VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis formally recognized a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian teenager whose birth in 1991 will make him the first millennial to become a saint.

In a meeting on Thursday, May 23, with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for Saints’ Causes, the pope signed decrees advancing the sainthood causes of Blessed Carlo as well as one woman and six men.

Vatican officials announced on May 23 that the pope had signed the decrees and that he would convene a consistory to set a date for the canonization of Acutis and other future saints: Blessed Giuseppe Allamano; Marie-Léonie Paradis of Québec, Canada; Elena Guerra; and eight Franciscan friars and three Maronite laymen who were martyred in Damascus, Syria, in 1860.

Blessed Carlo was born and baptized in London to Italian parents in 1991, but the family moved back to Milan, Italy, while he was still an infant.

After he started high school, he began to curate, create, or design websites, including one for a local parish, for his Jesuit-run high school, and for the Pontifical Academy “Cultorum Martyrum,” according to the saint’s dicastery. He also used his computer skills to create an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world.

He volunteered at a church-run soup kitchen, helped the poor in his neighborhood, assisted children struggling with their homework, played saxophone, soccer, and videogames, and loved making videos with his computer.

Mother’s Hope is preparing to offer even more hope to expectant mothers. That’s because the Fort Wayne-based organization, which shelters pregnant women and gives them opportunities for growth, is experiencing some growth of its own.

Nearly six years after welcoming its first resident, A Mother’s Hope is officially expanding. Thanks to funding from the St. Joe Community Health Foundation in 2023, the board and staff of A Mother’s Hope have engaged in strategic planning to open a second home for pregnant women who have other children living with them. According to Executive Director Stasia Roth, this will allow A Mother’s Hope to reach women they would otherwise be forced to turn away.

“Right now, our current program only serves pregnant women who do not have other children in their care,” Roth told Today’s Catholic. “But only 39 percent of the women we serve, this is their first baby, so most of the women have other kids somewhere — they’re just not with us. So that’s been an impediment to women getting their children out of foster care.

A MOTHER’S HOPE, page 20

BY CAROL GLATZ

BY ERIC PEAT

Stasia Roth, Founder and Executive Director of A Mother’s Hope, sits in her new office at 4618 East State Boulevard, the offices previously occupied by Redeemer Radio.
Father Fernando Returns to Sri Lanka

BY KEVIN KILBANE

Ministering to the sick and older adults has been a focus of Father Polycarp Fernando’s ministry in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. He plans to continue some of that work in his homeland for Sri Lanka after retiring on Monday, June 17, from this diocese.

Father Fernando, 73, who currently serves as a Parochial Vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, will move to the campus of the Congregation of Sisters of the Holy Angels of Sri Lanka in the country’s Archdiocese of Colombo. The campus includes an infirmary, chapel, and training program for women entering the congregation.

“When sisters fall sick, they bring them there,” said Father Fernando, who wants to talk in a religious community. “And they look after them and, when they are cured, they are sent back.”

Holy Angels sisters work as teachers and care for older adults in Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Australia.

The outgoing Father Fernando about an hour from his home village and family, so he can visit them often, he said. Of the 14 children, he now has only five living siblings, including a sister who is a member of the Holy Angels religious order and who works in Australia. He asked Bishop Rhoades to grant him retirement before the usual age 75 so he can spend time with his surviving family.

St. Vincent Parish will celebrate Father Fernando’s 15 years of ministry there with farewell receptions after the 9 and 11 a.m. Masses on Sunday, June 9, in the parish’s Monsignor John Kuzmich Life Center.

“Both the youngest and the oldest parishioners are especially drawn to him,” said Father Daniel Scheidt, St. Vincent Pastor. “The oldest parishioners because he is so generous with his time and thoughtful in his listening to their needs and concerns. And also wise in offering his pastoral counsel to them.

The latest and youngest of our parishioners are drawn to him because he is like an extra grandfather for them — or even great-grandfather.”

Father Scheidt added. Father Fernando always greets people before and after weekend Masses, he said, and he celebrates some weekday Masses for children attending the parish’s school.

Father Fernando was born in a small village near the city of Negombo on the west coast of Sri Lanka, an island nation southeast of India. The Negombo area is about 95 percent Catholic, though Catholics and Christians make up only about 6 percent of Sri Lanka’s overall population, Father Fernando said. About 65 percent of Sri Lankans practice Buddhism.

Along with growing up in a strong Catholic family and in a Catholic environment, Father Fernando said he was inspired to become a priest by his pastor, who served as a mentor, and by the first man from his village to become a priest. Father Fernando said he felt a call to the priesthood in sixth grade, and he entered a seminary in 1964 to begin eighth grade. After graduation from high school, however, he left the seminary and taught for about two years at an after-school tutoring site.

He still felt called to the priesthood, so he moved to the Diocese of Galle in southern Sri Lanka and enrolled in the seminary there, he said. Some of his friends attended the same seminary. The Galle diocese, which serves an area with few Catholics, also had a greater need for priests. He was ordained there on August 19, 1978.

During approximately the next 18 years, he served in the Diocese of Galle except when earning a master’s degree and doctorate in moral theology in Rome.

He came to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in May of 1997.

His diocese in Sri Lanka allowed priests to serve for three years in the United States to gain pastoral experience, Father Fernando said. A neighbor from his home village who had become a priest already worked in this diocese and recommended it, saying the only problem was the snow and winter. He applied to this diocese and one in New York, telling himself he would accept the first offer. That came from the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese’s late Bishop John M. D’Arcy.

After a few months at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Father Fernando served from August of 1997 to 2001 at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fort Wayne. There, his responsibilities included ministering to people who were sick, in nursing homes, or homebound.

“Everybody cannot do it,” Father Fernando said. “When I worked at St. Charles, I got that liking and zeal to do that.”

After completing his allowed three years in America, he decided to stay on as a priest of this diocese rather than return home. Bishop D’Arcy approved the request.

“I thought I can work here well,” Father Fernando explained.

He continued ministering to a large number of homebound parishioners when he was named Pastor in 2001 of both St. Henry and Sacred Heart parishes in Fort Wayne. From 2003 to 2011, Father Fernando served as Pastor at St. Dominic Parish in Bremen, where he said he did a lot of work with youth and children. He also led the parish through the diocese’s Legacy of Faith fund drive, where the congregation exceeded its goal by nearly $100,000. They had the highest parishioner participation rate among all congregations in the diocese. The

overage returned to the parish helped them add a chapel and main-floor restrooms, he noted.

Father Fernando enjoyed his time at St. Dominic, but he asked Bishop D’Arcey to assign him a parochial vicar so he could devote more time to ministering to the sick and older adults. He began his assignment at St. Vincent Parish in 2011 and has been there since.

The parish’s boundaries include at least 14 nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, more than any other parish in the diocese, Father Fernando said. He celebrates Mass monthly at nine of the facilities and visits all of them at least once a month.

He also visits people who are homebound and St. Vincent parishioners who are living in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities just outside the parish boundaries.

“Of course, I visit them a little,” Father Fernando said of his visitsations. “I give Communion and a blessing. If there is anything they want, I tell them I am here [St. Vincent Parish].”

Father Fernando’s responsibilities at St. Vincent also include providing at parishioners’ funerals and participating in the regular preaching rotation at Masses, Father Scheidt said.

“Father Polycarp is very diligent about preparing his homilies, both in terms of study and of prayer,” said Father Scheidt, who has worked with Father Fernando as very humble. The homilies encourage people to examine their lives in relation to that day’s Gospel message, which “has helped multitudes of us at St. Vincent’s examine our lives in light of the Lord and bring ourselves closer to the Lord,” Father Scheidt said.

Father Fernando said he has most enjoyed two aspects of his ministry: “Of course, celebrating Mass and the sacraments, confession,” he said. That allows him to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

“And, of course, I like children. We learn a lot of things from them. When we become friendly with the children, it is good for the children to have that trust and so on and also get an idea of a priest gradually (while the ‘housewarming’).

