called Laetare Sunday, taking its name from the Latin word, *laetare*, meaning "to rejoice." This is the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, which for centuries in the Roman Rite was in Latin.

In the liturgies of this weekend, priests have the option of wearing the color rose – a blend of red and gold, not pink – vestments. Rose is not the toning down of a stricter purple of Lent but a signal that Easter is near.

Thus, the presence of gold is critical to understanding the meaning of this liturgical moment. The gold symbolizes the brilliant light of the Resurrection.

At dawn, daylight does not initially appear in a burst of golden sunlight. It comes gradually. The first sign of dawn is a rose-colored sky.

In reminding us that the sunburst of Easter is not far away, this weekend the Church calls us to rejoice, even if we are in the fourth week of

Lent. The victory of Christ is approaching. Salvation is near!

On Good Friday, we will remember the crucifixion, but Jesus, crucified, was eternally victorious over death. He is the radiant "Light of the World."

For humanity, the blessed fact is that anyone who turns to Jesus will have the light of Jesus to guide them through the darkness and fog of earthly existence.

READINGS

Sunday: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalms 137:1-6; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21

Monday: Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalms 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b; Jn 4:43-54

Tuesday: Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalms 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; John 5:1-16

Wednesday: Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalms 145:8-9, 13c-14, 17-18; John 5:17-30

Thursday: Exodus 32:7-14; Psalms 106:19-23; John 5:31-47

Friday: Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; Psalms 34:17-21, 23; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Saturday: Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalms 7:2-3, 9b-12; John 7:40-53

'True Confessions' Offers Inside Perspectives on Church's Challenges

Parishes closing or consolidating. Fewer and fewer people at Sunday Mass. An aging corps of priests and not enough new vocations to take their place. These and similar items combine in a pattern of downsizing by the Catholic Church nearly everywhere in America today.

Other churches are having the same problems. No one has a formula for halting, much less reversing, what's happening. But people who know the Catholic Church well can provide informed assessments along with shrewd guesses about what lies ahead.

A generous helping of assessments and guesses is now available in a challenging book called "True Confessions" (Ignatius Press, \$24.95). It is the work of Francis X. Maier, a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, who for 23 years was a senior aide, first in Denver and then in Philadelphia, to now retired Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, a Capuchin Franciscan, and before that was Editor-in-Chief of the National Catholic Register.

The book contains edited interviews with 103 bishops, priests, and others including lay women and men, all of them knowledgeable about the Church's inner workings and external problems. Archbishop Chaput contributes an introduction and an interview, and Maier provides useful running commentary.

But why "confessions?" As Maier explains, in religious language, one meaning of confessor is someone who "bears testimony to the faith." Each of the book's interviewees was chosen precisely to "confess" how he or she sees the Church's situation now.

Summing up the results isn't easy given the variety of responses, but there is virtual unanimity that the Catholic Church is undergoing long-term institutional shrinkage, with no end in sight. The crisis is real, and the quarter-century ahead is sure to bring hard

times as measured by resources, attendance, infrastructure, and social influence.

In the past, one bishop says, the Church was served well by its ever-expanding network of parishes, schools, and other institutions, but now some "feel more like dead weight." Others who share that view see shrinkage as a potential blessing in disguise by reshaping American Catholicism as a smaller but more united faith community.

"We don't want to be foolish and just blow things up," the same bishop adds. "But in looking to the future ... everything should be up for discussion about whether and how well it fits into our mission. Difficult times are difficult."

Even so, others interviewed caution Church leaders against what the president of an investment advisory firm calls "an ethos of managed decline." And a lay woman insists: "We underestimate our strength. The Church in the United States is much less corrupt with much more freedom and many more resources than in many places."

The book contains repeated, strong criticism of American secular culture and the corrupting effect of the media. An anonymous public official points to an alarming decline in the moral standards of ordinary Americans while blaming "mass entertainment, which has had a damaging effect on families."

That this is an unhealthy environment for religion hardly needs saying. But the biggest problem, cited often in "True Confessions" – and presumably not unrelated to the state of the culture – is that many Catholics simply haven't experienced genuine conversion to Christ.

