TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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100 YEARS OF SERVING THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

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Statement of Bishop Rhoades Encouraging Holy Hour for Peace

Bishop Calls for Fidelity to Catholic Teaching on Human Dignity and Immigration

BY BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the midst of the turmoil in our country surrounding the tragic events in Minneapolis, the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Paul Coakley, has invited the bishops and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace during this time. He writes: "Let us pray for reconciliation where there is division, for justice where there are violations of fundamental rights, and for consolation for all who feel overwhelmed by fear of loss."

I am grateful for Archbishop Coakley's invitation and encourage these Holy Hours for Peace here in our diocese.

Through the years, I have spoken and written often about immigration, explaining the Church's teaching on migration, the plight of refugees, and the need for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. Sadly, such reform has not happened, due to the political polarization in our society. Now we find ourselves in a situation where peace is threatened. We must pray and act for peace in our cities and nation.

This past November, the Bishops of the United States issued a Special Message addressing our concern for the evolving situation impacting immigrants in the United States. We reiterated the Church's teaching on the fundamental dignity of every human person, including immigrants,

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A Class Act at the Synod

With the Consultation Phase of the Diocesan Synod in Full Swing, Notre Dame Grad Students Are Pitching in

BY SCOTT WARDEN

Beginning in late fall and continuing throughout the winter and early spring, parish communities and other unique groups in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend have gathered or will soon gather to prayerfully participate in the first diocesan synod in 100 years.

Following a discernment period, as members of the faithful join together to hold these "conversations in the Spirit" centered around the synod's five themes – evangelization, catechesis, spiritual and liturgical life, vocations, and outreach – they are guided by reflection booklets that contain excerpts from Scripture, the Catechism, and pastoral writings, as well as relevant statistics from the diocese related to the themes. More than three quarters of the parishes in the diocese have already held their synod consultations, and soon, the special consultations phase will begin, which will invite those who can't or don't have access to a parish community to give their input. While the presbyterate has already had its consultation, groups that will soon begin their discussions include deacons and their wives, college students, the unhoused, the incarcerated, those in nursing care facilities, and those who are distant from the faith or have left the Church.

Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades gives a lesson on the history of the diocese to graduate theology students from the University of Notre Dame at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne on Friday, January 30.

In all, nearly 90 separate consultations will take place, each producing a summary document synthesizing an array of thoughts on where the diocese succeeds at proclaiming the Gospel and living as a community in Christ and where it can improve.

The job of compiling these reports that will be used by the delegates at the two synod sessions later this year – one in South Bend and one in Fort Wayne – won't fall to Bishop Rhoades or priests of the diocese or parish employees or anyone in the diocesan curia. Instead, it will fall to a group of graduate students wanting to learn about – and live – the synodal experience.

Stacey Noem, moderator of the synod and director of human and spiritual formation in the Masters of Divinity program at the University of Notre Dame, came up with the idea to form a one-credit-hour class for graduate theology students called Synodal Workshop.

"I had a number of students

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The
Diocese of
Fort Wayne-South Bend

All Christians are earnest to speak the truth in charity and join with all peace-loving people in pleading for peace and trying to bring it about.
— Gaudiem et Spes, 78

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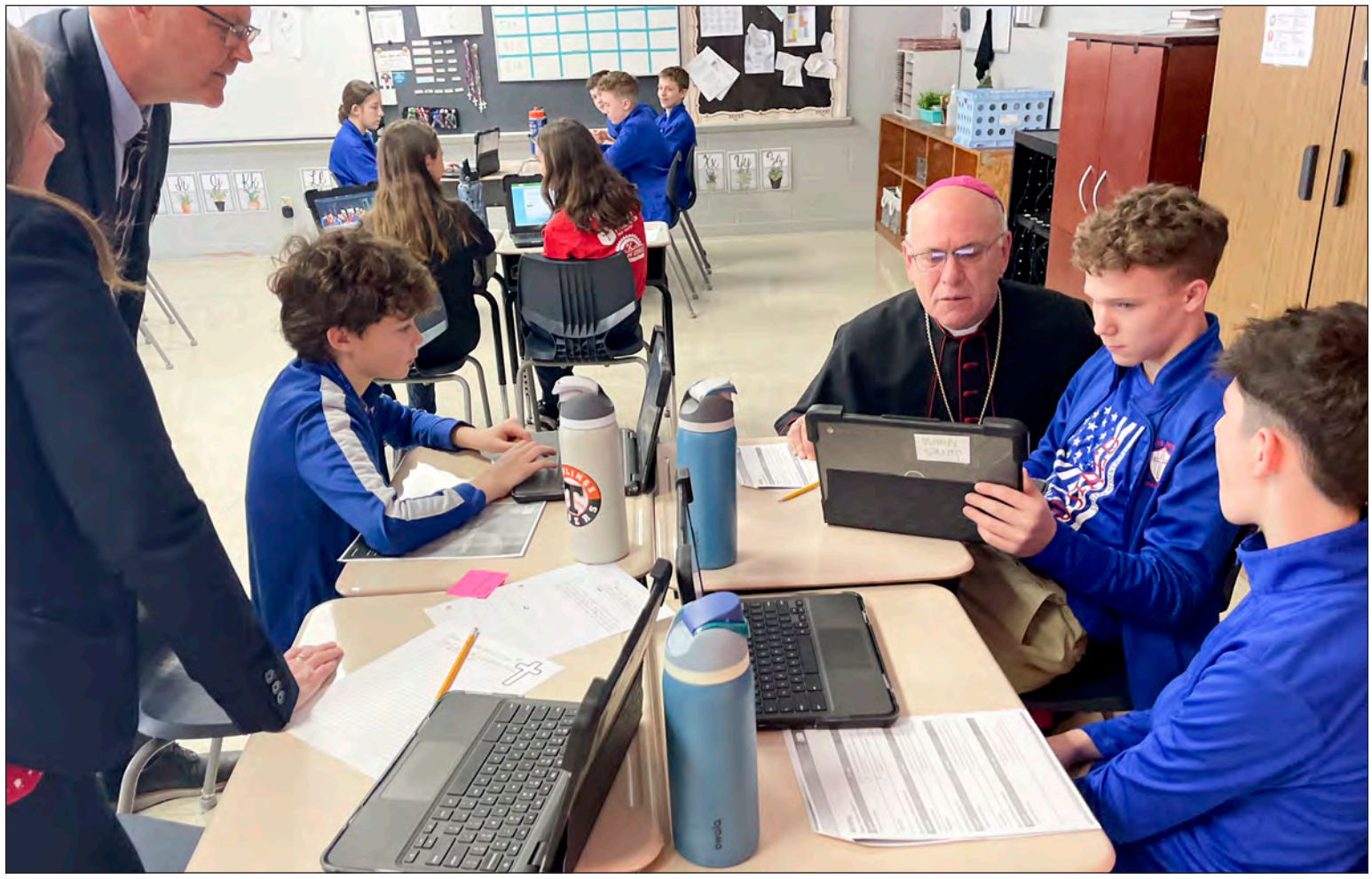


Photos by Tim Johnson

Bishop Rhoades, David Maugel, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the diocese, upper left, and St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Principal Katie Hoffman, left, look on as students identify artwork of the Last Supper during a discussion of St. John the Evangelist in a seventh-grade religion class on Thursday, January 29.

At St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel, Faith Endures Beyond the Weather

BY TIM JOHNSON

St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel School
Address: 11521 Old U.S. Highway 27 S, Fort Wayne
Phone: 260-639-3580
Website: stjoehc.org
Principal: Katie Hoffman
Enrollment: 203 students
Nickname: Squires

Catholic Schools Week unfolded this year amid winter storms that brought multiple days of e-learning and delayed starts for schools across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, forcing many planned activities to be rescheduled or scaled back. Yet at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel School in Fort Wayne, the heart of Catholic Schools Week – celebrating faith, community, and the mission of Catholic education – remained firmly in place.

As part of the week's observance, students, teachers, staff, and parishioners of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel gathered for Mass, joining together in prayer that reflected the school's deep parish roots and shared commitment to faith formation. That sense of unity was affirmed during a visit from Bishop Rhoades, whose presence underscored the strength of a school community shaped not by a single week on the calendar but by daily life rooted in faith.

"This week we celebrate Catholic Schools Week with the theme 'United in Faith and Community,'" Bishop Rhoades told students during his pastoral visit on Thursday, January 29. "We are united in our faith in Jesus Christ but also united as a community – brothers and sisters who follow Jesus together, not just as individuals."

A School Formed by Generations

That sense of unity – sustained even as winter weather disrupted schedules across the diocese – is something St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Principal Katie Hoffman sees every day.

"St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel School and parish are filled with families who have been here for generations," Hoffman told Today's Catholic. "There's a rich history and tradition, but also a strong family feeling. That warmth welcomes students who are new to the parish or the school and encourages them to grow in both their faith and academic life."

Father Michael Ammer, pastor of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Parish in Fort Wayne, greets a kindergarten student from Joy Marquardt's class as they head to the cafeteria for lunch on Thursday, January 29.

While Hoffman anticipated strong academics when she arrived, she said she was especially moved by the way students care for one another and for the wider community.

"My expectations were exceeded by how deeply students care for their classmates and others in the school, church, and community," she said.

Faith Woven into Everyday School Life

Catholic identity at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel is not

ST. JOSEPH, page 20

USCCB President Calls for Holy Hour Amid 'Climate of Fear'

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is pictured in a file photo. In a January 28 statement, Archbishop Coakley called for a Holy Hour for Peace as a step toward national healing following a trio of recent killings by immigration enforcement personnel.

(OSV News) – Amid soaring domestic and global tensions, the head of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has called for a Holy Hour for peace as "a moment of renewal for our hearts and for our nation."

In a January 28 statement, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the USCCB, said that "the current climate of fear and polarization, which thrives when human dignity is disregarded, does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel."

