



# TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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## From the Last Supper to the Resurrection

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Joshua Schipper

The Easter Candle is lit at the beginning of the Easter Vigil Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on Saturday, March 30.



Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades celebrates Mass at the chapel at Saint Anne Community in Fort Wayne on Easter Sunday, March 31.

### A Walk Through the Sacred Liturgies of the Triduum

Through the solemn and sacred liturgies of Holy Week, in the co-cathedrals and parishes across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the faithful had the opportunity to walk with Christ from His journey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, to the Upper Room and the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, to His passion and death on Good Friday, to the joyful celebration of His glorious resurrection at Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses.

Through words and photos, Today's Catholic is proud to share the richness of these beautiful liturgies with its readers.

#### HOLY THURSDAY – Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend was filled on Holy Thursday, March 28, for the celebration of a banquet of love. "My brothers and sisters,

TRIDUUM, page 8

## Chrism Mass Reminds Us We Are God's Anointed



Joshua Schipper

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER AND KASIA BALSBAUGH

On back-to-back nights at the beginning of Holy Week – at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on Monday, March 25, and at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on Tuesday, March 26 – Bishop Rhoades celebrated Chrism Masses before throngs of priests, deacons, and the lay faithful who witnessed the consecration of the various holy oils and the renewal of priestly vows.

Three main types of oils are

blessed at the Chrism Mass: the oil of catechumens (used during the Sacrament of Baptism), the oil of the sick (used during the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick), and oil for the sacred Chrism (used during baptism, ordination, confirmation, and church dedication). At the two Chrism Masses, Bishop Rhoades mixed the oil with sweet-smelling balsam to make the chrism. After Mass, the holy oils are apportioned to be used at the parishes throughout the diocese.

CHRISM, page 7

## TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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# 'A Man of Faith': Bishop Offers Condolences After Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry Dies

Following the passing of Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, Bishop Rhoades offered his prayers and condolences as well as his appreciation for Henry's faithfulness and dedication to the city. Henry died on Thursday, March 28, following a battle with stomach cancer.

"I and the Catholic community of Fort Wayne mourn the death of Mayor Tom Henry, a man of faith, who served our city with selfless devotion through his many years of public service," Bishop Rhoades said in a statement. "Mayor Henry died on Holy Thursday as we began our three days of remembrance of the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord. We pray that Mayor Henry, who died peacefully in the Lord, may share in the joy of his resurrection. On behalf of the people of the diocese, I extend condolences to Mayor Henry's family and friends, praying that God will grant them comfort and consolation during these days of mourning. I will always remember with thanksgiving Tom's goodness to me and to so many others, especially the needy of our community. May he rest in peace!"

Henry, 72, who had served as Fort Wayne's mayor since 2008, was elected to an unprecedented fifth term in November. His wife, Cindy, 67, died January 20 after battling pancreatic cancer. At a news conference on February 26, Henry revealed he had been diagnosed with late-stage cancer. On March 28, Henry's family released a statement saying the mayor had been placed in hospice care. Hours later, they issued another statement saying Henry had passed away.

"Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry passed away peacefully Thursday, March 28, 2024, after experiencing a medical emergency related to his cancer," the family statement read. "In the early morning hours of Wednesday, March 27, Mayor Henry was privately transported to a local hospital at which time he and his family consulted at length with medical professionals including his oncologist. After careful consideration of the risks associated with surgical intervention, Mayor Henry opted for comfort measures. He died peacefully surrounded by his loving family. Mayor Henry was a man of the highest character – a true servant leader who devoted his entire adult life to the betterment of Fort Wayne and its residents. He was also the best dad a son or daughter could ask for. We, his family, mourn the loss of Tom with the rest



Wikipedia

**Thomas Christopher Henry was an American businessman and politician who was the 35th Mayor of Fort Wayne from 2008 until his death. A member of the Democratic Party, Henry served five terms on Fort Wayne City Council from 1984 to 2004, representing the 3rd District. He was Fort Wayne's longest-serving mayor having been elected to five terms.**



Today's Catholic file photo

**Mayor Tom Henry stands with Bishop Rhoades at an award ceremony held in 2015.**

of our community, but we also take great comfort in knowing that he is once again with his beautiful Cindy who passed away from cancer just two months ago. We thank you for your continued thoughts and prayers, but also ask for privacy as we grieve Tom's passing and celebrate his extraordinary life and legacy."

Henry is survived by his son Benjamin, daughter Elizabeth, and four grandchildren. Henry was the second oldest of 17 children born to Jerome and Marganelle "Marge" Henry. Mayor Henry and Cindy were married on June 21, 1975, at St. Henry's Catholic Church – a day he said he would never forget.

"It was extremely hot, no air conditioning in the church or reception hall," he told the Journal Gazette in 1996. "My uncle and my brothers kept me up the whole night before. My wife was absolutely gorgeous. What an angel! What a day!"

Henry graduated from Fort Wayne Central Catholic High School in 1970 before serving in the U.S. Army Military Police Corp. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1976 from Saint Francis College (now the University of Saint Francis) and a master's degree in business administration from the school in 1981.

"The University of Saint Francis community is deeply saddened over Mayor Tom Henry's passing. As an alumnus with two degrees, he remained a dedicated supporter and proponent of his alma mater," said Dr. Lance Richey, President of Saint Francis. "His service to the city of Fort Wayne is well known throughout Indiana and beyond. His love for the people in our community was undisputed and he will be greatly missed. We offer our condolences to the Henry family and pray they be comforted in this time of grieving. May our friend Tom rest in the everlasting love of our Heavenly Father."

Karl Bandemer, 79, who had been serving as Henry's Deputy Mayor since 2013, was sworn in as Fort Wayne's acting mayor on Friday, March 29. He will serve as acting mayor until the Allen County Democratic Party holds a caucus to elect a replacement within a 30-day deadline. If the party does not select a replacement, Bandemer will remain in the position until the end of Henry's elected term in 2027.

A funeral Mass for Henry will be held on Friday, April 12, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne. As of Tuesday, April 2, additional details had not been released.

# National Shrine Eager to Celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

(OSV News) – An upcoming celebration of the Divine Mercy devotion will focus on the Eucharist and on the need for “spiritual fatherhood.”

Some 15,000 pilgrims are expected at the annual Divine Mercy Sunday Weekend, which takes place April 6-7 at the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The shrine also is home to the U.S. Province of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, who oversee the shrine.

The 350 acres of the shrine grounds will be transformed into what organizers call a “small tent city,” with opportunities for confession, Eucharistic adoration, and Rosary prayers, as well as Masses both days.

Observed on the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday was established in 2000 by Pope St. John Paul II during his canonization of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, a 20th-century Polish mystic. As a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy, the unassuming saint shared how she enjoyed numerous visions in which Jesus Christ urged her to promote devotion to His mercy through various prayers, an annual feast, and an image featuring rays of blood and water issuing from His heart.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the principal celebrant for the April 7 outdoor liturgy, which will be livestreamed on the Marian Fathers’ dedicated streaming site, DivineMercyPlus.org.

With the Catholic Church in the U.S. in the midst of a National Eucharistic Revival, the gathering continues those efforts to highlight the centrality of the Eucharist to the Catholic faith.

In addition, the Marian Fathers have scheduled a sold-out April 6 conference titled “Godly Fathers Strengthen Families,” which features talks by Marian Father Chris Alar, Provincial Superior of the order’s U.S. province and an author and television show host; fellow Marian Father Donald Calloway, Vicar Provincial and vocation director, as well as the author of more than 15 books; and filmmaker Jim Wahlberg, Executive Director of the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, which works to assist urban youth. Wahlberg also is Executive Producer of the films “Mother Teresa: No Greater Love” and the soon-to-be-



CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec

**Polish Sister St. Faustina Kowalska is depicted with an image of Jesus Christ the Divine Mercy. St. Faustina, a nun with the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw, Poland, is known as the Apostle of Divine Mercy.**

released “Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist.”

The themes of Divine Mercy, the Eucharist, and spiritual fatherhood are all interwoven, said Father Alar, who spoke in Fort Wayne in February at the Rekindle the Fire men’s conference.

“The very fact is the gift that God gives us in the Divine Mercy is most seen through the fatherhood of God,” Father Alar said. “In His mercy, He gave us His Son.”

The Eucharist “is the manifestation of that gift,” he added. “So it’s a perfect combination.”

The three panelists also will speak during a televised “pre-Mass show” on Sunday, April 7, joined by Archbishop Broglio and former NFL players Elvis Grbac and Ben Steele.

On display during the weekend is a prayer banner composed of thousands of cloth pieces with prayer intentions sent to the shrine from throughout the U.S. More than 400 volunteers will be available to assist pilgrims, including translators for those who speak Spanish, Polish, Italian, French, German, or Tagalog.

