National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Draws Standing Room Only Crowds in Diocese

By Paula Lent

When welcoming the crowd of more than 1,000 people who had gathered at St. Therese, Little Flower, Catholic Church in South Bend on Friday, July 5, in order to spend time with our Eucharistic Lord and follow Him through the streets as He entered the diocese, St. Therese’s Director of Evangelization, Abby Kyle said, “This city, this country, every heart, and every inch, belongs to Jesus and what a gift it is to witness Him reclaim it step by step.”

The entrance of the Marian route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage into our diocese as it travels to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis brought out Catholics from near and far, making what are often invisible truths of the Church visible, and offering the hope of further healing and unity in the Lord.

The communion of the Church was first made visible at the kickoff event at St. Therese. Priests, seminarians, and deacons from out-of-state dioceses, including Kalamazoo,

After Years of Anticipation, Indianapolis Set to Host National Eucharistic Congress

By Today’s Catholic

In November of 2021, as the bishops of the United States gathered in Baltimore for their annual fall assembly, Bishop Andrew Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota, announced from the podium that Indianapolis had been chosen to host a National Eucharistic Congress, which was to be the marquee event of the bishops’ three-year National Eucharistic Revival—an ambitious plan to foster a deeper devotion among Catholics in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

After nearly three years of preparation, Indianapolis is ready to open its arms to Catholics from across the country—including thousands from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. The congress will take place July 17-21 at Lucas Oil Stadium, the Indiana Convention Center, and other locations in downtown Indianapolis.

Bishop Cozzens, Chair of the Board of Advisors for the National Eucharistic Congress, called the gathering “an opportunity for us to come together and as a Church to gather and be renewed.” He added: “Whether participants attend for one day or five days, they will be invited to a profound experience of renewal by the Holy Spirit, and they’ll be invited, we hope, to be set on fire with that missionary desire.”

“I just pray that as we gather together in Indianapolis, this might be a moment of great renewal and great revival for our Church.”

Throughout the National Eucharistic Revival, Bishop Rhoades has encouraged the faithful of the diocese to attend the congress and receive what certainly will be an outpouring of grace at this historic event. Day passes are still available. For more information, and to register, visit eucharisticcongress.org.

PILGRIMAGE, page 8
Today’s Catholic, Secretariat for Communications Earn 21 Outstanding Achievement Awards

BY NICOLE HAHN

The Catholic Media Association (CMA) invites members of the Catholic media to submit entries for consideration in the annual Catholic Media Awards. The awards, given during the association’s annual conference in Atlanta on Friday, June 21, recognize the exceptional work done by members of the CMA in their efforts to further the mission of the Church.

This year, three members of the staff of the Secretariat for Communications were recognized for work on specific projects. They are Nicole Hahn, Secretary for Communications; Joshua Schipper, Video, Digital Content, and Graphic Design; and Francie Hogan, Graphic Design. Lisa Kochanowski, a former staff member and current freelance journalist, was also honored.

The entire Communications and Today’s Catholic staff were recognized for work on specific projects, as was Bishop Rhoades.

Eric Peat, a freelance journalist for Today’s Catholic, was recognized for his overall work and work on specific stories, and three other freelance journalists – Jill Boughton, Paula Lent, and Joe Romie – were honored for their work as well.

The awards are:

- Multimedia Journalist of the Year, First Place: Eric Peat
- Best Multiple Picture Package, First Place: World Youth Day in Review – Nicole Hahn, Joshua Schipper, Francie Hogan
- Best Reporting of Social Justice Issues, First Place: Bishop Blesses Motels4Now which House the Chronically Homeless in the South Bend Area – Jill Boughton
- Best Sports Journalism, First Place: Year After Coming Up Short, Marian Claims Soccer Crown – Eric Peat
- Best Photograph – National/International Event, First Place: Father Paolo Degasperi Waves the American Flag as He Looks Back at His Pilgrims at World Youth Day – Joshua Schipper
- Best Social Media Account – Diocesan Bishop, First Place: Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades – Joshua Schipper
- Best Diocesan Pastoral Message, Second Place: Saint Mary’s Compromising its Identity as a Catholic Woman’s College – Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades
- Best Photograph – Hot Topic Eucharistic Revival, Second Place: Father Daniel Whelan Inorses the Altar During Adoration by Candlelight – Joe Romie
- Best Photo Gallery or Slideshow, Second Place: World Youth Day – Joshua Schipper
- Best Use of Photos in Social Media, Second Place: Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend – Communications Staff
- Best Online Content Not Published in Print – Photo, Second Place: World Youth Day – Joshua Schipper
- Best Photo Story, Second Place: Celebration with Bishop Rhoades Ends Cross-Dioecesan Eucharistic Pilgrimage – Joshua Schipper and Lisa Kochanowski
- Best Story and Photo Package, Third Place: Pilgrims on a Journey: World Youth Day, Day by Day – Nicole Hahn and Joshua Schipper
- Best Social Media Campaign, Third Place: #revivalfwsb – Joshua Schipper
- Best Photography – Hot Topic Eucharistic Revival, Third Place: Pilgrims Finish the Final Leg of the 8-Day Cross-Dioecesan Eucharistic Pilgrimage – Joshua Schipper
- Best Photograph – Holy Days/Liturgical Seasons, Honorable Mention: Bishop Rhoades Enters the Cathedral During the Easter Vigil – Joshua Schipper
- Best Personality Profile, Honorable Mention: Local Artist Helps Bring the Saints to Life in New Book – Paula Lent
- Best Sports Journalism, Honorable Mention: Horvath Enjoying Early Taste of NFL Success – Eric Peat
- Best Diocesan Video Fundraising Appeal, Honorable Mention: As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Send You – Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Communications Staff
- Best Website, Honorable Mention: diocesefwsb.org – Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Communications Staff
- Best Newspaper, Honorable Mention: Today’s Catholic – Today’s Catholic Staff

With these awards, the Catholic Media Association recognizes the outstanding quality of work produced by the staff of Today’s Catholic and the Secretariat for Communications in serving the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.
Federal Agencies Distort Truth, Threaten Religious Freedom with Gender Ideology Rules

BY BISHOP KEVIN C. RHoades
AND BISHOP ROBERT E. BARRON

(OSV News) – The Church celebrates the month of June in dedication to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, who pours out His never-ending love to humanity. This love is offered to each of us, yet we are reminded that love cannot exist without truth because He who loves us is truth itself (cf. John 14:6). As bishops, we are thus compelled to address recent efforts to distort the truth through the proliferation of “new rights” by federal agencies, which aim to codify, and in effect, further advance in society, what Pope Francis lately called the “ugliest danger” of our time.

Throughout the past several years, federal agencies have been working methodically to promote gender ideology at the expense of the rights of people of faith. Recently, that steady march became a sprint. Throughout three weeks in April and May, federal agencies issued eight separate rules enshrining gender ideology into law.

We saw this coming. In 2022, U.S. bishops began alerting Catholics and people of goodwill to proposed federal regulations that do harm to Catholic institutions and undermine the common good.

- Chairman across multiple USCCB committees focused on problems coming from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Education (USDE), Cardinal Dolan of New York and Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago took to America Magazine to warn Catholics about an HHS regulation that would require Catholic hospitals to perform gender transition surgeries. And the USCCB undertook significant efforts to explain to these federal agencies how their proposed rules would do harm. On the Title IX and Section 1557 regulations alone, USCCB action alerts generated more than 37,500 total comments filed by concerned Catholics.

In the end, it seems to have made little difference. A common pattern runs through these new rules. First, they require charities and social service providers to consent to or participate in gender ideology in various ways. One rule requires foster parents to affirm their child’s asserted gender identity. Another says having sex-separate bathrooms at work is sexual harassment. Yet another continues a law against disability discrimination into a requirement to accommodate gender identity claims. And so on.

The rules then make vague assurances that the agencies respect religious freedom, while pointlessly refusing to provide any real guarantee that anyone’s religious freedom will actually be honored. In many cases, faith-based organizations are told exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

We need to be really clear here. These rules promote an ideological worldview at odds with the foundational order of human nature. In doing so, they also threaten the viability of Catholic institutions, such as hospitals, migration and refugee services, and adoption and foster care agencies. This regulatory regime harms the common good and undermines the Church’s good works in service of the human person.

belief in the dignity of the human person underpins all our charitable services. Our special care for migrants, orphans, the poor, and the sick flows from this powerful reality—which we affirm to be both biblical but also available to natural human reason—that every individual has an “ontological dignity,” which is “indefinite and remains valid beyond any circumstances in which the person may find themselves.” Indeed, persons who struggle with gender dysphoria have infinite dignity, and they deserve our love and respect as persons created in the image of God.

But this same principle of human dignity is also what animates our defense of unborn life, our promotion of marriage, our teaching that each person’s sexual identity—rooted in his or her biological sex—ought to be received as a gift from God, and our concern for religious freedom. Our commitment to serving in the world cannot come at the expense of our commitment to life, marriage, and the nature of the human person.

Despite the challenges we face, discouragement has no place in the good news of the Gospel. Catholics will continue to serve the least of our neighbors—orphans, the poor, and the sick—down to the very end of their days.

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is pleased to announce that the process has begun to merge the historic parishes of St. Patrick and St. Hedwig in South Bend, St. Patrick, founded before the City of South Bend, in 1858, and St. Hedwig, the oldest ethnic Polish parish in South Bend, founded in 1873, have requested the merger for the greater glory of God, in order that the combined parish might be strengthened and more faithfully serve the greater community. These historic parishes and their churches have been twinned since 2001. Father Eric Zimmer, Pastor of St. Patrick and St. Hedwig, said: “I expect that the merger of the two parishes, after Fort Wayne-South Bend in so many ways, will allow us to better minister to what we expect will be a growing community as downtown South Bend continues in its redevelopment. These great churches have witnessed the founding of South Bend in 1865, its development as an industrial hub attracting immigrants to its factories, the phenomenal growth of the University of Notre Dame, and so much more. We are poised to flourish with this merger and look forward to all it brings.”

A merger would combine operations internally. Both churches would remain open for sacraments.
Bishop Rhoades: Excited for the Congress, but Work Remains

BY SCOTT WARDEN

I n November of 2021, during the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Fall Assembly, two seeds were planted that are continuing to produce much fruit for the U.S. Church.

First, the bishops approved “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,” a 35-page document that explored the importance of Christ’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

“The Mystery of the Eucharist” was developed by the USCCB’s Committee on Doctrine, chaired at the time by Bishop Rhoades. The document blossomed out of discussions centered around a 2019 Pew Research survey that showed just 1 in 3 self-proclaimed Catholics believed that the Eucharist truly is the body and blood of Christ, and not just a symbol.

Also in the fall of 2021, still based on the need to foster deeper devotion to Christ’s presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the U.S. bishops approved the three-year plan for the National Eucharistic Revival, which included hosting a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July of 2024.

Since its inception, Bishop Rhoades has been directly involved in the planning of the National Eucharistic Revival and the congress, which will be held July 17-21 in Indianapolis. Today’s Catholic spoke with Bishop Rhoades about the congress and about carrying forward the momentum and work of the revival after the congress ends.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Today’s Catholic: In 2021, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the document “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,” which you had great input on. How did your work on the document influence your perception of a need for a National Eucharistic Revival?

Bishop Rhoades: Yes, that was a document prepared by the Committee on Doctrine, and I was the chair of the committee at the time. Part of what we were looking at was the results of that Pew poll about the significant number of Catholics who did not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist – although future polls have kind of shown better results, because some of the results were driven by the wording of the questions. But still, there was a need for greater knowledge of the Church’s teaching on the Eucharist, but not only knowledge but also an understanding of the sacrifice of Christ becomes present on the altar. So that did stir up the bishops, I would say.

Today’s Catholic: With the congress now days away, what most excites you about these five days in Indianapolis? What are you most looking forward to?