He pointed to "the recent killing of two people by immigration enforcement officers in Minneapolis and that of a detained man in Texas," referencing the deaths of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, respectively slain by federal agents on January 7 and 24 as they protested immigration enforcement actions in Minneapolis. Archbishop Coakley appeared to reference the death of Cuban immigrant Geraldo Lunas Campos, whose January 3 death in a Texas immigration detention facility has been ruled a homicide.

Campos, the third detainee to die at the facility, had pleaded for medication before apparently being slammed to the ground by guards, according to sworn court testimony by several fellow detainees. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials at the facility claimed Campos had died while attempting suicide and that guards had tried to save him. A federal judge on January 27 blocked the federal government from deporting the witnesses until they could provide depositions.

The three deaths "are just a few of the tragic examples of the violence that represent failures in our society to respect the dignity of every human life," Archbishop Coakley said. "We mourn this loss of life and deplore the indifference and injustice it represents."

Archbishop Coakley's message comes amid a growing chorus of outcry from the nation's Catholic bishops over the increasingly frayed domestic and international order.

During their annual plenary meeting in November, members of the bishops' conference collectively issued a special pastoral message on immigration, which condemned "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people" and prayed for "an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement."

In his January 28 message, Archbishop Coakley acknowledged that "many people today feel powerless in the face of violence, injustice, and social unrest."

"To those who feel this way, I wish to say clearly: Your faithfulness matters. Your prayers matter. Your acts of love and works of justice matter," he said.

Archbishop Coakley said he was "deeply grateful for the countless ways Catholics and all people of goodwill continue to serve one another and work for peace and justice." He added, "Whether feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, accompanying the lonely, visiting the imprisoned, or striving daily to love their neighbors, no work of mercy or act of justice is ever wasted in the eyes of God."

Archbishop Coakley continued, saying, "While proper laws must be respected, works of mercy, peacefully assembling, and caring for those in your community are signs of hope, and they build peace more surely than anger or despair ever could."

Referencing Matthew 10:42, he added, "Christ reminds us that even 'a single cup of cold water' given in His name will not go unrewarded."

The archbishop invited "my brother bishops and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace in the days ahead," providing a link to a USCCB webpage with instructions, Scripture readings, and a "Litany of Peace."

The instructions also included a passage from St. John Paul II's 1987 encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis ("The Concern of the Church for the Social Order"), which in turn marked the 20th anniversary of Pope St. Paul VI's 1967 encyclical Populorum Progressio ("On the Development of Peoples").

The quoted passage from St. John Paul II's encyclical, which stressed the centrality of the Eucharist, affirmed that while "no temporal achievement is to be identified" with the awaited glory of God's kingdom, "that expectation can never be an excuse for lack of concern for people in their concrete personal situations and in their social, national, and international life, since the former is conditioned by the latter, especially today."

"Let us pray for reconciliation where there is division, for justice where there are violations of fundamental rights, and for consolation for all who feel overwhelmed by fear or loss," Archbishop Coakley said.

"I encourage Catholics everywhere to participate, whether in parishes, chapels, or before the Lord present in the quiet of their hearts for healing in our nation and communities," he said.

"May this Holy Hour be a moment of renewal for our hearts and for our nation," he added. "Entrusting our fears and hopes to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us ask the Lord to make us instruments of His peace and witnesses to the inherent dignity of every person."

PUBLIC SCHEDULE OF

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Veritatem In Caritate

(Truth in Charity)

- **Wednesday, February 11, at 9 a.m.** – Mass and Pastoral Visit, Marian High School, Mishawaka
- **Thursday, February 12, at noon** – Meeting of Diocesan Finance Council, Best Western Plus, Warsaw
- **Sunday, February 15, at 2:30 p.m.** – Rite of Election, St. Charles Borromeo Church, Fort Wayne
- **Sunday, February 15, at 6:30 p.m.** – Talk with Knights of Columbus, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Avilla

Hundreds Rally to Support Life in Fort Wayne

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Despite snowy and frigid conditions, several hundred pro-life supporters gathered at Parkview Field in downtown Fort Wayne on Saturday, January 31, for the 2026 Northeast Indiana Right to Life March and Rally.

The march, which brought together people of all ages to affirm the dignity and value of every human life, has been held annually nearly the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which made abortion legal across the United States. While the Supreme Court overturned *Roe* in 2022, giving the legal authority to regulate abortion to individual states, pro-life leaders continue to stress the need to advocate for the God-given dignity of all human life.

"Women in our community are still facing pressure and pain, and chemical abortions through abortion pills are now the most common method of ending a pregnancy," Right to Life of Northeast Indiana said in a statement. "The need for truth, compassion, and advocacy for both mother and child is greater than ever."

Photos by Joe Romie

SCHOOL SPIRIT

YOUR SCHOOLS, **YOUR STORIES**

This academic year, Today's Catholic is partnering with the student media programs at all four Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Each week, student writers, editors, and photographers from Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger in Fort Wayne, Saint Joseph in South Bend, and Marian in Mishawaka will share their work on this new page, School Spirit, dedicated to telling the stories of their school communities.

The Value of Catholic Education

Marian Student Shares How His School Community Is Fostering Real Growth Both Academically and Spiritually

BY DOREN BROOKS

Photos provided by Marian High School

Being a student in a Catholic school is a unique experience that not everyone understands. Some of my friends go to public school, and when I told them about uniforms and going to Mass or religion classes, they think it must be a super strict place where nobody has fun – and honestly, that's not true. There are rules, and sometimes they feel like a little much, but being in Catholic school has shaped how I see things and how I go about my day-to-day life. I don't think I'd be the same person if I went somewhere else.

One of the first things people notice about Catholic school students are their uniforms. Every morning, I have to put on my polo shirt, which at times feels repetitive and kind of boring. I'll admit, I've gotten a detention once or twice for not having the proper uniform on or not wearing the right shoes. At the same time, though, uniforms do make things easier. I don't have to waste time figuring out what I'm going to wear, and it keeps everyone looking pretty much the same. I know that in public school people can get judged for their clothes. At Catholic school, people pay more attention to who you are rather than what you're wearing or what brand you have on.

The religious part of Catholic school is another thing that really stands out. We have religion classes just like we have English classes, and we pray in class or as assemblies. At first, I treated it like another subject, just trying to get the homework and the quizzes done. But over time, it started to feel different. In religion, we talk about real-life stuff, like how to deal with forgiveness, how to resist peer pressure, and how to treat people with respect. Sometimes those lessons hit me when I least expect it, like if I get into an argument with a friend, I'll remember something from class about patience or trying to see the good in others. I don't always get it right, but those ideas do stick with me.

Mass is another part of school life. To be honest, sometimes it feels long, especially when I'm already stressed about homework and I'm tired from staying up too late. But there are also moments during Mass where I actually feel calm, like I can step back from the busyness of school and just think. The singing of prayers, even the silence gives me a kind of reset. I know not everyone pays attention, but I think it's something I'll appreciate more as I get older.

Community is a large part of a Catholic school, too. Because our school is smaller than most public schools, everybody knows everybody, and that can be good and bad. It feels like we're all connected, and teachers really know us not just as students but as people. When my friend was having a hard time last year, one of my teachers asked him how he was holding up from it. The class had prayed for him. That made me realize how much school cares about us outside of grades and assignments. On the other hand, being in a small school means people notice things fast. If you mess up, it doesn't stay a secret for long. Still, I'd rather be in a place where people notice me than somewhere I would feel invisible.

The rules are definitely strict at times. I've gotten in trouble for little things like being late to class or having my phone out. But if I'm being honest, those rules do keep us accountable. It's frustrating in the moment, but I get why they do it. It teaches us that even small actions matter, and that's something that will probably help later in life.

Academically, Catholic school challenges me, but I wouldn't say it's impossible. My GPA isn't the highest, but I do try my hardest. It can be difficult trying to balance schoolwork and things outside of school. Some subjects just are easier than others. Most teachers try to go beyond making us memorize stuff but try to teach us things that stay with us throughout our life. They want us to connect what we're learning to the real world and our own values and not just so we can pass a test.

Outside of the classroom, sports and extracurriculars are a big deal here. I'm not the best athlete to come to Marian, but I think I'll leave a mark on the football program. It sure left a mark on me. Some of my greatest memories were in the locker room and on the field. I will say that balancing school and sports is one of the harder things that I've had to do. But over time it's taught me how to be efficient and multitask and be disciplined in the way that I do things.

Overall, being in Catholic school isn't perfect, but I think it gives me something meaningful that goes beyond just an education. It is teaching me about discipline, about faith, and about being a part of a community. Sometimes I get annoyed with the rules or stressed with the workload, but I know it's helping me grow into a better version of myself. I might not have straight A's, and I definitely don't have everything figured out, but going to a Catholic school is shaping who I am right now in ways I'll carry with me for a very long time.

Doren Brooks is a senior at Marian High School.

NEWS BRIEFS

POPE LEO PRAYS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

OSV News photo/Amilton Neves, Reuters

A flood victim stands in floodwater outside her home in Maputo, Mozambique, on January 18. Flooding continues to ravage southern Africa. Weeks of relentless rain since late December have killed hundreds of people, displaced thousands into temporary shelters, and devastated farmland, roads, bridges, water sources, and health facilities across Mozambique, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and parts of South Africa. In Mozambique alone, about 700,000 people in six provinces have been affected. During his Sunday Angelus on February 1, Pope Leo prayed for the flood victims.