According to the diary St. Faustina was instructed to keep by her spiritual director, Christ promised to grant to those who go to confession and receive holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday complete forgiveness of sins, as well as remission of the temporal punishment they incur. The Catechism of the

Catholic Church teaches that sin incurs a “double consequence.” According to that teaching, if grave in nature, sin can deprive a person of communion with God, resulting in eternal punishment; however, temporal punishment follows from the nature of every sin, even venial, and requires purification “which proceeds from a fervent charity.”

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, according to the Catechism, restores a person to God’s grace “joining us with Him in intimate friendship.” Nevertheless, it explains the “temporal punishment of sin remains,” which is purified through works of mercy, charity, prayer, and penance to complete the soul’s conversion. Such temporal punishment also can be remitted, in whole or in part, through indulgences granted by the Church.

St. John Paul granted a plenary indulgence on Divine Mercy Sunday, under the usual conditions (receiving sacramental confession and holy Communion, and praying for the pope’s intentions) to faithful who take part in Divine Mercy devotions in a spirit of complete detachment from affection for sin, even venial.

That last condition can be difficult to fulfill, said Father Alar, which is why the “extraordinary promise (of Christ to St. Faustina) and the extraordinary grace” attached to Divine Mercy Sunday are so precious.

“The only two things you have to do is go to confession and receive holy Communion,” he said. “What God is basically saying is this: ‘I want you to come back to the sacraments so much that all I’m asking you to do is go to confession and receive holy Communion, and I will flood you with this most incredible gift called remission of all your temporal punishment due to sin.’”

He stressed that Divine Mercy Sunday is “not a rabbit’s foot or a magic wand,” since participants must turn from sin and “desire to be good” as part of this unique opportunity to draw profoundly close to God.

“This is a day of free grace,” said Father Alar. “It’s like the Lord saying, ‘I’m going to wipe your slate clean. All you’ve got to do is go to confession and holy Communion.’”

*Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News.*



## Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Monday, April 8: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. John the Baptist Church, New Haven  
 Tuesday, April 9: 10 a.m. – Meeting of Bishop’s Cabinet, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne  
 Tuesday, April 9: 5:45 p.m. – Meeting of Diocesan Review Board, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott, Warsaw  
 Wednesday, April 10: 10:30 a.m. – Presbyterate Meeting, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Warsaw  
 Thursday, April 11: 8:30 a.m. – Mass and Pastoral Visit, St. Michael Church and School, Plymouth  
 Thursday, April 11: Noon – Harvest House Luncheon and Talk, Knights of Columbus Hall, Plymouth  
 Friday, April 12: 10 a.m. – Meeting of Seminary Admissions Committee, Sacred Heart Parish Office, Warsaw  
 Friday, April 12: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Joseph Church, Garrett  
 Saturday, April 13: 10 a.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Fort Wayne  
 Saturday, April 13: 7 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Warsaw  
 Sunday, April 14: 2 p.m. – Confirmation Mass, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Fort Wayne



## Forty Hours Devotion



### 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

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

## EVERY CHILD DESERVES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month  
[diocesefwsb.org/prevent-child-abuse](http://diocesefwsb.org/prevent-child-abuse)

# On Easter, Pope Asks Christ to 'Roll Away' the Stones of War

BY JUSTIN MCLELLAN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Just as Jesus removed the stone that sealed His tomb on the morning of the Resurrection, on Easter, Christ alone “has the power to roll away the stones that block the path to life” and that trap humanity in war and injustice, Pope Francis said.

Through His resurrection, Jesus opens “those doors that continually we shut with the wars spreading throughout the world,” he said after celebrating Easter Mass in St. Peter’s Square on Sunday, March 31. “Only the Risen Christ, by granting us the forgiveness of our sins, opens the way for a renewed world.”

Seated on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, the pope asked the Risen Christ to bring peace in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, and a host of other conflict-ridden regions in the world.

“In calling for respect for the

principles of international law, I express my hope for a general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine,” he said. “All for the sake of all!”

Pope Francis then appealed to the international community to ensure access of humanitarian aid to Gaza and called for the “prompt release” of hostages taken during Hamas’ attack on Israel on October 7, as well as “an immediate cease-fire in the strip.”

“War is always an absurdity, war is always a defeat,” he said, asking that the “strengthening winds of war” do not reach Europe and the Mediterranean. “Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearming. Peace is never made with arms but with outstretched hands and open hearts.”

As is traditional, the pope did not give a homily during the morning Easter Mass but bowed his head and observed



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

An aide hands Pope Francis his candle, lighted from the paschal candle, at the beginning of the Easter Vigil Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on Saturday, March 30.

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several minutes of silent reflection after the chanting of the Gospel in both Latin and Greek.

Although the Vatican said Pope Francis stayed home from a Way of the Cross service at Rome’s Colosseum on Friday, March 29, “to conserve his health” for the Easter Vigil and Mass, the pope appeared in high spirits while greeting cardinals and bishops after the Mass. He spent considerable time riding the popemobile among the faithful, smiling and waving to the throngs of visitors in St. Peter’s Square and lining the long avenue approaching the Vatican.

The Vatican said some 30,000 people attended the pope’s morning Mass and, by noon, there were approximately 60,000 people inside and around St. Peter’s Square for his Easter message and blessing *urbi et orbi* (“to the city [of Rome] and to the world”).

On Easter, which Pope Francis said celebrates the life given to humanity through the resurrection of God’s Son, he lamented “how much the precious gift of life is despised” today. “How many children cannot even be born?” he asked. “How many die of hunger and are deprived of essential care or are victims of abuse

and violence? How many lives are made objects of trafficking for the increasing commerce in human beings?”

“On the day when Christ has set us free from the slavery of death, I appeal to all who have political responsibilities to spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking, by working tirelessly to dismantle the networks of exploitation and to bring freedom to those who are their victims,” he said.

The evening before, at the Easter Vigil Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica on Saturday, March 30, Pope Francis reiterated that Easter is a promise that no matter how dark the world may seem and no matter how heavy the burdens one carries, victory belongs to the Risen Christ and all who believe in Him.

“Let us lift our eyes to Him and ask that the power of His resurrection may roll away the heavy stones that weigh down our souls,” the pope said in his homily.

“Let us lift our eyes to Him, the Risen Lord, and press forward in the certainty that, against the obscure backdrop of our failed hopes and our deaths, the eternal life that He came to bring is even now present in our midst,” he said.

In his homily, Pope Francis asked the congregation of about 6,000 people to think about what the women who had gone to Jesus’ tomb to anoint His body must have been thinking and feeling.

“The tears of Good Friday are not yet dried; they are grief-stricken, overwhelmed by the sense that all has been said and done,” the pope said. And, according to the Gospel of Mark, they are worried about being able to move the stone away so they can anoint Jesus’ body.

“That stone marked the end of Jesus’ story, now buried in the night of death,” the pope said. “He, the life that came into the world, had been killed. He, who proclaimed the merciful love of the Father, had met with no mercy. He, who relieved sinners of the burden of their condemnation, had been condemned to the cross.”

But, Pope Francis said, the stone also represents the weight on the heart of Jesus’ female disciples and the burdens carried by everyone who is grief-stricken and without hope.

“There are times when we may feel that a great stone blocks the door of our hearts, stifling life, extinguishing hope,

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CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis greets the crowd after delivering his *urbi et orbi* Easter message and blessing from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Sunday, March 31.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Francis holds his crozier in St. Peter's Square after delivering his blessing at the conclusion of his Easter Mass at the Vatican on Sunday, March 31.

imprisoning us in the tomb of our fears and regrets, and standing in the way of joy and hope," he said. Those "tombstones," he said, can come with the death of a loved one, a failure to do good, a missed chance to build a more just society and "in all our aspirations for peace that are shattered by cruel hatred and the brutality of war."

But the Gospel says that when the women "looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back."

"This is the Pasch of Christ,

the revelation of God's power: the victory of life over death, the triumph of light over darkness, the rebirth of hope amid the ruins of failure," Pope Francis said. "It is the Lord, the God of the impossible, who rolled away the stone forever."

"Even now," the pope said, "He opens our tombs so that hope may be born ever anew. We too, then, should 'look up' to Him."

"If we allow Jesus to take us by the hand, no experience of failure or sorrow, however painful, will have

the last word on the meaning and destiny of our lives," he said. "Henceforth, if we allow ourselves to be raised up by the Risen Lord, no setback, no suffering, no death will be able to halt our progress toward the fullness of life."

"Let us welcome Jesus, the God of life, into our lives, and today once again say 'yes' to Him," Pope Francis said. "Then no stone will block the way to our hearts, no tomb will suppress the joy of life, no failure will doom us to despair."

