

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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Bishop Dedicates New Altar at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

BY ERIC PEAT

Laetare Sunday – the Latin title meaning “rejoice” given each year to the Fourth Sunday of Lent – was indeed a day for rejoicing at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Fort Wayne.

The church's renovations, which have been ongoing since last July, took a giant step toward completion on Saturday, March 9, when Bishop Rhoades presided over a special Mass for the dedication of the new altar and ambo. Father Terry Coonan, Pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, assisted with the Mass, along with Parochial Vicars Father Jake Schneider and Father LeeAllen Fortin.

“The church is beautiful, and I'm so happy to be with you today to dedicate the new altar and ambo,” said Bishop Rhoades. The Mass featured several extra rites, beginning with a sprinkling of both the congregation and the new altar and ambo with holy water.

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades remarked on the appropriateness of dedicating the altar on the vigil of Laetare Sunday, fitting for such a “joyful occasion.” He then recounted the events of the first reading, in which the people of Judah were exiled in Babylon for 70 years before being able to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple and altar. “I understand you were in exile in the gym – but not for 70 years,” Bishop Rhoades joked, referencing the six weeks that weekend Masses at the parish were celebrated in the St. Elizabeth gymnasium due to construction.

Bishop then detailed what makes an altar dedication such a special ceremony. He highlighted the use of sacred chrism oil, which is usually reserved for baptisms, confirmations, and ordinations, and is only used outside of these sacraments to consecrate a new church or altar. “Those are three sacraments that can only be received once, because there's a permanent seal in our souls from baptism, confirmation, and ordination,” Bishop Rhoades said. “The altar, because it is the central object of the church



Photos by Eric Peat

Bishop Rhoades rubs chrism oil into the surface of the altar during the Mass of Dedication at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish on Saturday, March 9.

where the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered, is consecrated, dedicated to God, which means nothing else can ever be done on this altar except Mass.”

Bishop underscored the importance of the altar in every Catholic Church as the location where the sacrifice of Jesus becomes present to the congregation. “And at this altar, for many decades to come, the community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish will gather with joy to be refreshed and nourished with Christ's body and blood,” Bishop Rhoades continued. “When God's people returned from exile in Babylon, they rejoiced when they rebuilt the Temple and erected a new altar, which was dedicated for their sacrifices of animals. The

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Bishop Rhoades speaks to the faithful at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

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**NEW ALTAR, from page 1**

new altar we dedicate today is for the greatest and most perfect worship: the sacrifice of Jesus, which has gained for us salvation."

Next, those gathered sang the Litany of the Saints, a reminder of their unity with the Communion of Saints. One ancient Church tradition that honors the saints is the placing of a saint relic within each altar. Bishop Rhoades helped to place a relic of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton inside the new altar, which two parishioners sealed shut. Bishop then read a prayer of dedication over the altar, referencing key figures and moments of salvation history and how Christ fulfilled each in the New Covenant. He also anointed the altar with chrism oil, pouring it in the center of the altar over the relic and in each corner of the altar. Once the chrism oil was rubbed in across the entire surface, Bishop Rhoades burned incense on the altar, praying: "Let our prayer rise to the Lord like incense in your sight. And as this house is filled with the pleasing fragrance, so let your Church be fragrant with the aroma of Christ." Father Schneider and another parishioner then covered the altar to prepare it for the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Finally, the lighting of the altar signified the Church's responsibility to shine Jesus' love all around us. "May the light of Christ shine upon the table of this altar," prayed Bishop Rhoades, "and may those who share the Lord's Supper shine with His light." At that moment, all the lights above and behind the altar were turned on for the first time, eliciting more than a few sighs of reverence from the pews.

The remainder of the Liturgy of the Eucharist continued as usual, with Bishop Rhoades consecrating the body and blood of Christ for the first time on the new altar. Just before the final blessing, Father Coonan expressed his gratitude to Bishop Rhoades for his presence. "Thank you once again, Bishop, for a beautiful celebration," Father Coonan said. "The sanctuary is looking more and more complete, and it's beautiful to be able to see the altar, and be able to celebrate Mass on the altar, and to be able to call it an altar, because it finally actually is. So, thank you so much for being here. What a joy that we got to do this on Laetare Sunday."

Bishop Rhoades responded by thanking Father Coonan for his leadership in the renovations of the church, which he noted gave the church a bigger feel. "He did such a good job. I promise you I'm not going to transfer him in June – or Father Jake, for that matter, or Father LeeAllen," Bishop quipped to many laughs and cheers.



Photos by Eric Peat

Bishop Rhoades places the relic of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton inside the new altar at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish on Saturday, March 9.

"Now, just so you know, you owe me big time for giving you these three good priests," continued Bishop Rhoades. "But you have a wonderful parish, and I'm so grateful to all of you for your generosity for this beautiful house to give glory to God. That's what it's all about, this beautiful altar that is now sacred."

A separate article detailing the renovations at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish will be published by Today's Catholic at a later date.



Fathers Terry Coonan, Jake Schneider, and LeeAllen Fortin assist at Mass with Bishop Rhoades, alongside Deacon Rob Slocum, left.



Bishop Rhoades visits with parishioners after Mass.



Deacon Rob Slocum lights the candles for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



OSV News photo/Barbara Johnston, University of Notre Dame

Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America, seen in an undated photo, is the recipient of the University of Notre Dame's 2024 Laetare Medal. University officials announced the honor on Sunday, March 10, and it will be presented at the university's 179th commencement ceremony on May 19.

Feeding America CEO Named 2024 Recipient of Laetare Medal

BY OSV NEWS

Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America, has been named the recipient of the University of Notre Dame's 2024 Laetare Medal, the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics.

It will be presented at the university's 179th commencement ceremony on Sunday, May 19, at Notre Dame Stadium.

The honor was announced on Sunday, March 10, Laetare Sunday, which is the Fourth Sunday of Lent. The Laetare (pronounced lay-TAH-ray) Medal has been given to Catholic leaders since 1883.

"Claire Babineaux-Fontenot has devoted herself to answering Christ's call to feed the hungry and care for those who are most vulnerable, and in doing so has created a network that sustains millions of Americans every day," Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, President of Notre Dame, said in a statement.

Feeding America, a national network of more than 200 food banks and 60,000 charitable and faith-based partners, works to rescue, store, and distribute food to more than 49 million people facing hunger each year. It also conducts research on food insecurity and

potential solutions.

"Under her visionary leadership, Feeding America has become a beacon of hope not only to the individuals and families it serves but for all who share her vision of eliminating food insecurity in this country," Father Jenkins said.

Babineaux-Fontenot joined Feeding America in 2015. At the time, she was Executive Vice President of Finance and Global Treasurer at Walmart and a member of its leadership team for 13 years. But she felt called by God to a higher purpose. "I knew that there

was someplace I was being guided to, and I knew it was going to require faith and confidence in Him," she said in a statement.

Feeding America's CEO since 2018, Babineaux-Fontenot has led the organization through several challenges, "including navigating a global pandemic and the ensuing increase in food insecurity," Notre Dame officials said in a news release.

In 2022, Feeding America became the nation's largest charitable organization, according to Forbes, and the network distributed 5.3 billion meals in 2023.

"More than 10 million children are food insecure here, in the richest country in the history of civilization," Babineaux-Fontenot said. "That means we

need to continue to get the word out. We should help people to understand that the game isn't over. Notre Dame knows a thing or two about football, right? You don't leave the field before the game is over. The game's not over with hunger."

Feeding America officials recently announced a partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services to explore the link between food insecurity and health outcomes.

Babineaux-Fontenot, who has a law degree and a master of law degree in taxation, spent 30 years in leadership positions in government, at law firms, and with private corporations before joining Feeding America. She was named one of Time's "100 Most Influential People of 2020" and was featured in the 2022 Forbes "50 over 50" list.

Growing up in Opelousas, Louisiana, she was one of 108 siblings. "Through a combination of birth, adoption, and fostering, her parents built a large and loving family and worked tirelessly to help children in need," according to the news release.

Previous recipients of the Laetare Medal include President John F. Kennedy, Catholic Worker Movement Co-founder Dorothy Day, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, labor activist Monsignor George G. Higgins, jazz composer Dave Brubeck, singer Aaron Neville, and actor Martin Sheen.

Last year's recipient was Mercy Sister Rosemary Connelly, former Executive Director of Misericordia and a lifelong advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities.

In 2022, Feeding America became the nation's largest charitable organization.



Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Tuesday, March 19: 3 p.m. – Pueri Cantores Mass, St. Pius X Church, Granger
Wednesday, March 20: 3 p.m. – Meeting of Our Sunday Visitor Institute Committee, Hilton Garden Inn, Fort Wayne
Thursday, March 21: 8:30 a.m. – Meeting of Board of Directors of Our Sunday Visitor, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
Sunday, March 24: 11:30 a.m. – Palm Sunday Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne



Forty Hours Devotion



MARCH

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

APRIL

St. Vincent de Paul, Fort Wayne: April 14-16
Blessed Sacrament, Albion: April 14-16
Our Lady of Good Hope, Fort Wayne: April 21-23
St. Adalbert, South Bend: April 21-23
St. Robert Bellarmine, North Manchester: April 21-23
Sacred Heart, Notre Dame: April 28-30

MAY

St. Joseph, LaGrange: May 12-14

JUNE

St. Anthony of Padua, Angola: June 2-4
St. John the Baptist, South Bend: June 23-25

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

Chrism Masses



Monday, March 25 at 7 p.m. | St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend

Tuesday, March 26 at 7 p.m. | Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne



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Report abuse

It remains important for our Church to protect children and young persons from the evils of abuse. The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend remains committed to upholding and following its guidelines, policies, and procedures that were implemented for the protection of children and young people. These can be reviewed on the diocese's website, diocesefwsb.org, under "Youth Protection."