Father Fernando expressed appreciation for the many lay-people who assisted him at the parishes where he served. He also thanked leaders who have worked with him, such as Bishops Rhoades and D’Arcey, the late Monsignor John Suelzer at St. Charles, and current Pastor Father Scheidt and former Pastor Monsignor John Kuzmich at St. Vincent.

“Of course, I have greatly missed,” Father Scheidt said, “because he loved generously, and he encouraged people to love generously.”
U.S. Bishops Join Lawsuit Regarding Federal Abortion Regulations

BY KATE SCANLON

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, alongside other Catholic groups, filed suit on Wednesday, May 22, against a federal agency for including abortion in regulations implementing a law meant to add workplace protections for pregnant workers.

Final regulations for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in April, grant workers protections for time off and other job accommodations for pregnancy-related medical conditions such as miscarriage, stillbirth, and lactation — but also for abortion, which was opposed by many of the bill’s supporters, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Chieko Noguchi, USCCB Spokeswoman, told OSV News on Thursday, May 23, that the conference “enthusiastically supported passage of this law, because it had nothing to do with abortion.”

The conference, Noguchi said, supported the legislation’s “reasonable accommodations and things like paid time off and modified work schedules. … We supported that because we believe it’s important to help protect the well-being of expectant mothers and their preborn children,” she added. “But the EEOC, which is an unelected federal agency, hijacked the law, which doesn’t mention abortion at all,” she said, adding the EEOC’s regulation is “mandating that employers accommodate employee abortions.”

As such, she said, the regulation would, in effect, force the USCCB to “knowingly support employees as they get abortions, and it forbids us from encouraging them to choose life.”

“It bans us from operating in accordance with Church teaching,” Noguchi said. “So that’s why we have filed this lawsuit.”

The EEOC regulations govern the implementation of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, bipartisan legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden in December of 2022. The law went into effect in June of 2023 and prohibits employers from asking workers about the reason for workplace accommodations, pregnancy-related medical conditions, and pregnancy-related medical conditions, “in a way that violates the conscience of pro-life employers.”

Many pro-life activists, including the USCCB, supported the legislation. But the EEOC regulation governing the implementation of the law was released after it was enacted, contained broad language including abortion among “related medical conditions,” and the potential circumstances for which employers may have to grant workplace accommodations, such as time off for medical appointments or additional rest breaks.

“Congress was right and EEOC is wrong,” Noguchi said. “The bipartisan law itself is a ‘really good law.’ The complaint, filed in in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, states that ‘Congress was right and EEOC is wrong.’

“The PWFA is not an abortion accommodation mandate. Rather, it fills a gap in federal employment law by ensuring pregnant women receive workplace accommodations to protect their pregnancies and their preborn children,” it said.

Daniel Blomberg, Vice President and Senior Counsel for Becket, told OSV News that the case is important because the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act itself is a “really good law.”

“It’s about protecting pregnant women and their children in the workplace,” Blomberg said. “The idea is that you want to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy childbirth, and that’s great for a healthy country. That’s why the USCCB supported that law. That’s why a lot of folks supported this bipartisan law.”

But the law, he said, “has been hijacked by a partisan EEOC that is trying to use a law about healthy pregnancy to force abortion on employers nationwide, including religious employers, and that’s just not right.”
St. Vincent de Paul Parish has been blessed with the vocation of Father Polycarp Fernando and his 13 years of faithful service within our parish.

May God bless him on his retirement!

BY GEORGIA LIEB AND JOSHUA SCHIPPER

A head of their respective graduation ceremonies in which the class of 2024 at Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger commemorated the end of their high school careers, Bishop Rhoades celebrated separate baccalaureate Masses to honor their achievements.

Graduating seniors at Bishop Dwenger High School processed into St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne for a baccalaureate Mass on the morning of Thursday, May 23. Parents, students, and administrators listened as Bishop Rhoades spoke of the benefits of Catholic education and the many challenges that the graduates will face as they enter the world.

Bishop Rhoades shared similar sentiments to the graduating class from Bishop Luers High School during their baccalaureate Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne on Friday, May 24.

At both Masses, Bishop Rhoades spoke about the Gospel reading that told of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, reminding the graduates that Jesus used the Beatitudes – these “fundamental attitudes,” Bishop Rhoades said – to teach the disciples how to live in the world. Jesus tells the disciples to build their houses on Him, meaning that following His teachings would lead the disciples to eternal life.

“I invite you, at this important moment of your life, to reflect on this Gospel. You’re going to be following different paths. Most of you will be going off to college, various colleges and universities, some of you to the world of work, or perhaps military service. Some of you may go into construction work. But I want to say to you this morning: You’re all going into construction work. You’ll be building a house: a house of your life.”

He continued, “The most important thing in the construction process is building on a strong foundation, and that’s what a Catholic education is meant to teach you: to build your life on rock, not on sand. Your education [at Bishop Dwenger and at Bishop Luers] has taught you to construct your house on Christ, the living Word of God.”

Bishop Rhoades said that the saints built their lives on the foundation of Christ and pointed to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. He said that Frassati had a difficult family life that was compounded by political turmoil in Italy. This turmoil contributed to anti-Catholic attitudes in Frassati’s home country. Despite this, he persisted. He joined the Italian Catholic Federation of University Students and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, as well as Catholic Action.

“He didn’t sit and watch the world go by,” Bishop Rhoades told the students at St. Vincent de Paul and at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. “And I want to encourage you, if you’re going off to college or university, get active.”

Bishop Rhoades concluded his homily at both Masses by encouraging the students to strive for greatness like the saints did.

“I am asking Blessed Pier Giorgio to pray for you, graduates, as you go forth,” Bishop Rhoades said. “His motto was ‘Verso l’alto!’ which means, ‘To the heights.’ Remember, he was an adventurous mountain climber with his friends. After Mass and adoration, he would go mountain climbing with his friends, and he would often lead them in praying the Rosary as they climbed. Graduates, ‘Verso l’alto!’ ‘To the heights!’ Be spiritual climbers! In other words, strive to be saints! Build your houses on solid rock!”

A cantor sings during the baccalaureate Mass for Bishop Luers High School.

Dwenger, Luers Grads Encouraged to Strive for Greatness

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A cantor sings during the baccalaureate Mass for Bishop Luers High School.
On Pilgrimage with Christ: Meet Mason Bailey

By Mason Bailey

My name is Mason Bailey, and I am excited to share throughout these next several weeks my thoughts and experiences as I participate in the Marian Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. I am a native of Fort Wayne, and my home parish is Most Precious Blood. I attend St. Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana, where I just completed my first year of philosophy studies. God willing, I will be ordained a priest for the diocese in 2029!

In preparing for this pilgrimage, I virtually met my fellow pilgrims and the incredible organizers of the pilgrimage, listening as they outlined the events for each diocese along the way. I’ve been incredibly impressed with their leadership and organization. It is no small feat to plan a thousand-mile journey across the Midwest! It also happens that one of my fellow pilgrims, Kai Weiss, and I attended college at the same time. Small world!

Physically, this route will be arduous, of course, but manageable. I see it as a considerable grace that I was able to participate in last year’s World Youth Day events in Lisbon, Portugal. We walked along miles of road to see Pope Francis and engage with Catholics from across the globe. Similarly, I will encounter thousands of Catholics from across the Midwest and witness the transformative power of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This is a national, once-in-a-lifetime movement in the United States. Spiritual preparation for the pilgrimage has been very good. Built into every day of seminary is time to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. It’s encouraged to make a Holy Hour every day, even when you are tired after a long day of studying John Duns Scotus and Aquinas! Although, I must admit that I’ve rested with the Lord on more than one occasion. During these Holy Hours, I prayed for God’s grace to strengthen me on this pilgrimage and give me the ability to encounter people along the way.

My prayer for this pilgrimage, the National Eucharistic Congress, and the National Eucharistic Revival as a whole, is that the Church in the United States will be set ablaze with the fire of God’s love and His Holy Spirit. There is such a yearning in the human heart, especially in those of young people, that can only be filled by Christ. I saw it firsthand while in college. As a resident assistant, I walked with Christians of every stripe on their faith journeys. I look forward to ministering to all the people I meet along the way this summer. This pilgrimage has the opportunity to inspire many vocations and conversions. Please join me in praying for an increase in vocations in our diocese and in each one that the pilgrimage passes through.