Bishop Rhoades: I think just gathering so many thousands of people together to give praise and worship to Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. I think such a public manifestation of faith will be very uplifting. I would also say that the liturgy for the Congress is excellent – many good speakers, many opportunities for the faithful who attend to take part in various workshops as well as the general sessions.

And the highlight of it all, of course, will be our prayer together, our celebration of beautiful liturgies each day of the congress, as well as the procession through the streets of Indianapolis on Saturday. I think it will be extremely uplifting, and people who are not able to participate in person can also follow it and join spiritually with it. And this congress is not the end, because the Eucharistic Revival will continue – and needs to continue after the congress.

Today’s Catholic: At the end of the congress, the faithful will be commissioned to go out during the third year of the revival – the Year of Mission. The bishops are also promoting the Walk with One initiative, where every Catholic is being encouraged to accompany one person to attend Mass with them. What can the faithful of the diocese do to support these two initiatives?

Bishop Rhoades: Really authentic Eucharistic faith means that our worship and the grace we receive in the Eucharist must be lived out. That is necessary. Mission is very much a part of that. Christ sends us on mission. We receive Him, His body and blood, and that equips us with grace to spread His love, because this is the sacrament of His love. That is our mission as disciples, and to be missionary disciples as Pope Francis calls us to be.

I think the follow-up Year of Mission will be very important, and will be this idea of Walking with One, which is a really beautiful idea that we’re all called to be evangelizers. We’re co-responsible in the Church for evangelization – every baptized person, not just our priests and bishops and deacons, not just the ordained, but all the lay faithful are called to evangelize, especially by their witness, but also by their words, and actually called to invite people to come to Mass and to learn about the Catholic faith.

So, I think that idea of just reaching out and inviting one person is a great idea, because sometimes it can seem overwhelming, but when we accompany someone, there’s so many people who are longing for truth and meaning in their lives, and we have an opportunity. Imagine if every Catholic in our diocese brought one other person into the faith, into the Church. It would be amazing. I’d like to see more of that. But it’s important how we go about this invitation. We don’t do it in a way that’s judgmental or condemning, but we’re to do it in a way that’s loving and inviting.

Today’s Catholic: Recent polls, as you mentioned, show that the belief in the Real Presence of Christ is on the rise, and the Church has tremendous momentum that has been built up by the revival, congress, and the pilgrimage. How do we keep this momentum going in order to bring more people back to the Church and to the truth that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist?

Bishop Rhoades: I think it means strong catechesis for sure, and also strong catechesis on the strong catechesis – on every level: children, youth, and adults, adult faith formation, RCIA, and introductory classes for the sacraments. The sacred liturgy is celebrated so is important, because it’s also a question of reverence we bring to the celebration of Mass. I think we have a lot of work to do to improve some of that in our liturgies.

The Eucharist is the center of our life; it’s the source and summit of the life of the Church, and therefore it should be given the due attention that it deserves. So, I would highlight those two things: ongoing, strong catechesis, and continued attention to the beauty of the liturgy.

Today’s Catholic: Numbers alone at the congress show that the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend have bought more passes to the congress than any other diocese in the country. What does that say about the willingness of those in the diocese to embrace this call to Eucharistic revival?

Bishop Rhoades: I think it shows the vitality of the faith in our diocese. And, certainly, I think it improves our Secretariat for Communications [Nicole Hahn] for the wonderful promotion of the Eucharistic Revival. I think that helped to increase the number of participants at the congress. But truly, right now, we only know the ones who have signed up for the congress through our diocesan website, but there’s also many who perhaps signed up directly with the congress. So, we’re going to have a lot of people there, and I’m looking forward to seeing a lot of our own faithful during the week in Indianapolis.
Praised be Jesus Christ!

BY MASON BAILEY

At each entrance into a diocese and in every parish on this National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, Our Lord has truly been welcomed home. This past Sunday was no different. It was a truly beautiful sight to see so many people from Fort Wayne South Bend gathered to greet and walk with Jesus from St. Therese, Little Flower to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame. Hundreds packed into churches to worship, adore, and process with the Blessed Sacrament. The beauty of our Faith shines in the communal aspects of our worship. Indeed, the Eucharist is called Holy Communion for a reason! We are all bound together by our individual reception of the Eucharist, but also by the act of doing so within a community of believers. We are many, but we are also one in Christ Jesus, by virtue of His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. We find our home in Christ through the Eucharist, as we journey to our eternal home with Him in heaven.

This entrance has been a particularly great grace to me! As a seminarian for this diocese walking with Jesus every step of the way to Indiana, this past weekend was a homecoming for me as well. I was able to see my parents, parishioners from local parishes like St. Pius X in Granger (where I did my pastoral year), people from college, priests that are great role models to me, and many more. Our diocese, under the leadership of Bishop Rhoades, has been incredibly supportive of the National Eucharistic Revival, and it is such a blessing to witness the profound graces that have occurred already. Hearts are being set ablaze everywhere we go. People are coming from far and wide to join us for the events in our diocese this week. What a beautiful testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit active through this Eucharistic Revival.

One unique thing about the route of this pilgrimage is that the parishes have not been to many of the parishes before. This experience is providing me with the opportunity to see parts of the diocese that I otherwise wouldn’t have seen, including in Bristol, LaGrange, Angola, and more. Father Bob Van Kempen and Father Osman Ramos were incredibly hospitable to me and the rest of the Perpetual Pilgrims.

It is also an honor to be able to show our diocese to my fellow pilgrims, who are from all over the country, including California, Colorado, Illinois, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Ohio, and even Germany! Each Perpetual Pilgrim has received a token for their journey, and they have been made to feel at home with us here in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in the home stretch of this pilgrimage as it enters its home stretch.

My continued prayer for the diocese is one of revival and rejuvenation. I pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, so that there may be more laborers in the field, for the harvest is plentiful (Mt 9:37). I also pray for increased unity in our diocese and an end to any and all divisions that keep us from seeking the Kingdom together. This pilgrimage will bear abundant fruit to those who participate in it. I’m eager to see you!

Pax Christi,
Mason

Indiana Catholic Conference opposes the Resumption of State Executions

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

On behalf of the five Catholic dioceses in the state of Indiana, the Indiana Catholic Conference is strongly opposed to the decision to seek the resumption of executions in Indiana as recently announced by the Indiana Governor and Attorney General.

A Consistent Ethic of Life

The Catholic Church has consistently sought to protect human life from conception to natural death. As Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us in 1999, “the new evangelization calls us to be unconditionally pro-life,” and that “modern society has the means of protecting itself without definitely denying criminal the crime to reform.” More recently, Pope Francis emphasized the Church’s opposition to the death penalty in a 2019 letter opposing the death penalty: “In seeking to end the use of the death penalty, we do not dismiss the evil and harm caused by people who commit horrible crimes, especially murder. We share in the sorrow and loss of families and victims of such crimes. And we call upon our faith community and all persons of good will to stand with the victims and to provide spiritual, pastoral, and personal support.”

Indiana Should Eliminate Use of the Death Penalty

In addition to the Church’s moral teaching, there are several compelling reasons for Indiana to forego the use of the death penalty: 1) there are other means of protecting society and punishing criminals, 2) the death penalty demonstrably does not deter crime, 3) its application is flawed and can be reversibly wrong, 4) death penalty cases are extremely expensive compared to other judicial cases, and 5) twenty-nine states no longer use it in a form of punishment.

The ICC’s Appeal to the Indiana General Assembly, Governor, and Attorney General

The Indiana Catholic Conference calls upon the Attorney General, members of the Indiana General Assembly, and the Governor, respectively, to:

1) Rescind the motion asking the Indiana Supreme Court to set an execution date for Joseph Corcoran.

2) Legislatively repeal the use of the death penalty in Indiana.

3) Remove plans to include a death chamber in the new state prison under construction in Westville, Indiana.

These actions would bring Indiana closer to implementing a consistent protection of human life and social order through law. We make this appeal alongside a commitment to working with our elected leaders and public officials to continue strengthening the culture of life in our great state.

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L. – Archbishop of Indianapolis, Indiana Catholic Conference General Chairman

Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, D.D. – Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend


July 8, 2024
**Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Condemns Israeli Army Attack on Catholic School**

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (OSV News) – Officials with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued a strong condemnation after the Israeli military targeted a Catholic school in Gaza that killed four people, including a senior Hamas official. The statement published on Sunday, July 7, said they were monitoring reports of a strike on Holy Family School, which “has, since the beginning of the war, been a place of refuge for hundreds of civilians.” The Latin Patriarchate condemns, in the strongest terms, the targeting of civilians or any belligerent actions that fall short of ensuring that civilians remain outside the combat scene,” the statement read. The patriarchate called for a cease-fire agreement “that would put an immediate end to the horrifying bloodbath and humanitarian catastrophe” in the region.”

**Russia Strikes Children’s Hospital in Ukraine**

OSV News Photo/Thomas Peter, Reuters

Rescuers work at Okhmetyt Children’s Hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, on Monday, July 8, after it was severely damaged during Russian missile strikes amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine. At least 31 people are dead and more than 135 injured as Russian bombers pounded Kyiv and numerous other cities throughout the nation that day with more than 40 missiles and guided aerial bombs, with one striking the large children’s hospital, where emergency crews search the rubble for victims.

**Vatican Excommunicates Archbishop Viganò, Found Guilty of Schism**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former nuncio to the United States, has been excommunicated after being found guilty of schism, Vatican officials said. Members of the Diaconate for the Doctrine of the Faith met on Thursday, July 4, to consider an extraordinary process against Archbishop Viganò, who was accused of “the reserved delict of schism,” dicastery officials announced in a news release on Friday, July 5. “His public statements manifesting his refusal to recognize and submit to the Supreme Pontiff his rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Sacred Vatican Council are well known,” dicastery representatives wrote. “At the conclusion of the penal process, the Most Reverend Carlo Maria Viganò was found guilty of the reserved delict of schism,” it said. Dicastery officials thereby declared the archbishop automatically excommunicated in accordance with canon law. “This decision was communicated to the Most Reverend Viganò on 5 July 2024,” it said. “The lifting of the censure in these cases is reserved to the Apostolic See,” it added.

**Pro-Lifers Ask Delegates Not To Change Republican Platform on Abortion**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – Amid reports that members of the Republican National Committee are poised to changeits written stance on abortion, at the direction of former President Donald Trump, the party’s presumptive presidential nominee, pro-life activists asked Republican delegates “to support pro-life planks and vote down any platform that weakens the party’s commitment to the cause of life.”

**CRS Criticizes House Version of Foreign Spending Bill**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – Officials with Catholic Relief Services, the international relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., criticized funding legislation recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives as “inconsistent with American values and interests” regarding cuts to humanitarian funding. The legislation – the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025 – which funds some of the U.S. priorities abroad, was approved by the House in a 212-200 vote on Friday, June 28, and reflects Republicans’ pledge to cut funds for the overall legislation, representing about $7.6 billion less than the previous version. Bill O’Keefe, Executive Vice President for Mission, Mobilization, and Advocacy at CRS, said in a statement on Monday, July 1: “We were disappointed in the disproportionately low allocation provided to the State and Foreign Operations subcommittee for Fiscal Year 2025. We are further alarmed by the steep cuts to life-saving foreign assistance in the House-passed bill. The substantial reductions to critical humanitarian and development accounts, in some cases by roughly 25 percent, would have dire consequences for millions of families facing hunger, humanitarian crises, and infectious diseases.”

**Lourdes Bishop: Micas Mosaics ‘Need to be Removed’**

**With Church’s Help, Afghan’s First Female Fighter Pilot Settling into New Life in U.S.**

OWNESBORO, Ky. (OSV News) – At age 33, Hasina Omari has survived familial disapproval of her career choices (becoming Afghanistan’s first female fighter pilot), nearly 370 flight hours, months of missions, and expecting a baby – and with the help of the Church – as Russian bombers pummeled Kyiv and numerous other cities throughout the nation that day, setting the stage for a new life in the United States, and resettling in the United States.