Another complicating factor, as interviewees see it, is government hostility to the Church regarding issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Some speak bitterly of President Joe Biden for flaunting his Catholicism while supporting abortion and gay rights. "I never thought I'd put



RUSSELL SHAW

GUEST COMMENTARY

the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel on my medicine cabinet mirror," said a bishop. "Now I pray it every morning when I shave."

The book's interviews took place between late 2020 and mid-2022. Since then, Donald Trump's legal troubles and reelection campaign have shifted media attention to him. If the interviews were conducted now, Trump likely would get his share of criticism.

A number of those interviewed speak well of Catholic schools and express hope they survive. But it's different with Catholic higher education. A non-Catholic college professor recalls sending one son to a Catholic university and another to an Ivy League school – and the Catholic institution proved more secular than the secular one.

To lighten the gloom, perhaps, the book includes a chapter describing several apostolic groups with successful formation programs in leadership and evangelization.

What to make of all this? "True Confessions" mostly leaves that unanswered.

But Archbishop Chaput hazards a response by recalling two saints – Francis of Assisi and Augustine. Of Francis, he writes, "God renewed the Church of his day through his service," while Augustine reminded his people repeatedly that complaining about the times is useless. "We are the times," the archbishop said. "We make the times. And it's up to us to make them better."

Russell Shaw is a veteran journalist and writer, and a columnist for OSV News.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for March 10, 2024
John 3:14-21

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B: Jesus speaks of being "lifted up." The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

MOSES	LIFTED UP	SERPENT
OF MAN	SO LOVED	WORLD
HE GAVE	HIS ONLY SON	IN HIM
PERISH	SEND	CONDEMN
ALREADY	THE NAME	VERDICT
LIGHT	PEOPLE	DARKNESS
EVIL	HATES	EXPOSED

THE VERDICT?

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

CAPECCHI, from page 12

haunting sensation. It is at once new and familiar – the warmth of recognition plus the tingle of novelty.

Leave it to the Italians to capture it: *pentimento*. It is an art term used to describe traces of a previous work, an artist's change of mind. Most often, it refers to original marks in a painting that were painted over but reappeared over time. The painting beneath the painting.

Pentimento may show a head or hand that the artist first sketched in a slightly different place. A dramatic example is Picasso's "The Old Guitarist," where the outline of a woman's head appears at a 90-degree angle from the guitarist's neck. Conservators used X-ray images to further decipher what lie beneath, extracting more of the woman's body and another face at her neck.

To me, *pentimento* is hopeful: The original marks of childhood endure, the stories and songs and sanctifying graces.

When we worry about the record number of "nones," those Americans who claim no religious affiliation, I like to preface the stats. We do not see what may be slowly unfolding. We do not know what painting is hidden beneath the painting. It is the very passage of time that allows for *pentimento* – the gradual erosion of oil paint, sometimes through centuries, like a person's tough exterior or recent departure from faith.

Their story is not over. And though it may be buried very deep, long ago, something sacred remains.

Christina Capecchi is a Freelance Writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.



CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

315-386 FEAST: MARCH 18

Cyril lived when the Arian heresy was roiling Christianity. Raised and educated in Jerusalem, he was ordained by St. Maximus and succeeded him as bishop of Jerusalem around 350. His episcopate lasted until his death, but he spent 16 years in exile, turned out by emperors influenced by the Arian bishop of Caesarea who claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Jerusalem. The Council of Antioch sent St. Gregory of Nyssa to investigate Cyril and his diocese. He reported that Jerusalem was rife with factionalism and Arianism, but that Cyril was orthodox. He is famous for his extant "Catechetical Instructions," some of which consist almost entirely of carefully interwoven scriptural passages. Pope Leo XIII named him a Doctor of the Church in 1882.

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Marian Teacher Receives Grant to Study Fencing Overseas

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

Thomas duToit first heard about medieval fencing from YouTube. Now, thanks to a Lilly Endowment grant, the teacher at Marian High School in Mishawaka will be traveling to Germany to take private lessons in medieval fencing and participate in an international tournament.

The Lilly Endowment's Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program awards grants every year that allow Indiana teachers to pursue their interests. DuToit, a Latin, Greek, and philosophy teacher at Marian, was one of nearly 100 teachers to receive a grant this year. A former Marian teacher received a Lilly grant several years ago, and duToit said that put his "radar up."