If you have reason to believe that a minor may be a victim of child abuse or neglect, Indiana law requires that you report this to civil authorities. If you or someone you know was abused as a child or young person by an adult, you are encouraged to notify appropriate civil authorities of that abuse. In addition, if the alleged abuser is or was a priest or deacon of the Catholic Church, you are encouraged to contact Mary Glowaski, Victim Assistance Coordinator, at 260-399-1458 or mglowaski@diocesefwsb.org; or Very Rev. Mark Gurtner, Vicar General of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, at P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46801, at 260-399-1419, or at mgurtner@diocesefwsb.org. The diocese is committed to helping prevent the abuse or neglect of children and young people and to assist those who have suffered harm as a result of such abuse.

Denuncie los abusos

Es importante para nuestra Iglesia proteger a los niños y jóvenes adultos de los actos malvados como el abuso. La Diócesis de Fort Wayne-South Bend se compromete a mantener y seguir las reglas, políticas y procedimientos que fueron implementados para la protección de niños y personas jóvenes. Estos pueden leerse en la página web de la diócesis, www.diocesefwsb.org bajo la sección de “Protección de Jóvenes” (“Youth Protection”).

Si usted tiene motivo de creer que un menor es víctima de abuso o negligencia, la ley de Indiana requiere que usted reporte esto a las autoridades civiles. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce fue abusado, ya sea niño o persona joven, por un adulto, le recomendamos que notifique a las autoridades civiles apropiadas. También, si el alegado abusador es o fue un sacerdote o diácono de la Iglesia Católica, se le insta comunicarse con Mary Glowaski, coordinadora de asistencia de víctimas, al (260)

Report abuse

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Senate Resolution Condemns Physician-Assisted Suicide

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

After the latest effort to push for physician-assisted suicide in Indiana failed at the Statehouse, some lawmakers took the extra step of issuing a resolution condemning the practice to help ensure it never takes hold here.

The Indiana Senate approved the resolution on Monday, March 4, just days before the early conclusion of the 2024 General Assembly and at a time when more than a dozen states were considering joining the ranks of those already allowing physician-assisted suicide.

In light of the Catholic Church's longstanding commitment to upholding the dignity of human life, the Indiana Catholic Conference hailed the statement as an important stand.

"Physician-assisted suicide neither allows for a natural death nor respects the dignity of the person, both of which are fundamental teachings of the Church," said Angela Espada, Executive Director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), the official public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Additionally, these types of laws are not in the best interest of patients, particularly patients who are vulnerable due to a devastating illness or debilitating circumstance in life. These are the people who should be cared for and most protected, not given tools to harm themselves."

In physician-assisted suicide, which is currently legal in 10 states and the District of Columbia, adults deemed terminally ill can obtain and then self-administer life-ending medication. Proponents often use terms such as "end-of-life options" or "death with

dignity" in presenting their case for what they contend is a means of avoiding a painful, prolonged death when a person faces a terminal, debilitating illness.

But opponents of physician-assisted suicide – including the American Medical Association – maintain that palliative care and hospice care offer patients true dignity in such situations, providing comfort measures and compassion in the most difficult circumstances.

Dr. Tyler Johnson, an emergency room physician from Leo-Cedarville who is the lawmaker behind the Senate resolution, points to numerous ethical issues inherent in the practice of assisted suicide.

"Physicians are typically with their patient during the patient's most vulnerable moments, and that alone carries a responsibility that most professions do not," said Johnson, who has been a member of the Indiana Senate since 2022. "It is a far stretch to get from palliative care and allowing natural death to physician-assisted suicide. Unfortunately, there are people in the world who have embraced this evil to promote suicide among the most vulnerable individuals."

"You cannot compassionately kill a patient, and you cannot care for the patient you are comfortable killing," he continued. "As a physician in my 15th year of medicine, I cannot fathom what it feels like to give up and stop trying. Physician-assisted suicide is contrary to a physician's duty as a healer and undermines the physician-patient relationship, and we must condemn this unethical

medical practice."

In a statement he issued following the Senate's passage of his resolution, Johnson also called attention to the euphemisms surrounding physician-assisted suicide.

"Those in support will often

"As a physician in my 15th year of medicine, I cannot fathom what it feels like to give up and stop trying. Physician-assisted suicide is contrary to a physician's duty as a healer and undermines the physician-patient relationship, and we must condemn this unethical medical practice."

DR. TYLER JOHNSON

use softened terms like 'medical assistance in dying' to try to make suicide sound satisfactory," said Johnson, a graduate of the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne. "But let us not be confused: We are discussing a physician taking

steps to end a patient's life."

A major driver behind the physician-assisted suicide movement is the Colorado-based organization Compassion & Choices. The group backs "end of life options" legislation such as House Bill 1011, the physician-assisted suicide measure introduced this year in the Indiana General Assembly. Virtually identical in content to legislation proposed in prior years, the bill failed to receive a hearing.

Still, the ICC and other opponents of physician-assisted suicide say they must remain vigilant as the movement continues to gain momentum.

Twenty years ago, Oregon was the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The practice is now allowed in nine others – California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington – in addition to the District of Columbia.

This year, physician-assisted suicide legislation has been introduced in more than a dozen other states, including Illinois, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia. In the Virginia General Assembly, a bill made its way through the Senate before stalling in the House during the first week of March.

Two Catholic bishops in Virginia issued a statement condemning the legislation in keeping with the Church's long history of social teaching on the sanctity of life.

"Human life is sacred and must never be abandoned or discarded," wrote Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, and Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond,

Virginia. "Legalizing (assisted suicide) would place the lives of people with disabilities, people with mental illnesses, the elderly, and those unable to afford health care – among others – at heightened risk of deadly harm."

The bishops added that "people facing the end of life are in great need and must be accompanied with great care and attentiveness. ... To address each of their needs and alleviate their suffering, patients deserve high-quality medical, palliative, and hospice care – not suicide drugs."

Leaders of the ICC have been closely monitoring developments around the United States involving this issue, keeping in touch with their counterparts at other Catholic Conferences nationwide. They say they want to ensure that physician-assisted suicide never becomes a reality in Indiana, while also speaking out against the death penalty and other matters in opposition to the sanctity of life.

"It's important to remain vigilant and understand what's happening around the country with regard to these critical issues," said Alexander Mingus, Associate Director of the ICC. "It is also important to understand what the Church's teaching is and to articulate that clearly as we bring the voice of the Church to the public forum."

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.

First Saturday Devotion

Our Lady, Patroness of America Center



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On Good Friday, Catholics Urged to Support Middle East Christians

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis plans to launch a humanitarian project in Gaza or the West Bank with the possible help of the traditional Good Friday collection for the Holy Land, according to officials with the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches. “The outbreak of the war in Gaza, after the events of October 7, paralyzed the Holy Land. The lack of pilgrims and tourists has put thousands of families in difficulty,” the dicastery officials said in the group’s annual appeal to bishops around the world asking them to urge their people to generously support this year’s collection. “The Holy Father intends to carry out a project with humanitarian purposes in Gaza or the West Bank, which can help the population resume a more dignified life and create job opportunities once the war is over,” said the appeal, which was published on Friday, March 8. “This project could be realized with the offerings of the faithful from all over the world who participate in the collection for the Holy Land.” The collection “is not merely a pious tradition for a few,” wrote Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the dicastery. “Everywhere in the Catholic Church, the faithful have an obligation to offer their contribution,” he wrote, “because, apart from the custody of the holy places that saw Jesus, there are still Christians living and operating in the Holy Land, amid many tragedies and difficulties often caused by the selfishness of the powerful of the world.”

Zelenskyy, Ukrainian Church Respond to Pope’s Call for Negotiations

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis’ comment that Ukraine should have the “courage of the white flag” and engage in negotiation to end its war with Russia was dismissed by the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian Church leaders. In an interview with the Swiss media outlet RSI, the pope had said the stronger side in the war in Ukraine “is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people, and has the courage of the white flag, and negotiates.” Elsewhere in the interview, released in part on Saturday, March 9, the pope specified that “negotiation is never a surrender.” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy clearly alluded to the pope’s comments in his nightly video address on Sunday, March 10, but made no explicit reference to Pope Francis. Zelenskyy,

Nigeria Reels from Recent Kidnappings



OSV News photo/Reuters

A boy holds a sign in Kaduna, Nigeria, on Friday, March 8, protesting current conditions in the country. Recent kidnappings of hundreds of people, including almost 300 schoolchildren on Thursday, March 7, in Kuriga, in the central part of Nigeria, have left Church leaders and parents, including Catholics, speechless as kidnappings have become a horrific new normal.

speaking in Ukrainian in a video with English subtitles, thanked Ukrainian military chaplains on the frontline and said, “This is what the Church is – it is together with people, not 2,500 kilometers away somewhere virtually mediating between someone who wants to live and someone who wants to destroy you.” The bishops of the Permanent Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church released a statement on March 10 in which they said that “with Putin there will be no true negotiations.”