**BELOVED daughters**

A RETREAT FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Saturday, April 27 | 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
 Sacred Heart Parish Center (Notre Dame, IN)  
 \$15 | Lunch Provided | Financial Assistance Available

[diocesefwsb.org/beloved](http://diocesefwsb.org/beloved)

DIocese of FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

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A PODCAST FROM ARMOR TO GOD

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JOIN US FOR CATHOLIC CHARIT*tea*

In honor of Mother's Day, join Catholic Charities on April 28 at the Fort Wayne Country Club for an afternoon of tea with your mother, sisters, and friends.

This event will benefit our Counseling Services, which provides mental health services to 13 Catholic schools, as well as therapy, group addiction counseling, and clinical navigation to all those in need throughout our diocese.

*When:*  
 April 28 from 1-3 p.m.

*Where:*  
 Fort Wayne Country Club  
 5221 Covington Rd., Fort Wayne

*Register:*

Tickets can be purchased at [ccfwsb.org/tea](http://ccfwsb.org/tea) for \$35 per person

*Tea, light sandwiches, and pastries will be served.*

**MORE INFO AND RSVP:**

## Vatican to Publish Document on Human Dignity on April 8

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Officials with the Vatican Press Office announced that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith's declaration on human dignity, said to include a faith-based critique of "gender ideologies" and surrogacy, will be released on Monday, April 8. Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the dicastery, and Msgr. Armando Matteo, Secretary of the doctrinal section of the dicastery, along with Dr. Paola Scarcella, a professor of medicine and Director of Catechesis for Persons with Disabilities with the Community of Sant'Egidio, are scheduled to speak at a Vatican news conference on April 8, the press office announced on Tuesday, April 2. In an interview with the Spanish news agency EFE in January, Cardinal Fernández said, "We are preparing a very important document on human dignity which includes not only social issues but also a strong critique of moral issues such as sex change, surrogacy, gender ideologies, etc." The social issues would include anything that impacts human dignity, such as immigration, poverty, war and environmental degradation.

## Baltimore Bridge Collapse Leads to 'Inexplicable Sadness,' Pastor Says

BALTIMORE (OSV News) – Ever since the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore collapsed in the early hours of Tuesday, March 26, Redemptorist Father Ako Walker has been acting as a spiritual support to the families of six Hispanic construction workers who are believed to have perished in the tragedy. "I am here with them as a spiritual presence during this difficult time," said the pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus/Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, a largely Spanish-speaking parish. "They all have questions and can't find the right answers to this situation, so I am here as a presence if anyone needs prayer or anything like that, I am available to help them." On Wednesday, March 27, the bodies of two of the six missing workers were recovered, USA Today reported. They were identified as Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, 35, of Baltimore, and Dorlian Ronial Castillo Cabrera, 26, of Dundalk, Maryland.

## Holy Land Christians Pray for Peace Amid Subdued Good Friday

JERUSALEM (OSV News) – With a heavy police presence but few pilgrims, Jerusalem's normally crowded Franciscan

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Pope Washes Feet of Women Inmates on Holy Thursday



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis washes the feet of an inmate at the Rebibbia women's prison on the outskirts of Rome as he celebrates the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper on March 28. As he poured water over their feet, dried them with a towel, and kissed their feet, the 12 women inmates at Rome's Rebibbia prison wept. Each of the 12 sat on stools on a raised platform so the pope, who has difficulty walking, could wash their feet while seated in his wheelchair. Keeping with his Holy Thursday tradition, Pope Francis gave only a brief homily, speaking without notes. He told the inmates, "All of us have small failures, big failures – everyone has their own story – but the Lord awaits us always with open arms and never tires of forgiving."

Good Friday procession made its way down the Via Dolorosa, the route Jesus Christ is believed to have walked to his crucifixion, led in hymns by Catholic scouts. As the war between Hamas and Israel nears the six-month point, the celebration was subdued and rather than the traditional scout marching band, the participants walked in prayer from station to station, ending at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Near the fifth station, the place where tradition holds that the Romans ordered Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus carry the cross, local Jerusalem resident Sabah Jasa watched the procession go by before joining them. "The heart hurts because there are no people here," she said. Most West Bank Christians did not receive Israeli travel per-

mits to cross the checkpoints into Jerusalem as they do most years during the Easter holiday. Israel imposed a closure following the October 7 Hamas attack on Israeli southern border communities, in which 1,200 people, including mainly civilians, were killed, and 254 people were taken hostage into Gaza. The ensuing war has left some 32,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip dead, a majority of whom were women and children, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health.

## Supreme Court Hears Oral Arguments in Abortion Pill Case

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV

News) – The Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Tuesday, March 26, in a case concerning mifepristone, a pill commonly used for abortion but more recently has been used for early miscarriage care. This is the first major case involving abortion on its docket since the high court overturned its previous abortion precedent in 2022. A coalition of pro-life opponents of mifepristone, which is the first of two drugs used in a medication or chemical abortion, filed suit over loosened restrictions by the Food and Drug Administration on the drug, which included making it available by mail, arguing the government violated its own safety standards in doing so. The FDA has argued the drug poses little risk to the mother

in the early weeks of pregnancy. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that more than half of the abortions performed in the U.S. are chemical or medical, rather than surgical. During oral argument, justices from across the court's ideological spectrum appeared skeptical that the pro-life doctors challenging the reduced regulations had legal standing to bring the lawsuit, with the question of standing becoming more of a focus than whether the FDA acted lawfully.

## Protesters Disrupt Easter Vigil at St. Patrick's Cathedral

NEW YORK (OSV News) – Three protesters from a group called "Extinction Rebellion (XR) NYC Palestine Solidarity" were arrested during the Easter Vigil at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on Saturday, March 30. The men have been charged under New York state law with disruption of a religious service, a spokesperson for the New York Police Department told OSV News. Videos provided by the protesters to OSV News show five individuals involved in displaying a banner reading "Silence = Death" as the Liturgy of the Word was in progress; a separate group of three protesters stood during one of the Mass readings, with one female protester singing "Dona Nobis Pacem." The group was ejected from the cathedral by security staff.

## Report: Most U.S. Catholics Unaware of Laudato Si'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – A new study shows most Catholics in the United States believe environmental justice is an important issue, but only a third of them have heard of Pope Francis' encyclical on the topic, with Mass attendance key to familiarity with Church teaching on the care for creation. "American Catholics' Views on Climate Justice" was released on Tuesday, March 26, by officials with Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, with data drawn from a December 2023 electronic national poll of 1,342 self-identified adult Catholics in the U.S. Most of those interviewed (74 percent) prioritized Church teaching on marriage over the environment (66 percent), but researchers noted that concern for the environment among Catholics – as well as awareness of Church teaching – was stronger among those who attend Mass at least weekly. In addition, political divides on the issue were "mitigated" somewhat among Catholics who are in the pews at least once a week, Jesuit Father Thomas Gaunt, CARA's Executive Director, told OSV News.

**CHRISM, from page 1**

The celebration of the Chrism Mass dates to the early Church. Traditionally, the Chrism Mass is held in the morning of Holy Thursday, but most dioceses celebrate it on another day of Holy Week, in large part to make attendance easier for the laity.

During his homily, Bishop Rhoades said that, in contrast to the rest of Holy Week where the Church focuses on Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, at the Chrism Mass, the faithful are brought back to the early days of Jesus' public ministry.

First speaking of Christ's baptism, Bishop Rhoades referenced Jesus' reading from the prophet Isaiah.

"He unrolled the scroll and purposely chose to read the passage that we heard in the first reading: Isaiah's prophecy about 'the anointed One, the Messiah' – in Greek, the *Christos*, the Christ – and His mission. After reading the text, Jesus rolled up the scroll and sat down. The Gospel tells us that 'the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at Him.' Jesus then spoke those emphatic words that were like a thunderbolt: 'Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

He continued to recount that, initially, the people who heard these words were amazed and spoke highly of Jesus, but soon that acclaim turned into violent rejection.

"It was too much for them to believe that the One whom they knew as Joseph the carpenter's son could be the long-awaited Messiah who would bring them salvation."

Connecting this to the Chrism Mass, Bishop Rhoades spoke of the theme of "anointing," explaining that the oils will be used for sacramental anointing understood in the context of God the Father anointing Christ with the Holy Spirit.

"The same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from Christ the Head into the Body, into us, His people. We thus participate in the three offices of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, and we bear the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from these offices."

Then, turning to face the presbyterate, Bishop Rhoades addressed the promises that they made at their ordination and thanked them for their service.