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“Transform All Things Through the Eucharist”
Panel Highlights the Eucharistic Mission of the Church

We are called this year to restore all things in Christ through the Eucharistic Lord,” said Timothy O’Malley, Director of the Center for Liturgy at the McGrath Institute for Church Life, at a panel discussion at the University of Notre Dame on Friday, July 5. O’Malley was joined on the panel by Katherine Angullo, Director of the Thriving in Ministry Program at the McGrath Institute. They are consultants to the National Eucharistic Revival organizing committee and have worked with 60 dioceses across the country to prepare for the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis taking place July 17–21.

In his remarks, O’Malley drew upon a talk delivered by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, at the 2002 Eucharistic Congress in Italy. He invited the audience to consider five aspects of transformation as they look ahead to the coming year of mission:

The first transformation is that of the Last Supper, as Jesus took bread and wine and transformed them into His Body and Blood, giving it to His disciples, and to the world, as gift. “This is the Eucharistic Revival has been particularly careful to attend to,” said O’Malley.

“At the heart of the Eucharistic mystery, the gift of the body and blood is the sacrifice of Christ pro nobis,” for us.

The transformation of violence into love is the second, and for Ratzinger, the essential transformation. “Jesus transforms from within men’s act of violence against Him to an act of self-giving love for those men.” This is, according to O’Malley, the real significance of the True Presence of Jesus. “Eucharistic presence matters because it’s connected to the Resurrected Christ. From those Eucharistic elements comes forth the presence of the Resurrected Lord.” His sacrifice is offered and given for the life of the world, made present for us in the Mass.

The transformation of bread and wine into Body and Blood is God’s invitation to enter into His “economy of gift.” The bread and wine is itself already a gift from God, one that we offer back to Him in the Eucharist, which then transforms us into the body of Christ. O’Malley illustrated the apparent absurdity of God’s economy of gift by drawing a parallel to his children asking for money to buy Christmas gifts for him. “Thank you for the soap, which you bought with my money, but because you gave it to me, I will cherish it!”

The transformation of individuals into the Body of Christ welcomed and supported. “The Church comes into existence through this gift, through the Eucharist. We are meant to enter into God’s gift not as individuals, but together, in our parishes.” The unity and solidarity to which we are called comes through our shared reception of the Eucharist. “The Church is born not ultimately from strategic plans, evangelization strategies, or mission statements, but from the Eucharist.”

The final transformation is the renewal of the entire cosmos. This is not something added on as an afterthought to Eucharistic piety, but it is essential to the mission of the Church. “It is Eucharistic through and through to fight against an ideological politics, which participates in the throwaway culture so often mentioned by Pope Francis,” said O’Malley. “The life of the unborn, the migrant, the prisoner, and the elderly are sacred. To care for such persons is a consequence of the Eucharist. To develop a politics defined by higher ends, that is a Eucharistic mission.”

O’Malley suggested that a robust dedication to this Eucharistic mission includes fostering family life, setting up houses of hospitality where the homeless or forgotten are welcomed and supported, developing Catholic schools where disciples are formed and wisdom is inculcated, and welcoming into our parishes the disabled and those who suffer with mental illness. O’Malley concluded his portion of the panel with the words of Cardinal Ratzinger.

“The Eucharist is a process of transformation, in which we become involved in God’s power to transform hatred and violence, in God’s power to transform the world. Therefore we pray that the Lord will help us celebrate the Eucharist in this way, to live it. Therefore we pray that He will transform us, and the world together with us, into the new Jerusalem. Amen.”

In her remarks, Angullo shared stories illustrating various gifts that she has experienced during her work with dioceses across the country during the last three years of Eucharistic Revival. She described a joyful gathering hosted by the Diocese of Raleigh, where 6,000 of the faithful joined for Mass in the largest event in the history of the diocese. “You could see people from one parish seeing parishioners from across the diocese and saying, ‘We are in this together! This is what unifies us!’ In front of Jesus Christ, there is no division. We all look at Him with a single love, the love we share.”

Angullo related a story told at a revival retreat by a priest who found himself distracted by noise from the congregation during his daily Mass, but then experienced a change of heart through an interaction with the mother of four fidgety children. “I bring them to Mass every day so that they can see Jesus,” she told the priest when asked why she brought her little ones. Since learning that the priest said that he has taken special care to elevate the host to ensure that their children can see the Eucharistic Lord clearly.

In Oakland, California, which has been beset by civil and social unrest, the Eucharistic Revival is bringing a renewed hope, said Angullo. She shared how the local bishop invited not just his fellow Catholics, but also the mayor and the police department to take part in the celebrations. “This revival is not just for our faith, but for our city,” she quoted the bishop as saying.

Concluding her remarks, Angullo referenced the pilgrimage that took place earlier in the day from South Bend’s St. Therese, Little Flower Parish to Notre Dame’s Basilica of the Sacred Heart, connecting it with the wider National Eucharistic Revival. “You are part of one piece of a big month of beautiful moments of revival that are happening. What else are you going to do to make sure that this comes alive? Not only in your own life, but will you be generous enough to share with the people around you?”

Musical Highlights God’s Love Through the Eucharist

This is the curtain call for “Behold God’s Love: A Eucharistic Musical,” which premiered at Saint Mary’s College on Saturday, July 6, as part of the events of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.
PILGRIMAGE, from page 1

Detroit, Joliet, Toledo, St. Paul, and Minneapolis, joined St. Therese’s pastor, Father Julius Okojie, at the front of the parish, looking out at the sea of people who made use of every pew and floor space available to sit or stand in order to take part.

“Today was a moving experience,” said Father Okojie. “The church was packed to overflowing. The people to my left said they were from Michigan, about a two-hour drive away, while those to my right were from a city west of Chicago.”

The atmosphere was gentle and reverent—a stark contrast to the near-deafening din that often accompanies large crowds. As Andrew Goldstein, of The Vigil Project, and Tierney Vedelyak sang, there was a palpable peace, as the massive crowd prepared their hearts to encounter Christ in the Eucharist.

Before the pilgrims arrived inside the church, local young adult, Mia Tiwana, shared her stirring witness talk about risking her life to convert from Islam to Catholicism. Tiwana concluded by encouraging the crowd, saying, “Soon our Lord, love Himself, will process in. Ask Him for hope, fearlessness, and perseverance. Ask Him for the grace to live well for Him. And ask Him for the understanding that you were created to be loved, and created to be little.”

Then it was time. As bells rang, Jesus, present in the Eucharist, entered the church. As He made His way down the main aisle, flanked by the color guard of the Knights of Columbus, the room gathered to its feet to see Him, then fell to their knees to pay Him homage.

For the next 15 minutes, a beautiful sense of solemnness filled the space, as all eyes beheld their Lord. As worship music played, many voices throughout the sanctuary joined in song, while others remained silent. Even in the midst of such a large crowd, there was a palpable sense of intimacy throughout the space, as each person communes with Jesus.

Observing the room as he entered in the procession, Perpetual Pilgrim Matthew Heidenreich said, “I was amazed. It feels like people in South Bend are just so excited, they’re so hungry to experience the Lord. It was beautiful, not knowing how to say about Little Flower or about South Bend, to walk in and to see people who were ready to worship, who were ready to welcome Jesus. It was such a gift.”

Following Adoration, Father Okojie held the monstrance for all to see, and then the procession began out of the church, down the busy street in front of it, and onto Bulla Road, as the pilgrims made their way to the University of Notre Dame.

The front of the procession was led by altar servers, the Knights of Columbus color guard, dergy, and four children who had recently received their First Holy Communion: Lily Markovich, Anna Engelsen, Jonah Smith, and Stella Fredo, each wearing their First Communion attire. The priests took turns holding the monstrance as they journeyed, and the crowd was led in the recitation of prayers together.

“As we walked down Bulla Road towards Notre Dame, there were hundreds of people ahead of me and hundreds behind. I felt swept up in a very joyful but still solemn procession,” said Kaiser. “The people prayed the whole way, led by someone up front. Everyone seemed happy to be there, and the peace and joy were palpable.”

The pilgrimage made several truths of the Church visible: our unity as the body of Christ, our call to live our faith in visible ways in everyday circumstances, and the fact that we are a pilgrim people, followers of Jesus on our journey to our heavenly home.

“The most moving part for me was just being a part of the Pilgrim People,” Josh Noem with Ave Maria Press told Today’s Catholic. “You’re a part of this great movement. I just kept turning around to look to see if I could see the end of the procession. It made visible what is invisible for us when we go to Mass and are part of the Eucharist. That communion, that gathering, is invisible and it’s really nice to be Eucharistic.”

Being able to witness and help facilitate the unity of the Church was one of the reasons Kai Weiss chose to be a Perpetual Pilgrim. “I love this country,” Weiss said, who originally hails from Germany, and is a graduate of Michigan’s Hillsdale College. “I’m so grateful to be here, but it’s obviously a very polarized and divided country at this time, and I think this pilgrimage is just a wonderful way of bringing people together, sanctifying this country, Jesus sanctifying this country, and yes, to bring some healing. Jesus meets all of us in the Eucharist regardless of which corner of the country we come from, or where we grow up, in what way we grow up, what political party we vote for. He desires all of us to be with Him. And so, just finding that healing for this country has
University of Notre Dame Graduate Shares Conversion Story During National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

BY PAULA LENT

O n Friday, July 5, St. Therese, Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend was packed. With every pew filled, people sat on the ground around the perimeter of the sanctuary just to get a glimpse, to stand close to our Lord. The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage had come to the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and the diocese and people from neighboring states came out to meet our Eucharistic Lord with open arms.

Taking in the scene, one couldn’t help but think of the many times recorded in Scripture when crowds packed spaces just to get a glimpse of Jesus; and the large crowd that later followed Him through the streets to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame.

The cost of discipleship, the grace needed at all times for it, and the immeasurable worth of our Lord were all themes of the talk given by Mia Tiwana before the pilgrims entered St. Therese. Before Tiwana’s talk, St. Therese’s Director of Evangelization, Abby Kyle, shared a favorite and challenging quote with the crowd: “Hearing Jesus plus the world is not more than having Jesus alone.”

A recent graduate of Notre Dame, Tiwana shared her testimony of converting from Islam to Christianity as an adolescent, a decision for which she risked her life ever since. She was disowned by her family, and faced persecution from her native country, Saudi Arabia.

Until adolescence, Tiwana had been a pious and satisfied Muslim. “I lived and breathed Islam,” she shared. “By age 5, I was able to recite many chapters in the Quran from memory. And every single day, I zealously made my Salah by praying five times a day. I have so many fond memories of stirring awake before the crack of dawn offering my sleepy morning to Allah.”

Her conversion was sparked by adolescent rebellion. When she was 12 years old, Tiwana, upset about the constraints Islam placed on women like arranged marriages, form-hiding clothing, disparity in gender roles, “quietly began a crusade to reconcile feminism with Islam.” She said, “For the first time, I sought to understand the Quran and Hadith on my own. As the months went by, my faith began to shatter. One day, as I woke up to my alarm for my morning prayer, I realized that I was no longer certain about the God I had been taught to worship all my life. A crisis of faith ensued. I asked God ‘Who are you, and what could you possibly want from me?’” She continued, “A voice deep within me told me ‘Keep searching, Mia.’”

Tiwana began to explore other monotheistic religions, and through studying the Bible, came to believe in Jesus.

She secretly kept a journal filled with Scripture and letters to God. “I read the letter, and cried. Tiwana, giving her two options: Go back to being Muslim, or face the consequences of being Christian. I was completely frozen,” Tiwana recalled. “The consequence he was talking about was death.”