Pope Francis Tasks Judge to Investigate Quebec Cardinal

MONTREAL (OSV News) – Pope Francis has asked a retired Quebec judge to conduct an investigation “into the facts, circumstances, and imputability of (an) alleged offense” targeting Cardinal Gerald C. Lacroix. In a letter he personally signed, the

pope indicated to Judge André Denis that he was appointing him to investigate acts of a sexual nature allegedly committed by the archbishop of Quebec before he was ordained a priest under the provisions of the Church law for investigating abuse titled *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (“You Are the Light of the World”). At the end of this investigation, the pope added, “you will take care to produce for me a detailed report of your steps and your conclusions.” The pope said the allegation against Cardinal Lacroix was brought to his attention back in January. Pope Francis did not mention in his letter a final date for submitting the investigative report into Cardinal Lacroix.

Papal Commission to Submit Safeguarding Report Launches Study

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The pope’s commission for advancing the Catholic Church’s efforts

to prevent the abuse of vulnerable persons is due to submit its first annual report on the state of safeguarding in the Church. In a statement dated Friday, March 8, and sent to reporters on Monday, March 11, officials with the commission said they had approved the submission of its “pilot annual report” on safeguarding policies and procedures to Pope Francis, who had requested a report from the group in April of 2022. Officials with the commission also announced in their March 8 statement the approval of a study group “to examine the reality of vulnerable persons in the context of the Church’s ministry and how this informs safeguarding efforts.” The goal of the study group is to “adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the questions around vulnerability to provide concrete recommendations on how the Church might better combat the harms committed against non-minors by the Church’s ministers in a variety of pastoral settings.”

Alabama Governor Signs ‘Ill-Considered,’ ‘Unjust’ IVF Bill

MONTGOMERY, Alabama (OSV News) – Alabama’s Republican Governor Kay Ivey signed into law on Wednesday, March 6, a bill passed by lawmakers to grant legal protection to in vitro fertilization clinics after a ruling by that state’s Supreme Court found that frozen embryos qualify as children under the state law’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. Ivey said in a statement, “The overwhelming support of SB159 from the Alabama Legislature proves what we have been saying: Alabama works to foster a culture of life, and that certainly includes IVF.” The ruling by the Alabama Supreme Court found that embryos are children under the terms of 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, their frozen embryos were improperly removed from storage equipment, which the couples argued constituted a wrongful death.

Irish Voters Reject Bid to Redefine Family, Undermine Motherhood

DUBLIN (OSV News) – Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar has conceded that his government was defeated “comprehensively” when voters rejected amendments to the constitution that the country’s Catholic bishops warned would have weakened supports for marriage and undermined motherhood. Opinion polls showed a clear majority favored the government plan to widen the definition of the family to include other “durable relationships” as well as marriage. But when votes were counted on Saturday, March 9, 67.7 percent of citizens rejected the amendment. A second amendment proposed removing a provision from the 1937 document that said women should not be forced by economic necessity to take a job “to the neglect of their duties in the home.” Again, polls showed it was likely to pass, but this proposal was rejected by an even wider margin, 73.9 percent to 26.1 percent. It is the highest-ever “no” vote in Irish referendum history. Maria Steen, a Catholic lawyer who campaigned against both proposals, described the result as “a great victory for common sense.”



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The Mission of Lent: Running Toward Love Himself

BY FATHER MARK HELLINGER

"By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, Your Son handed Himself over to death."

The collect prayer for the Fifth Sunday of Lent places us, yet again, in the heart of the mystery toward which we are walking in this Lenten season. Love and death are two themes that emerge from the prayers for the Mass and the readings. Both the option for the raising of Lazarus (for parishes doing the Scrutinies) and Year B ("unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat") speak of this mixture of love and death – a seemingly inseparable duo of human experience that is so intimately tied together that it is hardly possible to list all the different ways in which we relate to this combination of forces.

Yet, as the Bride exclaims in the Song of Songs (8:6-7): "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised."

We see in this Sunday's collect that we are not praying for a banal love – a love only focused on good works/social justice, or a love that is shut off from the world and limited to myself or even one other human person. We are praying

for the love with which Christ faced death *for us*. This is a passionate love – an unquenchable fire burning in the very heart of God.

As Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis comments in "Love's Sacred Order," "Not only are divine love and human passion not incompatible; there is no truly Christian faith and experience that does not have passionate love at its center, love in the image of Christ's own. Christianity, therefore, is not primarily a set of philosophical propositions appealing to the mind and looking there for assent, or a social project to realize an earthly utopia. All Christian truth (whether intellectual or social) ultimately derives from the Heart of God as a burning furnace of love: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!' The purple of Lent is not a sign of mourning or sorrow in the first place, but the color of royalty and of passion, the color announcing the love unto death of the King of the Universe."

Thus, our asking God for the love that took His Son to the Cross is not a causal request. It is a request to taste even a small drop of the passionate love of God, which burns everything without consuming it – like the burning bush, one of the earliest manifestations of God in salvation history. We began these Lenten reflections by pointing out that Lent is not so much a time for accomplishment as it is an opening up of our hearts to the Lord. As we turn toward this final push, we see what it is exactly we are opening ourselves to: a love stronger than death.

Jesus Christ is our only way to the love we long for. He is the

only truth that not only tells, but shows us, how to live it. He is the life that is the source of the love that conquers death. Thus, Lent is ultimately a season of love – the transforming work of God's life in this world, and the goal toward which all of creation has been directed since the foundations of the world. As St. Augustine puts it: "Love is itself the fulfillment

of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: We run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest."

This Fifth Sunday of Lent directs our Lenten penances and pilgrimage to its true goal: not just the celebration of the Easter mysteries and sacraments, but being consumed, overtaken, and

completely won over by Love Himself as He pours His life out on the cross and wraps us up in His love, which is mercy and justice itself.

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

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Countdown to the Congress

Headed to Indianapolis This Summer for the National Eucharistic Congress? Here's What to Expect

BY MARIA WIERING

(OSV News) – The tens of thousands of Catholics planning to attend the five-day 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July will experience large-scale liturgies, dynamic speakers, and opportunities for quiet prayer and faith-sharing, with six different “impact session” tracks tailored to their peer groups or faith journey.

Leaders hope attendees become “a leaven for the Church in the United States as Eucharistic missionaries going back to their parishes, but also sort of a gathering of people who are standing in the breach, or in proxy, for the entire Church across the United States, inviting that new Pentecost, and that new sending (of) healing and life to the full,” said Tim Glemkowski, CEO of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., in a January meeting with media.

The event is the pinnacle of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative of the U.S. bishops to inspire a deeper love for Jesus in the Eucharist that began in 2022. The revival focused its first year on dioceses, the second and current year on parishes, and the final year, beginning after the congress, on “going out in mission.”

Catholic leaders have described the National Eucharistic Congress as potentially transformational for the Catholic Church in the United States.

“I believe this event and the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage leading up to it will have a generational impact on our country,” wrote Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota, Chairman of the Board of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., in a commentary published by OSV News in January.

The congress will be held at Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the Indianapolis Colts, and the adjacent Indianapolis Convention Center. The congress distinguishes itself from other Catholic conferences because it “invites the entire Church to come to pray together for revival,” said Joel Stepanek, the National

Eucharistic Congress' Vice President of Programming and Administration.

“We’re going to gather with those there to pray for the Holy Spirit to fall on us, to pray for revival in the Church in the United States, to pray for healing in our own lives so we might be Eucharistic missionaries, and we’ll do that through powerful experiences of prayer and with the encouragement of wonderful keynote speakers,” Stepanek said.

The congress’ theme is centered on Luke 24, which describes Jesus meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus following His death and resurrection. The disciples did not recognize Him at first but listened to Him explain Scripture, only to later realize their companion was Jesus during their evening meal “in the breaking of the bread.” They raced back to Jerusalem to tell others what they had seen.

Leading up to the congress is the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, a two-month pilgrimage beginning at four different points of the United States, where groups of pilgrims will primarily walk to Indianapolis with the Eucharist in a monstrance. The congress’ opening event will include pilgrims from the four routes converging for a procession into the stadium.

Glemkowski said the congress shares the goal of the revival: “the idea that we need a spiritual movement of God in our Church to bring about renewal in this time.”

“The bishops have prophetically inaugurated or invited the Church to this time of encounter with Jesus, a deepened encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, which has everything to do with belief and relationship and what ... (St.) John Henry Newman would call ‘real assent’ – a sacrificial gift of your heart to Jesus in the Eucharist which bears fruit for the life of the world.”

Maria Wiering is Senior Writer for OSV News.

DAY 1

Wednesday, July 17

Theme: From the Four Corners



The congress is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 17, with an opening ceremony in Lucas Oil Stadium. The evening’s speakers include Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens; Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States; and Sister Bethany Madonna, a Sister of Life who is the local Superior and Mission Coordinator of the sisters’ Phoenix foundation.

DAY 2

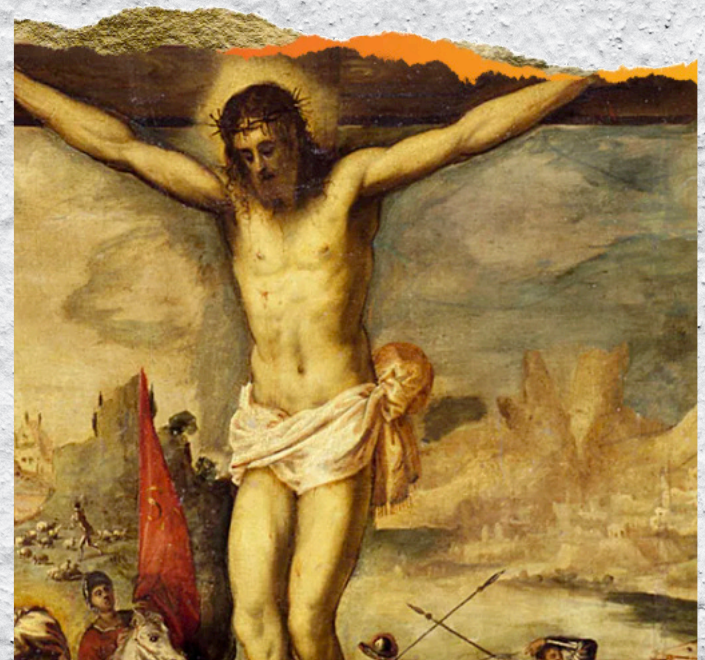
Thursday, July 18

Theme: The Greatest Love Story

Thursday, July 18, begins with 8:30 a.m. Mass, with options to worship in English or Spanish, including an additional Mass for youth.