"My brother priests, thank you for your priestly zeal and for your witness to Christ, the Good Shepherd. Of course, neither you nor I are perfect in our ministry. There's only one perfect priest, Jesus. We're His unworthy servants. We have human flaws and weaknesses. We are sinners in need of God's pardon. We hear a lot of confessions, and like those we absolve, we need to also be penitents and go to confession."

Continuing, he told them: "Let us never become discouraged by our human weaknesses, but,

trusting in God's mercy and love, may we experience the joy of His forgiveness and joy in our priestly ministry, remembering that we were anointed with the oil of gladness, not unhappiness. I pray that you are glad to be priests, glad to serve the Church, and glad to give your lives in love for the Lord. In moments of sadness or discouragement, may the Lord revive within you the joy of the priesthood."

After the conclusion of his homily, Bishop Rhoades led his brother priests in the renewal of their vows.

Having reaffirmed their promises to God, the priests watched as members of the community presented urns of new chrism oil to the bishop, who consecrated and blessed them for a particular use in the ministry of the Church to the faithful.

During his homily, Bishop Rhoades asked the faithful to pray for the sick, suffering, and dying.

"May they know the closeness of God in the midst of their suffering," he said. "Jesus always showed special concern for the sick and suffering, and so must we."

Priests throughout the Church use the oil of catechumens before baptisms.

"I think ahead to next year and those who will be anointed with the oil of catechumens that will be blessed tonight," Bishop Rhoades said. "I hope we will have even more people preparing for baptism here in our diocese. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening for those preparing for baptism."

He continued to cite falling numbers of baptisms in the United States, and the West generally, and said that the Church faces a challenge of an "increasingly secularist culture and the growth of the number of unchurched and religiously unaffiliated."

"Rather than just bemoaning this trend," he said, "we are called to intensify our evangelizing efforts, especially among young people. We need to be a more missionary Church – that includes all of us – sharing our faith, witnessing to our love for Jesus and His Church, and inviting people to our parishes."

The third and final oil, known simply as the sacred chrism, will be used by the clergy both during confirmation and the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Bishop Rhoades expressed his excitement at how many people would experience the sacraments in the coming year. He said his hope is that so many sacraments are administered that priests have to ask him to bless more oil of catechumens.

After Mass, the presbyterate, diaconate, and seminarians formed a semi-circle around Bishop Rhoades outside as he blessed and dismissed them to minister to their flocks, having received new oils with which to carry out their ministry.



Kasia Balsbaugh

**Above, priests look on during the annual Chrism Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on Monday, March 25. Each year during the Chrism Mass, priests are called to renew their priestly vows.**

**At right, Bishop Rhoades receives oil from the faithful at the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne.**



Joshua Schipper



Kasia Balsbaugh

**Bishop Rhoades prepares the sacred oils, assisted by Father Royce Gregerson, Pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Goshen, during the Chrism Mass at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend.**



Joshua Schipper

**Bishop Rhoades stirs oil at the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne.**



Joshua Schipper

**Bishop Rhoades blesses and dismisses the presbyterate outside of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception after Mass on Tuesday, March 26.**

## TRIDUUM, from page 1

tonight we recall the Last Supper in which the Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, showed His love for those who were His own in the world. He gave His body and blood under the forms of bread and wine," Bishop Rhoades said in his homily. "St. Paul explained that as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we recall Christ's death as we await His coming in glory. Three stages in time are brought together in this action: the past (Jesus' death), the present (our eating His body and drinking His blood), and the future (the Second Coming of Jesus).

Bishop Rhoades discussed how the celebration of the Eucharist is a proclamation of the death of the Lord until He comes again.

"What does participation in the Eucharist mean for our Christian life? First of all, we are united to Jesus when we receive Him in holy Communion," Bishop Rhoades said. "The gift of His body and blood fills us with His life and love and increases within us the gift of His Spirit. Our communion with Jesus through the Eucharist also reinforces our union with one another in His body, the Church. This is the reality of the Eucharist: We proclaim the death of the Lord; we take part in His Paschal Mystery, and we gain its fruits."

After the homily, members of the St. Matthew Parish community had the honor of having their feet washed by Bishop Rhoades. This was an opportunity for the congregation to recall the foot washing Jesus performed with the disciples at the last meal they shared before He was crucified.

"Pope St. John Paul II wrote that St. John's account of the washing of the feet brings out 'the profound meaning' of the Eucharist," Bishop Rhoades said. "By bending down to wash the feet of His disciples, Jesus is explaining the meaning of the Eucharist. It is the sacrament of Christ's love 'to the end,' of His self-giving love on the cross. The Eucharist doesn't end with our receiving holy Communion," he added. "We are sent at the end of Mass to go forth to glorify the Lord by our lives – lives of self-giving love," Bishop Rhoades said.

## GOOD FRIDAY of the Lord's Passion

On Good Friday, March 29, Bishop Rhoades led the faithful in commemorating Christ's passion and death at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne.

## Holy Thursday



Photos by Joshua Schipper

**Father Jacob Runyon, pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception washes the feet of his parishioners at Mass on the evening of Holy Thursday.**

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades recounted a question he often gets asked during Holy Week – namely, why it's called "Good Friday" when it was the day on which Jesus suffered unimaginable torture and was killed.

"I usually answer with the words I learned when I was a little boy, the answer that was given in the Baltimore Catechism," Bishop Rhoades said. "Good Friday is good because on this day Christ 'showed His great love for man and purchased for him every blessing.'"

Bishop Rhoades continued: "We are filled with sorrow today because we know, as Isaiah prophesied, that Jesus 'was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins,' and that He bore our iniquities when He carried the cross. As the Catechism says: 'the Church has never forgotten that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured.'" St. Francis of Assisi once said to his brother friars words that can be addressed to us: 'demons did not crucify Jesus. It is you who have crucified Him and crucify Him still, when you delight in your vices and sins.' So, today, Good Friday, should be a day of repentance and sorrow for our sins."

However, Bishop Rhoades said: "Today is not only a day of sorrow, it is a day of hope. It really is Good Friday. It truly is Great Friday because it is the

day of our redemption. We will venerate the cross today, not as an instrument of torture and death or as a sign of defeat, but as the luminous sign of God's love. We venerate the cross of Jesus because by His holy cross, He has redeemed the world. We venerate the cross as the tree of life because our crucified Lord overcame evil and death with the power of merciful love. His resurrection, the celebration of which will be the climax of this Paschal Triduum, gives us this certainty. Our crucified Lord became our Risen Lord."

## HOLY SATURDAY at the Easter Vigil

The Easter fire, newly lit, gave warmth and light to the surrounding night at the beginning of the Easter Vigil Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on the evening of Holy Saturday, March 30.

Huddled around the fire, with a newly made Easter candle, Bishop Rhoades, several acolytes, a crowd of catechumens and elect, and the congregation of the cathedral took in the blessing of the Easter fire as Bishop Rhoades applied the five points on the cross of the Easter, one for each of the wounds of Christ. The light from the fire softly lit each face as the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection was pondered.



**Father Jacob Runyon and many faithful keep watch with the Eucharistic presence of Christ at the St. Mother Theodore Guerin Chapel on the evening of Holy Thursday.**

## Good Friday



**A woman venerates the cross during a Good Friday service at St. Peter Parish in Fort Wayne.**





Photos by Joshua Schipper

Father Patrick Hake processes a crucifix to the front of St. Peter Parish in Fort Wayne for veneration by the faithful during a Good Friday service on March 29. There, faithful reflected Christ's passion and the prophecies that foretold His redemptive suffering and death.

### Easter Vigil



Bishop Rhoades blessed a new Paschal candle at an Easter Vigil Mass celebrated at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on Saturday, March 30. This candle will be lit during the remaining 50 days of the Easter season, as well as during baptisms and funerals at the parish.



Bishop Rhoades welcomed numerous people into the Church at the Easter Vigil, including eight who were baptized.



The faithful spread the light of Easter with candles lit from the Paschal candle.



More photos are available at [todayscatholic.org](http://todayscatholic.org)






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# Warning: How I Nearly Got Scammed By a Thief Posing as My Pastor

BY ANN CAREY

The email that arrived in my inbox one evening seemed perfectly normal, so I did not realize that it had the potential to make me the victim of a crime and lose \$2,000.

The email looked like the address of my pastor at St. Anthony de Padua Parish, Father Arthur Ssembajja. He wrote that he wanted to reward the dedication of the parish staff by presenting each of them with a \$100 Amazon gift card. He was too busy to get out to buy the cards, he wrote, so he asked if I would buy 20 \$100 cards, and he would reimburse me with a check. He said it was a surprise for the staff, so not to tell anyone, and I should keep one card as a reward for running this errand.