She was disowned by her family, and faced persecution throughout the following year. Yet she responded with joy and happiness. “There was nothing more fulfilling and sustaning than knowing that I had accepted the true living God,” she said.

Tiwana eventually came to Indiana, and now, years removed from her perilous conversion, she shared that “the grace she received then are all the more needed for each of us in the everyday.”

“The things that help you to be able to die well for God, are the same things that help you to be able to live well for God,” Tiwana emphasized.

“In my search to find meaning and purpose, I tried everything, and sometimes wonder: Could I do it again? Would I be willing to die for Jesus? How far does my sacrifice go?” she shared candidly.

“I think about the graces that God gave me during that time. I had three things: hope, fearlessness, and perseverance. I need them more than ever now, as someone who has no imminent threat to her life. I’ll say it again. The things that help you to be able to die well for God are the same things that help you to be able to live well for God.”

According to Kyle, Tiwana was asked to share her testimony because, “Mia’s story evokes conviction about truths about Gospel living that are totally lost on the average Catholic. Catholics today, myself included, have become overly familiar with the Gospel to the point of forgetting how absolutely radical it is. There are truths of the Gospel like, ‘He who loves father or mother or children more than Me is not worthy of Me’ or ‘You cannot serve God and mammon,’ that we flip past like an old magazine in a waiting room. Those words from our Lord are meant to cut us to the heart and require us to make a choice: Jesus or everything else.”

The talk struck many hearts, including that of parishioner Sam Mertz, who said, “I thought Mia’s talk was very moving and it was very stunning to see how God worked so powerfully in her life, in her conversion experience.”

As she concluded, Tiwana encouraged the crowd, saying, “Soon our Lord, love Himself, will process in. Ask Him for hope, fearlessness, and perseverance. Ask Him for the grace to live well for Him. And ask Him for the understanding that you were created to be loved, and created to be little.”
been one key aspect as well of me doing this.”

Brian Peterson was among the Knights of Columbus at the front of the procession. He told Today’s Catholic that it was inspiring to glance back a couple of times and see all of Bulla Road filled with pilgrims. “But the most inspiring thing,” he said, “was that every time we came upon a group of people out in the procession, they kneel in silence. That was just beautiful and breathtaking to be able to see that everywhere! One lady who came out of her house, she had a cross, and she was holding it and as we went by, she was kneeling just beautiful. That’s what it’s all about.”

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart quickly filled up as the procession arrived. “There were so many people in the Basilica that not only were all the seats taken, but almost any room to stand or even sit down was also occupied,” said Kaiser.

There was extended time for quiet adoration before Mass began. “The quiet in adoration before Mass was special,” said Notre Dame Ph.D. candidate, Laurel Lown.

The Mass readings included Matthew 9:9-13, in which Jesus calls Matthew, the tax collector, to be his disciple and then dines at his house with other sinners. “To the person who questioned the scene, Jesus responded: ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’” I did not mean the words, ‘I desire the meaning of the words, ‘I desire mercy and love for Christ?’ And how might we live moving forward. How do we each follow after Jesus more visibly? How might we experience a conversion,” he said.

In his homily, Father Gregory Haake, CSC, highlighted the beautiful way to remember that soon we will be going home from this experience. He said, “It’s so beautiful to spend time in the Eucharistic presence as part of our day-to-day.”

Pilgrims at the University of Notre Dame Eucharistic Pilgrimage on Sunday, July 7.

Heidenreich shared. “Day by day, we’re getting closer to where we’re from. I’m from Columbus, Ohio. And so, it’s just bringing to mind that reality that soon we will be going home from this experience. And so, it’s kind of a beautiful way to remember that even as we’re going forward to the communities that we have originated from, from there, from where we’re from, we’re still going to be pilgrims there, and we’re going to be missionaries there especially. We’re pilgrims forever on our journey to heaven, and we’re missionaries now of the Eucharist, to go and share this experience with others, to have those places that we came from. So, it’s a good reminder that there’s a lot more to come.”

Father Chin also continued with the Eucharistic Pilgrimage’s time in South Bend also presented an opportunity for everyone who participated in it to consider for themselves how they might live moving forward. How might we live our lives of faith more visibly? How might we continue to foster the sense of our Eucharistic unity? How can we each follow after Jesus more closely? And how might we work to retain our love and gratitude, and awe for Christ?

At the closing Mass on Sunday, following an anecdot about a professional hockey player whose grandchildren had lost sight of how accomplished he is, Father Brian Ching, Rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame, reflected during his homily. “When you have that sort of familial relationship with someone, when you spend that much time with them, and love them so much, it’s very easy to forget about their quote, unique, professional accomplishments.”

“My friends, let me say that today’s Gospel suggests to us that this sort of intimacy, this sort of relationship, and this sort of forgetfulness that it causes, might be part of the struggle of living the Christian life.”

Father Chin said. “Because this sort of intimacy, intimacy between a grandfather and his grandchildren, is being planted out alongside others, including my own family, in faith to honor our Lord, was a very moving experience, as well as the hending His individual love and attention to everyone. While praying beforehand, I was very grateful that all the events are providing and for the gift of a reasonable hope in great things that will follow from this.”

Fellow parishioner Elyse Paul was also influenced by the pilgrimage. “I think when you sit in silent meditation and open the Scriptures, anytime you sit in silent meditation and contemplate, anytime you gaze upon the beauty of His creation, God wants to be there with us and for us. And that level of familiarity, and that level of relationship, is good, and it’s beautiful, and it is a great gift to give to us. But the challenge is when we’re to keep it close to our hearts and show us the way forward.”

St. Therese parishioner Austin Stonewall found the pilgrimage to be a beautiful way to remember that Grace is often comes from a stubbornness of heart, but rather a gradual complacency.

He noted that the goal of the Eucharistic Revival “is to remind us that just who it is we’re called to be and just what it is we believe God to be capable of, to remind ourselves that God is indeed that good, that loving, that merciful, that merciful, that He is willing to enter our life at any moment, to be present to us, and journey with us and show us the way forward.”

Theresa of Avila, St. Teresa of Avila, said, “I think my heart speaks to ours, grateful for that abundance. We’re again in the Eucharist. We’re pouring our blood to symbolize His flesh, poured out for us, the blood of water poured from His side, we will get what we need to fortify our hearts, to experience that Holy Mystery to transform us, and to make of our lives an offering to Him.”

He concluded with a call to believe and trust, saying, “My brothers and sisters, as you receive this Eucharist today, and as you unite your heart to the heart of Jesus, become what you receive and offer your lives as a sacrifice to Him, and go out and proclaim, by the power of love and mercy, that He is our Savior. Proclaim by word and deed that you believe that He is the one who has come to save us and to bring salvation to the world. Following Mass, the Perpetual Pilgrims had opportunities for both rest and community. There were breaks at the presbytery on Notre Dame’s campus. During this time, they enjoyed attending Carolyn Pirtle’s musical, “Behold God’s Love: A Eucharistic Musical,” and also the beauty of the campus grounds. They also participated in workshops with Catholic Charities, helping with Catholic Charities, helping to plant a unity garden.

He also enjoyed the musical, “Behold God’s Love: A Eucharistic Musical,” which was held at Saint Mary’s College on Saturday, July 6, and was inspired by it. “I think it’s so beautiful that a musical could carry our history and remind us how every gift can be used. Every gift is welcome. To see how this community has used the gifts that they have of singing, of songwriting, of theater, it was beautiful. It was so encouraging for me to think, ‘What gifts do I have that maybe I haven’t used for this revival or for the Lord yet?’” It was very uplifting.”

Sunday, July 7, was the last day for the Perpetual Pilgrims in South Bend. As they prepared to leave, they realized that their Pilgrimage was coming to an end, with their arrival in Indianapolis less than two weeks away, caused them to consider how to live in their next phase of life.

“I think for some of us, Fort-Wayne-South Bend is like a homecoming in some ways,” Heidenreich shared. “Day by day, we’re getting closer to where we’re from. I’m from Columbus, Ohio. And so, it’s just bringing to mind that reality that soon we will be going home from this experience. And so, it’s kind of like a beautiful way to remember that even as we’re going forward to the communities that we have originated from, from there, from where we’re from, we’re still going to be pilgrims there, and we’re going to be missionaries there especially. We’re pilgrims forever on our journey to heaven, and we’re missionaries now of the Eucharist, to go and share this experience with others, to have those places that we came from. So, it’s a good reminder that there’s a lot more to come.”

As a final procession made its way around the University of Notre Dame’s campus, ending with adoration in the Eucharist, we reflect on the top of the steps on the main building, Tiwana’s encouragement to the crowd and Kyle’s opening remarks which I found very inspiring: “You were created to be loved, and created to be little,” Tiwana had said.

The guests were thrilled to see the University of Notre Dame, every heart, and every inch, belong to Jesus and what a gift it is to witness Him reclaim it step by step. Tiwana reminded those in attendance.

Looking at the crowd, down on their knees outside, adoring Jesus, I felt just how small we are, how overwhelming Christ’s love is, and that everything belongs to Him.
National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Includes Service Project for Catholic Charities in South Bend

BY DENISE FEDOROW

Eucharistic pilgrims on the Marian Route made a stop at St. Mary of the Annunciation in Bristol on Sunday, July 7.

Father Bob Van Kempen, Pastor at St. Mary’s, said his parish has been focusing on a parish year of Eucharistic Revival. Before the pilgrims arrived, parishioners and others inside the church went out to greet Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and processed back into the church for adoration, followed by lunch.

At 2 p.m., a Holy Hour began with music provided by Father Malachy Joseph Napier, CFR, and reflections by Brother Samuel, both Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

“A church community coming together to praise God for His son, Jesus. It was a beautiful day for everything,” Father Van Kempen said.

Parishioner Kim Yaney shared her thoughts. “In a time when division in the world is so prominent, processing the Eucharist from all reaches of the country is showing unity in our faith. Jesus joins us from big cities to small towns to kind of like He’s walking along with us on our everyday journey. It is such a great honor that St. Mary of the Annunciation Church was chosen for one of the stops!”

Business Office Manager Calla Patka said, “I am so excited for myself and our parish community that we get to be part of a historic event. It is such a great honor to host the pilgrims and spend time in fellowship while eating lunch, but most importantly spending time in prayer with the Blessed Sacrament! This will be a wonderful memory for our parish community to reflect on in the years to come.”

Father Van Kempen said hosting the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage was another wonderful opportunity for parishioners and for him to “grow in holiness and grow in love for Jesus.”

He continued, “I was so happy and filled with joy that we were able to be part of the grand procession throughout the United States. One of our seminarians, Mason Bailey, joined the group in Minnesota and will be with them until Indianapolis.”

“[This weekend] was a perfect way to wrap up our Eucharistic Revival Parish Year activities, but most importantly has lifted my spirits and has fed me and renewed my faith in the Lord,” he said.

National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Makes Stop at St. Mary of the Annunciation in Bristol

On Saturday, July 6, staff members of Catholic Charities in South Bend welcomed seven members of the Marian Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. The pilgrims worked in the newly created Miami Village Unity Garden. Housed on the diocesan grounds of Catholic Charities and the Cathedral of St. Matthew, the pilgrims helped Catholic Charities staff expand the garden so that more Maimi Village community members will be able to access healthy food and have a nice place to meet their neighbors. Using the items collected during a recent hygiene drive hosted by Catholic Charities and the Cathedral of St. Matthew’s St. Vincent de Paul Society, the pilgrims also distributed free hygiene kits to members of the community. Find more photos at todayscatholic.org.

National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Makes Stop at St. Joseph Parish, LaGrange

Our Eucharistic Lord sits in a special tabernacle inside a van outside of St. Joseph Church in LaGrange prior to being brought into the parish for adoration during the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage on Sunday, July 7.