Pope: Scripture Is a Living Reality that Develops, Grows in Tradition

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The word of God is not "fossilized" but rather develops and grows in tradition, Pope Leo XIV said on Wednesday, January 29, during his weekly general audience. The Church's "deposit of faith," which contains "the entirety of our faith – doctrine, worship, morality, etc. – is not static but dynamic for it develops and is more profoundly understood by the Church over the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit," he said. "Entrusted to the Church, who preserves and interprets it in Jesus' name, this deposit helps us to navigate the complexities of life to reach our eternal home in heaven," he said. Speaking to visitors gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall for the general audience, the pope continued his series of talks dedicated to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum. Jesus sent "the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles to remember, apply and proclaim everything he taught," he said. That means "sacred Scripture, the inspired word of God, and sacred tradition, the living memory of the Church, are intimately bound together and form the one deposit of faith. … The word of God, then, is not fossilized, but rather it is a living and organic reality that develops and grows in tradition."

Pope Adds Feast of St. John Henry Newman to Universal Calendar

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Leo XIV has added the feast day of St. John Henry Newman, who is "a radiant light for the Church on pilgrimage through history," to the General Roman Calendar so that "his optional memorial be celebrated by all on October 9." Cardinal Arthur Roche and Archbishop Vittorio Francesco Viola, respectively prefect and secretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, announced the pope's decision in a decree published by the Vatican on Tuesday, February 3. Cardinal Roche said the inclusion of St. Newman in the General Roman Calendar "is intended to present his figure as an outstanding example of the constant search for the truth that enlightens and saves" and to help the faithful contemplate him "as a man led by the 'kindly light' of God's grace to find peace within the Catholic Church." Bishops' conferences around the world will need to translate from Latin the prayers issued by the dicastery for Mass on his feast day as well as those used in the Liturgy of the Hours and in the Roman Martyrology, and have the translations confirmed by the dicastery. Previously, the feast day of St. Newman was inscribed only in the proper calendar of the Congregation of the Oratory – the religious congregation to which he belonged – and the proper calendar of England and Wales. Now his memorial, celebrated on the date of his conversion to Catholicism in 1845, is included in the calendar of the universal Church.

Pope Leo Laments Rising U.S.-Cuba Tensions

VATICAN CITY (OSV News) – Pope Leo XIV has called for "a sincere and effective dialogue" as tensions between the United States and Cuba mount. The pope shared his concerns in remarks delivered after he led the Angelus prayer on Sunday, February 1 in St. Peter's Square. "I have received the greatly troubling news regarding an increase in tensions between Cuba and the United States of America, two neighboring countries," he said. President Donald Trump, citing Cuba as a threat to the U.S., has moved to cut off fuel supplies to the island, which has sustained what the Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization have described as a long-running "socio-economic crisis exacerbated by converging disasters," including in its energy and public health sectors. Pope Leo echoed a January 31 message issued by Cuba's bishops "inviting all responsible parties to promote a sincere and effective dialogue, in order to avoid violence and every action that could increase the suffering of the dear Cuban people."

'Radical' Abortion Amendment Passes Virginia General Assembly

RICHMOND, Virginia (OSV News) – The Virginia General Assembly has sent a sweeping amendment enshrining a "fundamental right" to abortion in the Constitution of Virginia to a statewide referendum on the November ballot. If the voters approve the amendment, it will establish virtually unlimited abortion at any stage of pregnancy as a "fundamental right" in Virginia's constitution. The amendment passed the General Assembly on January 16 despite the best efforts of the bishops and more than 600 pro-life advocates who met with legislators a day earlier, on Virginia Pro-Life Day. Richmond Bishop Barry C. Knestout joined Arlington Bishop Michael F. Burbidge in calling the amendment "radical," "extreme," and "shocking to the conscience" in a statement.

Pope Appeals for End to Antisemitism, Prejudice, Genocide

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Leo XIV called for an end to all antisemitism, prejudice, oppression and persecution worldwide. "I renew my appeal to the community of nations always to remain vigilant so that the horror of genocide never again befall any people and that a society based on mutual respect and the common good be built," he said on Wednesday, January 28. The pope made his remarks during his greeting to Italian-speaking visitors after leading his general audience talk in the Paul VI Audience Hall. The pope recalled the previous day's commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is marked January 27 each year. "On this annual occasion of painful remembrance, I ask Almighty God for the gift of a world without any more antisemitism, prejudice, oppression or persecution of any human being," Pope Leo said. The pope also commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day with a post on X January 27, recalling "that the Church remains faithful to the unwavering position of the Declaration #NostraAetate against every form of antisemitism. The Church rejects any discrimination or harassment based on ethnicity, language, nationality or religion."

Spanish Bishops Back Plan on Migration as Church in Italy Mourns 380 Lost at Sea

MADRID (OSV News) – Catholic leaders in Spain are welcoming a new government plan to regularize the legal status of around 500,000 migrants in the country without authorization, calling it a long-overdue act of social justice. Announced on Tuesday, January 27, the measure would grant one-year residency permits to migrants who have lived in Spain for at least five months and have no criminal record, including some asylum seekers. The Spanish bishops' conference, Caritas, and religious orders praised the move as a step toward dignity, inclusion, and the common good. Archbishop Luis Argüello of Valladolid said it recognizes migrants' human dignity while also highlighting the need for broader European cooperation on migration. The announcement came amid grim news from Italy, where Church leaders mourned hundreds of migrants feared dead in recent Mediterranean shipwrecks. Italian bishops warned of growing indifference to deaths at sea, criticizing restrictive policies and limited rescue efforts. Archbishop Gian Carlo Perego of Ferrara, Italy, called for a joint sea rescue operation by EU member states and lamented the increasing number of deaths at sea "amid Europe's disinterest."

Firing Squad Shot Down as Execution Method in Indiana

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is hailing positive developments at the midpoint of the legislative session, including the rejection of a push to introduce execution by firing squad as a means of capital punishment.

Following impassioned debate on the House floor, a bill that would have added this controversial method of carrying out the death penalty in Indiana was defeated in a close vote. Representative Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), a Catholic lawmaker who last year introduced legislation to abolish the death penalty altogether, was among those appealing to his colleagues to vote no on House Bill 1119.

"We have executed people in this country wrongfully," Morris told his fellow House members before their vote on Wednesday, January 28. "One thing is for certain: You will never bring that life back when it is gone."

Calling execution by firing squad inhumane and the effort to bring this method to Indiana "taking a step backwards," Morris called for a renewed look at capital punishment in the Hoosier state. Currently, only lethal injection is allowed by law to carry out the death penalty, although lawmakers backing House Bill 1119 argued that the high cost of the drugs involved, as well as supply issues, have created the need for alternate methods.

"I'm against every means of capital punishment until this body can debate it," Morris said. "Stand here and tell me the best way to execute a life. I'm a pro-life legislator, and I know many of you are as well. Vote this down and let's start the discussion on capital punishment."

House Bill 1119, authored by Representative Jim Lucas (R-Seymour), was rejected on a narrow 48-46 vote, failing to reach the 51 votes needed for constitutional majority. An earlier version of the bill had also proposed nitrogen hypoxia – lethal gas – as an additional method of execution for Indiana, but that portion had been amended out before the final House vote.

Prior to the vote on the House floor, Morris had been joined at the podium by other lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle calling for the bill to be rejected.

"There was some really heartening movement of the Holy Spirit as this debate was happening and moving people's hearts," said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Even those we know are supportive of the death penalty conceptually said that the firing squad is not the way to go.

The ICC had strongly objected to the bill throughout the first half of the legislative session, along with a similar measure in the Senate that never received a vote.

Now that the Indiana General Assembly has reached its midpoint, known as "crossover," bills that are still active move from one legislative chamber to another. Another death penalty-related measure – House Bill 1432 – passed unanimously on a 96-0 vote and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

That bill, which the ICC supports, creates a framework to screen out anyone with a defined intellectual disability from being eligible for the death penalty.

Abortion Restriction Proposal

Another pro-life measure that is moving forward is Senate Bill 236, which passed out of the Senate along a 39-10 party-line vote and has been referred to the House Committee on Public Health. The bill, authored by Senator Tyler Johnson (R-Leo), would place tight restrictions on the use of abortion-inducing medications in Indiana, prohibiting their distribution or mailing in most circumstances.

Johnson, an emergency room physician, spoke of the dangers of these medications during Senate testimony in January. His bill also would allow for civil actions to be brought against manufacturers or distributors of abortion medications for what a plaintiff would consider personal injury or wrongful death from the use of the drugs.

The ICC supports the direction of Senate Bill 236 and will continue to monitor its progress.

Homeless Encampment Bill

Legislation related to the dignity of the human person is always of utmost importance to the ICC, which represents the five Catholic bishops of Indiana in the public arena. Therefore, the ICC is tracking Senate Bill 285, which is another attempt at prohibiting homeless encampments across the state.

Under the bill, law enforcement officials first encountering individuals sleeping or camping on public property would issue a warning and offer to connect them with local shelters and other resources. Repeat violations could result in a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a standard fine of $500 or up to 60 days in jail.

Opponents call the measure a means to criminalize homelessness. But Senator Cyndi Carrasco (R-Indianapolis), the Catholic lawmaker who authored the bill, said the intent is to "create a moment where outreach, diversion and connection to services can occur, and to move individuals to a healthier and more stable life."

The bill passed on a 29-19 vote on the Senate floor on January 28 and now awaits further action in the House.

"This is something that we will monitor and continue to talk to people about as it moves to the House side," said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC. "We will continue to discern what is going to be best for our brothers and sisters who are chronically homeless and whom this bill will affect across the state of Indiana."

Other Legislation

Another effort aimed at providing adequate housing for vulnerable Hoosiers has moved from the House to the Senate for consideration. House Bill 1001, a significant housing affordability measure, includes a provision that would streamline zoning to allow religious entities to build affordable housing on church property.

The ICC supports the measure, which falls under the growing "Yes in God's Backyard" (YIGBY) movement nationwide. YIGBY efforts encourage churches and other faith-based institutions to use their underutilized land or current structures to create dignified, attainable housing for low- and moderate-income households. They are a counterpoint to more restrictive zoning practices often labeled as "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY).