I was a member of the parish council, so Father Ssembajja knew that I, like many other parishioners, appreciate his dedication to our parish and try to be helpful when we can. So, I replied to the email and told him I did not want a reward for helping him and would get 20 gift cards the next day and drop them by the rectory and pick up his \$2,000 check.

The next morning, I found another email from the same address that looked like Father Ssembajja's, saying not to bring the cards to the rectory because they were a surprise. Instead, he wrote, I should reveal the pin number on the back of each card, photograph those numbers, and email them back to him.

Thankfully, the alarm bells went off in my head, and the questions I had considered when I got the email resurfaced: Why didn't he order the cards online himself? Why was he gifting the staff when it wasn't a holiday? We don't have 20 people on staff at my parish, unless he was adding school staff, and then that would exceed 20. Why this amount? Have the collections been that good recently?

The next step, of course, was to contact Father Ssembajja, who was shocked to hear that someone had used his name to try to extract money from his

parishioners. He advised me to call the police, which I did, but they told me there was no way to trace the gift cards and that is why scammers use this technique.

For the next two days, I received follow-up emails from the scammer, asking if I had purchased the gift cards yet. I was advised not to reply, though I wanted to give them a piece of my mind. I felt it was particularly onerous that scammers would target people by using their pastors' names, since most churchgoers respect and trust their pastors.

I continued to be troubled about how the scammer got my email address and connected it to my parish and my pastor. Was it someone who knew me?

My son solved that mystery by asking if my email address ever appeared in our parish bulletin. It indeed has: I am the coordinator of our parish Senior

Fellowship lunches, and I had put my email address in the parish bulletin for RSVPs. And Father Ssembajja's name and email address are in all bulletins. Like most parishes, our bulletins can be read on the internet by anyone in the

world.

Since my experience, I have learned from dozens of online news stories that this scam has become more common throughout the past five years, with parishioners losing tens of thousands of dollars to fraud. Furthermore, the scams are getting more sophisticated.

For example, the Greater Northwest News of the United Methodist Church reported on Friday, March 8, that in Wenatchee, Washington, a scammer posing as a known parishioner of the local Methodist church emailed the parish office to report a "new"

email address. She also asked for a copy of the church directory, which was sent.

Thereafter, the pastor phoned the parishioner to confirm the address change and learned the woman had made no such request for the email change or for the directory. The pastor realized that now an outsider had possession of all the parishioners' email and contact information and immediately warned parishioners to be alert for a scam of some kind.

That scam subsequently showed up in some parishioners' emails that looked legitimate and were signed by the pastor, asking for four \$500 gift cards for a "discreet favor" to be sent to that "new" email address.

Other reported scams were allegedly from pastors or ministers asking the congregation to send gift cards to help pay medical bills for an ill parishioner or to help feed a poor family. Other pastors and parishioners at parishes throughout our diocese have reportedly been targeted, as well.

The Federal Trade Commission issued a consumer alert about the scam that is believed to have originated in Nigeria. The FTC urges victims to call the company who issued the gift card as soon as possible and to report the scam to their agency at [ftc.gov/complaint](http://ftc.gov/complaint). This could help law enforcement agencies prevent such fraud.

Father Ssembajja told Today's Catholic that parishioners should "never trust anything that comes from an unofficial email address from the pastor or any parish staff. Pastors and parish staff don't communicate official parish things using personal emails."

Even if an email address looks official, he added, "As a rule of thumb, don't be quick to engage in any transaction that involves money without confirming with the person 'supposedly' it is from."




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

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TRIDUUM, from page 8

During the Easter Vigil Mass at the cathedral in Fort Wayne, eight candidates and six catechumens gloriously came into full communion with the Church, and they were welcomed by an overflowing Easter crowd of their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades explored the liturgy's reading from the Gospel of St. Mark that recounts the witness of the three women who were first to arrive at the empty tomb of Jesus.

"Going to the tomb, the women had one major preoccupation - how were they going to roll back the large stone from the entrance to the tomb?" Bishop Rhoades said. "They would not be able to roll it back because it was so heavy. My brothers and sisters, we are all powerless to roll back the stone of death - the most inescapable fact of our human existence. But when the women got to the tomb, the stone was rolled back because God had entered the story. God had intervened.

"The women learned this from the young man inside the tomb, clothed in a white robe, an angel who said to the amazed women: 'Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; He is not here.' This is the Easter proclamation, the heart of our celebration on this holy night, and the crowning truth of our Christian faith."

Bishop Rhoades concluded his homily by reminding those in attendance to "depart with



Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades gives Communion to a resident at Saint Anne Community during Mass on Easter Sunday, March 31.

joy and peace, with the song of Alleluia in our hearts. I pray that we will leave with the firm conviction that there is a cure for death. That cure is Christ who is our life. He to whom all power in heaven and on earth was given holds us forever in His love. He is alive and is with us on our journey every day of our lives. May we go forth strengthened by His holy sacraments as missionaries of His Gospel and witnesses of His love, the love that conquers sin and is more powerful than death!"

EASTER SUNDAY - The Resurrection of the Lord

Bishop Rhoades celebrated Easter morning with friends, family, and residents of Saint Anne Community in Fort Wayne by offering Mass in the chapel of the nursing home on Randallia Drive.

"Easter is the greatest feast of the Church, since the Resurrection of Jesus is the fundamental event upon which our Christian faith rests," Bishop Rhoades said at the beginning of his homily. "It

is an event absolutely unique in human history. I am very happy to be here with you today to celebrate with you the glorious mystery of Jesus' resurrection here at Saint Anne's at this Easter Sunday Mass."

Bishop Rhoades continued: "The resurrection of Jesus is not some far-distant event that has little relevance for us today. It is the most relevant event in history and for us today. By His resurrection, Jesus opened for us the way to a new life. It's an event that touched us when we were baptized and taken up into Jesus' risen life and became co-heirs with Him to eternal life. We became new creatures. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans, 'We were indeed buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.'"

Bishop Rhoades spoke of the importance of the Easter tradition of the faithful renewing their baptismal promises. "The Sacrament of

Baptism extends to our whole life," he said. "We still need to renounce Satan and all his works and empty promises. We must say no to sin and yes to grace throughout our life, continuing to profess and live our faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose name we were baptized. We entered into the life of the Holy Trinity, eternal and indestructible life, when we died and rose with Christ in baptism. Our task as Jesus' disciples is to remain united to Him, to follow Him and His way, the way of faith, hope, and charity. ... Because we have died and been raised with Christ in baptism, we shouldn't be primarily oriented to worldly things, but to Christ, our exalted and Risen Lord. God should have priority in our lives. We should always remember that, though we are here on earth, we are citizens of heaven. Our ultimate dwelling place is the Father's house, where Jesus has prepared a place for us. That's our ultimate destiny, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus."

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## Let's Celebrate Easter for a While

This year, I'm glad to see Lent come to an end, and not just because of Easter alleluias and Cadbury dark chocolate eggs.

It was a tough Lent. Part of it, of course, had nothing explicitly to do with Lent. The news has generally been dreadful – a reminder, I suppose of why we need saving. This broken, battered, cruel world needs a savior. I need a savior.

Perhaps this was not true for you, but my Lent was especially difficult because I had trouble keeping my Lenten resolves. None of them were all that hard, by the way. But each of them demanded a certain amount of diligence in the sacrifice, and diligence was a struggle this year.

I won't go into all the bloody details, except to say that when "Son of a ..." flew from my lips, only to remember that I had resolved to refrain from saying "Son of a ..." well, it was that kind of Lent.

One of my favorite Easter reflections is from St. John Chrysostom. He is a saint revered by both the Eastern and Western churches, and for many good reasons. But this quote from his Easter homily proclaiming the time to celebrate reveals his Christ-like love of our poor humanity.

"First and last alike receive

your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness! Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal Kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave."

"Forgiveness has risen from the grave," so "you that have kept the fast, and you that have not," come and celebrate all the same. All of us: Those of us who didn't do so well this

Lent. Those of us who kept our resolutions with gritted teeth and quiet grumbling. Those of us who sacrificed with a prayerful soul and a smile.

St.

Chrysostom reminds us that all of us are invited to the feast: the lazy and the good, the sober and the slothful, rich and poor.

In another part of the same homily, he invokes that great parable that so frustrates Americans. It is the one about the workers in the vineyard (cf. Mt 20:1-16) who show up at different times of the day, yet all get the same payment at day's end. Boy, does that frost our



### AMID THE FRAY

GREG ERLANDSON

puritan cupcakes.

Easter, St. Chrysostom says, is the same reward for all of us. Lent is a good discipline, a way of reminding us of the Lord's own suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. But that sacrifice has been already made for us, and now in this glorious Easter season, we can celebrate that He truly is risen and defeated death.