It is a gift to be a seminarian for our diocese and to be able to represent the faithful of Fort Wayne-South Bend at each stop of the pilgrimage from Bemidji, Minnesota, to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress. Know of my prayers for you as we process the Blessed Sacrament across the region. I hope you enjoy what my friend and fellow pilgrim, Danielle, has to say. She’s on fire for the Lord! Pax Christi, Mason Bailey
**Pope Marks First World Children’s Day**

Pope Francis shakes hands and greets a group of children after Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Sunday, May 26, wrapping up the first World Children’s Day weekend. On Saturday, May 25, the pope celebrated with thousands of children at Rome’s Olympic Stadium to mark the inaugural event. Pope Francis told the crowd that to change the world, children must press ahead, be joyful, ask adults why there is injustice, and always help others. “We are gathered here at the Olympic Stadium, to ‘kick-off’ the movement of boys and girls who want to build a world of peace, where we are all brothers and sisters, a world that has a future because we want to take care of the environment around us,” he said on May 25.
Grants Awarded
The 2024 Parish-in-Need Grants have been awarded to eight parishes within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. This program is part of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal and supports smaller or less-affluent parishes to fill specific needs at the individual parishes throughout the diocese. Each year, many parishes request aid through the program, but not every request can be granted. As a result, a committee carefully considers each application, and Bishop Rhoades gives final approval. This year, 10 of 19 requests were granted for a total of $210,000.

This year’s disbursement and the primary parish projects include:

**Fort Wayne**
- St. Therese – $23,000 for gym building controls
- St. Therese – $17,000 for a school boiler
- Queen of Angels – $40,000 for outdoor stairwell replacement

**South Bend**
- St. Casimir – $40,000 for a new annex flat roof
- Our Lady of Hungary – $20,000 for church radiator repairs
- Our Lady of Hungary – $10,000 for school ceiling and roof repairs
- Holy Cross – $7,500 for a security entrance system for the school
- St. John the Baptist – $57,655.50 for the rectory

**Area parishes**
- St. Joseph, LaGrange – $10,344.50 for parish office roof repair and gutters
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw – $14,500 for a new HVAC system for the rectory.

St. Mary Avilla Student Claims International Soccer Title
Beretta Opliger, a third-grade student at St. Mary of the Assumption School in Avilla, was recently recognized by the Father Dominic Duehmig Council No. 14214 of the Knights of Columbus for being named one of just 12 International Winners of the group’s 2023-24 Soccer Challenge. Opliger is just one of two winners in the world honored in the 9-year-old age group. According to the council, Opliger had the highest score among all the winners in her age category in the female division. She also won the regional and state competitions. Pictured with Opliger from Council No. 14214 are Knights Ben Helmkamp, Brad Wilson, Ken Gerard, Tim Dice, and Dave Roesener.

Praise and Worship Band Brings Community Together to Pray in Area First
Father Thomas Zehr, Pastor at St. Mary Parish in Huntington, stands with members of a praise and worship band to talk to and pray with parishioners from St. Mary and SS. Peter and Paul at the first Praise and Worship event hosted by both parishes at the Knights of Columbus in Huntington on Saturday, May 18.

2024 Scheiber Scholars Announced
On Tuesday, May 14, the Community Foundation of Huntington County announced the 2024 recipients of the Donald E. and Lou Rayne Scheiber Catholic Education Scholarships. The winners of the scholarship are Henry Landrigan, Dale Schweller, Cordelia Richert, and Madeline Davis. All are members of SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Huntington. Created in 1997, the mission of the Donald E. and Lou Rayne Scheiber Catholic Education and Charity Fund is first, to promote educational opportunities for Huntington County students who are members of one of three local Catholic Church parishes (St. Joseph in Roanoke and St. Mary and SS. Peter and Paul in Huntington), and second to provide charitable grants to Catholic organizations that promote the accepted teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Parishioners of St. Mary and SS. Peter and Paul churches in Huntington sing along with the band to honor the Lord at the first Praise and Worship Night.
The Heart of a Servant Leader: Monsignor Schooler Marks Golden Jubilee

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

Some of his fellow priests call him “Monsignor,” his proper title, just to get a reaction out of him. They know that’s not really his style. Really, everyone from parishioner to priest knows him as “Father Bill.”

On Saturday, May 25, Monsignor William Schooler celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination – his golden jubilee – at his parish, St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger, at the vigil Mass of the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

As Father Schooler said in his homily, remembering his early priesthood, “I’ll never forget, part of my homily I very much said, ‘We priests are ordained to build communities of people, not physical buildings.’” The congregation laughed, as Father Schooler has overseen the construction of more than one church building, including St. Pius X’s school and rectory. But the turnout to Father Schooler’s Mass provided a testament to his ability to foster that spiritual community as well.

The large church of St. Pius X was full of family, friends, parishioners, fellow priests, and an assortment of choirs and instrumentalists to beautify the liturgy.

People from St. Pius X Church gave Today’s Catholic various descriptions for Father Bill, including “compassionate,” “welcoming,” “patient,” “humble,” and “easygoing.”

Catholic various descriptions for Father Bill, including “compassionate,” “welcoming,” “patient,” “humble,” and “easygoing.” The parish’s business manager, Maureen Newsom, offered what she saw as a defining characteristic of Father Schooler: “empathy.” “He gives totally of himself to the parishioners, and they know it,” said Newsom, who is the only remaining staff member at St. Pius X Church who remembers Father Bill’s coming to the parish 23 years ago. “I liked him immediately,” she remembered.

Mary Kate Boyle, Assistant Director of Children and Family Formation at St. Pius X Church, has been a parishioner since last August. “I’ve loved working with him,” Boyle said of Father Schooler. She added, “One of the things so apparent from the beginning. He has the heart of a servant leader.”

In Bishop Rhoades’ comments after the jubilee Mass, Bishop Schooler for the various ministries he grew during his pastorate, as well as his “well-balanced” life (Father Schooler is an avid cyclist). Additionally, Bishop Rhoades noted that 1974, Father Schooler’s ordination year, was a difficult time for the Catholic Church, with vocations and Mass attendance plummeting. Father Schooler was the only priest in the diocese to be ordained that year. Referencing Pope St. Paul VI’s work in guiding the Church during that time, Bishop Rhoades said, “Father Bill imbued the hope of [Pope Paul VI]’s exhortation in his zeal as a young priest, a zeal that has remained for all these years.”

Bishop Rhoades also mentioned another characteristic of the 1970s: the hair, bringing the congregation’s attention to the photo of a newly ordained Father Schooler on the back of the Mass program. “I had almost the identical hairstyle. ” Bishop Rhoades remembered. He then added that the then-bishop of the diocese had made Father Schooler get a haircut before his ordination. “Father Bill, we share so much in common – the Bishop of Harrisburg made me get a haircut when I applied to seminary.” Bishop Rhoades said to laughter in the congregation.

In his homily, Father Schooler reflected on the self-sacrifice he has learned as a priest. He remembered how hard it was to leave every assignment he has had, whether as a chaplain and teacher at Marian High School or as pastor in the parishes he served before St. Pius X. “What’s interesting is that every time I died to what I was doing, I shared new life I never expected,” Father Schooler said.

He added: “I’ve always found every move to be very beautiful. As painful as they were, those moves, dying to the old place, taught me something about the Paschal Mystery.”

Father Augustine Onuoha is Parochial Vicar at St. Pius X, his first priestly assignment. He met Father Schooler three years ago on his ordination day and has worked with him ever since. Father Onuoha remembered that another priest once told him that a man’s first few years as a priest can set the tone for the rest of his priesthood.
priesthood. Father Onuoha thanked Father Bill for being such a good mentor during his first years as a priest.

“I’m really, really privileged to work with him as a young priest, because not all people have that opportunity,” Father Onuoha said, adding that he works well with Father Schooler in part because he said the two have “almost the same personality” in that both are very outgoing.