BY DENISE FEDOROW

Photos provided by St. Joseph, LaGrange

Father Osman Ramos, Pastor at St. Joseph Church in LaGrange, carries our Eucharistic Lord into the parish for adoration as part of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage through the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.
July 14, 2024

TODAY’S CATHOLIC

Experience the Church Like Never Before

After Years of Preparation, Tens of Thousands of Catholics Are Set to Gather in Indianapolis

BY MARIA WIERING

(OSV News) – “I think my heart is going to explode,” said Montse Alvarado, describing the way she expects to feel when she gathers with tens of thousands of Catholics to adore the Eucharist at Indianapolis’ Lucas Oil Stadium. “It feels like so much beauty at a moment when our country and our world is in the midst of war and so much pain, just to see this be our Church’s response – wow, what a witness.”

The first event of its kind in the United States in more than half a century, the National Eucharistic Congress is expected to draw more than 40,000 Catholics to Indianapolis from July 17-21 for five days of prayer, speakers, liturgies, and fellowship, all centered on Jesus in the Eucharist.

Speakers showcase a “who’s who” in Catholic evangelization, including Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who is the founder of Word on Fire; Father Mike Schmitz of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, host of “The Bible in a Year” podcast; Sister Josephine Garrett, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and host of the “Hope Stories” podcast; and Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus in “The Holy Family of Nazareth and Corpus Christi Sunday in June of 2022 to renew Catholics’ spiritual unity, to be a source of American Catholics’ identity, and to make a visual and spiritual impact on the city.

The event is the pinnacle of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative the U.S. bishops launched on Corpus Christi Sunday in June of 2022 to renew Catholics’ love for and understanding of Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist.

Alvarado, EWTN News President and COO, and one of three emcees for the congress’s daily “revival sessions,” told OSV News on Friday, June 21, that she expects the congress to be a source of American Catholics’ spiritual unity, strengthened identity, and renewed vigor through the Holy Spirit.

“I’m excited for people to connect with the Church,” she said, “for the Church to encounter itself.”

The congress begins on the evening of Wednesday, July 17, in Lucas Oil Stadium with the first of the four evening revival sessions, with Eucharistic adoration, speakers, and worship music. The event opens with a major procession with the 30 young adult “perpetual pilgrims” from all four routes of the eight-week National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. The pilgrims set out with the Eucharist on Pentecost weekend from points in California, Texas, Minnesota, and Texas to meet in Indianapolis for the congress, covering a combined 6,500 miles – many of them on foot – as they encountered Catholics at parishes and other sacred and secular sites for Mass and other worship experiences, Eucharistic processions, and fellowship.

The congress’s opening procession will culminate in Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota, entering the stadium with the Eucharist in a “massive” monstrance designed for the congress, leading to a time of silent adoration. Then participants will hear from Bishop Cozzens and the evening’s other keynote speakers, including Cardinal Christophé Pierre, the Holy See’s Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, and Sister Bethany Madonna, a Sister of Life.

As with each congress evening’s revival session, Alvarado will be emceeing along with Sister Miriam James Heidtland, a sister of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity and co-host of the “Abiding Together” podcast, and Father Josh Johnston, a priest of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and host of the “Ask Father Josh” podcast.

Worship will be led by Dave and Lauren Moore, the founders of Catholic Music Initiative. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday have similar schedules. The days begin with relevant Radio’s Family Rosary Across America with Father Rocky Hoffman, followed by Mass, with English, Spanish, and youth options, celebrated by key American prelates such as Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley of Boston, and Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington.

Following Mass, attendees are encouraged to remain in the stadium or head to the “traditional Latin Mass”) offered at nearby parishes. A key congress highlight is Saturday’s 3-5 p.m. Eucharistic procession through downtown Indianapolis, which is expected to make a visual and spiritual impact on the city.

On Wednesday to Saturday, revival sessions begin in Lucas Oil Stadium at 7 p.m. Thursday’s keynote speakers are Bishop Smich and Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, Foundress and Servant Mother of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth in the Archdiocese of Boston. Friday’s speakers are Sister Josephine and Father Boniface Hicks, a Benedictine monk of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and the Friday event will include prayer for healing and reparation as well as a Eucharistic procession.

Saturday’s revival speakers are Bishop Barron, Roumie, Catholic media personality Gloria Purvis, and Tim Glemkowski, who is the current CEO of National Eucharistic Congress Inc., the nonprofit organizing revival events, especially the congress and pilgrimage. Catholic musician Matt Maher will lead worship during Eucharistic adoration.

On Sunday, the congress’s final day, the revival session is in the morning, with speakers Mother Adela Galindo of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who founded a bilingual “religious family” of religious sisters and brothers, priests, and laypeople; and Chris Stefanick, Founder of Real Life Catholic.

As the event draws near, Glemkowski said he is excited to watch it unfold.

“There’s movement and energy, and it’s focused on Jesus, and we’re asking for the Holy Spirit to fall on the Church in a new way,” he told OSV News on Wednesday, June 26. “The communion of the Church is going to be so powerful and prominent.”

Speaking to fellow bishops on Friday, June 14, at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Spring Plenary Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky, Bishop Cozzens, Board Chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., pointed to the encouragement Pope Francis gave congress organizers when they met with him in June of 2023.

“I’m reminded and encouraged often by the words of our Holy Father to use Cozzens and the bishops. The National Eucharistic Congress,” he (Pope Francis) said, ‘marks a significant moment in the life of the Church in the United States. May all that you’re doing be an occasion of grace for each of you, and may it bear fruit in guiding men and women, throughout..."
More at the National Eucharistic Congress
Catholics Are Set to Gather for Five Historic Days in Indianapolis

your nation, to the Lord who, by His presence among us, rekindles hope and renews life.”

The congress kicks off the National Eucharistic Revival’s third year, the Year of Mission, which encourages Catholics to intentionally accompany someone on his or her faith journey back to the Catholic faith through its “Walk with One” initiative.

The year also invites Catholics to become Eucharistic missionaries, which would take them, Bishop Cozzens said, “deep into the mystery of the Eucharist” and help “a new wave of people connect to Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist. Here are six things to expect. For the full schedule, visit eucharisticcongress.org.

1. Lots of People

As of late June, around 40,000 people had registered for the congress’s five-day pass, with thousands more signed up for single-day passes. That puts the congress’s attendance, especially for its weekend events, close to Lucas Oil Stadium’s 45,000-person capacity for this style of an event, said Tim Glemkowski, CEO of National Eucharistic Congress Inc.

With this many people to accommodate, the event’s organizers recommend making plans in advance. “Take care of your human needs, and don’t try to overdo it,” he said. “Let the Lord lead you through an experience of a day instead of trying to maximize and be sort of everywhere.”

Evangelist Church, which Glemkowski described as the congress’s “spiritual hub,” St. John is holding evangelistic, nighttime prayer events following the congress’s revival sessions, as well as offering other forms of hospitality, including coffee and food, throughout the congress.

3. Speakers and Musicians

The congress brings together more than 50 popular Catholic speakers, leaders, media personalities, and musicians under one roof for five days. Households names such as Bishop Robert E. Barron, Father Mike Schmitz, and Jonathan Roumie are speaking during evening revival sessions, with Grammy-winning musician Matt Maher leading worship on Saturday night.

While many of the speakers are popular in Catholic circles, they were chosen because of their gifts in connecting a person to mission, with Bishop Cozzens, said. “We have remarkably well-known, impactful people in the Church gathering for this moment,” he said. “Everyone is just trying to... lend their gifts and their support to this moment of renewal.”

4. The Arts and Exhibits

Also at the congress will be several exhibits related to Jesus and the saints, a musical theater performance, and programming for kids and families, as well as a dynamic expo hall.

The National Shroud of Turin Exhibit features a replica of the famous burial shroud believed to have covered Jesus in the tomb and invites viewers through a high-tech experience to consider what it terms the “world’s greatest mystery.” The Eucharistic Miracles Exhibit, originally created by soon-to-be St. Carlo Acutis (a special intercessor for the Eucharistic revival), explores Eucharistic miracles around the world.

Meanwhile, a chapel with relics from Blessed Carlo and other saints associated with the revival – such as St. Manuel González García and St. Paschal Baylon – will be open for prayer and veneration.

On Thursday, “Bernadette de Lourdes, the Musical” – a theatrical performance about the Marian visionary of Lourdes, France – will be staged in Lucas Oil Stadium at 6:30 p.m. ahead of the evening’s revival session.

Meanwhile, an expansive expo hall in the convention center will be open each day with booths and displays featuring apostolates, ministries, religious orders, publishers, and “makers of all types,” according to organizers.

5. Service

An encounter with the Eucharist should spur the Church to seek out the “least and the lost,” Glemkowski said, which is why several outreach opportunities will be highlighted at the congress. On Thursday and Friday, attendees can pack meals for people who are hungry with the Indianapolis-based Million Meal Movement. The Denver-based Christ in the City will also train small groups of people to encounter men and women who are chronically homeless in Indianapolis.

6. Commissioning

Between a morning revival session and a closing Mass, the final day of the congress on Sunday, July 21, includes a “great commissioning,” which organizers compare to “a new Pentecost,” where attendees “will be sent out to joyfully proclaim the Gospel in every corner of our nation.”

The congress kicks off the National Eucharistic Revival’s third and final year, the Year of Mission, where Catholics are invited to accompany Catholics no longer practicing the faith back to the Church, and to grow more deeply in their understanding of what the Eucharist requires of their own lives.

The U.S. bishops’ Walk with One initiative encourages Catholics to recognize “the one person over the next year that you’re uniquely being sent to on mission,” Glemkowski said.

Maria Wiering is Senior Writer for OSV News.
Since the earliest days of the National Eucharistic Revival, Jason Shanks and other Catholic leaders have been working behind the scenes to implement what, at the time, was more conceptual than concrete. In the summer of 2021, Shanks himself was dealing with COVID-19. In November of 2020, the Pew Research Center published a survey claiming that fewer than 1 in 3 Catholics believed that Jesus was truly present in the Eucharist, with the other two-thirds believing it was merely a symbol of Christ’s body and blood. With churches across the country closed out of an abundance of safety, the pandemic, it seemed, exacerbated the problem.

Out of this, the National Eucharistic Revival was born, and with it, the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, where tens of thousands of Catholics from across the country will flock to take part in a five-day celebration of Christ living among us in the Blessed Sacrament.

Three years later, with revival ongoing and the opening of the congress near, Shanks recently named the new CEO of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc., the organization largely responsible for planning the national revival, congress, and pilgrimage. He had been serving as president of the NEC since August of 2023. Shanks will step into his new role this August, following the outgoing CEO, Tim Glenkowski, who has headed the organization since April of 2022. Now, Shanks has tasked with carrying forward the momentum the Church has built throughout the course of the revival.

“It is the idea that this important work will continue,” Bishop Rhoades told Today’s Catholic. “The revival still needs to take place, and Jason is so well-versed to do that. Not only is he a man of deep faith, but he has skills for administration and organization that have already proven to be very fruitful for the upcoming congress.”

In a wide-ranging interview with Today’s Catholic, Shanks discusses the early days of planning the revival and the congress, why this movement was necessary, how the Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend has embraced it all, and what he’s most looking forward to in Indianapolis.

So, for me, personally, I’ve been thinking about what that third year is about. Church being lit on fire and people discovering the Eucharistic heart of Jesus, and it’s really taking hold. If this movement were to just stop at the Congress, gosh, it would have been a great two years – because there’s a whole other year of the revival left – and I think people would be like, “Wow, that was great.” But I see it like the Sermon on the Mount. I think people just need a few events, but this is really, in my view, the national Church being lit on fire and then sent out, and then that’s what the third year is about. How do we bring people back to church? How do we bring them to Jesus? How do we bring them to the Eucharist? So, for me, personally, I’ve seen this movement play out in my own life, and I feel like God’s called me to this moment. Frankly, looking at the history of the Church in the United States, it seems like this moment – this movement is happening for a particular reason that’s solely being directed by Him.