"We are happy to see this effort move forward in the legislature," Mingus said. "We hope it will be one piece to solving the broader puzzle of housing affordability across our state."

Another issue of interest to the ICC and many of its allies for years – restricting access to social media for children and teens – hit a roadblock in this year's General Assembly. Language that would have prohibited anyone in Indiana younger than 14 to have a social media account and anyone between age 14 and 18 to have parental consent was removed from a broader education measure, Senate Bill 199.

Mingus said that he believes there is strong bipartisan support for efforts like these despite this year's outcome.

"The question is how to get it done," he said. "But we are very supportive of getting this across the finish line one day."

In addition, the ICC is following Senate Bill 182, which aims to define gender in state statute as male or female. The measure passed the Senate and is now under consideration in the House.

"Conceptually, it's something we are supportive of because it aligns with our God-given understanding of our Christian anthropology," Mingus said.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2026

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

"Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community" was the theme for this year's Catholic Schools Week, observed January 25-31. Despite snow and freezing temperatures causing delays and cancelations across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend during the week, Catholic grade schools and high schools marked the week with Masses, faith-based events, assemblies, open houses, and activities that highlighted the unique mission of integrating faith and learning. Enrollment for the 2026-27 school year is open now. Learn more about Catholic education at diocesefwsb.org/schools.

Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic School, Fort Wayne

St. Vincent de Pau Catholic School, Fort Wayne

Marian High School, Mishawaka

St. Anthony de Padua Catholic School, South Bend

St. Jude Catholic School, Fort Wayne

St. Joseph Catholic School, Fort Wayne

Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, South Bend

Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic School, Fort Wayne

Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne

Our Lady of Hungary Catholic School, South Bend

Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne

St. Joseph Hessen-Cassel Catholic School, Fort Wayne

St. Joseph Grade School, South Bend

St. Louis Academy, New Haven

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: The Adventure of a Lifetime

Fighting Improbable Odds and Precious Time, Robert and Nicholas Kloska Scramble to Make a Life-Changing Journey to California

BY ROBERT KLOSKA

If you are not a Christian, you may not have heard of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity, our God who gives life and guides Christian believers. The Holy Spirit is the power source of my life. The more I am welcoming and obedient to the Holy Spirit, the better my life goes. The more I ignore or disobey the Holy Spirit, the more unhappy and lonely I become. The following story is an improbable true-life account of what really happened one day in 2023 when I listened to the Holy Spirit in a way that was almost illogical.

On Tuesday, March 28th, 2023, I was on a business trip to California. I had just finished a meeting in Monterey and drove down the coast to Carmel-by-the-Sea – one of those places that seems almost unfairly beautiful. Carmel's downtown is really just a small rectangle, maybe six city blocks by four city blocks, but it is absolutely packed with art galleries, fashion boutiques, and outstanding restaurants. I was strolling around, enjoying the rare luxury of having no schedule and only one decision to make: where to eat in this magnificent little enclave! I had flown into San Diego a few days before and drove up the coast visiting Catholic dioceses with whom my employer, Notre Dame Federal Credit Union, had a relationship – when my phone rang.

It was my son, Nicholas.

Photos provided by Robert Kloska

Robert, left, and Nicholas Kloska pose for a photo at the end of their journey.

The Offer of a Lifetime

Nicholas had graduated from the University of Notre Dame a year earlier with a degree in film, television, and theater. He had spent nearly the entire subsequent year living at home in South Bend urgently trying to move to New York or Los Angeles in order to break into the industry where he most desperately wanted to work as a writer. After nearly an entire year of frustration and last-minute disappointments, out of nowhere, he had just received a job offer. Like, a real one! A dream job!

It was a position in a writers' room for a major Hollywood producer who was launching a new show for Netflix. In the previous 12 months, Nicholas had interviewed for many promising jobs, sometimes completing up to five separate interviews for a single position only to lose out at the last moment. Being a young man who is accustomed to success, this was eating at him. Then suddenly and unexpectedly, this dream position was offered to him without any kind of formal interview. The producer was already familiar with him and his abilities from previous interactions. It was the answer to prayers.

The offer came from one of the most respected and accomplished producers in the TV/streaming industry. This gentleman was so accomplished that according to widely circulated press reports, he had inked a nine-figure deal with a prominent production studio. This guy was at the top of his profession. In addition, he was widely known as a great human being – a man who valued people and treated them really well. There was just one complication. To accept this job, Nicholas needed to report to work – on-site and in person – exactly nine days from the day he called me.

> "But somehow this evening, as I paced around those beautiful Carmel streetscapes, the Holy Spirit said to me, "This is a unique situation, an exception. Be a strong Dad and do it decisively!"

Instead of excitement, the voice I heard on the phone was filled with anxiety bordering on panic. How could he possibly get to Los Angeles and get his affairs in order in time to accept this offer?

An Uphill Climb

At the time, Nicholas had several part-time side jobs he needed to properly disengage, including a dog-sitting commitment. That sounds relatively trivial, but when someone is traveling and you are their dog sitter, you can't just up and leave. You have to find an acceptable alternative and communicate with the traveling person while they are traveling. Not easy.

He didn't have any savings, and his student loans were going into repayment mode. He didn't have a car. He didn't have a place to live in Los Angeles. He wasn't even sure he had a closet of clothes to wear to work. And to top it all off, he was all alone. My wife, Margy, and our daughters had already left town for spring break to visit our other son, Michael, who had recently moved to Houston.

Nicholas felt overwhelmed and genuinely afraid that he was not going to be able to accept this position. Contrary to his normally guarded and calm demeanor, he immediately shared all this with me. I remember the phone call vividly. He went on and on and on in a breathless rant. Normally, he is cool as a cucumber, but in this moment of intense pressure, he admitted that after all his relentless efforts to pursue his dream job, it was being offered to him on terms that looked absolutely impossible to meet. Move to California in nine days? Wind up all his various current commitments in a few days? Find a place to live in California in a week without any money or deep knowledge of the city? Buy a car without a job – just a future job – and have the vehicle in Los Angeles within nine days? Supplement his wardrobe with some appropriate work clothes?

I have to say, it looked very intimidating and overwhelming to me, too. But I just let him talk. As he talked, I listened and prayed and listened some more. Honestly, I, too, became quite anxious at the seemingly insurmountable barriers facing him.

As I walked the sidewalks of downtown Carmel in a repetitive loop, I prayed to the Holy Spirit. Gradually, clarity came over me. It became apparent to me that I was born to help this kid in this moment of his life, and I could not fail him. His success at this critical juncture became more important than anything else in the world. He had a once in a lifetime opportunity and somehow, he had to make it work. I was all in.

Nicholas is not a person who rants very often. The fact that he was doing so in itself was surprising and, frankly, unsettling to me. When he finally ran out of words, I believe the Holy Spirit took center stage. I didn't plan to say this; it just came out. Somehow, I said the only thing that mattered and I said it with confidence and absolute commitment.

"Nicholas, I will not let you fail."

Forming a Plan

As I heard myself saying this, I surprised myself. Normally, I DO allow my kids to fail. I'm no "snowplow parent" who sets them up with all their opportunities and clears all their obstacles. Fending for themselves is actually the only way for young people to learn and grow muscles of achievement and re-

Father and son pose with a bust of Knute Rockne in rural Kansas.

silience. But somehow this evening, as I paced around those beautiful Carmel streetscapes, the Holy Spirit said to me: "This is a unique situation, an exception. Be a strong dad – and do it decisively!"

That statement was the turning point. Once I said it, I could hear the anxiety slowly drain out of my son. Peace replaced panic. Together, we committed to action. We broke everything down into small, manageable steps. Nicholas worked on disengaging from his side jobs, procuring a few items of work clothes, and using his Notre Dame friend and alumni network to find a temporary place to live relatively near Universal Studios – a spare room, a couch, anything. He went immediately to the credit union to apply for an auto loan; he could do that part. But having no money and no job (yet), I would have to follow up and co-sign.

There are a million little things to do before one moves across the country. We took things one at a time – nothing impossible, just forward motion. For my part, I needed to provide the necessary documentation for another car loan, find him a decent car quickly, plan a way to get him to California on time with literally no margin for error, and find someone to care for our own dog.

After we hung up, I went to dinner. Then I returned to my hotel room and changed my flight home from the following Tuesday to the upcoming Friday morning. I had already visited five dioceses; the sixth could wait. I spent that evening planning a day-by-day itinerary that would check all the necessary boxes and get Nicholas to Los Angeles by Wednesday night. It all seemed to work, but it was very tight, and there was no room for any kind of unforeseen delay.

What ensued is one of the greatest adventures of my fatherhood.

Delayed but Determined

I flew home to Chicago early Friday morning. Before we landed, the captain advised us that there was some inclement weather ahead. He mentioned the possibility of diverting to another airport. This would be a disaster for the plan. It literally had no margin for error. Fortunately, we were the last plane they allowed. As we landed at O'Hare, a major storm – complete with tornado warnings – hit the area. The moment we arrived at the gate, we were quickly ushered into a warm, crowded, humid, foul-smelling men's restroom, where we stood shoulder-to-shoulder holding our bags for an hour until the storm passed. When the staff finally released us, they announced that the airport was closed until further notice and all flights were canceled. Winds were gusting up to 80 miles an hour. Come Holy Spirit.

Nicholas poses with the salesman who sold him his car in Jasper, Indiana.

This caused predictable anxiety at the gate, especially among the 30 to 40 people trying to get to South Bend. Already in Batman mode, I jumped up on a chair and announced that I was going to rent the largest vehicle I could find and drive anyone who needed a ride to South Bend. There was no sense in just taking care of myself. We were ALL stranded – why not drive everyone else?