“He’s joyful, he’s easygoing, he’s a pastor,” Father Onuoha reflected. “He’s a pastor who loves his people, and that is really important.”

A crowd of parishioners, family, and friends lined up to personally congratulate Father Schooler after Mass. At the reception afterwards, the church hall was covered with well-wishes and banners from the parish school students.

“Dear parishioners, Father Bill has served you with joy and love,” Bishop Rhoades said to the congregation. “I thank you for loving and supporting him as your shepherd these past 23 years.”

Parishioners, family, and friends line up to congratulate Monsignor Schooler on the 50th anniversary of his ordination.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades congratulates Monsignor Schooler during Mass on Saturday, May 25, at St. Pius X in Granger.
Saint Mary’s, ND Graduates Sent Forth on a Mission

BY MICHELLE MCDANIEL AND SCOTT WARDEN

On the weekend of May 17-19, Bishop Rhoades celebrated alongside the graduating classes at two local Catholic institutes of higher learning – Saint Mary’s College and the University of Notre Dame.

Bishop Rhoades celebrated the baccalaureate Mass at the Angela Athletic and Wellness Complex on the campus of Saint Mary’s on Friday, May 17. The following day, after saying Deacon Andrew Barnes at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend, Bishop Rhoades spoke at the commencement Mass at Notre Dame. On Pentecost Sunday, May 19, he offered the invocation at Notre Dame’s graduation ceremony, which was held at Notre Dame Stadium.

At Saint Mary’s, more than 1,000 graduates attended the Mass, which was presided over by Bishop Rhoades and included students who participated in the Mass as altar servers and readers. Saint Mary’s graduate Georgia Sigler, who will pursue a master’s degree in music education at The Catholic University of America beginning in August, cantered for her third commencement Mass.

“It was really special for me to be able to cantor this Mass,” Sigler told Today’s Catholic. “Being able to combine my faith and my studies and put them together in my commencement weekend was very special. It made me feel like I could prove that Saint Mary’s College has given me in my studies and show that it has paid off.”

Once more students had filed into the front five rows of the gymnasium, Bishop Rhoades greeted the attendees.

“Tenderness is the warmth of love,” Bishop Rhoades said, “a love that is intimate and real, not an abstraction, not just an idea. Mary is a living icon for us of God’s tenderness. … The holy cross of Jesus is the proof of divine tenderness, and tenderness is not sentimental; rather, it is a love poured out for others that is compassionate and lived out in the world’s mercy. … While sweet, true tenderness is also strong. It involves strength of spirit. In Mary, we encounter a tenderness that is strong. Her strength is the strength of faith. She exhibited fidelity in doing what God asked of her and courage in following her Son on the road to Calvary. … Our Lady had the strength of staying the course, even when there was great opposition to her Son and her. Be true; in other words, be loyal. … Our Lady was certainly loyal and true, wholeheartedly saying ‘yes’ to God’s call and living that ‘yes’ as the first and greatest disciple of her Son. … Remaining true to her vocation, Mary shined fully the mission of her Son. She teaches us to be true to Jesus and His Body, the Church, as we promised at our baptism. Not just in some or even most aspects of our lives, but with every fiber of our being.”

Bishop Rhoades encouraged the graduates to be tender, strong, and true – to embrace the three adjectives from the Notre Dame alma mater that describe Our Lady.

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Bishop Rhoades concluded by saying: “Graduates, my prayer for you is that, following the example of Mary, Notre Dame, Our Mother, and with the help of her intercession, you will be tender, strong, and true throughout your life’s journey. May Glory’s mantle that cloaks the Blessed Virgin Mary one day cloak you, her spiritual sons and daughters.”
St. Thérèse, Little Flower Parish Praises Holy Spirit with Pentecost Festivities

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

The staff at St. Thérèse, Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend consider one of their “anchors as a parish” to be “reliance on the Holy Spirit,” according to Abby Kyle, the parish’s Director of Evangelization. So, when Pentecost approached this year, they knew they wanted to do something extra special as a parish to mark the occasion.

“The Holy Spirit is a gift that the Lord desires to give to everyone,” Father Julius Okojie, Pastor of St. Thérèse, Little Flower, said at the Pentecost Mass, citing Jesus’ promise to pour out the Holy Spirit.

The Pentecost weekend was full of events from a family-friendly bonfire with worship music to intercessory prayer to a multicultural food festival hosted by parishioners from around the world. Kyle said she wanted to offer multiple opportunities for celebration throughout the weekend.

“We just wanted to make sure there was something for everyone,” Kyle said. She added, “Sometimes people think that life in the Holy Spirit is this monolith, when it’s really not.”

One feature of the weekend was the Called and Gifted workshop, which leads participants to discern the charisms (particular gifts) that they have been personally given by the Holy Spirit, whether leadership, service, craftsmanship, or others. Parishioner Grace Rivelli joined in the workshop this year because she had heard positive things from former participants. Because the workshop fell on Pentecost weekend, she called the decision to sign up a “no-brainer.”

“I was wanting to welcome the Holy Spirit and see how He’s been activating in my life,” Rivelli said.

Most of the charisms Rivelli discerned were not surprising – especially that of encouragement, which Rivelli said she uses frequently in her job as a teacher at St. Joseph Preschool. But of other charisms she has less experience with, Rivelli said, “I’m curious to see if the Lord might use that in the future, down the road.”

Another major weekend event was the foreign cuisine fest after the Sunday Pentecost Mass. Parish staff dubbed this the “tongues of fire, multicultral food festival,” after the passage in Acts where foreigners all hear the disciples speaking in their own languages. Different countries were represented with tables, decorations, and, of course, good food. Kyle expressed her enthusiasm in “all these different cultures celebrating our unity under the Trinity,” while Father Okojie reminded everyone present that “God chose to make us who we are; it isn’t a mistake that we come from different cultures.” He exhorted everyone to “show up and show off” their cultural heritages.

Food at the festival ranged from Rwandan samosas to the Caribbean island Saint Lucia’s national dish: “green fig salad,” made with green bananas and salted fish (one taster said it reminded her of potato salad).

At her table, native Lebanese Pauline Farhat showed visitors how to eat food the Lebanese way. Farhat moved to the United States from Lebanon two months ago because of the war in the Middle East. Farhat said she was motivated to participate in the festival so she could introduce people to St. Charbel, a significant saint in the Maronite Catholic rite and in Lebanon. “St. Charbel wants to be known in Indiana,” Farhat said.

Longtime parishioner Carolynne Hine-Edington has Native American Cherokee heritage and, like many other participants, came dressed in native garb. In her case, this was a “jingle dance,” which is a dress covered in 360 tin cones representing days of the year. Hine-Edington said she loves learning about all different cultures while introducing people to her own. “We’re here to praise God who made all nations,” Hine-Edington said.

Of course, prayer was a central part of the weekend, whether through the extended Pentecost Vigil Mass, Mass parts prayed in languages from Tagalog to German, or the personal intercessory prayers offered after every weekend Mass.

“We are grateful to the Holy Spirit for manifesting strongly in our parish this weekend, and for continuing to animate us to bear witness to Christ,” Father Okojie said. “This is a revival moment for our parish, and South Bend as a whole.”

As Kyle said, “Jesus is always going after the one, so that is our hope and our objective, for individuals to experience the personal love of Jesus.” She added, “If even one person understands that this weekend, all this work will be worth it.”
Perpetual Adoration Makes Christ Constantly Available

BY JOSHUA SCHIPPER

E ven as the moonlight casts shadows of steeples across the parking lots of two parishes in Fort Wayne, Catholics continuously flock to the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrances of these adoration chapels.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish’s chapel, the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene, opened in 2021, and St. Jude Parish’s chapel will mark its upcoming 40th anniversary with major renovations to a space that has seen very few updates since its inception in October of 1985.

Monsignor Robert Schulte, Pastor of St. Jude in Fort Wayne, said that a major donation will allow St. Jude to begin these renovations at the end of May, necessary after 39 years of continued use and sanitizer-damaged pews from the pandemic.