Today’s Catholic: When was the vision of the revival at the beginning, and can you explain why it was so necessary at this point in time in the history of the Church in the United States?

Shanks: This seems like I’m not answering your question directly, but let me say this today. I’ve been thinking about why this pilgrimage is working so well. So, I’m a guy who, for the last five to six years, has been studying ideas, studying trends, studying movements within the Church, and this pilgrimage is really a fascinating study. And the reason I say that is because everybody has done processions in their parishes and dioceses. It works, right? This one is taking on a life of its own, and the question is: Why?

As I’ve been thinking about this, I’ve been thinking about this COVID experience, to say, “We can do mission. I just feel like God’s calling me to this moment.” And I think people would be like, “Wow, that was great.” But I see it like the Sermon on the Mount. I think people just need a few events, but this is really, in my view, the national Church being lit on fire and then sent out, and then that’s what the third year is about. How do we bring people back to church?

Today’s Catholic: How do we as a Church – from priests to bishops to laypeople to the work in parish and diocesan ministries – get Catholics in the pews to see that the Eucharist is what the Second Vatican Council said in Lumen Gentium, the source and summit of our faith?

Shanks: I worked for a diocese for a better part of my career, and this isn’t a...
criticism, but sometimes what happens is we just try to be all things to all people and try to do everything. But there is a prioritization that has to occur, and you have to major on your majors and minor on your minors, and to your point, this clearly would be a major priority and should be a major priority. But what I don’t want to point out is that a framework is emerging through this revival that will influence the entire mission of our work. We simply have to compel or convince them this is the central point to everything that we are all part of. Let’s just take the area of evangelization. Arguably, for the last 30 to 40 years, we’ve just been adopting the evangelical way of evangelizing. I think a more authentic way is starting to emerge of what it means for us as Catholic Churches to truly share their faith. I don’t necessarily think of it as something that means we take Jesus on the streets all the time. That’s not what I mean. But it’s clear that evangelization must be rooted in the Eucharist, and I think that’s truly present right here and right now. If we can manage to convey this, if we can get this right, where it’s going to be beautiful. The music is out of this world. It’s not every day that a stadium is full of Catholic worshipers singing Jesus in the Eucharist. It just doesn’t happen anymore. But ultimately, I hope people come for the encounter with Christ, and maybe even also for a sense of hope. … This is a national moment, and I think people should embrace, and it should give them hope… I get that people might see this as an event, and I think it started out that way even for those who were planning it, but I don’t think that’s what this has become. I know what a conference is. I know what an event is. … This to me seems more like calling Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount an event or calling the feeding of the 5,000 an event. That’s not what this is.

Today’s Catholic: It’s been beyond humbling. I’m humbled that I get to be a part of this. It’s moved, and it’s given me a tremendous amount of hope. I’m moved, and it’s given me a tremendous amount of hope.

Today’s Catholic: You’ve been up to your elbows in this thing. What has being a part of this done for your own impression of the Church today and also your own personal faith?

Shanks: It’s been beyond humbling. I’m humbled that I get to be a part of this. It’s moved, and it’s given me a tremendous amount of hope. I’m moved, and it’s given me a tremendous amount of hope.

Today’s Catholic: Let’s shift a little bit and talk about the congress and something that took place in Indianapolis. What are you personally excited about for the congress, and what should other people be looking forward to about these upcoming five days in Indianapolis?

Shanks: I personally am looking forward to being delighted and surprised. I think that this is going to do things that will hopefully – please, God! – do things that I haven’t thought about. We’ve done the details, we’ve made safety plans, we’ve done logistics, and crowd management, and all these things, but ultimately, we do all that because we’ve got to get out of the way because the Holy Spirit is going to do His thing, and it’s happening right in our own backyard. Families here can go experience this. Just come down for the day! We are doing a kids area, we have a huge exhibit hall that has a way for kids to do service projects. We have passports for kids to go find different things in the exhibit area. In the evening sessions, we have areas for families to pull out the kids. In any way, when they pull out, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is there for them to do. … For my kids, I have 6-year-olds, and this he’s going to be mesmerized by the musicians, the band, the football field, the stage, the size, the magnitude. … I think he’ll be enchanted by the whole thing, and because of that, he’ll get to actually experience it in a way that might be foundational to his faith.

Today’s Catholic: How did this personal growth influence your willingness to lead the National Eucharistic Congress Inc. into the future?

Shanks: When I was discerning what this is going to be going forward, I started looking at all the people who you will, and I realized that God did something in my COVID experience. … What I’m thinking is that this was leading me through this idea of understanding Jesus in the tabernacle through my own immersion in that. I think that’s where the first thing I did work-wise was show up at this meeting, to getting involved as I was and helping with this incredible project. So, taking this initiative forward became an easier decision than I thought, because I was like, I think the Lord has directed me, for whatever reason, to do this. And then very early on with the revival, at the very first moment, I was looking to speak at the time – and I stopped the whole meeting and said, “Can we start with the ending in mind and ask, ‘What we are defining success?’” And I said, from OSV’s standpoint at the moment, we don’t want to fund an event. We don’t want to fund a three-year initiative. This has to go on. It’s what I’m very passionate about, and why I’m taking this on. It has to keep going. There’s too much momentum. It can’t stop here.

“Just look at the threads of this whole thing, and I am excited about this, and I am excited about that.”
Diverse Musical Artists to Bring Faith-Filled Worship Through Song at National Eucharistic Congress

BY LAURETTA BROWN

(OSV News) – As the National Eucharistic Revival calls Catholics to enter into the Lord’s great love for them in the Eucharist, musical performers from a variety of backgrounds will invite those at the National Eucharistic Congress to faith-filled worship through song.

The congress, taking place in Indianapolis July 17-21, features musicians and bands from across the country. Catholics will notice some familiar names, such as veteran Grammy nominated musician and composer Matt Maher.

The event also features plenty of new Catholic music, including the winner for the official hymn of the revival, “Let the Earth Acclaim Christ Jesus,” by Kathleen Pluth of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Phoenix. The contest was sponsored by the U.S. bishops.

Attendees also have the unique opportunity in the evening of Thursday, July 18, to preview “Bernardette de Lourdes, the Musical,” which was inspired by the official transcripts from St. Bernadette Soubirous’ interrogations by French authorities after Mary appeared to her in Lourdes, France, in 1858. The show is coming to the United States in 2022 after a successful run in France.

Performing at the congress throughout the week, Dave and Lauren Moore, a husband-and-wife musical duo from northeast Texas, are founders of the Catholic Music Initiative, which is “dedicated to enriching the liturgical experience by seamlessly blending the beauty of traditional sacred music with contemporary expressions of faith.” Dave Moore also is the Director of Music and Liturgy for the National Eucharistic Congress.

The congress’s morning impact sessions, planned for days 2-4, are organized into six tracks: Encounter, Encuentro, Empower, Renewal, Cultivate, and Awaken. Each features a unique musical performer.

The Encounter track has music from worship leader and songwriter Sarah Kroger, who is based in Nashville. “A big part of what I’ve been diving into as an artist and as a writer (and) just in general as a human being is just the wonder of God and his presence in the world around us,” Kroger told the Our Sunday Visitor newspaper earlier this year.

The Encuentro track is in Spanish and includes music from Nino Cabrera, a bilingual worship leader born and raised in Colombia, who has lived most of his life in the U.S. He seeks “to create spaces of authentic encounter with Jesus.” Kairy Márquez also is performing for the Encuentro track. She was born in the Dominican Republic, grew up in New York City, and now resides in a suburb of Atlanta. She is a wife and mother of three boys and travels to lead Eucharistic concerts in Latin America.

The Empower track, a more intimate series designed to help individuals become Eucharistic missionaries in their communities, features the Vigil Project for musical entertainment. They are “a collaborative group of Catholic musicians, filmmakers, and creatives who create music and media for the Catholic journey.”

The Renewal track for those who work in parish or diocesan ministries features the music of Josh Blakesley, who is based in Houston and feels the calling “to make music that moves people into prayer and action.”

The Cultivate track, focused on families attending together, will feature performances by Steve Anglissana, a veteran musician and worship leader from Texas, and Francesca LaRosa, an Indiana-based singer and songwriter who arranges different musical settings for the public to help people approach Scripture.

The Awaken track at the congress is aimed at high school youth and features the music of Andrew Laubacher, a singer and speaker from Southern California who is also part of Humanality, a nonprofit aimed at helping college students “flourish through creating healthy relationships with technology.” Ricky Vazquez, a Nashville-based singer of Puerto Rican descent, also performs for this track. He is a part of Anchor Hymns, a multigenerational collective of artists focused on writing new hymns for the Church today.

In addition to the musical performances for the individual tracks and on the main stage at the congress, the event also features two stages for performances throughout the week. These stages include artists such as Nick and Nikki Garza, a husband-and-wife duo with five children from Mesa, Arizona; Louisiana-based artist John Finch; the group Liveloud; Louisiana musician Grae McCullough; and a local Indianapolis Mariachi group, Mariachi Sol Jaliscente. A popular bluegrass band of Dominican friars, the Hillbilly Thomists, and the New Orleans-based gospel choir, the Voices of St. Peter Claver, also take the stage. Catholic musicians Santiago Fernández, Javier Iván Díaz, Mike Serapio, Nick Scanlan, and Eric Wilkes also are performing throughout the week.

In addition to these musical performances, Giancarlo Bernini, a Catholic magician who addresses themes of identity, apologetics, and more in his shows, is part of the entertainment for the congress. There is also a dance performance from Danza Azteca Guadalupana.

Laurett Brown is Culture Editor for OSV News.
As the Church around the world observed the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul on Saturday, June 29, congregants packed SS. Peter and Paul Church in Huntington not only to honor the saints but to mark the 180th anniversary of the parish named in honor of the apostles.

Bishop Rhoades celebrated the special Mass with assistance from the parish’s priest, Father Tony Steinacker, along with Father Caleb Kruse, Father Nathan Maskal, and Deacon Roger Dinius, who serves SS. Peter and Paul Church as well as St. Mary Church in Huntington.

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades said: “The preface of today’s Mass describes Peter as ‘foremost in confessing the faith’ and Paul as ‘its outstanding preacher.’ Jesus made Peter the rock of His Church, and He called Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. On this day, June 29, the Church commemorates both together in remembering their martyrdom in Rome – Peter’s crucifixion and Paul’s decapitation, both taking place during the fierce persecution of the Church by the Emperor Nero in the 60s A.D., some 50 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today is a big feast in Rome, where the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul are venerated at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican and at the Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls along the Ostian Way. Millions of pilgrims visit these basilicas and pray at the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul every year.”

Bishop Rhoades talked about how the two apostles are considered the pillars of the Church and that SS. Peter and Paul in Huntington has the distinction of being the only parish in the diocese to be named “in honor of the princes of the apostles.”

He ended his homily by saying, “May Saints Peter and Paul intercede for all of us that, following their example, we may hold fast to our faith! At the end of our lives, may we be able to say with St. Paul: ‘I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.’”

Following Mass, a celebratory dinner and reception were held at the Knights of Columbus Council 1014 in Huntington.
Brayton Thomas was in a jam.
The senior pitcher for the Bishop Dwenger baseball team had just allowed three straight batters on base as he struggled to find the zone.
Bases were loaded with no outs. A dozen professional scouts were watching his every move. Head Coach Jason Garrett called for time and trotted to the mound to talk to his ace.

“I, man,” Garrett recalled telling Thomas. “All these people behind me already know you have the ability. This moment right here is why they’re here — they want to see how you respond to this. It’s about how you deal with this moment.

Thomas put his head down and went to work. Strikeout, strikeout, strikeout. Inning over.