DuToit said his first exposure to fencing was through his dad, who did Olympic-style fencing for fun. (Olympic-style fencing is the type that is perhaps more widely recognizable – white uniforms, wire mesh masks.) While his father had stopped fencing by the time duToit, the seventh child, came along, duToit remembers seeing some of the equipment and books on fencing around the house. "I think that's what turned me on initially," duToit told Today's Catholic.

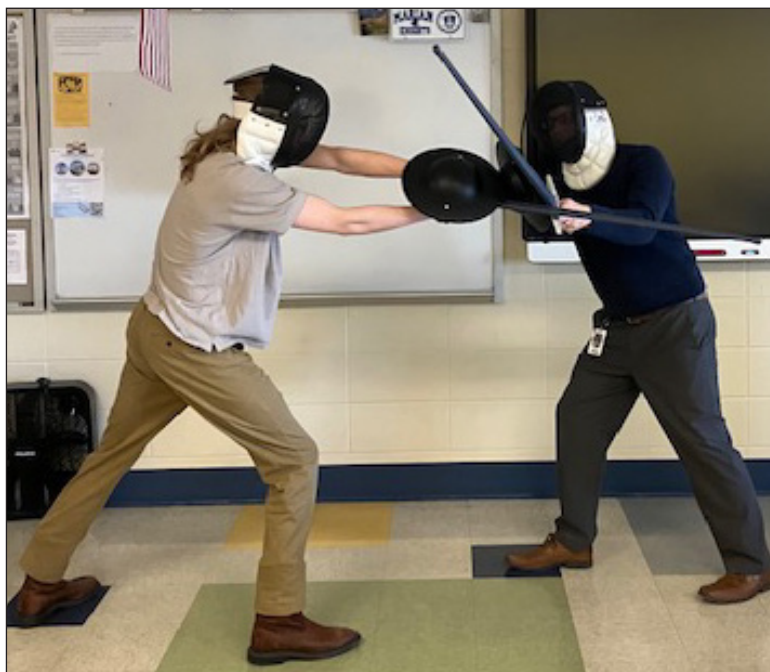
When duToit moved to the South Bend area in his 30s, he heard about the Indiana Fencing Academy in Mishawaka. "So I called them up and asked, 'Do you give lessons to old guys?'" duToit remembered. For a while, he took lessons during the summers when he wasn't teaching. "I really dug it," duToit said.

"I've never competed in Olympic fencing. I just did it for the sport," duToit said. "You can pick up fencing to compete, or you can pick up fencing to be in shape and to get better at something and to have fun."

Eventually, duToit began a fencing club at Marian at the request of a student. The club has been running continuously for eight years, with six to eight regular student attendees throughout the year.

"By going to those classes in the summer, I knew the basics," duToit said. "But then I just learned more and more as I coached the kids."

More recently, duToit discovered medieval fencing – officially HEMA, which stands for "historical European martial arts." A key part of medieval fencing is studying old fencing manuals and trying to understand and remake moves. duToit called it "reenactment archaeology."



Provided by Thomas duToit

Thomas duToit demonstrates Olympic-style fencing in the classroom.



Provided by Marian High School

Thomas duToit, a Latin and Greek teacher at Marian High School, received a grant from the Lilly Endowment to study medieval fencing in Germany.

Much of the knowledge of medieval fencing comes from a 13th-century dueling manual, written in Latin by a cleric. Dueling was outlawed soon after the manual's completion, which makes other resources difficult to find.

One of the main differences between Olympic fencing and medieval fencing is the difference in equipment. While Olympic fencing uses a long, thin, pliable sword with a sensor on the end that responds to touch, medieval fencing uses a flat, heavy steel sword. While not sharp, these swords can still inflict injury, so medieval fencing also involves lots of protective gear such as masks, specialized jackets, and small shields to protect hands.

When he travels to Germany in the spring of 2025, duToit plans to take a week of private lessons from Cornelius Berthold, a medieval fencing instructor. Then, he will participate in the Berlin Buckler Bout, an international gathering of mostly instructors.

According to duToit,

everyone wears protective gear on the first day of the gathering, but on the second day, almost nobody does. "The thing that's most terrifying is the fear that I'll hurt someone accidentally, as opposed to getting hurt," duToit said.