Despite this period of construction, perpetual adoration at St. Jude continues. Amy Delaney, who heads the Perpetual Adoration Committee at the parish, emphasized the importance of persisting with perpetual adoration during the renovations because the purpose of the chapel is to promote perpetual adoration regardless of inconvenient circumstances.

Delaney, whose committee is responsible for finding adorers to commit to a combined 336 hours every week, pointed to a nearby parish conference room that adorers will use until renovations are completed.

She reflected on the impact that the nearly four decades of perpetual adoration has had in the Catholic community outside of St. Jude, saying that many priests who have been ordained in the diocese have prayed in the chapel as they discerned their vocation. She also mentioned that adorers come from numerous neighboring parishes to worship and take advantage of this gift that the parish provides to the area.

On top of that, the chapel’s close proximity to Parkview Randallia Hospital across the street has often given a place of solace to those caring for hospitalized loved ones.

The chapel at St. Jude has marked several memorable events over the years, including an apostolic blessing from Pope St. John Paul II and a written letter from St. Mother Teresa offering her “whole-hearted support and encouragement” of the chapel’s mission.

The constant battle in maintaining a perpetual adoration chapel is finding enough committed adorers to keep watch with Christ. Oftentimes, adorers will make changes in their lives that prevent them from keeping their commitment, and in many cases, older adorers who take on multiple hours in their retirement pass away, leaving behind early morning hours that can be hard to fill.

The struggle to fill hours is something that is well-understood by both perpetual adoration chapels in Fort Wayne. Jessica Hayes, who coordinates adoration at the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene on the campus of St. Vincent de Paul in Fort Wayne, said that a hesitancy toward commitment drives a lot of initial issues in recruiting new adorers, as well as what she described as a “difficulty with silence.”

To get over the hurdle of hesitancy toward committing to a weekly hour, Delaney recommends simply popping in as a visitor for five to 15 minutes at a time to see what works. Becoming a substitute, she said, is also a very low-commitment, low-pressure way to encounter perpetual adoration, grow in the devotion, and benefit the longevity of the chapel. Delaney said that available substitutes ensure that, even when committed adorers need to miss an hour, someone is always watching keep. Substitutes will receive notifications that they are needed, but they can choose to accept or decline requests, something she said helps introduce people to perpetual adoration without the added pressure of a weekly commitment.

For those encountering adoration for the first time, Hayes suggested a number of ways to ease nerves and make the time more fruitful.

“They can take spiritual reading, or there’s Scripture,” Hayes told Today’s Catholic. “I always have a Gospel reflection and meditation written up for people to pick up on their way in from last Sunday’s Gospel, if they wish. I had suggestions of different things that they could do — praying lectio divina, or meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, and just some resources for basic prayer along with books for their spiritual reading.”

Outside of structured reading and prayer, Hayes said, people can encounter the Lord in adoration by simply being there in the quiet and making “whatever comes to their mind and heart their prayer and their offering in that time.”

New adorers and substitutes can find more information and sign up via links on the parishes’ websites at saintv.org/adoration and stjudeadorationchapel.com.

CORPUS CHRISTI

SUNDAY

On Sunday, June 2, the Church celebrates the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, also known as Corpus Christi Sunday. On this feast day, the faithful are called to honor the Real Presence of Christ — body, blood, soul, and divinity — in the Eucharist.

On this solemnity in 2022, Pope Francis spoke of the importance of being nourished by the Eucharist. He said: “Instituted during the Last Supper, the Eucharist was like the destination of a journey in which Jesus had prefigured it through several signs, above all the multiplication of the loaves. … Jesus takes care of the huge crowd that had followed Him to listen to His word and to be freed from various evils. He blesses five loaves and two fish, breaks them, the disciples distribute them, and ‘they all ate and were satisfied’ (Lk 9:17).”

The Gospel says, in the Eucharist, everyone can experience this loving and concrete attention of the Lord. Those who receive the body and blood of Christ with faith not only eat but are satisfied. To eat and to be satisfied: these are two basic necessities that are fulfilled in the Eucharist. … For in the warmth of His presence, our lives change. Without Him, everything would truly be grey. Adoring the body and blood of Christ, let us ask Him with our heart: ‘Lord, give me the daily bread to go forward, Lord, satisfy me with your presence!’”

The perpetual adoration chapel at St. Jude Church in Fort Wayne will soon undergo a renovation.

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Photo by Joshua Schipper

The Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene, located on the campus of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, opened in 2021.

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Photo by Joshua Schipper

The Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene, located on the campus of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, opened in 2021.

Photo by Joshua Schipper

The Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene, opened in

June 2, 2024
BY SCOTT WARDEN

Earlier this year, the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana announced that Mackenzie Ritchie would succeed Mike Shade as CEO. Shade had led the foundation since 2017.

The mission of the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana is to support the spiritual, educational, and charitable ministries of the Catholic Church and Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend by inspiring charitable giving and estate planning.

The foundation, essentially, helps donors and local Catholic organizations by establishing endowment funds that provide ongoing, long-term support for Catholic parishes, schools, and other groups and apostolates across the diocese. According to the foundation’s 2023 impact statement, the foundation has distributed more than $11 million out of the 271 funds it holds throughout the past five years, and more than $2.3 million was distributed during the 2023 fiscal year alone.

Ritchie is no stranger to the fundraising and development space, having previously worked for two military academies before serving as the Director of Communications and Director of Development for the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan.

In an interview with Today’s Catholic, Ritchie explains the benefits of giving to parishes, schools, and elsewhere through the foundation, the challenges and opportunities of sharing the foundation’s mission, and the joy she’s found in forming relationships with members of the Catholic community.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Today’s Catholic: Many readers are likely familiar with the name Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana, but what is the foundation that might be a mystery to them. How would you describe the mission of the foundation to everyday Catholics?

Ritchie: In these first few months in my new role, I’ve found this to be true—I’m realizing one of our biggest challenges is that many people are unaware of what we do. Our mission, at its heart, is to provide long-term financial support to the Catholic community in northeast Indiana. So, what is the Catholic community? It’s every parish, it’s every Catholic school, it’s every Catholic ministry. And how do we provide ongoing, long-term support? We do that by connecting individuals and families with the Catholic ministries they are most passionate about. Our mission is to walk alongside donors in their charitable giving, helping them to establish or donate endowment funds that provide permanent financial support to Catholic organizations.

Today’s Catholic: To help readers understand a little more clearly, the foundation invests their donations by pooling them with like-minded givers and then the proceeds of those investments provide an ongoing gift to the parish or school or organization that they’ve chosen, correct?

Ritchie: That’s exactly right. So, for example, if a donor were to set up a fund to support Immaculate Conception Parish in Kendallville, their gift will always be separate in the sense that it can only be used to benefit Immaculate Conception. But it is pooled together with other endowments held at the foundation for investment. When a grant is made from the return on that investment, their fund’s portion of that return will go directly to Immaculate Conception. This is an annual process, providing ongoing support to their chosen ministry.

The foundation grants out 4.5 percent each year, while leaving the principal of the endowment intact. This is what allows the funds to grow over time while continuing to provide support to the specified ministries every year.

I also think it’s important for parishioners to know that at the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana, our investment portfolio and strategies are aligned with Catholic teaching. This commitment to socially responsible investing, which ensures we invest based on Catholic moral principles, is an important part of our foundation’s mission. Donors can feel confident that not only is their donation supporting the ministry they love forever, their gift is also being invested in a way that fully reflects our beliefs as Catholics.

Today’s Catholic: When donating through the foundation, what’s the benefit for donors—and also, what’s the benefit of Catholic schools, parishes, and other Catholic groups you’re holding funds for? Many might think, “Well, that’s a beautiful question, because even for myself as a parishioner and donor, that’s really what’s on top of my mind. It’s really important for parishioners to donate to both, quite frankly. Here’s how I like to think of it: The tithing you do weekly to your parish is absolutely critical. It covers the everyday ministry work, the payroll, keeping the lights on... all those necessary things that keep the parish running today. Everyone’s importance of donors and gift giving is absolutely critical to the foundation. But the capital gifts—endowments—are often not disposable income. Instead, gifts are made through a donor’s will or other estate plans, often as a percentage or dollar amount of their estate. For many, giving this percentage, let’s say 5 or 10 percent, is like continuing to tithe even after they’ve died. This is a beautiful legacy that makes a world of difference to their parish and other Catholic ministries they support.