It’s a midseason memory that lives on for both Garrett and Thomas, as it encapsulated not only the Saints’ 2024 season but also Thomas’ baseball journey.

“I struggled before, and I knew how to deal with adversity. I’ve had tougher things come my way,” Thomas told Today’s Catholic. “Whether that be learning on God or things you’ve grown through in the past — learning how to deal with failure to lead you to success. God will put you in tough spots, and it’s how you respond to them.”

Thomas’ response has been nothing short of phenomenal. The star southpaw just transitioned to travel ball, first playing up a year with the Team Indiana Bulls and then with the Summit City Vipers in Fort Wayne.

“My dad was hard on me, really hard on me,” Thomas said. “Just tough love from your dad, and that was awesome. He was usually harder on me than any other person on the team, which was hard at the time, being 12-13 years old, but it was a good experience.”

Dan Oplinger, who also coached Thomas with the Vipers, remembers Thomas taking it all in stride.

“He was just a quiet kid, very receptive to any coaching,” Oplinger said. “If he had a problem, he would come and ask what he needed to do. He was the perfect team player and had a passion for the game.... I always told him he can do whatever he wants to do, because he’s that talented. He just has to work hard and stay committed.”

‘He Always Wanted to Play Baseball’

“It’s no exaggeration to say that Thomas’ baseball journey began at birth.

“I literally remember the day he came home from the hospital,” said his father, Stephen. “I would go into the basement and watch Cubs games. I remember him just opening his eyes, looking at the TV, and not fussing whatsoever. I would watch every single inning of every single game. I was obsessed with baseball, and it probably led him loving it.”

Stephen spent countless hours with Thomas after work on the St. Joe Little League fields in Fort Wayne, catching, pitching, hitting, and teaching his son every position. During the day, Thomas’ mother, Amanda, followed suit.

“He always wanted to play baseball,” Amanda recalled. “I’d constantly be tossing balls to him, apologizing to the neighbors for always being in their yard. When [his younger brother] Landon came, playing catch was the daily thing.”

At age 7, Thomas was playing up a year with the 8-year-old Little League team, which was coached by his dad. Stephen continued coaching and challenging his son as he transitioned to travel ball, first with the New Haven Bulldogs and then with the Summit City Vipers in Fort Wayne.

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‘The best decision we’ve made’

As his older teammates moved on to high school and Thomas began eighth grade, his parents knew it was the right time to explore a better team in Thomas’ age group. One of his teammates’ father suggested the Indiana Bulls, the state’s premiere travel team in Indianapolis.

He called the Bulls coach and said, “I’ve got a left-handed pitcher,” and the coach said, “There are no left-handed pitchers in the state that can play here yet.” Stephen recounted. “He said, ‘Well, I’ve got one.’ The Bulls’ tryouts had lasted hundreds of kids, and they went down that night, and Brayton was awesome. The coach didn’t let us get out of parking lot without offering him a spot.”

However, the team wasn’t so simple. It would mean several drives to Indianapolis each week, with every practice and game being in Indianapolis — or farther away — not to mention all the homework. Thomas would have to in the car, along with the cost of gas and lodging when necessary. When Stephen and Amanda laid out the pros and cons to Thomas, they got a straightforward response.

“He looked at me and said, ‘But what’s the point of all this?’” Amanda said. “So, I asked him, ‘What is the point?’ And he said, ‘So I can play in college and play in the big leagues.’ The kid has big dreams, and what parent isn’t going to help him get there?”

Thomas spent the next four summers with the Team Indiana Bulls, travelling to the likes of Georgia, North Carolina, California, and Arizona to face the best competition in the country.

“The Thomases were able to make the long-distance commitment work thanks to a full family effort. Thomas’ grandparents drove him to Indianapolis on numerous occasions, and he was able to stay at his uncle’s house, which was Fishers whenever he needed to.

“It was tough,” Stephen said, “but it’s the best baseball decision we’ve made for him to this point.”

His family’s sacrifices aren’t lost on Thomas.

“My parents mean everything — my parents are my biggest supporters, and my brother,” Thomas said. “I’ve been shown so much love and support for him because he goes out and he does his own thing and tries to make a name for himself and is making a name for himself. He just has his own hobbies, and I love that he can be different in that kind of way.”

‘God Entrusted Him with Immense Talent’

Once Thomas reached high school, it didn’t take long for Garrett to notice. Thomas jumped off the field — literally.

During a preseason workout in 32-degree weather, the Bishop Dwenger coaches were hitting flyballs on the field, and I just hear all the air go out of the stadium,” Garrett said. “Brayton was chasing a fly ball, and he dives right across the track and catches fly ball. I went up to him and told him, ‘Great job, I love the effort, but we don’t need you diving across the track. Just let those ones go.’

“I lay out on the track, get a couple bruises and scrapes, but that’s just kind of the effort that I like to go at,” Thomas explained. “One hundred percent at anything, whether that be in faith, in baseball, on the baseball field, or the baseball field.”

Thomas made the varsity squad as a freshman and became a four-year starter for the Saints. Garrett said Thomas’ Christ-centered leadership is what made him so invaluable to the team.

“He’s fun-loving, he has fun in the dugout, he’s humble, he handles all distractions well, and he’s the greatest integrity, he’s a hard worker, he’s coachable — he has it all,” Garrett said. “I can’t be more thankful for Coach Garrett, just because he’s loved me through it all.”

“Thomas said. “We’ve spent the past four years with each other, whether that be in the school, in church, on the baseball field. So, we’ve gotten to know each other really well, and I have high praise for Coach G.”

“We’ve been extremely blessed over the years with coaches, but Jason Garrett is just one of the coolest people I’ve ever met,” Thomas said. “I can’t imagine not having a faith-based education where teachers care so much, teach you to be kind, to be a good man. I know Dwenger really helped [Brayton] with that.”

This was never more evident than on another workout this past spring, in which Thomas was prayed over and felt the Spirit at work.

“I felt the most impactful moment of my life,” Thomas said. “There was a healing service, and I’ve never been in a moment where I felt that close to God. It’s like He took over my whole body. Bishop Dwenger putting me in this moment was not by chance, it’s so good for that. I could go to the chapel anytime during the day. I could go talk to the guidance counselor, Father Zach G., anyone who I needed to talk to, they were there for me.”

“Thomas’ time as a Saint didn’t come without trials.
After outstanding freshman and sophomore campaigns on the diamond, Thomas struggled a bit as a junior with the mental side of the game and had to lean into Garrett’s preaching on levelheadedness. By his senior year, Thomas faced the scrutiny of a dozen professional scouts at every home game, most measuring his pitch speed with radar guns or recording him on camera. He was also limited by his professional advisor on his pitch count early in the season, which presented a challenge to Garrett against some of Dwenger’s toughest opponents.

Nevertheless, the Saints posted a 24-9 record this past season and captured their fourth straight Summit Athletic Conference crown. Bishop Dwenger topped Concordia 12-0 for a sectional title and edged Northwood 5-4 in regionals before falling in the semistate round to eventual state champion New Prairie. Thomas put together an impressive senior resume, finishing with a 1.47 ERA and 76 strikeouts in just 38 innings pitched, while also batting .375 and leading the team with 27 RBI.

Garrett said he couldn’t be prouder of how Thomas represented God, his family, and his team amid constant pressure all season.

“God entrusted him with immense talent,” Garrett said. “He’s done a lot to bring attention to our program by his presence and the way he’s been an Indiana fan, and it felt never nervous about this in the least, because he has two amazing opportunities in front of him.”

Nevertheless, Thomas’ parents are helping him weigh both options. On one hand, professional baseball has always been in his dream, and it is now within reach. He could become just the second pitcher drafted straight out of Bishop Dwenger joining Andy Helmer in the 13th round of the 1996 draft. On the other hand, IU would allow Thomas to obtain an education, experience college life, receive instruction from top college coaches, and compete for a national championship. He could also be draft-eligible again after his sophomore year, fazed on his birthday.

Regardless of the path he takes, Oplinger sees a bright future for Thomas.

“He’s the real deal, and just a quality kid,” Oplinger said. “I say it all the time: He understands how to be successful, he’s got a good head on his shoulders, he’s humble, and he doesn’t take anything for granted. He just loves to compete.”

When the MLB Draft unfolds July 14-16, Thomas will be gathered with his immediate family at their home, enjoying the moment with those closest to him. In the meantime, he will be listening to the Lord and prayerfully discerning God’s will.

“My parents have been pushing me to follow my heart and pray to God, pray for what He wants me to,” Thomas said. “This is for the ‘My Mommy,’ the ‘My Daddy,’ ‘God’s never put you in a bad situation with the team, so why would He do it now? Follow what your heart wants.’ So I’m just trying to listen to God. Silent prayer, that’s big right now – just trying to listen to what He’s calling me to do.”

Thomas credits his Catholic faith for helping him keep perspective on the game of baseball and its proper place in life. He occasionally posts phrases on the bathroom mirror at home to remind him of what really matters, such as “No one cares more about you than your family” or “Keep strong with the Lord; He has you.” This faith-based approach to sports is what he advises inspiring young athletes to adopt.

“I would say it’s never too late to start believing and following the Lord,” Thomas said. “Praise the Lord for what He has given us and has helped me be a better person in whatever I do.”

‘I’m Just Trying to Listen to God’

The summer after Thomas’ freshman year, he held his own against top national prospects in the Prep Baseball Future Game in Georgia, showing that high-level college baseball was attainable. The following year, he committed to Indiana University.

“My heart fell in love with IU,” Thomas said. “I’ve always been an Indiana fan, and it felt like home. The coaches treated me with respect, they wanted me for who I was and the ballplayer and the person that I was.”

His mom agreed.

“When we met the coaches at IU, they were exactly the kind of men that we felt comfortable passing our son off to,” Amanda said. “One of them, the pitching coach, had converted to Catholicism, and the head coach is Christian and goes to church.”

Once professional scouts began vauling Thomas up draft boards, his college plans became less clear. Currently, Thomas is projected to be a third- to fifth-round pick in the 2024 MLB Draft, thanks in part to being a big, left-handed pitcher. However, Thomas won’t automatically accept potential draft offers. He and his advisor have set a dollar amount in place, and if teams call and offer anything less, his advisor will decline the offers. Simply put, if Thomas’ name isn’t called, it doesn’t mean teams didn’t want him or didn’t try to draft him – it means they didn’t offer enough to lure him away from Bloomington.

“It’s very nerve-wracking right now, just because it’s all out of my hands,” Thomas admitted. “I’ve done what I could do, and now it’s up to the team if they want to take a shot on me or if they don’t offer enough. I could definitely fall back to Bloomington.”

Stephen admits that while he gets “nervous for everything – every game, every pitch,” he says he is “not nervous about this in the least, because he has two amazing opportunities in front of him.”

‘They’ve Never Had a Teammate Like Him’

Thomas is in rare company at Bishop Dwenger as he was selected to the all-state team as a senior in the Indiana High School Baseball Coaches Association, as he was named a North All-Star and the Summit Athletic Conference’s Athlete of the Game in Georgia, showing that high-level college baseball was attainable. The following year, he committed to Indiana University.

“God entrusted him with immense talent,” Garrett said. “He’s done a lot to bring attention to our program by his presence and the way he’s been an Indiana fan, and it felt never nervous about this in the least, because he has two amazing opportunities in front of him.”

After a game, pitcher Brayton Thomas prays with his Bishop Dwenger base- ball teammates.