And if I may suggest an Easter resolution: Let's not let Easter be forgotten in a flash. We spent 40 days in the desert of Lent. Let us now, as they did in St. Chrysostom's day, spend 40 days rejoicing.

Break out the Cadbury eggs! Celebrate with special foods! Express gratitude for the blessing that this, the greatest feast on the Church calendar, truly is.

There will be other Lents. There is just one Easter event. Let's remind this tormented old world that there is a happy ending.

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

## Gowns of Grace, Heaps of Joy: Rediscovering Catholicism

Jenna Wright has come a long way from being an NFL cheerleader to a first Communion catechist. Now, rather than sporting a skimpy outfit at the Super Bowl, she's selling white gowns to second grade girls and their families – and making it a memorable part of their sacramental preparation. It's the perfect fit for the mother of five who's rediscovered her faith.

Jenna was raised Catholic in Michigan. Again and again, the green-eyed blonde performed in the spotlight. As a teen, she trained in ballet and won a beauty pageant. In college, she studied broadcast journalism and became a professional cheerleader. She even cheered at the Super Bowl.

Meanwhile, her faith was crumbling. "I was quite thin, yet I had huge body issues and felt low in my self-worth," she said. "I was surrounded by worldly things."

At the end of her junior year of college, Jenna hit a breaking point. "I'm tired of this!" she felt. "Jesus was calling me back."

She made her first confession in years. Grace began to flood in.

When the Cardinals invited Jenna back the following



### TWENTY SOMETHING

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

season, she declined. "I don't want to be dancing around in a bikini in front of hundreds of thousands of people," she thought. "I'm done with that."

The more she learned about her faith, the more her confidence surged.

Now 36, she and her husband, Eric, are raising five kids, ages 1 to 10, on Daniel Island in Charleston, South Carolina, where they attend St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church.

Jenna delights in leading first Communion classes. "That age group is still so sweet and innocent, but they're asking good questions and can understand bigger concepts," she said. "And the sacraments! I get teary-eyed just thinking about it. Whenever you receive the Eucharist, it's like you have a cup, and God is filling up your cup with grace. Sometimes it gets so full that

CAPECCHI, page 13

## Through God's Divine Mercy Are We Freed from Sin and Death



### THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

### Second Sunday of Easter

As almost always in the Easter season, the Acts of the Apostles furnishes the Liturgy of the Word with its first reading.

Acts claims to be – and scholars assume it indeed is – the work of the Evangelist who wrote St. Luke's Gospel. Acts, therefore, may properly be seen as a continuation of the story presented in Luke's Gospel, which closes with the ascension of Jesus. Acts then begins at this point.

As it progresses, Acts traces for some years the development of the infant Church, describing the plight of its first

members. In so doing, it provides a fascinating insight into the formation of the Church's structure, as well as a powerful lesson in the basic beliefs that so compelled absolute loyalty and devotion from the early Christians whom Acts praises.

It also gives great examples of unqualified selfishness – the idea that might makes right, human ignorance, and treachery.

In this weekend's reading, Acts presents the first members of the Church as being "of one heart and one mind." Love for the Lord, and adherence to Him, were supreme for them.

Central in the story were the apostles, the Lord's special followers and students, whom Jesus commissioned to continue the work of salvation. The apostles literally had seen the Risen Lord, so the first Christians revered them.

Love for others, in the model of Jesus, was more than a platitude. The early Christians assisted the poor. Indeed, so much so that they sold their property or even their houses

to obtain funds to assist the needy.

St. John's First Epistle supplies the second reading, defining what being a Christian means.

Each believer must give self fully in love to God, through trust and faith in Jesus. Because of this commitment, and because of the Lord's redeeming acts, in Christ, each Christian is a child of God. This term means much more than merely earthly creation. It means eternal life.

Baptism in water symbolizes this absolute commitment.

The Gospel reading for this weekend is from St. John's Gospel. It is a Resurrection Narrative, a story with which most Christians are quite familiar. Recall the dismay among the followers of Jesus when they found the empty tomb? Where had the body of the Lord been taken?

This reading answers the question. The body of the Lord has not been hidden. Jesus lives! The encounter with the doubting, demanding Thomas affirms this glorious fact.

### Reflection

Resurrection from the dead is stunning, but Jesus further acts as God by conferring the very power of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. He grants them the authority of forgiving sins, a divine privilege, as sins are an affront to God. He sends them to the four corners of the world to bring redemption to humankind.

Passing through locked doors as if thin air, Jesus greeted the apostles by saying, "Peace be with you." In this greeting, Jesus makes clear that peace comes only from God. The living Lord is the sole source of peace.

Sadly, Ukrainians this year likely modified their historic celebration of Easter because of the war, but here and there, the traditional Ukrainian Easter eggs might have been seen, reminders of an ancient faith.

These eggs – the more elaborately decorated the better – represent the tomb in which the crucified body of Jesus lay. It was a blessed place, since from it, Jesus triumphantly rose.

Distancing from, indifference

to, and certainly outright rebellion against Jesus make our lives tombs, cold and dark.

We observe Divine Mercy Sunday on this weekend. In and through Jesus, the Son of God, Divine Mercy is with us, strengthening, restoring, empowering, healing, and freeing us, opening the sealed doors of the tombs in which we lay. Come forth! Live in the peace of Christ!

### READINGS

**Sunday:** Acts 4:32-35; Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31.

**Monday:** Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Psalms 40:7-11; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

**Tuesday:** Acts 4:32-37; Psalms 93:1-2, 5; John 3:7b-15

**Wednesday:** Acts 5:17-26; Ps 34:2-9; Jn 3:16-21

**Thursday:** Acts 5:27-33; Psalms 34:2, 9, 17-20; John 3:31-36

**Friday:** Acts 5:34-42; Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14; John 6:1-15

**Saturday:** Acts 6:1-7; Psalms 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; John 6:16-21

# During the Easter Season and Beyond, Stay Oily!

Oil is a funny thing. We use it for so many different purposes – both inside and outside of our bodies. Externally, we use oil to moisturize our skin but also to grease our squeaky wheels. Internally, we use oil on our salads or to cook on the stovetop. In short, oil is fitting matter to represent the Christian life.

The Christian life is not simply lived externally or internally; rather, it is meant to be lived as an integral whole in which both body and soul work in perfect harmony and communion.

In Psalm 133:1-2, we read the following: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running

down upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!” Here the Psalmist is making a reference to

*The Christian life is not simply lived externally or internally.*

the Aaron, the high priest, and the joy that is brought about by the people of Israel living in unity. In other words, the Psalmist is pointing out that unity is the result of both the head and members working together in harmony.

In our current political climate, I’m not certain our nation could truthfully recite this psalm. Every news event tends to end in some form of further division – with one side inevitably castigating the other. Needless to say, I don’t think it has left any of us saying to one another, “How good and pleasant it is when broth-

ers scorn each other!”

Thankfully, Jesus offers us a different way – an oily way! After all, the word “Christ” simply means “anointed” or “oiled.” It can easily be overlooked, but the Anointed One was not merely anointed with olive oil, but He was anointed with both the Holy Spirit and power (cf. Acts 10:38). This Holy Spirit, being the Love of the Father poured out for the Son, allowed Jesus to live in perfect communion with the Father. This is also why we end our opening prayer at Mass with the conclusion, “in the unity of the Holy Spirit, who lives and reigns forever and ever.”

Within the course of the liturgical year, perhaps no liturgy sacramentally realizes this unity among head and members as much as the Chrism Mass. There, the bishop, along with his priests, deacons, and the lay faithful, solemnly gather in the cathedral to bless the holy oils that will be used throughout the diocese throughout the upcoming year. This oil serves as a sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence working through the bishop’s apostolic ministry as the members of the faithful are baptized, confirmed, and anointed. It also serves as a sign of the unity that has been maintained for two millennia through apostolic succession. When both priests and bishops are ordained, sacred chrism is used. For a bishop, the chrism is poured over his head, indicating his role as high priest

of the diocese. Priests, in turn, have their hands consecrated as a sign of their service to the bishop’s apostolic mission. As a seminarian, I had the joy of working behind the scenes for several years during the Chrism Mass. We helped redistribute the blessed oils into smaller containers so they could be brought back to the parishes. As you can imagine, it was not the tidiest of processes. When the oil touched anything, it never went away easily. There was always a residue left behind, and everything it touched became “anointed.” The same thing happens whenever I baptize a baby. After anointing the baby’s head with chrism, the parents tell me the scent remains for several days or weeks.



## TWO CRACKED RIBS

FATHER BRIAN ISENBARGER

As we enter these good and pleasant days of Easter joy, let’s make it a goal to remain “oily.” We must continue to live in the light and presence of our resurrected King – a King who reigns over body and soul and heals every division. Just as oil remains on everything it touches, imagine what Christians, the anointed ones, would cause if we chose to dwell in unity! Stay oily my friends!