Today’s Catholic: Earlier this year you were named the CEO of the foundation, replacing Mike Shade, who had been in that position since 2017. How has the transition been for you personally, and what did you mean to have Mike help you learn about the foundation and its mission?

Ritchie: I was able to spend a few weeks with Mike as he transitioned into retirement, and it was a wonderful experience to work alongside him during that time. I’m very grateful for his ongoing support and for the wisdom he shares. He’s been “boots on the ground” for the last several years, and having him aid in the transition has been such a blessing.

I’m also grateful for the relationships Mike developed; it was obvious from day one that he had very positive relationships with families and donors, many of whom are still calling me to wish him the best in retirement! This speaks volumes about the priority Mike places on personal relationships and his understanding of the special relationship it is to maintain these relationships with donors. I look forward to carrying on that important work moving forward.

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VIVA BOCCE!

This year, the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana is hosting the annual Viva Bocce! event—one of the area’s largest fundraisers for the Church in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Viva Bocce! will be held on Thursday, June 13, at Bishop D’Arcy Stadium on the campus of the University of Saint Francis. The event supports the work of the Foundation, and a portion of the proceeds from this year’s event will be donated to a Mother’s Hope, a ministry that shelters pregnant women experiencing homelessness and provides life-changing opportunities for growth.

To learn more about the tournament, and to register your team, visit ccfnei.org.
Today’s Catholic: What have been some of the challenges—or will be some of the challenges going forward? You mentioned that one of them is getting Catholics in the community familiar with what the foundation is doing. Can you expand on that and then talk about some other challenges that you face?

Ritchie: Two challenges come to mind, but both are also opportunities. One is raising awareness of what the foundation is and what it does. Even when I’m talking with my own family or close friends, I’ve noticed a lack of understanding about what we do and the ways in which we serve both donors and our Catholic ministries.

The other challenge is that I think many people have a preconceived notion—and I probably did, too—that giving through the foundation is complicated, particularly if they aren’t familiar with endowments or investments. But largely, it’s the exact opposite! It certainly can be complicated if you have really complex wishes and plans you want or need to make. But for most donors, it is actually almost as simple as tithing. If you would like to make a gift through your estate plan, there’s very simple language we can provide for you to support your parish or Catholic school. It’s so simple yet can make such a tremendous impact.

I know that the person sitting in the pews is thinking, “I’m not looking for one more complicated thing in my life.” … I just want to help my parish.” And so, for me, if we accomplish one thing, it would be that the lay faithful know that if you want to give permanent support to your parish, Catholic school, or ministry, it can be as simple as a few paragraphs in your estate plan or leaving us as the beneficiary on your life insurance. It can be very easy, and we want every Catholic to feel equipped to give in this way. That’s where our foundation team can provide support, at no cost, to any individual or family that simply has questions about how to do this or to help explore the areas of need that exist in our Catholic community.

Today’s Catholic: What have you found surprising about the foundation and being its CEO? And what brings you joy about doing this work?

Ritchie: I love getting to love that part of the work. I love getting to know our donors and getting to know of the incredible sacrifices they make. Getting to work with donors every day, and to work with all our Catholic parishes and ministries and know of the incredible sacrifices they make in their work, it really fills me with gratitude. I’m inspired by the people I work alongside, who are living their faith and giving freely of themselves, with no strings attached. These wonderful people give, and they never look back, and it brings them such joy. I just love that part of the work.
Parishioners Drive Construction Project at Christ the King

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

The ongoing construction project at Christ the King Parish in South Bend wasn’t the pastor’s idea. “The idea of expanding our vestibule was never on my radar,” Holy Cross Father Steve Lacroix said. “It was initiated by parishioners.”

Father Lacroix added that while the initial conversation with parishioners had been about cleaning up the church’s facade, the need for a larger gathering space in the church soon became clear. In response to feedback, Father Lacroix assembled a parishioner committee. Members of the committee have consulted with him throughout what became the design and construction process of a new vestibule (also called the “narthex”).

In fact, a parishioner oversees the project. Andrew Roche has longstanding family history with Christ the King Catholic School. His mother taught at Christ the King Catholic School, where he himself attended grade school. Now, his two daughters go to the school, and Roche and his family still attend Mass at the church.

Roche is a principal architect at Creative Design Solutions Inc., an architectural firm based in South Bend. His expertise includes both medical field work and religious and sacred architecture projects.

Roche said, adding that the school now has more space for a growing number of younger students.

It was out of the school project that the first ideas for church renovation, and then expansion, arose out of parishioner surveys. While the narthex project was first being discussed in January of 2020, the COVID-19 shutdown delayed plans.

“We still kept working on the design during the shutdown, and that gave us the chance to be slow and deliberate in determining what we really wanted this space to be and what we could realistically afford to do,” Father Lacroix said. The main problem the new narthex is intended to alleviate is a very small space for fellowship after Mass. As Roche recalled, during pleasant weather, parishioners linger outside, but during cold and rain, there is much more of a “do Mass and go home” mentality.

With the new narthex, Sunday doughnuts can be held in the vestibule instead of in the basement, and there will even be space to move the parish’s food pantry and other ministries to the main floor. “It’s grown beyond just a gathering space to really becoming a space that can be used day to day,” Roche said.

As the project now stands, a new narthex is being added to the building, adding more than 5,000 square feet of new space. The parish is also taking this opportunity to improve many aspects of the old building, such as renovating the outside steps and ramp (which will now be inside), replacing roofs, and renovating the old narthex.

“IT started much smaller than where we ended up,” Roche said of the project.

Construction began in earnest in August of 2023, and the builders hope to be finished by this August. Currently, the roof is in place and the framing is being placed, with brick to be added to the exterior in the next couple of weeks.

The parish and parishioner committee have had to pivot during bumps in the project. Roche recalled one instance involving exterior brick. As Roche discovered, the bricks used in the original exterior of the church were produced by only one company and fired at just one factory in a special kiln called a “bee kiln.” Since the church was built, the factory has been modernizing to no longer fire in bee kilns, making the original brick color almost impossible to find. The parish eventually found an alternative: a staining process to create as close a color match to the existing brick as possible.

Of course, there have been bigger challenges. For instance, COVID-19 made construction much more expensive. “We’ve had to deal with the same cost increases and supply chain issues that everyone else has,” Father Lacroix said.

Another challenge, Father Lacroix added, is not having functional front doors in the church for the past year. “You can imagine all the inconveniences that causes,” Father Lacroix said. “But our parishioners have been so patient and have dealt with all these inconveniences without any complaints. I’ve been really grateful for that, and I think it’s a sign that folks know that this new vestibule is going to be worth it.”

Roche echoed these sentiments, saying that the way the parish “came together” to help, especially during increased costs, was “absolutely amazing.”

Father Lacroix is also looking forward to how the parish will continue to reach out to the broader community through the project. “I also believe that this space gives us the opportunity to evangelize,” Father Lacroix said. “We’re located on a major five-lane artery, and this project is highly visible. The new exterior will be beautiful, and we have a committee of parishioners who are looking at ways that we can use this unique moment in the life of our parish to invite more people into our church.”
**A Eucharistic Word: Christification**

**Michael Heinlein**

The Holy Eucharist is the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. In his glorious appearance to his disciples, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever come to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall not thirst” (John 6:35). During the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, giving his life for his Church: “This is my body... This is my blood” (Luke 22:19-20).