Mass is followed by impact sessions, where attendees can choose from six options with “dynamic preaching and music tailored to their state in life and mission,” according to the congress’ website. Following lunch are breakout sessions and “special experiences” tailored for specific groups or interests.

The evening includes a three-hour “revival session” with Father Francis “Father Rocky” Hoffman, Relevant Radio’s CEO and Executive Director, leading a Family Rosary Across America live from Lucas Oil Stadium. Father Michael Schmitz, host of the popular podcast “The Bible in a Year,” will also speak.

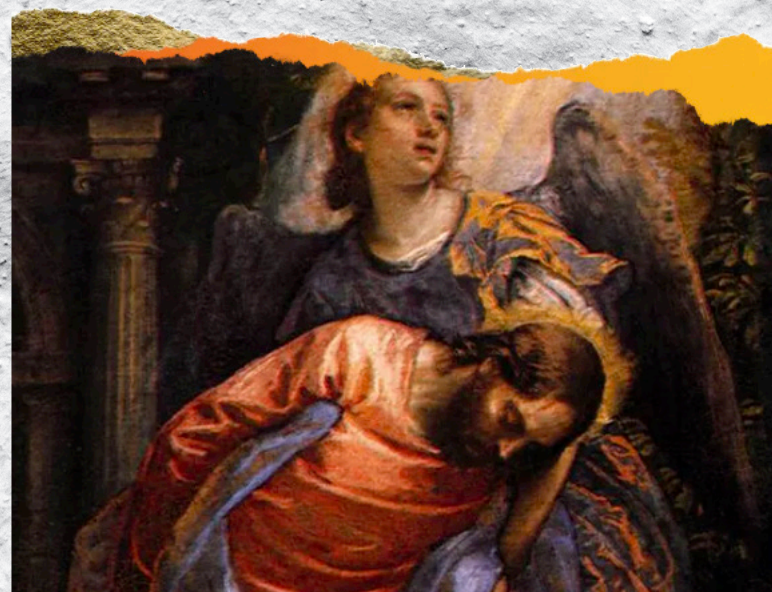


DAY 3

Friday, July 19

Theme: Into Gethsemane

Friday’s schedule mirrors Thursday’s, with morning Mass and impact sessions, afternoon breakout sessions, and an evening revival session with the Family Rosary Across America’s keynote speaker Sister Josephine Garrett of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

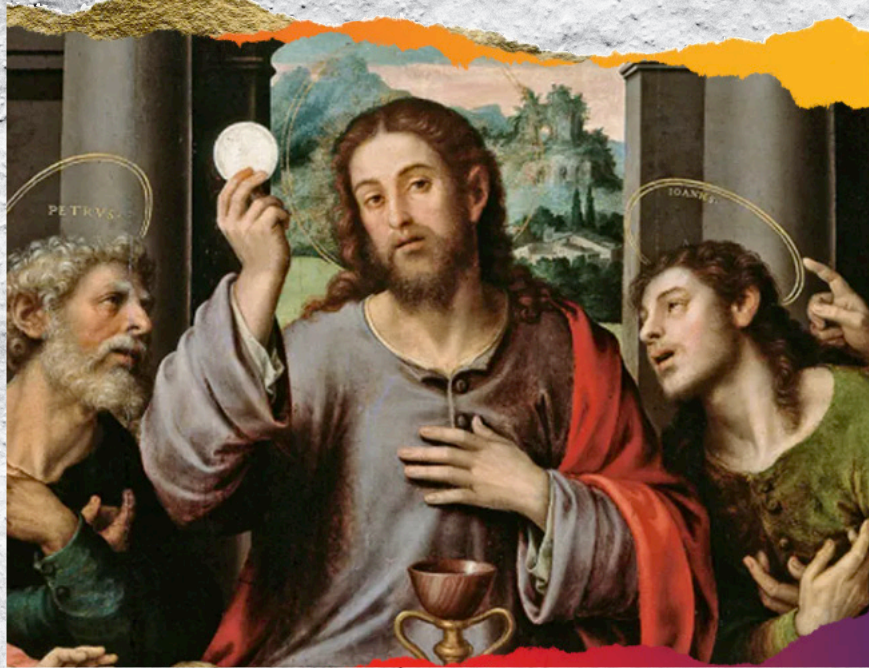


DAY 4**Saturday, July 20****Theme: This Is My Body**

Saturday's morning and early afternoon schedule follows the order of the previous days. In the mid-afternoon, attendees will form a large Eucharistic procession in downtown Indianapolis, which Joel Stepanek described as "a profoundly impactful experience."

"A lot of folks who will be out on a Saturday afternoon in downtown Indianapolis will encounter the Lord and will receive the witness that we have, as a Catholic community, of prayer and joy in that city," he said. "It's really one of the biggest outward facing pieces of the congress itself."

The evening includes a revival session featuring the Family Rosary Across America and speakers Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota; Mother Adela Galindo, Founder of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary religious order and lay Apostles of the Pierced Hearts; and Gloria Purvis, host of "The Gloria Purvis Podcast." Musician Matt Maher will lead worship.

**DAY 5****Sunday, July 21****Theme: To the Ends of the Earth**

The morning schedule on Sunday begins with a revival session with speaker and author Chris Stefanick, Founder and President of Real Life Catholic, followed by the revival's closing liturgy celebrated by a papal delegate, with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

"This is our big commissioning as a Catholic community, where we will go forward then and take what we have been entrusted with as being part of this experience back to our homes, our communities, our schools, our parishes, and our families to really be that salt and leaven in the world that is in need of the joy that we're going to bring," Joel Stepanek said.

MEET THE EMCEES**MONTSE
ALVARADO****SISTER
MIRIAM JAMES
HEIDLAND****FATHER JOSH
JOHNSON**

The masters of ceremonies for the congress' main events will be Montse Alvarado, President and CEO of EWTN News; Sister Miriam James Heidland of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity; and Father Josh Johnson, a speaker, author, and priest of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Dave Moore, Co-founder of Catholic Music Initiative, will provide music throughout the congress.

History of Eucharistic Congresses

Large-scale Eucharistic congresses have been part of the fabric of devotion in the Catholic Church for nearly 150 years and continue to be regularly convened by U.S. dioceses and in other countries. The 10th National Eucharistic Congress is the first Eucharistic congress in the United States in 83 years, with the most recent national congress held in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1941.

The first U.S. National Eucharistic Congress was held in 1895 in Washington, and subsequent congresses have been hosted by St. Louis, New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Omaha, Cleveland, and New Orleans.

The U.S. also hosted two International Eucharistic Congresses – in 1926 in Chicago and 1976 in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia congress drew 1.5 million people, including pivotal Catholic figures such as St. Teresa of Kolkata, Dorothy Day, and a future pope, St. John Paul II. Quito, Ecuador, is hosting the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress in September.

IMPACT SESSIONS

The morning impact sessions planned for Days 2-4 are organized into six tracks: Encounter, Encuentro, Empower, Renewal, Cultivate, and Awaken.

Encounter is the group of general sessions held in Lucas Oil Stadium. With a focus on deepening a person's relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist, it will feature speakers including Katie Prejean McGrady, Sister Mary Grace Langrell, Mary Healy, Edward Sri, and Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers.

Encuentro sessions are in Spanish, with speakers including Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio, Andrés Arango, Mabel Suárez, Kathia Arango, and Dora Tobar.

Empower sessions are designed to be smaller and "more intimate," with a focus on practical tools for becoming a "Eucharistic missionary" in one's community. Speakers include Deacon Larry Oney and his wife, Andi, Father John Burns, Chika Anyanwu, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Espallat of New York, Meg Hunter-Kilmer, and Paul Albert.

Renewal sessions are for people who work or volunteer in a parish, diocesan or other ministry role "to explore new and creative possibilities of accompaniment, evangelization, and catechesis," according to the congress' website. Speakers include Damon Owens, Sarah Kaczmarek, Julianne Stanz, and Curtis Martin.

Cultivate sessions are focused on families to attend together, with speakers including Father Leo Patalinghug and Ennie and Cana Hickman.

Awaken sessions are designed for high school youth, with large-group sessions in the mornings and smaller breakout sessions in afternoons. Speakers include Oscar Rivera, Brian Greenfield, and Jackie Francois Angel. Teenagers attending the sessions must be part of a youth group or accompanied by a parent or guardian.

REGISTER FOR THE CONGRESS

For more information, including detailed daily schedules, biographies of speakers, and how to register to attend, visit:

EucharisticCongress.org



First Knights of Peter Claver Court Established in Diocese

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC
AND KIMMI TROY

On Saturday, March 2, history was made in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend with the establishment of a Ladies Auxiliary Chapter of the Knights of Peter Claver. Several current and past national officers were in attendance for the event, as were members who came from as far away as Los Angeles, New Orleans, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Chicago, and Detroit to help celebrate the first Knights of Peter Claver Court in the diocese.