Bishop Dwenger baseball pitcher Braydon Thomas stands for a photo with his parents, Stephen and Amanda, on senior night.
A Toast – and Advice – to Those Beginning their Marital Journey

GREG ERLANDSON

AMID THE FRAY

THE FrAY

Surrendering Your Own Will Is the Greatest Gift You Can Give

GRETCHEN CROWE

God’s Love for His People, Even Today, Remains Steadfast

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Book of Amos is the source of this week’s first reading. Amos is one of the relatively few prophets of whom something is known. It is known that Amos was from Tekoa, a small village about 10 miles south of Jerusalem in Judah. He herded sheep, and he tended fig trees. He obviously was not well known, and he knew the traditions of his ancestors. He wrote during the reign of King Uzziah of Judah, or about the years 785-742 B.C. It was a time of prosperity and national security. Even so, as often has been the case in history, the poor still were in want. The gap between the rich and the less fortunate was quite evident.

Amos saw himself as an authentic prophet. The other “prophets” of his time, he thought, were hired by the king ultimately to strengthen the king’s rule over the people. Under such arrangements, these other “prophets” could not be trusted to preach the word of God.

This weekend’s reading reports a clash between Amos and a priest in the Jerusalem temple. According to the context, it was the priest’s role, insisting that he was called by God to be a prophet.

The Epistle to the Ephesians provides the second reading. In the first-century A.D., Ephesus was a major commercial center in the Roman Empire, being a seaport and port of the Mediterranean Sea. (Shifts in the soil, and collections of sediment along the coast, have left the traces of Ephesus, in present-day Turkey, a distance from the seashore.) Ephesus also was a center for the vices and fast business usually associated with major ports.

In addition, it was one of the most popular religious shrines in the empire. Its great temple, dedicated to Diana, the goddess of the moon, was an architectural marvel of the ancient world. Pilgrims came from everywhere in the empire to venerate the goddess. Accommodating these pilgrims was itself a big business in Ephesus. The epistles sought to reinforce the Christian commitment of the followers of Christ in the city. This reading serves this purpose by reminding the Christian Ephesians that Jesus died for them, and that in faith they are one with the Lord.

The reading from the Epistle to the Ephesians is key to understanding Amos’s Liturgy of the Word. Originally, it was written for a group of believers surrounded by paganism, hostility, and sin.

The epistle reassured them, and this weekend, through the readings, it reassures us. We have been redeemed. Our knowledge of Christ is neither accidental nor coincidental. God has chosen us individually.

still, we need nourishment and guidance as we continue to live on earth. God did not abandon the Chosen People in ancient times. He sent prophets to them.

This divine concern endures. God sent messengers, in the persons of the Twelve, and the messengers now are the bishops in the Church who bring us the words of the Gospels even today.

Through the apostles, and their successors, God heals us, in Christ. Healed and renewed, we move forward to eternal life. We will never die.

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They obediently went out into the countryside, preaching what Jesus had taught them. They possessed the Lord’s power. They drove devils away. They anointed the sick, using that ancient gesture of healing and strengthening mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, and they cured the sick.

Reflection

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Readings

Sunday: Amos 7:12-15; Psalms 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 3:21-35

Monday: Isaiah 1:10-17; Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23; Matthew 10:34-11:1

Tuesday: Isaiah 7:1-9; Psalms 482-8; Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday: Isaiah 10:5-7, 13b-16; Psalms 945-10, 14-15; Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday: Isaiah 26:7-9, 12-16, Psalms 102:13-21; Matthew 11:28-30

Friday: Isaiah 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; (Responsorial psalm) Isaiah 38:10-12, 16; Matthew 12:18

Saturday: Micah 2:1-5; Psalms 101:4, 7-8, 14; Matthew 12:14-21
Happiness, Joy, and the Glimpse of Our Eternal Destiny

Recently, at the annual archdiocesan ordination Mass, I had the great joy of attending three ordinations of close friends to the priesthood (including one of my own). The last of these ordinations, in the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, provided a particular opportunity, given the timing of it, for a sort of reunion of many close friends coming together to celebrate one of the last in our friend group to be ordained a priest.

The ordination, as they all are, was a beautiful and joyous time spent with friends. I thought of the sentiments Chesterton expressed in an article called “On Leaving Rome,” Father Schall reflects beautifully on various lessons the city of Rome teaches its residents. The lesson with which Father Schall ends his essay, and that was on mental formation and the fruit of years of preparation and growth. But I noticed as the weekend of events and time spent with friends came to a close that the words of the late Jesuit Father James Schall were ringing in my mind. In his essay entitled “On Leaving Rome,” Father Schall reflects beautifully on various lessons the city of Rome teaches its residents.

Happiness and beauty, wherever we find them, are harder to bear than sadness and pain, perhaps because they remind us more deeply of who we are, of what we are meant to be, and how we have strayed from those two things.

Yet, if we consider our eternal destiny—a question answered simply yet profoundly in the Baltimore Catechism: “Q. Why did God make you? A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next world.” We can see that happiness is precisely what the human person must be prepared to bear in complete purity if he or she aspires to the life of heaven. G.K. Chesterton draws our attention further in his masterpiece “Orthodoxy,” when he writes, “This is the prime paradox of our religion; something that we have never in any full sense known, is not only better than ourselves, but even more natural to us than ourselves.” How wonderful it is, then, when on this earth we can experience a silver of that eternal beauty and the glimpse of our eternal destiny that awaits us. Sadness and pain have a way of being forgotten in the face of the happiness and beauty for which we were made. And this is mainly, or at least it seems to me, because happiness and beauty are what we are made for—the final goal of our lives is the life of heaven, to be united to happiness and beauty itself for eternity. The sadness and pain that none of us is spared, though each of us experiences in different ways, intensities, and for various lengths, is not part of us—it is a foretaste and beauty of the brokenness of our reality after the Fall. It feels natural to us only when we forget who we are or adopt sons and daughters of God.

Thus, it really is no surprise that Father Schall would say such a thing after a great reflection on life, it’s even less surprising that we could find this statement to be true. And thank the Lord for the opportunity, given the timing of it, for a sort of reunion of many close friends coming together to celebrate one of the last in our friend group to be ordained a priest.

Father Mark Hellingner is the Parochial Vicar at St. John the Baptist Church in Fort Wayne.

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him, and he listed the names of everyone in our family, telling me in his own way how much he loves all of us.

As I stopped resisting the call of my child, as I gave up my own desire, small as it was, I was given a joyful connection with my toddler that I don’t get often enough.

This little anecdote of surrender was nothing remarkable. Parents around the world make sacrifices for their children every second of every day. Mothers, especially in the newborn phase, live in a perpetual state of surrender, as they give their very bodies to the children who depend on them for everything. “Stay-at-home” parents, especially those who can and do opt to school at home, like my amazing husband, surrender their time and sometimes their sanity.

But all of us, in every state of life, are called to surrender, to give ourselves freely, especially when we might not feel like it. To this end, I have come to greatly appreciate this prayer by Blessed James Alberione, founder of the Pauline Family, which demands surrender of one’s will to that of God.

Prayer for unity with Christ. Holy Spirit, in a profound spirit of adoration, I ask you to unite my heart, my will, and my mind with those of Jesus. May the affection of Jesus be my affections. May the desires of Jesus be my desires. May the thoughts of Jesus be my thoughts. May Jesus Himself live in my heart, my will, my mind. I give Jesus my heart, so that He may be the one who loves others in me and with me. I give Jesus my will, so that He may be the one who lives in me and with me. I want what He wants. In me, may He love. In me, may He decide. In me, may He act. And may it be He Himself who fulfills His mission through me. Amen.

Gretchen R. Crowe is Editor-In-Chief of OSN News.
Pope Launches Project to Get Vatican Solely on Solar Power

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis appointed two special commissioners to start work on building a dual-use solar system on a Vatican property outside of Rome that could supply the whole of Vatican City’s energy needs.

“There is a need to make a transition to a model of sustainable development that reduces greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, establishing the goal of climate neutrality,” Pope Francis said in an apostolic letter issued motu proprio, or “on his own initiative.”

The letter, titled “Brother Sun,” was dated Friday, June 21, the summer solstice and the longest day of the year. The Vatican published the letter on Wednesday, June 26.

“Humanity has the technological means needed to tackle this environmental transformation and its pernicious ethical, social, economic, and political consequences, and among these, solar energy plays a key role,” he wrote.

The pope called for the building of an agrivoltaic plant on Vatican property about 11 miles outside of Rome in the area of Santa Maria di Galeria where an array of shortwave directional antennas of Vatican Radio are located.

Agrivoltaic systems are a series of solar panels that coexist with crops, livestock, or both, such as by having panel arrays on top of greenhouses, interleaved among fields, or elevated above them so they can still be used for agricultural purposes.

The future installation will be projected to “ensure, not only the power supply of the radio station existing there, but also the complete energy support of Vatican City State,” he wrote.

The pope appointed two special commissioners to spearhead the project: the President of the commission governing Vatican City State, Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, and the President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (APSA), Archbishop Giordano Piccinotti. APSA directly administers Vatican real estate and properties.

He appointed the two presidents to be “extraordinary commissioners with the full capacity to carry out the necessary acts of ordinary and extraordinary administration,” and he ordered the Vatican Secretariat of State to facilitate the commissioners’ “every request and work to ensure that nothing is lost in that territory, which has been available to the Holy See” after it was ceded by Italy in an accord in 1929.

In 2022, the Vatican joined the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The pope said that by having the Vatican join the framework convention, which asks countries to commit to limiting the increase of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, he “intended to contribute to the efforts of all states to offer, in accordance with their respective responsibilities and capacities, an adequate response to the challenges posed to humanity and our common home by climate change.”
Our Lady of Hungary Parish Festival
SOUTH BEND – Our Lady of Hungary Parish, 829 W. Calvert St., will have a festival on Saturday, July 13, from noon to 9 p.m. Hungarian and Mexican food will be available. Flamenco Dancers will also be there! Kite games begin at noon, beer and wine sales begin at 3 p.m., Hungarian food begins at 4 p.m., and Mexican food begins at 5 p.m.

An Hour With Jesus
FORT WAYNE – Join the Ecce Angels, 1500 W State Blvd, for “An Hour With Jesus,” a Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration. Mass the First Saturday of each month at 11 a.m.

Annual Church Rummage and Bake Sale
NEW HAVEN – St. Louis, Besancon Church, 15535 Lincoln Hwy East will have a rummage and bake sale July 11-13. The hours are: Thursday, July 11, from 6-8 p.m.; Friday, July 12, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ($3 bag sale1-5 p.m.); and Saturday, July 13, from 8:30 a.m. to noon ($3 bag sale). Contact Beth at 260-623-6718 for information.

Father Solanus Guild Celebrates Feast Day
HUNTINGTON – The Father Solanus Guild is presenting St. Solanus Casey, OFM Cap. On Sunday, July 28, celebrate the annual feast day of Blessed Solanus with special anniversaries and memories of his life and spirituality. A recently published book by Richard Beemer (and co-authored by Linda Leitz) will be available at SS. Peter & Paul’s and at the Guild Bookstore at 2930 E. Northport Rd. For further information call 260-450-3045.

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The Secretariat for Communication is seeking a Graphics Specialist/Website Coordinator. The candidate will be a skilled and gifted visual storyteller for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. This person is responsible for the overall layout, production design, and graphic creation for a multi-platform team that engages the Catholic community in the diocese and better connects them to their priests, their parishes, the bishop, and the entire diocese.

Working closely with members of the content and digital team under the leadership of the Secretary for Communications and guidance by the Editor-in-Chief, the person in this position creates the layout for the diocesan traditional print media outlet, Today’s Catholic, the official weekly newspaper for the diocese, as well as the digital version of the newspaper, and is responsible for the layout of content on the newspaper website. This person also produces content for a wide range of mainstream and digital platforms and mediums throughout the diocese, including graphics and advertisements for print materials, websites, email, social media, and more.

As a member of the Secretariat for Communications, the Graphics Specialist/Website Coordinator strives to connect individuals to the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and the amazing work being done in the diocese through first-class content and innovative, artful storytelling.

For information visit diocesefwsb.org/careers