DuToit said the fact that his trip won't take place for another year gives him time to buy equipment and practice medieval fencing on his own. "My hope is to get to the point where [Berthold] can teach me some cool stuff instead of teaching me how to stand and how to hold a sword," duToit said.

The Lilly grant duToit received is substantial, and he plans to use that to make medieval fencing more available to the community. Only about half of the grant is for the trip, and the other half will be used on medieval fencing equipment for Marian High School and the fencing club.

DuToit is excited to continue teaching both Olympic-style and medieval fencing and helping students discover them. "It's appealing to people who may not have found success in a mainstream sport," duToit said. "If a kid didn't find a love somewhere else, like a major sport, then they can find a home here."

He added that, much like many martial arts, fencing has a strong component of learning respect and how to deal with adversity. "I think all of that can tie into Catholic teaching – respect for the human being, respect for another," duToit said, who added that the practice of fencing certainly has a "spiritual component."

"Excellence is a process," duToit said. "It's not just something you land on ... and that's a spiritual journey, too."

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For more information, visit:
StPius.net/Employment

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.

The Light is On For You – Confession in Every Diocesan Parish

Every Catholic parish in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will have priests available for confessions on Thursday, March 7, from 6-8 p.m. Visit diocesefwsb.org/light to learn more.

Laetare Sunday Choral Concert

MISHAWAKA – St. Therese, Little Flower will host a concert on Sunday, March 10, from 4-5 p.m. to celebrate the midway journey through the Lenten season at the church, 54191 Ironwood Rd. Inspiring choral music, beautiful solos, vibrant congregational singing, and sacred readings will be featured. Contact Joe Higginbotham for more

information at 574-272-7070 or joe@littleflowerchurch.org.

Adoration by Candlelight

FORT WAYNE – Our Lady of Good Hope Church, 7215 St. Joe Rd., will offer candlelight adoration on Sunday, March 10, from 7-8:15 p.m. in the church. Sacred music will be provided by the Ecce Young Adult Choir, and the choral prelude will begin at 6:45 p.m.

St. Monica First Communion Pop-Up Boutique

MISHAWAKA – St. Monica Parish, 222 W. Mishawaka Ave., will be hosting a First Communion Pop-Up Boutique on Saturday, March 15, featuring Gowns of Grace, a First Communion Attire Boutique.

There will be dresses and suits available for children to try on. Registration is required to secure your fitting time and includes a keepsake for the child, snacks, a religious craft, and more. All registered attendees will be entered in a giveaway from the local vendors. Contact Caitlin DeLaruelle at cdelaruelle@stmonicamish.org or visit gownsofgrace.com/pages/locations to register.

Parish Penance Services

St. John to Host Penance Service

NEW HAVEN – St. John the Baptist Parish, 943 Powers St., will have a penance service on Wednesday, March 13, from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Penance and Praise Night at St. John the Baptist

FORT WAYNE – A Penance and Praise Night will be held on Wednesday, March 13, at St. John the Baptist, 4500 Fairfield Ave., from 7-8:30 p.m. The night will feature adoration, Shema Culture, and five priests available to hear confession.

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne Eric Anthony, 56, St. Charles Borromeo	South Bend Vincent E. Burkhart, 59, Holy Family	Rita Valdez, 84, St. Casimir
Mary Helmkamp, 69, St. Charles Borromeo	Sandra Wacunas, 87, Holy Family	Dolores Cebulski, 94, St. John the Baptist
Shirley Powell, 91, St. Charles Borromeo	Dolores Kaczorowski, 81, St. Casimir	Warsaw Joseph Hemphling, 80, Sacred Heart

March 8 Fish Fries

St. Anthony de Padua Original Jonah Fish Fry, 4-7 p.m., 2310 E. Jefferson Blvd., South Bend

St. Patrick, Arcola, drive-thru only, 4-7 p.m., 12305 Arcola Rd., Fort Wayne

St. Gaspar del Bufalo Fish Fry, 4-6 p.m., 10871 N. St. Rd. 9, Rome City

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, 4-7 p.m., 10700 Aboite Center Rd., Fort Wayne