The ladies and their families attended the St. Augustine's Gospel Mass together with their new Knights of Peter Claver family on Sunday, March 3.

The Knights of Peter Claver is the oldest and largest historically African American Catholic lay organization in the United States. Named after St. Peter Claver, the Spanish Jesuit priest

who ministered to African slaves, the order was founded in the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama, in 1909 for African American men who could not join other fraternal organizations. The Ladies Auxiliary was founded in 1926. With the establishment of the junior divisions, the Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary became the only Catholic fraternal lay order to offer membership to the entire family.

The purpose of the order is to render services to God and His Church, to render aid and assistance to the sick and disabled, and to promote social and intellectual association among members. There are approximately 15,000 Knights and Ladies in the United States.

After returning from the National Black Catholic Congress last summer, some of the women were looking for a way to engage in fellowship with other spiritually like-minded women. They wanted to ensure that all

women of the diocese know they are part of a larger community outside their individual parishes and that they are not alone. They also wanted to come together to encourage our youth and enhance their spiritual and social well-being.

Membership in the Ladies Auxiliary is open to all women of the diocese. You do not have to be African American or African to join. All you need to do is be Catholic and be concerned about the social justice issues that Black Catholics face. During a five-month period, recruitment invitations went out across the diocese to women in more than eight parishes. Recruitment efforts were also made on social media and by word of mouth. By forming the Ladies Auxiliary, women from St. Augustine, St. Pius X, and St. Therese, Little Flower Parishes joined together to render services to God, His holy Church, and our community across the diocese.



Photos provided by Kimmi Troy

On Saturday, March 2, the first Knights of St. Peter Claver Court was established in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in a ceremony at St. Augustine Parish in South Bend. Several current and past officers of the fraternal organization traveled from across the country to attend the event.



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Podcast Hosts Share Lessons of Black Spirituality at Notre Dame

NOTRE DAME – Marcia Lane-McGee and Shannon Wimp Schmidt, hosts of the popular podcast “Plaid Skirts and Basic Black,” spoke at the University of Notre Dame on Thursday, February 29, to share lessons that the Black Church can teach everyone about being a witness to the faith in America today.

Focusing their talk on the Scriptural message found in Esther 4:14 – “Perhaps you have come for just such a time as this” – they shared humorous personal stories and also spoke on more sobering topics such as the rise in the number of “deaths by despair” – namely, deaths by suicide and due to drug overdose.

One key theme throughout their presentation was the sharing of gifts – including the gifts of Black Catholics – in order to foster cross-cultural collaboration, healing, and community.

Lane-McGee and Schmidt share more stories of faith in



their book, “Fat Luther, Slim Pickin’s: A Black Catholic Celebration of Faith, Tradition, and Diversity,” which was published in 2022 by Ave Maria Press, located on the campus of Notre Dame. The event, a collaboration between

the Black Catholic Advisory Board of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend and Notre Dame Campus Ministry, was well attended by university students and members of the public.

Local Author Shares Wisdom into Marian Apparitions

BY JILL A. BOUGHTON

Recently, Our Sunday Visitor released a revised and expanded fourth edition of "Those Who Saw Her: Apparitions of Mary" by local author Catherine M. Odell. Catherine and her husband, Bill, are active members of St. Therese, Little Flower Parish in South Bend.

Odell spoke to Today's Catholic about how she came to write about Marian apparitions, her latest version of the book, and how she views the messages of Mary as they relate to the world today.

Today's Catholic: The first edition of "Those Who Saw Her" was published in 1986. Why did you write the book in the first place?

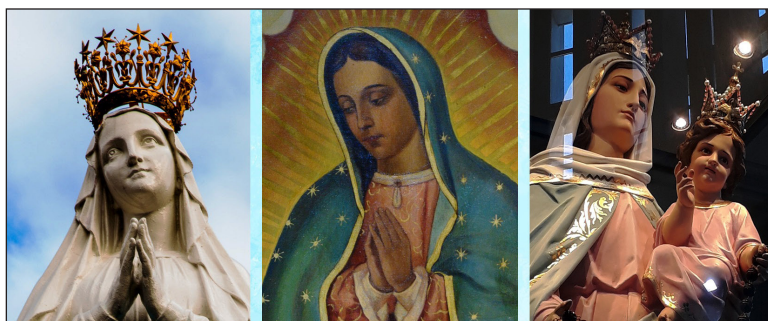
Catherine Odell: OSV asked if I would be interested in writing such a book. Interest in Marian topics was growing at that time, in part because of worldwide interest in the alleged apparitions of Our Lady at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, huge annual Medjugorje conferences were being held at the University of Notre Dame. In addition, all the popes in our lifetime have also had a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother and have visited several of the apparition sites mentioned in the book.

Today's Catholic: How about this fourth edition?

Odell: Again, it came about because the publisher felt there was ongoing interest. The whole Church seems to have a growing appreciation for Marian devotions that so many Catholics find helpful. Also, since the last edition of the book, the Church has declared several apparitions "worthy of belief," including the only one in the United States, at present-day Champion, Wisconsin, in the Green Bay diocese. Although it was in 1859 that Mary appeared as Our Lady of Good Help to a Belgian immigrant, Adele Brise, those beautiful apparitions weren't approved by the Church until 2010. At Champion, Mary asked 28-year-old Adele to teach children to pray and practice their faith. Other recent developments include the canonization of Guadalupe's Juan Diego and Fatima's Jacinta and Francisco Marto, the Church's youngest saints.

Today's Catholic: What other changes or improvements are found in the fourth edition?

Odell: I love the cover, which has images of Our Lady from all across the world, demonstrating that Mary's



Catherine M. Odell

Those Who Saw Her

Marian Apparitions

REVISED AND EXPANDED, FOURTH EDITION



visits are global. There are also new photographs of the seers and apparition shrines, statues and other artwork in the appropriate chapters rather than a few in one central section. Apart from Our Lady of Guadalupe, all the apparitions in the first edition occurred in Europe. Besides the one in North America, the fourth edition includes one from Japan (Akita), one from Rwanda (Kibeho), and two from South America (San Nicolas, Argentina, and Betania, Venezuela). There is also a chapter on recently approved apparitions at Laus, France, from 1664 to 1718.

Today's Catholic: Is there anything striking for you about all these apparitions when considered together?

Odell: They are all so different! In some, a single person saw Our Lady, in others, a whole village. Some, like Knock, were visual but no words were spoken. Some lasted a day, others through a period of many years. In some cases, you could say that the apparition continues – through the Miraculous Medal whose design Our Lady revealed to St. Catherine Laboure at Rue de Bac, and the image she left behind on Juan Diego's tilma.

Today's Catholic: How

would you summarize Our Lady's messages?

Odell: In the midst of war at Portmain in France, and in the midst of famine in Ireland, consolation seems to have been her primary purpose. But in other apparitions, she often urges us to repent, to return to the sacraments, to intercede for others, and to pray the Rosary. Frequently, she also desires that a church or shrine be built in her honor. These places of worship are another way that the benefits of apparitions can be ongoing.

Today's Catholic: What would you like to say about the introductory chapters?

Odell: When I first wrote the book, I had a lot to learn about how the Church sees and studies apparitions. So, I felt it was important to share this research at the beginning of the book. These introductory chapters lay important groundwork for the accounts of the actual apparitions. "Who Is Mary?" summarizes the major Church teachings about the Blessed Virgin Mary. In "Why Does Mary Come?" I explore what some prominent Mariologists have suggested. One memorable explanation is that Mary's appearances are like billboards that remind us



CATHERINE M. ODELL

of essential truths to which we've become inattentive. "The Church and Apparitions" explains how the Church goes about investigating purported apparition claims, beginning with the local bishop, who can most readily interview the seers and see the fruits of their vision. I also explain how the Church evaluates the validity of apparitions. Some it declares "not worthy of belief." They don't seem supernatural in origin and may even convey messages contrary to Church teaching. Others contain "nothing contrary to the faith" but haven't been officially authenticated. Pilgrims aren't forbidden to visit such sites. The final category is those "worthy of belief." But even then, no apparition is an article of faith. No Catholic is obligated to believe Mary has appeared in any of these places.

Today's Catholic: Have you yourself visited any of the Marian apparition sites?

Odell: I actually went to Lourdes before I even wrote this book. I still don't know why, but Doubleday asked me to accompany Father Ralph DiOrio, a priest with a healing

ministry, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome, and Lourdes. I wrote about that pilgrimage in a 1984 book, "On Pilgrimage" with Father Ralph DiOrio. Despite his popularity, the book sold very poorly. We pilgrims didn't spend much time in Lourdes, but it is a lovely, holy spot. I remember feeling a bit shocked by the commercialization there – so many shops selling religious souvenirs! I also hope to visit Champion, perhaps this summer.

Today's Catholic: Why do you think there's been so little interest in our own American apparition site in nearby Wisconsin?

Odell: That mystifies me. Perhaps it's not exotic or distant enough? And many, many decades elapsed before it was again studied by the Church and then declared "worthy of belief." Perhaps there will be a growing and gradual awareness of it, first of all, and then a devotion to what Mary had to say there.

Today's Catholic: The first apparition in this book occurred in 1531. What was Mary doing the first 1,500 years of the Church?

Odell: Mary has visited her people throughout Church history, but many of her earlier appearances were private revelations to individual saints rather than messages directed to the entire Church. And later in the history of the Church, the Church itself developed specific guidelines for the study and assessment of reported apparitions. Today, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith provides those guidelines that dioceses can use to assess apparition reports.