I raced to the train that takes you to the rental car center and arrived at the rental desk just as the masses were converging on them. When I told the agent that I needed a one-way rental, he firmly informed me that he would not rent me a car. When airports close, everyone grabs one-way rentals, and the cars never come back. It wreaks havoc on their inventory. It was now around 11 p.m., and the next available flight to South Bend wasn't until 4:15 p.m. the following day. Eventually, I talked him into a round-trip rental for one day. But he was skeptical. He made me give him my word that I would return it to O'Hare, which is all he needed to hear. But he also required a $500 deposit that I would lose if the car was not returned to Chicago on time. That was no problem since I had every intention of returning it as he requested. I figured I could return the car the next day and then catch my flight to South Bend.

Before I left to get the vehicle, I had hastily announced my cellphone number to the people at the gate, telling them to text me if they couldn't find the vehicle. As I pulled up to the curb in a ten-passenger Suburban, I was inundated with a barrage of texts from numbers I did not know, some of the texts in broken English. After a bit of chaos, confusion, and loops around the terminals, we found everyone who needed a ride.

The drive to South Bend in the middle of the night was colorful and unforgettable. Among my passengers were: an elderly Hispanic woman who barely spoke English; a dejected rural Indiana businessman who had just lost his job and was considering a move to Texas; a young African American woman struggling with which side of her recently broken family to live with; an older white couple who had just spent six months traveling the world with only one bag each; and a Filipino Notre Dame student returning to campus after a heartbreaking family funeral. There were others, but I cannot remember the details now.

What a surreal and fascinating trip! They shared their stories to pass the time during the two-hour drive. When we stopped at a rest stop for a bathroom break, every single person attempted to buy me a snack or drink! Their gratitude was enormous. When we arrived in South Bend, I dropped each person off at their preferred location and arrived home around 4 a.m. I went to bed.

A Pause to Celebrate

A few hours later, I got up and got to work on the plan. To complicate matters further, around noon, we hosted the 90th birthday party of a woman whose family had lived in our house when she was born in 1933. Her family owned the home from 1930 to 1980, and she grew up in our daughter's bedroom. They are very attached to their old family home and had asked months before if they could hold her birthday party at the pub in our backyard. Of course we agreed! They came from several states away to celebrate this happy occasion, having no idea what was going on in our lives at the moment.

> There's a million little things to do before one moves across the country. We took things one at a time: nothing impossible, just forward motion.

Years earlier, we had converted our old carriage house into an Irish pub with a piano behind the bar – perfect for gatherings like this. This party was full of music, laughter, and stories. I gave them a tour of the main house, and they shared even more memories of life there. It was absolutely fantastic – very memorable for their family and for me! One highlight was that some family members were professional singers and musicians. I have never heard such beautiful and refined operatic singing in our little pub! Originally, Nicholas was supposed to host the gathering, but this became my responsibility to free him up so he could run his errands – including finalizing paperwork for the auto loan.

Halfway through the party, I excused myself so I could drive to Chicago and catch my flight back home! This amused everyone greatly. So, I drove the rental Suburban back to O'Hare, returned it on time, and took the airport train to Terminal 1 to catch my flight to South Bend. Amazingly, I arrived back at the pub at 7:30 p.m..

Setting Off

The next day, Sunday, Nicholas and I went to Mass, came

ADVENTURE, page 10

Robert and Nicholas light candles before their journey at the Grotto at the University of Notre Dame.

ADVENTURE, from page 11

home, packed my car with all of his belongings, made a quick visit to the Grotto at Notre Dame, and started to drive south.

I had been working on finding a decent car for him that would hold up in LA traffic. Under the circumstances, I felt a lot of pressure not to saddle him with a lemon. Fortunately, Tony Uebelhor, a Notre Dame friend of mine, owns a Toyota dealership in Jasper, about a five-hour drive south. I had called him sometime during the chaos of that Friday and Saturday and asked him to pick out a car for us. He's a man of character, a guy I could totally trust. I knew he would offer it at a good price. He found something that met our criteria almost immediately. We planned to arrive at the dealership first thing Monday morning, buy the car, and start driving to California together. The schedule was very tight. Providentially, by driving to southern Indiana, we actually shaved several hours off our drive to Los Angeles. Come, Holy Spirit!

> Thank you, God, for making me a father and giving me such a son. I am grateful.

We arrived in Jasper that evening, stayed at a $65-a-night Motel 6 next door, and showed up at the dealership at 8:01 a.m. Tony's son was running things that day. One of his guys showed us the car. We looked it over for about two minutes and said, "It looks great! We'll buy it." We were very antsy to get on the road, but we were going to need the credit union to transfer the money to the dealership. Because the clerk understood our situation – knowing that the credit union didn't open until 9 a.m., and once the money was en route, the paperwork would take another 45 minutes – she did something remarkable, almost jaw dropping. She let us take the car without paying! She told us, "Tony vouched for you, and we know you're good for it. Just circle back with us after your trip and we'll finish this up." So, Nicholas and I simply got in the car and drove off. That saved us at least two hours. Small-town Indiana is like that.

Weathering the Storm

It was in the deepest part of the night on a long and lonely highway that we stopped for a restroom break at a random rest stop in rural Kansas. Both of us are Notre Dame alumni. Somehow, improbably, this rest stop featured a bronze statue of Knute Rockne, the famous Notre Dame football coach who died in a plane crash in a nearby field in 1931. Finding Notre Dame memorabilia in the middle of nowhere, in the dead of night, definitely felt like a reassuring wink from heaven.

Crossing into New Mexico, we encountered the part of the trip that gave me the most anxiety. We drove into a severe snow and ice storm. We were only able to drive 30-35 mph, tops, for several hours. I lost count after passing at least 12 disabled vehicles in ditches. As we passed each disabled vehicle, I was reminded about how devastating it would be for us to end up likewise. One unlucky move and our trip would be derailed. But we could not stop. It was already Tuesday morning, and Nicholas needed to report to Universal Studios at 8 a.m. on Thursday. I'll be honest: Nick was driving, and I was very nervous – so nervous I didn't even take a photo of the treacherous conditions. With every fiber of my being, I wanted to offer to drive, but I didn't want it to sound like I lacked confidence in him. So, I just let it go. Come Holy Spirit.

Nicholas performed superbly and safely guided us through the storm. At a snowy rest stop in northern Arizona, we did stop long enough to help a stranded man holding a cardboard sign who had no money to fill his truck with gas. He was a cash-only type of guy who had used all his money to repair his truck. After the repairs, he thought he had enough fuel to get home. He didn't. Why did we bother with this? Anyone can get self-absorbed and focus on achieving a goal, but it's way more cool, way more fun to illogically take a few minutes as the clock keeps ticking to help someone else. It Just makes for a more exciting and more beautiful story.

Mission Accomplished

After 30 nonstop hours on the road, we arrived in Scottsdale, Arizona, early Tuesday afternoon, completely exhausted. Margy and I had met there in the mid-1990s, so it felt like a homecoming. As part of our plan, some friends, Dan and Mary Minton, graciously let us impose on them and crash in a spare bedroom. On the way to their house, I was able to show Nicholas places that had been significant to his mother and me before we were even married. It was meaningful for both of us. I was so happy to share this part of our family history with him. We arrived at the Mintons' house and went directly to bed. Then we awoke to a wonderful surprise: a backyard cookout with old friends from Scottsdale! Nicholas heard stories about his mother and me directly from the people who lived them.

The next morning, we got up and briefly visited our Notre Dame FCU offices in Phoenix, then drove six hours through the Mojave Desert to Los Angeles. After all that we had been through, six hours felt very manageable.

The part of the plan Nicholas had worked on while I was coming home from California was a place to stay. This was no small task. He knew nobody at work, had very little money, and needed a place immediately. By the grace of God and his Notre Dame friendships, he was able to arrange temporary housing with the wonderful family of a classmate in Sierra Madre, a pretty good location for where he needed to be. It was well within striking distance of Universal Studios. Much to my amazement, we arrived at the Tupy family house only to be treated to a king's welcome – signs, a beautifully set dining room where we ate a steak dinner, and overwhelming kindness! Probably the most daunting and difficult part of the entire plan was affordable lodging – it made my heart sing to know that Nicholas had this amazing family to support him in his transition!

After dinner, we headed to our respective bedrooms. The photo we took together in the hallway that night remains one of the great emotional moments of my life. I was filled with joy for my son – and, frankly, a tinge of sadness for myself. Our adventure was over, the mission accomplished. My time as caretaker dad was over. Nicholas was stepping fully into adulthood, and I had no doubt that he would need very little from me going forward. As I closed my bedroom door, I looked at the photo on my phone and wept. I'm still not sure whether they were tears of love or sadness or joy. Probably all three. For days afterwards, I would pull up the picture and just look at it over and over with love and gratitude.

Nicholas successfully reported to work the next morning. Against all odds, he had done it!