As we enter these good and pleasant days of Easter joy, let’s make it a goal to remain “oily.” We must continue to live in the light and presence of our resurrected King – a King who reigns over body and soul and heals every division. Just as oil remains on everything it touches, imagine what Christians, the anointed ones, would cause if we chose to dwell in unity! Stay oily my friends!

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Father Brian Isenbarger is Parochial Vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Fort Wayne.

### CAPECCHI, from page 12

it’s overflowing, so you just have to share it with other people.”

As she taught, Jenna couldn’t help but notice a business opportunity. It began when her firstborn needed a first Communion dress. No local stores were selling them, and shopping online didn’t feel the same.

Other families began asking Jenna where to find dresses. She didn’t have an answer. One parent mentioned that they’d booked a trip to New York to shop at a boutique. The next year, another parent said they were headed to Rhode Island to buy a first Communion dress.

“I saw a hole in the market,” Jenna said.

Her thoughts quickly progressed. “There’s a need,

especially down South, where there aren’t as many Catholics. But it’s seasonal – you don’t need a brick-and-mortar all year round. Someone’s got to start a pop-up first Communion boutique. I guess that someone’s me.”

Last summer, Jenna officially launched Gowns of Grace. She sources all the dresses, culling from three designers, along with veils and suits for boys. Then she hosts a pop-up shop at a church. She packs everything up, carrying every size and style of dress. She makes it an experience for families to enjoy together, providing cookies and drinks, a religious craft, a photo booth, and a keepsake gift.

The event functions as a fundraiser for the hosting church, which receives up to 25 percent of her sales. Jenna also sells her products online

at [gownsofgrace.com](http://gownsofgrace.com). Parishes who promote it are given a code that gives them 10 percent back.

Jenna’s goal is to celebrate each child. “This is not just another dress you have to get,” she said. “This is really special.”

It works, creating a positive experience that underscores the importance of the sacrament – faith-filled and fun. “Every single parent and grandparent who came thanked me and told me how lovely it was.”

These days, beauty fills Jenna’s life. She’s come so far since college. “I felt like Jesus stepped in and said, ‘Here’s a fork in the road, go the other way,’” she said. “I haven’t looked back.”

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

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for April 7, 2024  
John 20:19-31

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Easter, Cycle B: when Jesus appeared in the locked room. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

EVENING	WEEK	DOORS
PEACE	HIS SIDE	SENT ME
BREATHED	RECEIVE	SPIRIT
SINS	FORGIVEN	RETAINED
THOMAS	HAVE SEEN	I SEE
NAILS	BELIEVE	BLESSED
NOT SEEN	OTHER SIGNS	BOOK

### UNLOCKED

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

## ALDOBRANDESCA

FEAST APRIL 26  
1245-1310



St. Aldobrandesca was a mystic in Siena, Italy. She was a curiosity because of her many visions, ecstasies, and miracles. Once a hospital maid came upon Aldobrandesca in a trance. The saint appeared to be unconscious and without feeling. The woman summoned everyone to see her, thinking she was dead. Some pricked her with pins and burned her fingers. When Aldobrandesca returned to her senses, she simply said: “May God forgive you.” That act of forgiveness tells us more about the saint than all of her paranormal experiences. Visions and ecstasies may be evidence of a supernatural touch, but mercy expressed to others is a sure sign of divine love. We honor Aldobrandesca as a saint for her charity, not for her trances.

# Singers Encourage All to Attend Ecumenical Concert in Angola

BY MARILYN KARPINSKI

In celebration of the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Angola will be hosting an ecumenical concert of sacred music on Sunday, April 21, at 5 p.m.

One might think holding a concert with members of other faith traditions during the Eucharistic Revival could be at odds with the spirit of the national initiative given that many Christian faiths do not embrace the Real Presence of Christ – body, blood, soul, and divinity – in the Eucharist. But concerns are quickly put to rest when speaking with members of the choir – more than half of whom are not Catholic but come from various Christian churches across northeast Indiana. Perhaps it was best summed up by Tracey Walker, who told Today's Catholic that "some of my best experiences in music came in situations where churches came together uniting their voices in love for Christ and music." She described the feeling as seeming like "a very special preview of heaven."

When asked what brought them together for this per-

formance, members of the ecumenical choir gave varied answers.

Jessica Jones, a young parishioner from St. Anthony, described it as "an amazing chance to celebrate being a Christian, to take a step back and celebrate the basics of our faith." Jones also stated that she loves the entire community – not just the Catholic participants but the members from all denominations.

Jeff Walker told Today's Catholic how he and his wife, Tracey, had been members of the choir at Most Precious Blood Church in Fort Wayne for many years and, as new parishioners at St. Anthony, how impressed they are by the love and acceptance with which the choir has greeted them. Jeff Walker said he is also grateful to be able to use his talents as a percussionist to enhance the concert performances.

Paul Thomas, Jane Matarese, and Casey Drudge, along with two other members of the Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, said they don't mind traveling more than 45 minutes each way to attend rehearsals. While Matarese described the concert as a "wonderful

## Ecumenical Concert of Sacred Music

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

700 W. Maumee St.

Angola

Sunday, April 21, at 5 p.m.

A reception will follow the concert.

*"Some of my best experiences in music came in situations where churches came together uniting their voices in love for Christ and music."*

TRACEY WALKER

Easter opportunity," she confesses, "I didn't expect such a worshipful experience." She explained how the song selections resonate with her spiritually. Drudge chimed in, saying, "The first practice I attended, I thought I had died and gone to heaven." Thomas described a unique song selection as having "a strong beat that will have many wanting to dance in the aisles."

During a March practice for the upcoming performance, J. Joseph Peters, Director of the choir, jokingly warned the singers, "You are not allowed to say you joined the choir because I forced you to!"

The choir members who spoke to Today's Catholic praised Peters' professionalism. Linda Jones, along with two other members of the Presbyterian Chapel of the Lakes in Angola, said they joined the choir out of respect for Peters, whom they describe as "a wonderful director and technician."

"And," Jones said, "we knew the music he chose would be great."

The performance will begin with the hymn "Sing to the Lord," based on Psalm 97 and written by Owen Alstott,

a Catholic composer, which has been a favorite of the St. Anthony choir since performing it for Pope St. John Paul II in Rome in 1997.

Classical selections have been chosen to honor the Eucharistic Revival. *Panis Angelicus* (meaning "Bread of Angels") was originally written by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, and *Ave Verum Corpus*, a meditation on Jesus' Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, which was also written in the 13th century, will be performed in their original Latin (but fear not, English translations are printed in the program so the beauty of the lyrics will not be lost).

In addition to the classical pieces, the concert will feature "Keep Your Lamps," a spiritual hymn written by Andre Thomas, inspired by the story of the wise and foolish virgins, found in Matthew 25, and "I Have Been Anointed," which was written and directed by Steven C. Warner, Director of the Notre Dame Folk Choir.

The entire ensemble invites you to join them for this free performance in Angola at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, 700 W. Maumee St., on Sunday, April 21, at 5 p.m.

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

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

### Divine Mercy Sunday at Immaculate Conception

AUBURN – A Divine Mercy Sunday Service that will include adoration and benediction will take place on Sunday, April 7, at Immaculate Conception Church, 500 East 7th Street, beginning at 2:45 p.m. until 4 p.m., with recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Rosary. Confession will be available from 2 to 3 p.m. Contact Lisa Hess at [office@iccauburn.com](mailto:office@iccauburn.com).

### Divine Mercy Sunday in Decatur

DECATUR – St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, 414 West Madison St., will host Divine Mercy adoration and confession on Sunday, April 7, at 2 p.m. A Rosary will begin around 2:10 p.m., and the Divine Mercy Chaplet will begin at 2:40 p.m. Mass will begin at 3 p.m. Contact Richard Reilly at 260-724-9050 or [rcrmatthew@hotmail.com](mailto:rcrmatthew@hotmail.com).

### Divine Mercy Sunday Holy Hour Devotion

FORT WAYNE – Divine Mercy

Sunday devotions at St. Jude Church, 2130 Pemberton Dr., will include a Holy Hour from 3-4 p.m. on Sunday, April 7. The Divine Mercy Chaplet will be prayed, and the Divine Mercy image will be present for veneration. A short reception will follow by the youth group. Contact Vickie Lortie at 260-484-6609 or [vlortie@stjudefw.org](mailto:vlortie@stjudefw.org).