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How a Lenten Climb Up Tepayac Hill Leads to Christ

I should have been more prepared for the altitude. I knew Mexico City's elevation had been a concern during the organization of Pope Benedict's 2012 trip to the country. (Many Vaticanists say that his increasing difficulty in traveling precipitated his resignation from the papacy.) But I was not paying attention to just how high the city sits. At 7,350 feet above sea level, the metropolis of 20 million people dwarfs Denver (5,280 feet).

I needed water. And sleep. My friend, Katie McGrady (host of OSV's "Like a Mother" podcast), had invited me to serve as a chaplain on a tour she had organized. I was eager to accept since Our Lady of Guadalupe was on my bucket list. But the trip was a quick pilgrimage, and I was coming in hot. And my preparation was focused on reading about the image, studying the words of the apparition, and working on my preaching. And that made the climb up Tepayac Hill ... well ... more strained than I would have preferred.

As I mounted the steps up to the Chapel of the Roses, I joked with Katie about how messy my white habit already was. The hem of my tunic was caked with dust and dirt from the city. The bright late-morning sun was a welcome change from the dreary East Coast, but not for long.

The several hundred-foot-tall hill was a surprising work-

out. Graced by beautiful stone steps, the climb includes a ramp the entire way to make the site accessible. Our little group of pilgrims smiled at the children posing for photos on statues of burros, giving a bit of Disneyland-like flair to the experience.

The climb reminded me of the Stations of the Cross at Lourdes, where pilgrims view the larger-than-life golden depictions of the Passion while ascending a hill behind the main basilica. Praying the stations at Lourdes is no easy feat.

The Chapel of the Roses, or the Chapel of the Hill, as it's sometimes called, marks the place where St. Juan Diego cut and collected roses at the direction of Our Lady of Guadalupe to show them as proof of her appearance to the local bishop. The baroque chapel, complete with facade graced by volcanic rock, includes murals by Fernando Leal, which tell the story of the apparitions.

As I climbed, I couldn't help reminding myself that Juan Diego walked eight miles (one way!) to the Church of St. James for instruction and catechesis. And I also began to reflect that journeys like ours are the perfect setting for Lent.

Lent is a call to step out of the ordinary rhythms of life. We talk about heading into the wilderness or up to a high place to be apart from the world, with God alone. It's a time to reset, to reprioritize, and recommit.



THINGS CONTEMPLATED

FATHER PATRICK BRISCOE

From the plaza in front of the chapel, pilgrims get a glimpse of the extraordinary landscape of Mexico City. With the city stretching across the horizon, the 20-minute climb was well worth it. I marveled at the old and new basilicas, which stand at the foot of the hill.

The Virgin Mary herself had come to this place. She called for a church to be built here. Yes, it was in her honor. Yes, extraordinary miracles have been worked in this place (not the least of which is the tilma, which bears her image). But Tepayac Hill is ultimately about the worship of her Son. And just like the season of Lent, Our Lady of Guadalupe points to Him.

That's the point of Juan Diego's climb. His encounter with the Virgin Mary is about meeting the Mother of God who leads us to her Son.

So, climb on this Lent. Seek the Virgin Mary. And she will lead you to Christ.

Father Patrick Briscoe is Editor of Our Sunday Visitor.

Cleaning Up for a Special Guest

Kids' toys were scattered around on the floor. Dog hair had blown into corners (we had shedders). Books were stacked in almost every room in the house, and baskets of laundry set on any flat surface. That was the house we had to clean when company was coming.

Not because we wanted to impress them. We didn't invite people into our home who we felt we needed to impress, because those people weren't friends or friends in the making. We cleaned up the house, and attempted to clean up the children, because we wanted to honor our guests. We wanted to be at our best for them. They honored us by coming.

We didn't need to clean up for them. Every one of them would have accepted, without thinking about it, two flustered parents explaining that they couldn't get the house clean but please come in; sorry for the doghair; let me move those books; here's your chair; here's the snacks, and here's your drink, and how are you doing? We all do something similar in Lent.

It feels natural to work to be at your best before the arrival of a guest, someone who's honoring you by coming to you. You stop going on as you were going and make things nicer. You clean up and dress up.

The Church's two penitential seasons give us set seasons to do both, with each focusing on



LIFE IN THE WORLD

DAVID MILLS

a different aspect. In Lent we focus on cleaning up and in Advent on dressing up.

The end of the seasons forms the seasons' characters. Lent points to Good Friday (and only after that, Easter). Advent points to Christmas. You get ready to witness an execution differently than you get ready to greet a newborn child.

Of course, both seasons involve both operations. Cleaning up leads to dressing up, and dressing up requires cleaning up. But you pay attention to different aspects of yourself and the world in different seasons. That's part of the genius of the Church year.

We're nearing the end of the Lenten season. We need cleaning, that we should know. That we need help getting clean, that we should know, too. Not that everyone does. Not that some of us always remember.

G.K. Chesterton in "Orthodoxy" called sin "a fact as practical as potatoes" and

MILLS, page 13

Discipleship Means Complete Obedience to the Will of God



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

Fifth Sunday of Lent

The Book of Jeremiah provides this weekend's first reading. A common theme runs through all the written prophecies of ancient Israel – namely, that despite human sinfulness and treachery, God always is merciful. He always forgives. He never forsakes the people.

Jeremiah constantly wrote with this theme in his mind. He had no doubt. The people had gravely sinned, and consequently, they had brought chaos and misery into their lives. Thus it is with humans. God, however, saves sinners from their plight.

This weekend's reading speaks of a new Covenant.

The people's sins had severely rebuked the old Covenant, given to the people through Moses, and then to David and his dynasty, but God would offer a new way to life, peace, and joy.

The Epistle to the Hebrews supplies the second reading. This epistle is rich in Jewish symbolism. It abundantly proclaims the most profound of Jewish beliefs, that God will never fail in mercy and forgiveness if the people reform.

This reading underscores the role of Jesus, the Son of God, in the divine plan to redeem the lost. His suffering on the cross affirmed and verified perfect obedience to the Father. The Lord made possible eternal salvation for all who obey.

St. John's Gospel supplies the last reading. Greeks who were visiting Jerusalem sought Jesus. They approached Philip, an apostle. Philip went to Andrew, another of the Twelve.

An interesting incidental was that contact with Jesus was initiated through the apostles. It shows that in the early

Church, when this Gospel was written, the apostles were very important because they literally had known the Lord. They were the Lord's special students, chosen to represent the Lord. Since they personally had been chosen, they acted and spoke with the very authority of Jesus.

Jesus placed a dark cloud over this reading. He predicted the crucifixion but implied that Calvary would result in life for all. To illustrate, Jesus spoke of a grain of wheat, lifeless and tiny, but, the Lord notes, from this small piece of nature, the mustard seed, new life springs. Finally, Jesus says that no gift is as total as the giving of a person's life.

The Gospel reveals the intimacy between Jesus and God the Father, and between the Lord and His disciples. This intimacy with the disciples necessarily requires their absolute will to follow the Lord regardless of the costs. The costs may be very high. Discipleship may not be easy.

Reflection

Next weekend, the Church will celebrate Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday. In two weeks, the Church will call us to mark this year's Holy Week with its magnificent, expressive liturgy of the Triduum.

Two consoling lessons emerge from this weekend's Gospel reading. The Lord Jesus and God the Father are perfectly and inseparably one. So, Jesus prays to the Father and is answered. Jesus is the supreme channel for the outpouring of divine everlasting love. The self-sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary is the sublime act of God's love.

God's love is never restricted or limited. In the first verse of this Gospel reading, Greeks wished to see Jesus. Many wish to see Jesus. He is visible to those who turn to the Lord.

The Lord declares that the Father will bless true disciples, all who acknowledge that the Lord is the perfect teacher.

The key to bonding with God is wholeheartedly turning to the Lord. Obedience is a vitally important part of each of the

lessons this weekend. Jeremiah called the people to obey God. Hebrews and Mark extoll the obedience of Christ.

Such unqualified obedience is demanding, to say the least, but nothing else will suffice.

In obedience is the genuine acknowledgement of God, a statement of reality, of who we are, and of who God is.

READINGS

Sunday: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

Monday: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Psalms 23:1-6; John 8:1-11

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Psalms 89:2-5, 27, 29; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:41-15a

Wednesday: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; (Psalm) Daniel 3:52-56; John 8:31-42

Thursday: Genesis 17:3-9; Psalms 105:4-9; John 8:51-59

Friday: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalms 18:2-7; John 10:31-42

Saturday: Ezekiel 37:21-28; (Psalm) Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-56

A Theology of the Body for Lent

In a recent column, I mentioned that the idea of sacrificial fasting – in particular, giving something up for Lent – has fallen out of favor among many Catholics in recent years, replaced by a desire to “do something more.” Yet, whenever I take fasting seriously during Lent (in the sense not just of, say, giving up watching TV but actually abstaining from food), I find myself wondering why I don’t make fasting more a part of my spiritual life throughout the rest of the year.

Part of the answer (I think) is that, like most modern Catholics, I have often viewed fasting through a mentality that is more modern than it is Catholic. Despite (intellectually) knowing better, I have unconsciously imbibed the modern view that the body is something wholly separate from the soul. Modern science, prescinding as it does from any discussion of the soul, convinces us to treat our own body the same as we do any other body – as an object wholly other, a thing to be studied and considered separate from the question of who I am (a question that science considers irrelevant or, at best, unanswerable).