St. Matthew Cathedral Parish, 4-7:30 p.m. in the school gym, 1701 Miami St., South Bend

St. Dominic Church, 4-7 p.m., 803 W Bike St., Bremen

St. Aloysius, 4:30-7 p.m., 14623 Bluffton Rd., Yoder

Immaculate Conception, Knights of Columbus, 5-7 p.m., 500 East 7th Street, Auburn

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 5-7 p.m. in the parish hall, 700 W. Maumee St., Angola

March 15 Fish Fries

St. John, New Haven, 4-7 p.m., drive-thru only, 943 Powers St., New Haven

St. Bavo Parish Original Jonah Fish Fry, 4-7 p.m., 524 W. 8th St., Mishawaka

Most Precious Blood Fish Fry, 4-7 p.m., 1529 Barthold St., Fort Wayne

Knights of Columbus Drive-Thru Fish Fry, St. Joseph Parish, 4-7 p.m., 1300 N. Main St., Bluffton

Our Lady of Hungary, 4-7 p.m., 735 W. Calvert St., South Bend

Immaculate Conception, Knights of Columbus, 5-7 p.m., 500 East 7th Street, Auburn

St. Paul Chapel, 5-7 p.m., 8780 E. 700 N., Fremont

St. Vincent de Paul Boy Scout Fish Fry, 5-8 p.m., 1502 E. Wallen Rd., Fort Wayne

For area fish fries, visit todayscatholic.org/event.

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BISHOP JAYASURIYA, from page 1

your midst,” emphasizing the need for spiritual guidance and support.

In 1658, 120 Catholic missionaries left Sri Lanka, and churches were closed or destroyed, leaving Catholics isolated without priests, sacraments, or churches. St. Joseph Vaz, disguised as a beggar due to a Dutch ban on Catholic priests, ministered to Catholics, relying on begging for survival.

Bishop Jayasuriya made his appeal during his episcopal ordination at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral, the mother church of the Diocese of Chilaw, which is located roughly 50 miles north of Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, on the country's western coast.

Bishop Jayasuriya addressed the country's diocesan bishops, hundreds of priests, nuns, and more than 10,000 faithful in attendance. Bishop Rhoades, Father Mark Gurtner, Vicar General, and Father Jacob Runyon, Judicial Vicar, traveled to the ordination to represent the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Archbishop Brian Udaigwe, Apostolic Nuncio to Sri Lanka, also attended.

Expressing his profound affection for the people, Bishop Jayasuriya said: “I sincerely love you. I love you like this because God loves you. God wants His love to flow to you.”

His words resonated with emotion and determination, reflecting his commitment to serving the community with compassion and humility.

Calling for a collaborative approach to problem-solving, Bishop Jayasuriya urged the laity and clergy to work together to address their issues. He promised to be present among the people, stating: “I promise to come to your parishes to discuss your issues and problems. Not only that, sometimes I also come to your homes,” showcasing his commitment to being a shepherd who is truly present and accessible to his flock.

Bishop Jayasuriya emphasized that leaders are called by God's love and grace to serve the people.

He highlighted the collaborative nature of leadership in the community, stating, “When God calls one person for a special task, tens of thousands of other people are chosen to serve around him.”

During his speech, the faithful clapped several times to warmly welcome his words and his plans on behalf of Catholic faithful and the Church.

Bishop Jayasuriya, born on January 23, 1969, was ordained as a priest for the Diocese of Chilaw in 1997. He completed his theological studies at the National Seminary and served as an assistant parish priest in three parishes. Father Jayasuriya furthered his



Archbishop Brian Udaigwe, Apostolic Nuncio to Sri Lanka and former bishop of Chilaw, walks with Bishop Jayasuriya before entering Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Chilaw on March 2.

studies in canon law in Rome and served as a judicial vicar of the Diocesan Tribunal. He also worked as a lecturer at the National Seminary and served as Pastor at St. Mary Mother of God Parish in Fort Wayne.

Maria Goretti Susila, 72, who once taught Bishop Jayasuriya when he was a young boy, expressed her pride in her student, stating: “I guided the bishop to write the first word, ‘mother.’ I am very fortunate to see him teaching thousands of his flock about God.”