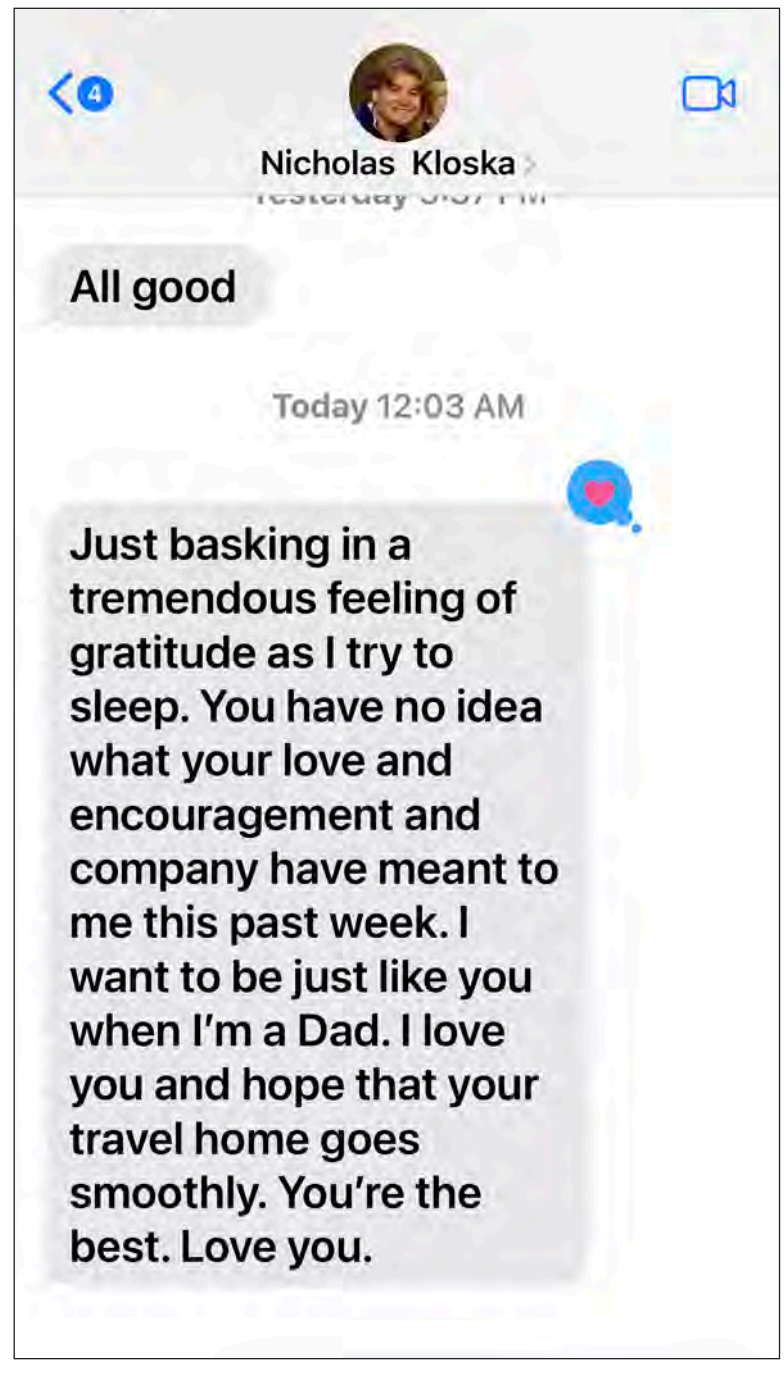
The Holy Spirit at Work

Today, nearly three years later, he is thriving in his career, and as I type this, he is still awaiting word whether his show on Netflix, "A Man on the Inside," will be renewed for a third season.

I woke at 4 a.m. the next morning to catch my Holy Thursday flight to St. Louis. I nearly missed it due to a traffic accident, but thanks to a very determined driver who got off the freeway, cut through alleys, and drove the wrong way on a one-way street, I made it just in time. I never sat down at the gate – just walked up as the last guy to board. They closed the doors behind me. When the plane landed in St. Louis, I managed to find my car, met a dear old friend, Joe Griesemer, for dinner, and was able to attend the Mass of the Lord's Supper at the exquisitely beautiful Basilica Cathedral of St. Louis. The word Eucharist means "thanksgiving." It was indeed a memorable time of prayer and thanksgiving for me as I sat in that glorious church looking at that photo.

I was still about seven hours from home. After Mass, I drove north until I got so tired I couldn't continue. At 2 a.m., I checked into a hotel, slept, and finished the drive home the next day. I arrived home on Good Friday, just in time to catch Stations of the Cross at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on campus of Notre Dame and then walked home and collapsed in my bed, where I remained for much of the next day.

Somewhere in all of it – the chaos, the exhaustion, the improbable timing – my heart surged with gratitude that the Holy Spirit was very much at work. If this were the end of the story, that would be something. But sometime during the trip home, I received a text, perhaps the greatest, most impactful text I have ever received. Thank you, God, for making me a father and giving me such a son. I am grateful.



St. Jude Knights Give $20,000 for Seminarians, Retired Priests

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

On Friday, January 30, members of the St. Jude Knights of Columbus – Council 16065 from Fort Wayne visited the diocesan Vocations Office in the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center to present Father Jonathon Norton, the diocese's director of seminarians, with two checks totaling $20,000 – one for $18,000 to be directed toward seminary education and the other for $2,000 that will help retired priests.

The money was raised during the Knights' annual golf outing, which was held at Riverbend Golf Course with 33 teams participating.

Along with the $2,000 given to assist retired priests, $14,000 will go directly to the diocese's 14 individual seminarians; $3,000 was given to help the seminarians attend the annual SEEK conference; and $1,000 was given to the bishop of the Diocese of Idah, Nigeria, for his seminarians on behalf of St. Jude's pastor, Father Emmanuel Abuh.

"I am grateful to the Knights of Columbus, who have provided generous financial support for our seminarians in their journey toward the priesthood," Father Norton, who also is pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Warsaw, told Today's Catholic. "Most recently, this support has been instrumental in helping them attend the SEEK conference, a transformative event that offers profound spiritual growth and formation. We are deeply grateful for the Knights' dedication to fostering vocations and their continued investment in the future of our Church."

Seminarian Stanley Amuchaka, who attended the SEEK confeence with a group of young adults and fellow seminarians in early January, said the event left an impression on his faith.

"Attending the SEEK conference taught me the importance of seeking a deep and intimate relationship with God – one that resists rebellion, temptations of sin, and worldly allurements," he said.

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Vocations Office

Members of the St. Jude Knights of Columbus – Council 16065 pose with Father Jonathon Norton, director of seminarians for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, during one of two check presentations made on behalf of the Knights at the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center in Fort Wayne on Friday, January 30.

A Call to Reflect the Spirit of the Good Samaritan

Message of the Holy Father for the 34th World Day of the Sick

BY POPE LEO XIV

The following is the message of the Holy Father Leo XIV for the 34th World Day of the Sick, on the theme "The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing another's pain." The World Day of the Sick is celebrated on February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The message has been edited for length.

OSV News photo/Brittany Hosea-Small, Reuters

A woman holds the hand of her husband at Mercy San Juan Medical Center in Carmichael, California, in this 2022 file photo. The 34th World Day of the Sick will be celebrated on Wednesday, February 11.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The 34th World Day of the Sick will be solemnly celebrated in Chiclayo, Peru, on February 11, 2026. For this occasion, I would recommend reflecting once again on the figure of the good Samaritan, for he is always relevant and essential for rediscovering the beauty of charity and the social dimension of compassion. This reflection further directs our attention toward the needy and all those who suffer, especially the sick.

We are all familiar with the moving account found in the Gospel of St. Luke (cf. 10:25-37). Jesus responds to a scholar of the law, who asks Him to identify the neighbor he must love, with this story: A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by robbers and left for dead. While a priest and a Levite passed him by, a Samaritan took pity on him, bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn, and provided for his care. I have chosen to reflect on this biblical passage through the lens of the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, written by my beloved predecessor Pope Francis. There, compassion and mercy toward those in need are not reduced to a merely individual effort but are realized through relationships: with our brothers and sisters in need, with those who care for them and, ultimately, with God who gives us his love.

1. The Gift of Encounter: The Joy of Offering Closeness and Presence

We live immersed in a culture of speed, immediacy, and haste – a culture of "discard" and indifference that prevents us from pausing along the way and drawing near to acknowledge the needs and suffering that surround us. In the parable, when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he did not "pass by." Instead, he looked upon him with an open and attentive gaze – the very gaze of Jesus – which led him to act with human and compassionate closeness. The Samaritan "stopped, approached the man, and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs. … [Above all] he gave him his time." Jesus does not merely teach us who our neighbor is but rather how to become a neighbor; in other words, how we can draw close to others. In this respect, we can affirm with St. Augustine that the Lord did not intend to show us who that man's neighbor was but rather to whom he should become a neighbor. Indeed, no one is truly a neighbor until they freely draw near to another. Thus, the one who became a neighbor was the one who showed mercy.

Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other. Being a neighbor is not determined by physical or social proximity but by the decision to love. This is why Christians become neighbors to those who suffer, following the example of Christ, the true divine Samaritan who drew near to a wounded humanity. These are not mere gestures of philanthropy but signs through which we perceive that personal participation in another's suffering involves the gift of oneself. It means going beyond the simple satisfaction of needs so that our very person becomes part of the gift. This kind of charity is necessarily nourished by an encounter with Christ, who gave Himself for us out of love. St. Francis expressed this beautifully when, speaking of his encounter with lepers, he said: "The Lord himself led me among them," because through them he had discovered the sweet joy of loving.

The gift of encounter flows from our union with Jesus Christ. We recognize Him as the good Samaritan who has brought us eternal salvation, and we make Him present whenever we reach out to a wounded brother or sister. St. Ambrose said: "Since no one is more truly our neighbor than he who has healed our wounds, let us love him as Lord and also as neighbor; for nothing is so close as the head to its members. Let us also love those who imitate Christ; let us love those who suffer due to the poverty of others, for the sake of the unity of the Body." "To be one in the One" – through closeness, presence, and love received and shared – is to rejoice, like St. Francis, in the sweetness of having encountered the Lord.