**The Red Carpet: Jesus on the Big Screen**

**Jamie Sturt Wolfe**

A columnist with access to press credentials in the Catholic space and a chronic moviegoer in public relations, I've attended a few movie premiers. But I had never been to a red-carpet event until the one held for "Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist," a new limited theatrical release documentary. It wasn't sure what to expect — or what to wear. The fact that it was taking place in Orange County, close to the epicenter of the film industry, was a little intimidating. Yet, I knew I'd be among friends — some of whom I didn't see in a while and comfortably at home in a Catholic crowd. But what made me buy the airline tickets was the insistent little voice inside telling me that I should go. That voice never disappoints. And neither does this film. There has been a more-than-usual number of faith-based movies throughout the past year, and I've managed to see most of them. But this documentary is special. That's because it offers unabashedly what the rest have soft-pedaled: substantial catechesis. Accompanied by beautiful cinematography and an on-the-mark balance between information and inspiration, “Jesus Thirsts” reveals the presence of the Holy Eucharist with both reverence and warmth.

**Christ’s Words Are Direct and Clear: ‘This Is My Body’**

**The Sunday Gospel**

**Monsignor Owen F. Campion**

Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Providing this feast day's first reading, the Book of Exodus, the story of an event that occurred as the Hebrews were making their way across the Sinai Peninsula, light from Egypt and slavery. To modern ears, the story may sound gruesome, giving the details as it does of the ritual sacrifice of a live child. It was a long time ago, when the ritual slaying and sacrificing of animals were common. For early Christians, many of these sacrifices had a message, the core of which is good to consider even now.

For example, the ceremony in this case required that the blood be sprinkled on the people. This gesture showed the thinking that life itself resided in a creature's blood. It is difficult to understand how this notion originally arose. The ancient people had a very limited knowledge of physiology, but they knew if the blood stopped flowing, the creature died; if enough blood escaped into the body to hemor- rhage, then death followed.

Offering the bull to acknowledge God's majesty made the bull holy. Its blood, therefore, the man who partsake in the Eucharist takes Christ into his being — body and soul. Christ is God. Holy Communion literally unites us with God's life and strength.

**Reflection**

Biblical scholars long have studied the words “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” Many Protestant scholars regard them as symbolic. Catholic scholars see them as literal. Interpreting them literally was the way the early Church looked upon the words. Seeing them as merely symbolic came much later.

History is on the side of the Catholic interpretation. The early Christians were not far removed from the Last Supper itself. The words are brief, direct, and clear. Read them as they are, as the Jewish religious leaders of this day understood by the first followers of Christ. The bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus.
The Joys and Challenges of Conforming to the Priesthood

In the early part of June, we often have the joy of celebrating priestly ordinations. This year is no different, as on Saturday, June 1, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Bishop Rhoades will ordain two men to the priesthood—Deacon Oscar Duarte and Deacon Caleb Kruse. Ordination season provides an opportunity to reflect on this important question: “Who is a priest?” A priest is a man consecrated to God, to act in service to the priestly People of God, who can exercise the priesthood of Christ sacramentally in their midst.

Jesus Christ is a Priest-Victim. Jesus Christ is a divine Person with two natures: human and divine. His priests, being sacramentally committed to Him in His priesthood, too, therefore, made Priest-Victims and also live in the tension of being human beings tasked with carrying the divine in a particular way, namely, through the mysteries of God that He alone can celebrate and dispense.

On the cross, Christ is offering a sacrifice to the Father for the salvation of the world. Himself. His priests are committed to Him to offer this very sacrifice, the bloody sacrifice which saves. Therefore, the priest must be able to act in persona Christi capitis (in the person of the head). But the effectiveness of the ministry of a priest is tied not only to his ability to say words and do actions in the person of Christ, but also to actually take on the life of Christ the Priest—the task, that is, to learn how to offer himself as a priest-victim on behalf of the people entrusted to his care. This is the heart of what service in the Church means and the key to understanding why Christ made men sharers in His priesthood in the first place.

So, a priest is a man who is committed to Christ in His Priestly Person—who himself must learn to offer his life as a living offering to God, for the building up of the Body of Christ, the Church. The priest must also be a man who carries the burdens of others on his behalf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, the 20th-century Catholic theologian and priest, once wrote: “If . . . there is only one priesthood, [Christ’s] priesthood, then this ecclesial participation must be set into His form, which is that of personal love and the gift of self that goes as far as death. The instrumentality of the Catholic priest derives from the instrumentality of Christ, and this leads inexorably to the cross.”

As Archbishop Fulton Sheen puts it: “Here is the key to the priest-servanthood of Christ and that of all His priests. As priests, we are to be holy. It is not our priesthood that commits us to the world; the priesthood binds us to the Father. As victims, however, we take the place of sinners by bearing their guilt and poverty and interceding for them. Like Christ, we come within the effects of sin because we are sinners by imputation.”

What does this look like? Every time I hear confessions, I enter into a sacred space, and through the ministry entrusted to me by Christ and the Church, I “take on” in a certain way the sins that I hear confessed. This is why the Church asks her priests to do penance on behalf of the penitents they have forgiven (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1466), because being sacramentally committed to the priest-victim who took on the world’s sins demands a special participation in the bearing of that sin.

Another example in the life of a priest includes administration and paperwork. Because the Church is an ordered society, it requires a lot of effort on the part of the priests of the Church to maintain. Within the context of my call as a priest, the structure of the Church is what we also represent. So, every time I have to do paperwork—be it marriage forms or organizing the collection numbers or writing letters to parishioners—this activity, too, is tied up to my ability to offer myself for the salvation of the people entrusted to my care. I am called—as all my fellow priests—to “be there” when the invisible structures of the Church for the sake of the invisible reality—and to do it with joy!

The ministerial priesthood in the Church—this is a great gift—it is a gift of service for the sake of the growth of the Church, the nourishing of the People of God, and, ultimately, for the salvation of the world. Obviously, the challenge for the ordained priest is to live the depth of his call. This is the specific grace that is helpful to pray for—so that our priests can be conformed as persons to the office they hold, and in this way give authentic witness to Christ’s Priesthood in the Church and in the world.

Father Mark Hellinger is the Parochial Vicar at St. John the Baptist Church in Fort Wayne. He is one of eight grown children. She writes from New Orleans.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

“Jesus Thirsts” is capable of administration and paperwork. Because the Church is an ordered society, it requires a lot of effort on the part of the priests of the Church to maintain. Within the context of my call as a priest, the structure of the Church is what we also represent. So, every time I have to do paperwork—be it marriage forms or organizing the collection numbers or writing letters to parishioners—this activity, too, is tied up to my ability to offer myself for the salvation of the people entrusted to my care. I am called—as all my fellow priests—to “be there” when the invisible structures of the Church for the sake of the invisible reality—and to do it with joy!

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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION SCHOOL
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 Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart staffed the school and are responsible for its Catholic identity and Franciscan 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. For more information about the position, you may contact Mr. Damian Schmitt at 260-897-3481.

PRINCIPAL
Our Lady of Hungary School
735 W. Calvert St., South Bend, Indiana
Starting July 1, 2024
185 students PreK – Grade 8
Visit our ourladyofhungary.org. For more information, visit diocesefwsb.org/careers.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School is seeking a dynamic kindergarten and first grade teacher for the 2024-2025 school year.

Contact Principal Lois Widner at lwidner@seascs.org or visit diocesefwsb.org/careers for information.

National Eucharistic Congress Seeking Volunteers

The National Eucharistic Congress is in need of several hundred volunteers for the upcoming national event in Indianapolis. There are many full-time and part-time volunteer opportunities available. The greatest area of need is full-time volunteer ushers. This role entails greeting guests at sessions either in Lucas Oil Stadium or the other large programming halls at the Convention Center. For full-time volunteers, the time commitment would be from 9 a.m. on Tuesday, July 16, until 2 p.m. on Sunday, July 21. For those who are unable to serve the entire time, many part-time volunteer shifts are also open.

According to officials with the National Eucharistic Congress, the benefit of volunteering is that ushers get to hear much of the congress programming for free. This is a great role for young adults, college students, retirees, or anyone who is looking for an affordable way to be a part of this historic event.

The event in Indianapolis will be the first National Eucharistic Congress held in the United States in 83 years. For more information and to register as a volunteer, visit eucharisticcongress.org/volunteer.

Director of Mission Advancement
Bishop Luers High School

PRIMARY PURPOSE: To support and promote the mission of Bishop Luers High School by implementing and overseeing development activities necessary to grow the organization and expand the base of financial support from a broad range of sources.