More than 50 years ago, the Catholic novelist Walker Percy called this way of thought “angelism-bestialism,” and in two perceptive novels, “Love in the Ruins” and “The Thanatos Syndrome,” provided imaginative narratives of the moral consequences of sundering body from soul. Today, we’re living out those consequences in the exponential growth of gender dysphoria (previously treated as a psychological condition but now regarded as a defect of the body that extends all the way down to the level of DNA) and, less destructively, intermittent fasting, which takes a practice that, throughout human history, has been identified almost exclusively with religion and

turns it into the physiological equivalent of tuning up an automobile.

Once we have come to view our bodies as objects rather than as an integral part of who we are, we find it hard to understand phrases like “integral part” or Christian descriptions of the human person as an “ensouled body” or an “embodied soul” as anything other than the mixing of two ultimately incompatible things. But throughout most of human history, man (Christian or otherwise) did not experience himself or others that way.

While this isn’t the chief purpose of the practice, fasting can help us recover the sense of ourselves as an integrated whole. As we fast, as we deprive ourselves of the nourishment and (just as importantly) the comfort of food, we become aware of a reality that seems – to the modern mind – counterintuitive: Hunger and thirst are as much a matter of the soul as they are of the body. Moreover, the vice of gluttony, and the corresponding virtue of temperance, are more truly spiritual habits than they are physical ones. When we say that an appetite is “carnal,” we don’t mean that it is confined wholly to the body but that to indulge it involves the use of the body – or, tellingly, even just the imaginative contemplation of the use of the body.

Rather than being a one-way street in which the appetites of the body are brought under the supervision of the soul, fasting helps us to understand how those desires we think of as purely physical are truly spiritual as well. And in recognizing that reality, we can understand why, in order to be able to “do something more,” we must first make the effort to become again what God made us, before original sin convinced us to regard the world of matter – the created world – as something wholly other



SCOTT P. RICHERT

than ourselves.

As the hero of Percy’s “Love in the Ruins” puts it (talking about his wife’s non-Catholic Christian views): “What she didn’t understand, she being spiritual and seeing religion as spirit, was that it took religion to save me from the spirit world, from orbiting the earth like Lucifer and the angels, that it took nothing less than touching the thread off the misty interstates and eating Christ Himself to make me mortal man again and let me inhabit my own flesh and love her in the morning.”

In coming to redeem us, Christ did not take on flesh as one puts on a costume; He, as we say in the Creed, “became man,” a unity of body and soul, of humanity and divinity. As St. Bede wrote, Christ remained consubstantial with the Father but also became consubstantial with His mother – and, therefore, with us. And He left behind the sacrament that, in breaking our fast, can bring us (like Percy’s Tom More) back to ourselves, the sacrament in which His body and blood are inseparable from His soul and divinity, just as our body and soul are inseparable this side of death and will be reunited eternally on the other side, at the resurrection of the dead, when all fasting will cease, because we will know Him as He truly is and know ourselves as we were truly meant to be.

Scott Richert is the Publisher of Our Sunday Visitor. Visit OSVNews.com.

ALL THINGS NEW

MILLS, from page 12

noted that the world’s religions began with this insight, however they defined clean. “Whether or no man could be washed in miraculous waters, there was no doubt at any rate that he wanted washing.”

He was wrong in saying “no doubt” in the sense that many people doubt it and many people don’t see it at all. Those who do see it, who know there’s something wrong with them, should experience Lent as a gift. They should see the inside of the church throughout Lent with the joy and relief that someone who’d been camping and hiking for two weeks in the hottest days of August sees the shower.

C.S. Lewis explained the desire to clean up in his argu-

ment for belief in purgatory in “Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer.” “It would break our hearts if after we died, God said that we were dirty and stank but come on in anyway. Should we not reply, ‘With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I’d rather be cleaned first?’”

People seem to be spread out on a spectrum between a neurotic feeling of sinfulness and worthlessness and a delusion of goodness and satisfactoriness. Most of us, I think, slide between the two, though generally staying closer to one pole than the other. Lent tells us that we are sinful but not worthless and that we are good but not satisfactory. It places against both delusions the reality that God created us in His image, but that for various rea-

sons we deface that image and deny Jesus’ love and make a mess of ourselves. It then adds the welcome news that, fortunately for us, Jesus loves us so completely that He chose to die in agony to save us.

The whole thing tells us the truth about ourselves: We need cleaning up; we need (assuming God’s care) to do what we can to clean up, even if we can’t do very much. It tells us the Church provides a way. But then it works its way to telling us, through the words and rites of Good Friday and Easter, that God has and is cleaning us up, and will someday clean us as clean as clean can be.

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

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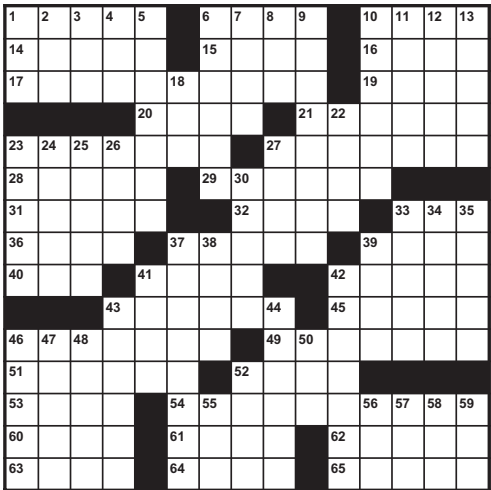
Gospel for March 17, 2024
John 12:20-33

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B: Jesus prepares for his Passion. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

GREEKS	WORSHIP	PHILIP
GALILEE	SON OF MAN	FALLS
GROUND	AND DIES	PRODUCES
SERVE ME	HONOR	TROUBLED
FATHER	A VOICE	CROWD
THUNDER	ANGEL	JUDGMENT
WORLD	DRIVEN	DEATH

VOICE OF THUNDER

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



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ACROSS

- 1 Sixteenth century Council
- 6 Alphabet string
- 10 Headwear
- 14 Aquatic mammal
- 15 Certain something
- 16 Island converted in the 5th century
- 17 Teachings listed in the Sermon on the Mount
- 19 Large crucifix
- 20 Canonical hour
- 21 Number of tribes of Israel
- 23 Like Zechariah and Elizabeth
- 27 Louder
- 28 Utterly stupid person
- 29 Every 365 days
- 31 Beastly
- 32 Remain
- 33 Collection of miscellaneous data
- 36 Double curve
- 37 Laud
- 39 Having wings
- 40 Matter of law
- 41 “What’ll ____?”
- 42 Judah, for example
- 43 Playful

DOWN

- 1 OT historical book
- 2 AAA suggestion
- 3 Airport letters
- 4 Tool of trade for Peter and Andrew
- 5 God in three Persons
- 6 Holy Thursday that begins the Triduum
- 7 Unclothed
- 8 Smelter input
- 9 Describes certain letters from

- the bishops
- 10 False teaching
- 11 Garlic-flavored mayonnaise
- 12 Valuable collection
- 13 Passover meal
- 18 Polish place
- 22 Crafty
- 23 The Friars ____
- 24 Saw
- 25 Ascends
- 26 Routine
- 27 Western pact
- 30 Politician Kefauver
- 33 You may be out on one
- 34 David married his widow
- 35 Mountain ridge
- 37 And so forth
- 38 ____ 360
- 39 Opera highlight
- 41 Charged particles
- 42 Like fast food, sometimes
- 43 Taunted
- 44 Elijah’s successor
- 46 Velveeta maker
- 47 Pilsner
- 48 Muse of lyric poetry
- 50 End of Time?
- 52 Diocese on the French Riviera
- 55 Photo
- 56 “Ora ____ nobis”
- 57 Defensive weapon (abbr.)
- 58 Label
- 59 Abstract being

Students Bolster Faith, Fellowship at Confirmation Retreat

BY ADDISON KREBS

On Saturday, March 9, more than 150 confirmands from across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend gathered for the annual confirmation retreat at Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne. The day began with a large group gathering and prayer invoking the Holy Spirit to be with everyone throughout the day. The aim of the retreat was to engage the students in spiritual formation as they prepare to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first talk of the day was given by Ryan Norden, a freshman at the University of Notre Dame and former member of the Diocesan Youth Leadership team. Norden spoke to the students about the gifts that God has given them and the importance of stewarding those gifts. He illustrated this with a clip from "Spiderman: No Way Home" that featured the iconic line from the character Aunt May, who said, "With great power comes great responsibility." He assured the teens that each of them has great power and unique gifts with which the Father has entrusted them, and they have a responsibility to share and use these gifts for advancing His Kingdom.

In the afternoon, Sister M. Fiat Staley of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration spoke about Pentecost and the power and friendship of Holy Spirit. She shared her own witness about how she went from an anxious, Type A, people-pleasing overachiever to a confident daughter of the King, whose love is given not earned. She attributed this shift to Holy Spirit's promptings and

guidance. She then led those present in an exercise inviting them to ask a question silently and then listen for a response from the Holy Spirit.

After each talk, there was time for sharing in small groups to further unpack and develop some of the ideas and lessons the speakers shared. Mass was held in the morning, and confessions were offered throughout the day. Later in the afternoon, there was a service project in which each group was given a tie-blanket kit for the students to make that will be donated to different women's shelters and charities. The groups were encouraged to intercede for the recipient of the blanket as they put them together.