She reminisced about her time teaching the bishop when he was one of around 20 children in her class, noting his friendly and engaged nature with all the children.

Susila affectionately still refers to him as “son” and shared a recent encounter at a funeral house where Bishop

Jayasuriya embraced her, highlighting his humble nature.

She continues to pray for him to be a kindhearted pastor and to find his lost sheep in the diocese.

The Diocese of Chilaw, which is known for its seaside town and is famous for its crabs and coconut plantations, includes four deaneries and 50 parishes, with 150 resident priests and more than 200 religious men and women. The Catholic population of the diocese is 350,000.

Buddhists constitute the majority of Sri Lanka's population at 70 percent, with Catholics making up about 7.4 percent. The country has 12 dioceses, including one archdiocese, and Catholics account for 1.6 million out of a population of 21.8 million.

Sanjaya Milroy, affiliated

Commission for Social Communication,
Diocese of Chilaw

**Bishop Rhoades lays hands on
Bishop Don Wimal Siri Jayasuriya
during his Ordination ceremony on
Saturday, March 2.**

with Caritas-Chilaw, the social arm of the Catholic Church, reflected on his work while Bishop Jayasuriya served as General Secretary of the diocese's Pastoral Council in 2012, noting, “With the bishop now in a position to implement the council's findings, which involved extensive consultation with hundreds of laymen, priests, and religious, there is a significant opportunity to act on those outcomes.”

Milroy emphasized the importance of the council's strategies to enhance services provided by priests and nuns, invigorate lay apostolates, foster a society characterized by justice, peace, and equality, and emulate Jesus' example in reaching out to those who may have strayed.

“Bishops and priests' lives serve as models for others, much like Jesus, who practiced what he preached,” Milroy said. “The new bishop was encouraged to mirror Jesus' boundless love for all people.”

Milroy emphasized that a bishop's love is demonstrated through accessibility and guidance toward the right path, along with the courage to speak out against evil.

Nuwani Tharangani, a Sunday School teacher, emphasized the importance of upholding truth, stating, “As priests and religious individuals, it is important to uphold truth, even when it is difficult, as it aligns us with Christ.”

She expressed concern that justice remains elusive for Catholics affected by the Easter bombings five years ago and highlighted the importance of collaboration among priests and religious. Nine suicide bombers linked to the local Islamist group

National Thowheed Jamath carried out coordinated attacks on Easter Sunday in 2019, targeting three churches and three luxury hotels. The assaults resulted in the deaths of at least 279 individuals, including 37 foreign nationals. More than 500 others were injured.

Tharangani emphasized the need for a bishop who will intercede for the problems of the people and be a deeply spiritual leader, especially during the economic crisis facing the country. Tharangani highlighted the impact of the economic crisis, noting that from 2021 to 2022, the country's poverty rate doubled to 25 percent.

Father Niranjan Dayalal, who studied with Bishop Jayasuriya at the minor seminary, told Today's Catholic that the bishop was appointed as dean of the major seminary due to earning the respect of all the senior priests and students there.

Statement from Bishop Rhoades

In a letter to Bishop Jayasuriya ahead of his ordination, Bishop Rhoades wrote:

“With much joy, I extend to you congratulations and prayerful best wishes form the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana on your ordination as a Bishop. As you know, when we received the news of your appointment by Pope Francis as Bishop of Chilaw, there was much joy, but also some sadness since we were sad to see you leave our diocese where you have served as a beloved pastor and as an excellent canon lawyer in our diocesan tribunal. We are very grateful to Almighty God for now calling you to serve as a successor of the apostles, as shepherd of God's people in the Diocese of Chilaw.

“The priests, consecrated religious, and laity of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will be praying for you on March 2 as you receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit through your episcopal consecration. We will continue to pray for you in your ministry as Christ's vicar in the Diocese of Chilaw, teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding that portion of Christ's Church entrusted to your pastoral care.

“As you know, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception. And you served here as pastor of one of our oldest parishes, the parish named St. Mary Mother of God. I pray that the Blessed Virgin Mary will watch over you and intercede for you and the faithful of the Diocese of Chilaw. She is Queen of the Apostles! May her love sustain you, as it sustained the apostles, in your service of her Son and His Body, the Church!”