### St. Paul Chapel's Fish Fry

FREMONT – St. Paul Chapel, 8780 E. 700 N., will have fish fry on Friday, April 12, from 5-7 p.m. Dine-in and carryout available. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$5 for children 6-12, and children 5 and younger are free. For more info, contact [katie@stpaulcatholicchapel.org](mailto:katie@stpaulcatholicchapel.org) or call 260-665-2259.

### Spring Rummage Sale

AUBURN – Immaculate Conception Church, 500 East Seventh St., will have a spring rummage sale on Thursday, April 18, from 1-6 p.m. and on Friday, April 19, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more info, contact Lisa Hess at [office@iccauburn.com](mailto:office@iccauburn.com).

### St. Mary's Fish and Tenderloin Dinner

HUNTINGTON – St. Mary's Rosary Sodality will be hosting a fish and tenderloin dinner on Friday, April 19, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. in the gym, 903 N. Jefferson St. Dinner includes cheese potatoes, coleslaw or applesauce, and dessert. There will be a 50/50 raffle and bake sale. Adult dinners are \$15, children 6-12 are \$7, and children 5 and younger are free. Carryout is available. The fish and tenderloin will be made by Dan's Fish Fry Service.

### RETURN Book Study: Morning or Evening

MISHAWAKA – Are you looking for a successful strategy to help your adult child return to practicing the faith? Gather with fellow parents for seven weekly sessions to discuss the book, "Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church," by Brandon Vogt. Sessions are held on Thursdays from April 18 to May 30 at St. Monica Catholic Church, 222 W. Mishawaka Ave., from 10-11:30 a.m., or in the evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. Register at [ablazemission.org](http://ablazemission.org)/return or contact Lisa Everett at [leverett@diocesefwsb.org](mailto:leverett@diocesefwsb.org).

## REST IN PEACE

### Fort Wayne

Mary Ann Krach, 91, St. Vincent de Paul

Kathleen Magsam, 81, St. Vincent de Paul

Greg Newport, 60, St. Vincent de Paul

Donald Teusch, 81, St. Vincent de Paul

Goshen  
Edward Shalaty, 87, St. John the Evangelist

Christine Waugaman, 75, St. John the Evangelist

### Granger

William Corbett, III, 93, St. Pius X

Merrill Crull, 94, St. Pius X

Joseph Gabriel, 86, St. Pius X

Carole Kulwicki, 85, St. Pius X

James Yahoe, 93, St. Pius X

### Mishawaka

Judy Andrews, 82, St. Monica

Dale Freeman, 65, St. Monica

Steven Rospopo, 81, St. Monica

### Pierceton

Lila O'Connell, 98, St. Francis Xavier

### South Bend

JoAnn Kimmel, 86, Sacred Heart of Jesus

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

### Most Precious Blood School Presents Spring Musical 'Willy Wonka Jr.'

FORT WAYNE – Most Precious Blood School presents "Willy Wonka Jr." in the Most Precious Blood gymnasium, 1529 Barthold St., on Friday,

April 19, at 7 p.m., and Saturday, April 20, at 7 p.m. Adult tickets are \$5, and student tickets are \$3. For more information, contact Angela Gernhardt at 260-424-4832 or [office2@preciousblood.org](mailto:office2@preciousblood.org).

## First Saturday Devotion

Our Lady, Patroness of America Center



Mass the First Saturday of each month at 11 a.m.

[PatronessOfAmerica.org](http://PatronessOfAmerica.org)

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St. Mary of the Assumption School in Avilla is in search of a licensed and qualified elementary or middle school teacher, preferably someone passionate about working with children in an educational setting.

The ideal candidate would be a person who is faith-filled, dedicated to quality pedagogy, and committed to holistic education of children. St. Mary was founded in 1863 and in 1876 the Fransican Sisters of the Sacred Heart staffed the school and are responsible for its Catholic identity and Fransican spirit of responsible stewardship and service. In addition the school has a reputation for academic rigor and high expectations. Quality candidates should be open to sharing their faith with children and collaborating with their colleagues.

Lastly, familiarity with educational technology and a willingness to grow professionally and spiritually are ideal.



Interested candidates can apply at [diocesefwsb.org/careers](http://diocesefwsb.org/careers)  
For more information about the position, you may contact  
**Mr. Damian Schmitt at 260-897-3481**



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AVERAGE CLASS SIZE OF 16 STUDENTS



# How Families Can Participate in the National Eucharistic Congress

BY MARIA WIERING

(OSV News) – This summer's National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis will provide a "Steubenville conference" experience for teenagers, while parents with children can expect full-family formation in a track designed to engage adults and kids together, according to congress leaders.

Planned for July 17-21 at Lucas Oil Stadium and the adjacent Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis, the 10th National Eucharistic Congress is expected to draw tens of thousands of Catholics of all ages from across the country for worship, prayer, formation, and community.

Steubenville Conferences, which organizes well-known youth conferences at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio and elsewhere around the United States, is hosting a morning impact session for teenagers and their chaperones under the congress's "Awaken" track. Those sessions will include keynote speakers, worship music, and prayer.

Joel Stepanek, the congress's Vice President of Programming and Administration, told media recently that teenagers can expect to "have that youth conference experience" within the congress context.

Families with children through age 12 or 13 are encouraged to attend morning sessions together at the congress in the "Cultivate" experience.

"The idea is that families with children oftentimes find themselves stuck, where you go to a conference or congress and perhaps there's child care, and Mom and Dad go to some sessions that are catered to them ... or, on the flip side, there's an experience where Mom and Dad go to with their kids, but it's really tailored for their children," Stepanek said. "Our goal for this particular experience is to do something unique."

The "Cultivate" track focuses on ministry for the full family. So, parents and their children "will be able to be present to each other to hear a talk together, to pray together, and have an opportunity to interact with one another," Stepanek said. "It's full-family formation."

While afternoon breakout sessions are open to all congress participants, families and youth also can expect sessions designed for them. Youth sessions are organized by different youth-focused apostolates, such as Life Teen, National Evangelization Teams (NET), and the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement.

Meanwhile, Catechesis



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

**A family is pictured in a file photo after presenting the gifts during Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. National Eucharistic Congress organizers are focusing on making the July event edifying for families, both in content and though logistics.**

of the Good Shepherd and CatholicHOM also will provide prayer, formation, and programming for families. There also will be a kid-friendly area in the exhibit hall, as well as organized family and youth games at White River State Park, which is within walking distance from Lucas Oil Stadium.

Family programming makes it possible for them "to not just experience the congress together but be formed through the congress together," Stepanek said.

Each evening, all congress participants will gather in Lucas Oil Stadium for music and worship, the Family Rosary Across America, and Eucharistic adoration. On Saturday evening, July 20, musician Matt Maher will lead praise and worship. The evenings also include some of the congress's most well-known speakers, including Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, Father Mike Schmitz, Sister Josephine Garrett, and Gloria Purvis.

"We'll have a talk for a means to an end, which is prayer," Stepanek said. "We'll have an opportunity where teens will pray with the larger Body of Christ, where families will pray with the Body of Christ, where children will get to see 60,000 Catholics in prayer and worship. This is an impactful moment for these two groups of people."

The National Eucharistic

Congress is part of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative launched by the U.S. bishops in 2022 to deepen Catholics' relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist.

The cost for the five-day conference pass is \$299 per adult and \$250 per teen, with kids 12 and younger free. By comparison, conference organizers said, a five-day pass for a teen at Disneyland is \$480. Day passes also are available. For more information, visit [eucharisticcongress.org](http://eucharisticcongress.org).

"We're hoping that people will look at this event and say, 'There's a great investment here,'" Stepanek said. The congress is "not just photos and memories for your family, but changing the trajectory of your family for potentially the next several generations."

The congress will differ from other adult, youth, and family conferences in the United States, said Stepanek, who worked as a parish youth minister before spending a decade with Life Teen. By placing the youth experience and families within the larger context of the congress, teenagers and children will see their connection to the wider Church, he said.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for teenagers," he said. "The next time we have a Eucharistic congress, they will be out of high school. ... They're going to be part of something historic, something that has not happened not only in their lifetime but their

parents' lifetime. ... They are a vital part of what we're doing."

Stepanek recalls an experience he had as a 9-year-old at a parish mission that still resonates with him as an adult. "Can you imagine what this will be like for families who have children, teenagers, to come to this historic big moment and to see the Church alive and vibrant in the United States? This is profoundly game-changing for what, generational, things look like for our faith moving forward in this country," he said.

The congress is being planned with family safety in

mind, including security and volunteers to help keep younger children safe and reconnect parents and children in case of separation, a family-specific first-aid station, and space for nursing and napping children.

"We want to make sure that this experience is open to families, is accommodating to families, and provides an opportunity for families to take what is planted here and to grow it when they go back to their home," Stepanek said.

*Maria Wiering is Senior Writer for OSV News.*