> "Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other. Being a neighbor is not determined by physical or social proximity but by the decision to love."
>
> **POPE LEO XIV**

2. The Shared Mission of Caring for the Sick

St. Luke continues, noting that the Samaritan "was moved with pity." Compassion, in this sense, implies a profound emotion that compels us to act. It is a feeling that springs from within and leads to a committed response to another's suffering. In this parable, compassion is the defining characteristic of active love; it is neither theoretical nor merely sentimental but manifests itself through concrete gestures. The Samaritan drew near, tended the wounds, took charge, and provided care. Notably, he does not act in isolation: "The Samaritan discovered an innkeeper who would care for the man; we, too, are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members." In my experience as a missionary and bishop in Peru, I have personally witnessed many who show mercy and compassion in the spirit of the Samaritan and the innkeeper. Family members, neighbors, health care workers, those engaged in pastoral care for the sick, and many others stop along the way to draw near, heal, support and accompany those in need. By offering what they have, they give compassion a social dimension. …

3. Always Driven by Love for God, to Encounter Ourselves and Our Neighbor

In the double commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27), we recognize the primacy of love for God and its direct consequences for every dimension of human love and relationship. "Love for our neighbor is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God, as the apostle John attests: 'No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is perfected in us. … God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them' (1 Jn 4:12, 16)." Although the object of this love differs – God, neighbor, and oneself – and can be understood as distinct expressions of love, they remain fundamentally inseparable. The primacy of divine love implies that human action is carried out not for self-interest or reward but as a manifestation of a love that transcends ritual norms and find expression in authentic worship. To serve one's neighbor is to love God through deeds.

This perspective also allows us to grasp the true meaning of loving ourselves. It means setting aside any attempt to base our self-esteem or sense of dignity on worldly stereotypes – such as success, career, status, or family background – and recovering our proper place before God and neighbor. …

Dear brothers and sisters, "the true remedy for humanity's wounds is a style of life based on fraternal love, which has its root in love of God." I genuinely hope that our Christian lifestyle will always reflect this fraternal, "Samaritan" spirit – one that is welcoming, courageous, committed, and supportive, rooted in our union with God and our faith in Jesus Christ. Enkindled by this divine love, we will surely be able to give of ourselves for the good of all who suffer, especially our brothers and sisters who are sick, elderly or afflicted.

Marriage: A Sacrament of Lasting Love

BY HEIDI BUSSE AND CORY BUSSE

National Marriage Week USA

(OSV News) – The great marriage myth of our time is that happy marriages "just happen." When we were first married, we – like many young couples – were under the impression that true love was all that was required to live "happily ever after." We certainly didn't believe that we needed to put any work into our marriage, because only unhappy couples work on their marriages.

Wow – were we wrong.

The images of love and marriage that surround us in popular culture reinforce the idea that real love is easy, and experiencing hardship means you've married the wrong person. The reality is, we are all human beings struggling to find our way through relationships. Successful spouses know that putting time and energy into marriage is essential in building the foundation of a lasting love.

The Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament. When a baptized man and a baptized woman freely consent to marry each other, their bond becomes sacramental – that is, it is a living and effective sign of God's love. Christian marriage is more than a signed piece of paper and a shared checking account. Sacramental marriage means that the couple shares together in the life of grace by the very fact of being married to one another.

The Church goes even further, teaching that the sign of God's presence in marriage is the couple themselves. While the priest is an essential witness at a Catholic marriage ceremony, the spouses are the true ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant" (No. 1617). As spouses, we are called to be signs of God's love and presence through our words and actions, by raising our children in the faith, and through the way we show love for one another.

Christian marriage is a holy vocation in which each spouse is called "to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life He gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb" (CCC, No. 1642). Married life gives us a glimpse of the eternal union of God and His Church and calls each spouse to build the other up for everlasting life in heaven.

Think of the shape of an hourglass. Wide at the top, continually tapering, tight at the middle, and flaring out again to its widest point on the other side. That's the shape of a marriage. At times we're far apart, at other times we're as close as we could be. The only thing constant in marriage is change.

In most marriages, there are four main seasons: the honeymoon, young parenthood, middle age and empty nesting, and the later years. Each season or cycle has unique joys and challenges.

• **The honeymoon:** The heady, early days of romance are like living on a breath mint, because it seems like it takes almost no effort to keep your marriage happy and healthy. As time goes by, novelty is replaced by familiarity. It's critical to navigate this transition because you want it to breed satisfaction instead of contempt. Falling in love is a wonderful blessing. Staying in love is a choice we make every day (and it takes a lot of work).

• **Young parenthood:** Children often give a marriage greater meaning (and some amazing stuff to post on social media). Kids can be a source of joy and fulfillment. But this phase of marriage is also among the toughest – and it can last two decades or more. So, finding joy in one another and your blossoming family is critical.

• **Middle age/empty nest:** During this phase, your careers are probably flowing well and the house is paid off (or getting closer to it). Now that the kids are grown and gone, you can refocus your time and energy on one another. The world is your oyster – so long as you've taken care to stay connected and interested in one another.

• **The later years:** Couples who age together often find a deepening love. Many couples who have been married for 20, 30 or 40 years say that they are even more in love in the later years of marriage than in their early days. This phase of marriage may also be called the "best friend" phase because spouses rely on each other and enjoy spending time together. One couple in their later years summed it up this way: "We simply can't imagine life without each other!"

It is important to foster closeness with your spouse through all cycles of marriage. Parenting often becomes the main connection while the "couple relationship" is no longer prioritized. Spending time together alone as a couple is essential to staying connected.

Date nights may seem trite, but they really do work! If a babysitter isn't forthcoming, turn off your devices and share the news of the day with each other. A friend of ours who was married for more than 40 years says that the secret to a lasting marriage is "to periodically learn something new about your spouse."

Difficult times visit every marriage. Unexpected challenges arise: illness, job loss, or death in the family. But that doesn't mean your marriage is doomed – far from it. Even the happiest and most successful marriages you can think of have had troubles – many of them big troubles.

Sacramental marriages work through the tough times. When marital conflicts arise, it is helpful to remember there are no "winners" because you are always on the same team. Being "right" is not so much the goal as being heard and understood. And listening is just as important as talking. It is important to respect your spouse enough to listen and consider his or her side of the conflict. The best marriages are a union of two "forgivers."

Nourishing your faith life together is also essential to a lasting union. Praying together at bedtime and at mealtimes is a great way to keep God at the center of your marriage (and serves as a faith model for children and friends as well).

It is a great gift to journey through life together as a married couple. There will be ups and downs, and as you move through the many phases of married life, it is most important to remember that you're not alone. The Church is there for your marriage long after the flowers have faded and the dress no longer fits. In times of joy and in times of trouble, remember that you have an entire faith community that wants your marriage to succeed and is committed to helping you in any way it can. Count your blessings and they will flow.

Is It Ethical to Clone Animals?

MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER THADEUSZ PACHOLCZYK

The global market for cloning cats, dogs, and other pets reached $300 million in 2024 and has been projected to reach $1.5 billion by 2035.

When it comes to the ethics of cloning animals, whether cattle, racehorses, dogs, or cats, it is important to inquire if a "proportionately serious reason" exists for doing the procedure, since the process can cause physical and genetic defects of varying severity in cloned animals.

Cloned mice, for example, have aberrant patterns of gene expression in multiple genes, and cloned animals have elevated rates of unexplained gestational or postnatal deaths, as well as anomalies such as enlarged hearts or abnormal lungs.

Because cloning involves the bringing together of two remnants of heavily damaged cells – an extracted nucleus from a body cell, plus an egg that has been deprived of its nucleus – it should come as no surprise that these two conjoined elements may have difficulty cooperating and communicating with each other to produce a presentable member of the species.

It is also conceivable that a cloned animal could give rise to a dangerous genetic variation by making the individual animal, for example, more violent. Even in the absence of such outcomes, regularly described in science fiction, it is still noteworthy that genetic variability and the long-term viability of animal populations, particularly small populations of endangered species, could be affected by extensive animal cloning. Decreasing diversity through cloning could make populations more susceptible to disease and environmental changes, impacting sensitive ecosystems and conservation efforts.

Even with the risks of cloning, we can envision situations where a "proportionately serious reason" would exist for attempting to clone animals. A German shepherd, for example, that is exceptionally skilled at sniffing out illegal drugs or other contraband might be cloned to expand the availability of "super-olfactory canines" for police departments around the country.

If a famous Hollywood celebrity loses his or her beloved Fido to cancer, however, we can validly debate whether a strong attachment to the departed canine constitutes a sufficiently serious reason for embarking on a cloning project with a price tag of $50,000 or $60,000. A generated dog clone will always be an imperfect copy of Fido and will often have a very different personality from the original animal.

When actress Barbra Streisand lost her beloved 14-year-old Samantha, she cloned two replicas. She commented that they had "different personalities. … I'm waiting for them to get older so I can see if they have her brown eyes and her seriousness." Later, a somewhat disappointed Streisand remarked, "You can clone the look of a dog, but you can't clone the soul."

Given that canines hold a primary position in the animal world as "man's best friend," it should not be difficult to find another furry friend, perhaps one waiting to be rescued from a local shelter, that can serve as a new member of the family and once again pull at their owner's heartstrings.

While animal cloning can sometimes be a reasonable choice, and ethically justifiable, the Catholic Church teaches definitively that the cloning of human beings is morally unacceptable. This conclusion arises from the recognition that human persons, unlike non-human animals, are created in God's image and likeness, which implies an essential obligation that human procreation and the transmission of human life happen exclusively within marriage through the marital act of spouses.

As we consider animal cloning and other novel biomedical developments of recent years, we face important ethical questions about how best to exercise our limited dominion over the earth, including the animal kingdom. Our dominion is not an absolute right of domination over God's creation. Instead, we are called to use reasonably, and avoid abusing, the powers we have received.

Exercising proper stewardship over animals ought to be a balanced part of a broader concern of avoiding exploitation of the vulnerable, as we try to be respectful of the given order of creation.

Cloning technology can have useful applications in animal husbandry, helping to generate stock animals that are more resistant to disease or that have a higher productivity rate. Researchers can engineer and clone dairy cows, for example, to produce an improved quantity of milk or better quality meat.

But if animal cloning becomes widespread, as seems likely, it may have the subtle effect of shifting our attitudes and perceptions toward the animal kingdom.