The schedule also left plenty of time for the students to spend growing in fellowship. One of the more memorable occasions was spurred by Norden. In his talk, he mentioned some of his own gifts but also his struggles – one of them being failing to win at kickball despite his love for the game. This invited a rather exciting game in the auxiliary gym at Bishop Dwenger during free time, where Norden and another volunteer, Eliana Noll, had a little competition between whose team could win the kickball game. Norden's team, true to his previous statement, was unsuccessful. Regardless of the outcome, the players shared many laughs, and the game brought great joy to the kids and volunteers who played.

One of the more impactful moments of the retreat was led by Shema Worship. The group, comprised of musicians Natali Perkins, Gloria Kohrman, and Brian Smith, was present for the entire retreat as they led

everyone in worship before each session. They also provided the music for Mass and Eucharistic adoration. Before Sister Fiat's talk, they did something they had not planned. They had intended to lead the group in worship to a song titled "Deeper," but during Mass, Kohrman had a sense that Holy Spirit had other plans. She brought this notion to the others, who agreed, and the Lord led them to sing the song "Reckless Love." Then, when the time came and they began to lead worship, Perkins invited everyone to spread out around the gym and sit or lay on the floor. She then opened up a beautiful exhortation about the Father's love and invited everyone to close their eyes, listen to the song lyrics, and just receive. Across the room, young people, chaperones, and volunteers were able to experience and ponder the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God. His presence was so tangible in the gym as these lyrics were sung and repeated – and the prayer from the beginning of the day, that Holy Spirit would be with everyone, was clearly answered.

The confirmation retreat was a beautiful experience for all those in attendance. The volunteers were a huge part of what made the day possible, and each joyfully stepped forward to share their love of Christ with the students. It was so encouraging to witness the kids open up throughout the day and watch them encounter the same Lord and faith that has touched my own heart.

Addison Krebs is a senior at the University of Saint Francis and is a member of St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne.



Photos by John Pratt, Jocelyn Alcalá

On Saturday, March 9, confirmands from across the diocese cut and tie blankets, attend Mass, and make knotted rosaries at the annual confirmation retreat at Bishop Dwenger High School.



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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.

Central Catholic Alumni Association Open House

FORT WAYNE – Central Catholic Alumni Association is having an open house at the Diocesan Museum, 1103 S. Calhoun St., on Sunday, March 17, from 1-3 p.m. The Central Catholic memorabilia has been moved from Bishop Dwenger High School to the diocesan Museum where it will eventually be on display.

Lenten Vice Series: Lust and Gluttony

FORT WAYNE – All are invited to attend a six-week Lenten series on the vices

on Thursdays at 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 4500 Fairfield Avenue. Speakers will be Father Paolo Degasper, Father Mark Hellinger, or Sister Benedicta Duna. Call Karen Glotzbach at 260-744-4393 to learn more.

St Adalbert Sisters' Auxiliary Bake Sale

SOUTH BEND – St. Adalbert Sisters' Auxiliary Annual Bake Sale will be held on Saturday, March 23, from 8 a.m. to noon in the Heritage Center, 519 S. Olive St. Lamb cakes will be on a pre-paid, pre-order basis only. No lamb cakes will be available for sale at the bake sale. The

deadline for the pre-orders is Friday, March 15. Cost is just \$24 each. Sweet-sour cabbage, Polish noodles, and all kinds of baked goods for Easter will be available. Lunch will be available. The Easter Bunny will be visiting from 11-11:30 a.m. Contact Ann Marie at 574-288-5708, ext. 203.

Easter Eggstravaganza

MISHAWAKA – Queen of Peace Church, 4508 Vistula Rd., will host an Easter Eggstravaganza on Saturday, March 23, from 10-11:30 a.m. A free breakfast, games, egg hunt, and petting zoo will be offered.

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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 St., 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

March 24 Fish Fries

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

St. Charles Borromeo Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, 4:30-7 p.m., 4916 Trier Rd., Fort Wayne

St. Joseph Fish Fry, 4:30-7 p.m., 1122 N. Main St., Roanoke

St. Anthony of Padua Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, 5-7 p.m., 700 W. Maumee St., Angola

Queen of Peace Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, 5-7 p.m., 4508 Vistula Rd., Mishawaka

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

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



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St. Patrick Church Arcola Brings Faith to Farm Life

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

Nestled among the cornfields sits St. Patrick Catholic Church in the outskirts of Fort Wayne. The beautiful stone church was officially established in 1862, and the church cornerstone was laid in 1898 and dedicated October 29, 1899. Later this year, the 427 families within the congregation will celebrate 125 years of active ministry to the community.

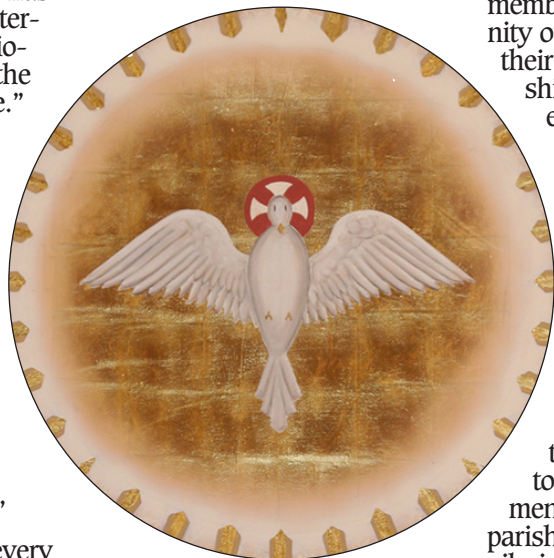
"Many parishioners are lifetime members dedicated to St. Patrick's," said Father John Eze, Pastor at St. Patrick, who was appointed to the parish last June. "It is a family farming community. This church has many dedicated families who love the family togetherness and care the parishioners have for one another. St. Patrick Church Arcola is also a welcoming community and has joyfully welcomed many international priests and parishioners from every corner of the United States and the globe."

According to their mission statement, St. Patrick Church is guided by the Spirit of God, the Scriptures, and the Traditions of the Church. Its mission as a parish community is to "continue the works of Jesus Christ" and to make His name be "known and loved," to proclaim the Good News to all, and to serve all in need, especially the poor.

"Our goal is to open to every



Today's Catholic file photos



member of our church community opportunities to grow in their relationship and friendship with God and with each other. Every parishioner is encouraged to be actively involved in the spiritual and social life of our parish community by being intentional disciples of Christ and active members of our Church," Father Eze told Today's Catholic. "The love and dedication of our parishioners to Jesus and the sacraments is very evident in this parish, and as we continue our pilgrimage of faith together

every day, come and join us."

Father Eze said the parish community is filled with dedicated volunteers.

"St. Patrick Church would not be what it is today were it not for the countless hours of service of the many volunteers through the years. The uniqueness of giving of their time, talent, and treasures is priceless. Many parishioners are continuously available to step up and volunteer to help any day and any time. To witness this love of service and stewardships for the Lord and St. Patrick's is so edifying," Father Eze said.

The parish offers many programs and organizations for members to get involved and be active in parish life, Father Eze said.

"St. Patrick's has a very active Knights of Columbus Council, adult ministry, youth group, St. Zelig Mosaic groups, Seven Sister Apostolate, St. Paula's Ladies Widow group, a Pro-Life Committee, St. Patrick's Shamrocks Decorating Committee, a ministry that cares for the homebound, and a wonderful religious education program," Father Eze said. "St. Patrick's is also well-known for its famous fish fry – the best in Indiana – as well as the annual bike blessing, which began with only eight bikes some decades ago but has grown into a full-blown Arcola community event that now attracts more than 500 motorbikes from within and outside Indiana on the last Saturday of April, and our many Knights of Columbus Sunday breakfasts and dinners to enhance the growth of faith, fun, fellowship, and friendships."

Father Eze has been working with the Parish Pastoral Council since his arrival to invite every parishioner to get more involved in the life of the parish by identifying one of the six missions of the Pastoral Council

PARISH SPOTLIGHT

St. Patrick Church Arcola

12305 Arcola Rd., Fort Wayne

Founded: 1899

Phone: 260-625-4151

Website: stpatrikarcola.org

Pastor: Father John Eze

Masses:

Saturday – 5 p.m.

Sunday – 7:30 a.m., 10 a.m.

Parish population: 427 families

– evangelization, education, liturgy, pastoral ministry, social concerns and outreach, and ecumenism and interfaith relations – where they can participate and suggest ways the parish can become more vibrant. This outreach ensures they are serving all of God's people in the Arcola community – Catholics and non-Catholics alike. They do not want anyone left behind.

Father Eze passed along testimony from parishioners on their love of St. Patrick.

"Many parishioners view the Church as being part of every event of their life from the cradle to the grave," Father Eze said. "Many parishioners testified that 'St. Patrick Church has been accompanying and supporting our families from baptism to the grave and even beyond, because after a funeral, our church family continues to pray and support us; the thought of this is so refreshing and rewarding,'" Father Eze said. "Another parishioner said, 'Giving back to my parish is done in appreciation for the many blessings that God has given to me to have such a wonderful parish church family that offers me a wholistic nurturing and nourishment with the sacraments as we make our pilgrimage to our eternal home.' Another witness from the parishioner put it this way: 'St. Patrick Church has helped me in a profound and unique ways to understand and value the salvation gifted to me through the death and resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and how my participation in the life of the Church must not be seen as a fulfillment of obligation but an invitation to develop and grow my relationship with God, His Church, and with my fellow parishioners.'"

"St. Patrick Church in Arcola is a special place with special people," Father Eze said. "God has surely blessed St. Patrick's. Come and experience it for yourself. If you want to take a drive and travel off into the countryside, stop by and experience the beauty of this pretty Catholic church in Arcola with a loving and welcoming people."

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