Responsibilities in this Role:
1. Strategic Plan Implementation
2. Grants and Giving
3. Fundraising
4. Database Management
5. Public Relations
6. Professional Development

REQUIRED EDUCATION: B.S or B.A., 3-5 years of development experience with 1-3 years emphasis in non-profit or church fundraising preferred. Strong skills in communication, organization preferred. Prefer an active Catholic with demonstrated understanding of parishes and Catholic schools; proficiency in oral and written communication and computer literacy.

See full job description and apply at diocesefwsb.org/careers.

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

St. John Bosco Eucharistic Procession
CHURUBUSCO – St. John Bosco, 220 N. Main St., will have a Eucharistic procession on Sunday, June 2, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with food afterwards. The group will be walking to three stops in Churubusco and stopping to pray at three homes.

Walk with Faith – Christ the King Eucharistic Procession
SOUTH BEND – Christ the King Parish, 52473 Indiana State Road 953, will have a Eucharistic procession on Sunday, June 2, to celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi. The procession begins at 1:30 p.m. at the church and will last until 3:30 p.m. Contact Amy Tatay at 574-272-3113 or atatyakristy@christthekingonline.org for information.

Catholic Young Adult Recreation: Kickball
FORT WAYNE – Young adults ages 18-35 are invited to register for our summer YA kickball league. The league is hosted by Catholic Young Adult Recreation, which collaborates with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Sign up individually or as a team of 11 players. The games will be hosted at Indian Trails Park, 10313 Abate Center Rd., every Wednesday in June at 6:30 p.m. The cost is $15 per person and includes four weeks of regular play. Learn more and register at diocesefwsb.org/cyar.

Jovenes Adultos Retreat
WARSAW – All jovenes ages 18-30 are invited to a half-day retreat at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 225 Gilliam Dr., from 2:30-8 p.m. The retreat will include prayer, adoration, confessions, and a talk by Juan Miguel from Notre Dame. Contact Jocelyn Alcala at 801-897-8358 or jalcalal@diocesefwsb.org/cyar.

Holy Smokes 2024
FORT WAYNE – Support A Mother’s Hope at the Men’s Bourbon and Cigar Benefit on Tuesday, June 25, at The Charles, 3127 Carroll Rd., from 5:30-8 p.m. This men’s only bourbon and cigar benefit is a great way to support home-less moms and their babies in the area. Tickets are $75 and include dinner, soda/beer, two bourbon tastings, and one cigar. A dynamic talk from Father Jonathan Norton, Pastor at Sacred Heart Parish in Warsaw, will be offered. Sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information visit go.amhfw.org/HolySmokes24 or contact Kristy Cirillo at 260-444-4975 or kristy@amhfw.org.

Altar and Rosary Society Polish Style Chicken and Sausage Carryout Dinner
NEW CARLISLE – The Altar and Rosary Society for St. Stanislaus Kośka Parish is hosting a carryout Polish style chicken and sausage dinner on Sunday, June 9, at 11:15 a.m. at the church, 55750 Tulip Rd. All proceeds will benefit the installation of a new roof and gutters on the parish office/school building. Ticket prices are $20 for adults and $15 for children 12 and younger. Tickets can be purchased after weekend Masses from the parish secretary or by calling the office at 574-654-3781. Contact Joann Stainko for information.

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and things like that.”

In 2023, A Mother’s Hope housed a total of 25 women and welcomed nine babies born full term. Although housing women with other children had always been a part of the original plan, Roth admitted the nudge from God to move forward with this phase came at a less-than-ideal time: amid the COVID shutdown in 2020.

“I remember sitting there, talking about something else, and hearing, ‘It’s time; you need to start preparing for another house,’” recalled Roth. “I think I even said, ‘Really? Now? We’re in the middle of a pandemic!’” Roth acknowledged that God was giving her ample time to prepare, since “He knew it always takes me a while to get on board with His ginormous plans.”

In order to continue its day-to-day operations and begin the planning process for a new home, A Mother’s Hope hired additional administrative staff. However, this required taking up space that was designed for residents, creating a dilemma. “It quickly was becoming apparent that we were losing the home-like atmosphere of A Mother’s Hope, and that is so key to what we do in creating that family-style environment to support the women,” explained Roth. A Mother’s Hope needed office space—which meant its one expansion project was about to become two.

Roth approached the Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation to inquire about office space, but she was told they had none available. “The next day, Cheryl Chalifant from Mary Cross Tippmann called me and said, ‘Would you be interested in the Redeemer Radio spaces?’” said Roth, who had already been eying the space since the Catholic radio station had closed its doors. “And I’m like, ‘Are you serious? That’s just how those things happen, right?’

A Mother’s Hope gladly accepted the office space.

Located at 4618 East State Blvd., roughly an eight-minute drive from the current home, the perfect time to do a Divine Mercy Chaplet,” as Roth has discovered). By January, staff members began to transform the space into their own. Kristy Cirillo, who has served as Outreach Coordinator for A Mother’s Hope since last October, began calling on local partners for volunteer assistance.

“We redid our garage last year, so we already had some really good connections,” said Cirillo. “The main one was Sherwin-Williams; they gave us all the paint and all the supplies we needed to do the renovations. We would’ve just dealt with the [existing] walls if we had not had those donated.” Also proving instrumental was Lassus Handy Dandy, which has a volunteer program that allows employees to sign up to help an organization. “Their liaison reached out in January and asked if we had any projects coming up in February or March, and I said, ‘Actually, we do,’” Cirillo recalled. “They jumped in and did all the painting, which was huge.”

Cirillo and company received additional help from a pair of St. Vincent de Paul Parish groups: Carpenter’s Sons, a ministry that does home repairs for those in need, and Knights of Columbus. Another St. Vincent partner and member of the A Mother’s Hope Building and Grounds Committee, Ron Schnipke, served as project manager and organized all the supplies for each group. Between taking down wallpaper, putting up drywall, painting, moving furniture, interior decorating, and picking up donations, volunteers contributed more than 600 hours to aid A Mother’s Hope in the transition. The office staff is now fully moved into the space previously occupied by Redeemer Radio, a fact that’s not lost on Roth.

“There was just a sadness that we had something that was so good and beautiful and brought Christ into people’s lives in a unique and special way, and I would say that A Mother’s Hope does that, too,” said Roth, stating she can tell a lot of prayer happened in that space. “It’s the residents we serve, it’s their babies, it’s their children, it’s that generational change that Redeemer was also working toward. But also, our staff, our supporters—anybody who comes into contact with A Mother’s Hope, I truly believe their lives are changed in some way, their eyes are opened to what other people experience, and I think that’s what Jesus would want.”

Now that A Mother’s Hope is adequately staffed with sufficient space, it can resume strategic planning for its second home. The staff is in the process of determining a number of key factors, including how many individuals and families can be accepted, and what regulations must be considered. They have completed several case studies on maternity homes that house women with other kids to help make these decisions. Cirillo is already prepping her volunteers for the work ahead.

“I shared with all our volunteers that it’s going to be a huge endeavor, with landscaping and building playgrounds,” Cirillo said of the new home. “We’ve started brainstorming and thinking from a kid’s perspective—needs that they’ll have, a playground, ways to make it inviting for children. We want them to feel that they’re home just as much as moms do when they walk in.”

Until then, A Mother’s Hope will continue to fundraise this summer. The organization was chosen as the beneficiary of the Catholic Community Foundation of Northeast Indiana’s Viva Beccel fundraiser this year, which takes place on Thursday, June 13, at the University of Saint Francis Bishop D’Arcy Stadium. Less than two weeks later, A Mother’s Hope will hold its annual Holy Smokes Men’s Bourbon and Cigar Benefit on Tuesday, June 25, at The Charles in Fort Wayne. Finally, the organization’s Seventh Annual Diamond Gala—the biggest fundraiser every year for A Mother’s Hope—is set for Thursday, September 19, at the Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne.

While there is no set date for the opening of the second home, Roth is trusting that it will come to fruition in the same way that all other aspects of A Mother’s Hope have: “in God’s timing.”