By routinely cloning animals, they may come to be seen as little more than manipulable quantities or raw material for our domination – less as animals and more as artifacts or objects. We need to be attentive to the prospect of reducing animals, including cloned animals, to market-driven technological commodities, cobbled together under the impetus of unrestrained profit-seeking.

So, while the cloning of animals is generally permissible when proportionately serious reasons exist, we must also remain attentive to the broader social and environmental implications. The responsible use of the technology requires us to weigh carefully its scientific potential against the duty to avoid causing unnecessary suffering to animals or risks to their populations.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, and serves as senior ethicist at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

In His Own Words, Christ Calls Us to Be Salt and Light to the World

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

The Book of Isaiah's third section is the source of this first weekend's reading. Scholars believe that this section was written perhaps in Jerusalem for the Hebrew remnant that had returned from Babylon.

This would put this section of Isaiah at a date after the epic Babylonian captivity. As political fortunes turned, the Persian ruler, Cyrus, had overtaken Babylon, and his decree allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland after an absence of four generations. Indeed, probably few had ever seen their homeland.

Nevertheless, release from Babylon brought utter exhilaration to the exiles. They were free to go home!

This seemingly wondrous opportunity was bittersweet. When the exiles reached their ancestral homeland, they found deprivation and want – conditions worse than anything that they had experienced in Babylon.

Imagine the disappointment and anger, but the prophet reaffirmed God's goodness, calling upon the people themselves to provide for those in need. Then they would experience the fullness of vindication, the fullness of God's promise to give them life and peace.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. This epistle was addressed to Christians living in Corinth, then one of the major cities of the Roman Empire. Rich and sophisticated, Corinth was a virtual center of the culture at the time. It also was a cesspool of vice.

Paul's advice ran directly opposite to all that mattered in Corinth. Of course, skeptics scorned him, asking if the Christian Gospel made any sense. The Lord was an obstacle for many. After all, importantly for so many, the founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth, had been legally executed as a common criminal and as a traitor to the empire.

The apostle's proclamation of Jesus in itself put mere human knowledge in its place.

In response, Paul insisted that he relied upon a source greater and more dependable than human wisdom – namely, the Holy Spirit.

St. Matthew's Gospel furnishes the last reading, a collection of two brief statements by Jesus, given in highly descriptive and clear imagery.

In the first statement, Jesus tells the disciples that they are the "salt of the earth." In the second, the Lord admonishes followers to be the "light of the world." These images, salt and light, hardly are unknown today, but an ancient aspect of each of them is unknown in this culture.

At the time of Jesus, salt was precious. Roman soldiers were paid in salt. ("He is not worth his salt.") "Salary" that we know today derives from this practice. Salt also was unrefined. Dust or sand usually mixed with salt. The less the dust and sand, the better the salt.

Today, people are accustomed to seeing bright lights at night. Darkness was a serious obstacle at the time of Jesus. Light, then, was precious in its own sense.

Jesus urges disciples to uplift the earthly society by being "salt" and "light."

Reflection

Gently, but deliberately, the Church is guiding us onward from its introduction of Jesus of Nazareth as son of the human Mary, and Son of God, and redeemer of the sinful human race, as given at Christmas, Epiphany, and the feast of the Lord's Baptism. It challenges us to respond to Jesus.

These readings are clear. Discipleship is no mere lip service. It is the actual and intentional resembling of Christ in our daily lives.

Matthew makes this clear, however: Believers have a strength upon which to draw as they illuminate the world. It is within the grace of their faith. As disciples, they are precious. Being a disciple is demanding, but it is not impossible.

Of course, to be pure, worthy, and therefore as strong as salt free of impurities, disciples must rid themselves of sin and fortify their Christian resolve. This is the task of Lent, soon to begin.

READINGS

Sunday: Isaiah 58:7-10; Psalms 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16

Monday: 1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Psalms 132:6-7, 8-10; Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Psalms 84:3-5, 10-11; Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday: 1 Kings 10:1-10; Psalms 37:5-6, 30-31, 39-40; Mark 7:14-23

Thursday: 1 Kings 11:4-13; Psalms 106:3-4, 35-36, 37, 40; Mark 7:24-30

Friday: 1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19; Psalms 81:10-11ab, 12-15; Mark 7:31-37

Saturday: 1 Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34; Psalms 106:6-7ab, 19-22; Mark 8:1-10

Embracing the Prince of Peace

GUEST COMMENTARY

SCOTT P. RICHERT

To be a Catholic in America has never been easy. In the years after World War II, as decades of outright discrimination and even persecution faded away, Catholics were left with the unsettling reality that neither major political party has ever been truly aligned with the fullness of the Church's moral and social teaching.

And today, as the United States and, indeed, the world are being shaken by seismic shifts in American domestic politics and U.S. foreign policy, we find ourselves asking how to bring our faith to bear in a public square increasingly hostile to its teachings.

The Church has always acknowledged that there is no single perfect political system. The genius of the Constitution of the United States, however, long lay in its federalist structure, which implicitly enshrined what Catholic social teaching would come to call "subsidiarity": the principle that authority flows from the basic building block of society – the family – outward, and that the authority proper to any given governmental structure (the family, the municipality, the state) should never be usurped by a level of government "higher" than it.

The shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal immigration enforcement officers will be debated on social media and by the talking heads of the 24-hour news channels ad infinitum. What should not be debated, however, is the principle that the enforcement of federal laws should not undermine lawful state and local authority, nor should any action of law enforcement – local, state, or federal – put people at risk unnecessarily.

In escalating an already tense situation and deliberately undermining the authority of state and local governments, the Trump administration's response to Good's death was a violation of subsidiarity that did not further the common good, as the shooting of Pretti 17 days later proved.

Similarly, while no structure of international laws and institutions will ever ensure lasting peace on earth, the Church has supported the development of international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO as natural outgrowths of the Church's longstanding just war theory and her call to foster international cooperation to further the progress of all peoples.

Actual and proposed unilateral military actions by the Trump administration – in Venezuela, in Iran, in Greenland, and perhaps in Mexico and Cuba and Colombia and even Canada – have no just war basis but reflect the administration's view that, as presidential adviser Stephen Miller told CNN on January 5, "We live in a world ... that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power."

Such "diplomacy based on force," Pope Leo XIV noted in his January 9 address to the Vatican diplomatic corps, "gravely threatens the rule of law, which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence."

While President Donald Trump, in his address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on January 21 said, "I don't have to use force, I don't want to use force, I won't use force" to achieve U.S. hegemony over Greenland, the preceding two weeks of bellicose language threatened to destabilize what remains of the post-Cold War international order, shatter NATO, and destroy the sovereignty of any country that stands in the way of U.S. control of natural resources or of this administration's expansive concept of national security and control of the Western Hemisphere.

The crisis du jour may have passed, but there is no reason to believe that Trump and others in his administration will abjure further threats of unjust military action against perceived foes, resource-rich countries, or even our NATO allies. Indeed, in Davos, Trump followed up his remarks on Greenland by listing a string of actions the military has carried out at his command, touting growing U.S. military might and contrasting that might with the lack of preparedness of our European allies.

Trump and others in his administration understand and successfully exploit the reality that social media and the 24-hour news cycle keep the American people distracted. But for Catholics, such distraction may come at a great cost, as we risk losing sight of the fundamental moral principles that flow from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These principles are the lens through which we should judge the actions, proposals, words, and behaviors of all of our political leaders: that we cannot do evil that good may come of it; that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and is loved by Him; that everyone we encounter is our neighbor and has an inherent dignity that we must respect; and that no country is uniquely blessed, and none uniquely cursed, but that all people of all nations are called to reject those who tempt us to worship power and the things of this world and to conform ourselves, personally and as a nation, to the Prince of Peace.

Scott P. Richert is publisher for OSV.

SAINT OF THE WEEK

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Feast day: February 11

This feast recalls the 18 appearances of Mary to a young French girl, Bernadette Soubirous, from February 11 to July 16, 1858, near a grotto at Lourdes, France. Bernadette did not know the identity of "the beautiful lady in white" and asked who she was. Mary said, "I am the Immaculate Conception," the title Pope Pius IX had defined as dogma four years earlier. In 1890, Pope Leo XIII allowed the local Diocese of Tarbes to celebrate this feast; Pope Pius X made it a universal feast in 1907. Lourdes is still the most famous Marian shrine in Western Europe.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for February 8, 2026

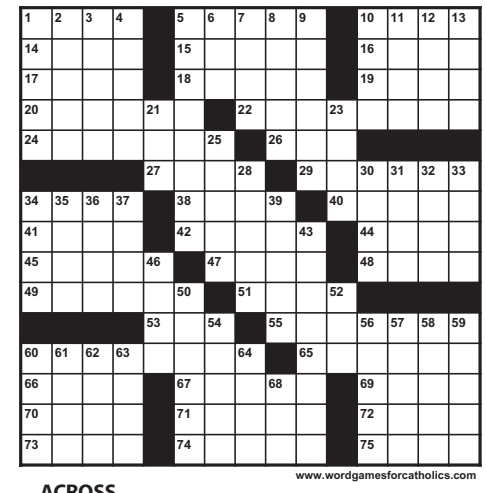
1 Corinthians 2: 1-5 / Matthew 5:13-16

Following is a word search based on the Second and Gospel readings for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A: the power of Christ's teachings. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

WORDS	WISDOM	EXCEPT
JESUS CHRIST	CRUCIFIED	TREMBLING
POWER	THE SALT	EARTH
NO LONGER	THROWN OUT	UNDERFOOT
LIGHT	A CITY	BUSHEL
STAND	GIVES	HOUSE
SHINE	BEFORE	FATHER

PARABLE WISDOM

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



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

ACROSS

1 Wise Men
5 "Let us ___ bread together on our knees"
10 St. Thomas' surname
14 Ardent
15 Administer extreme unction
16 Narrow opening
17 Vex
18 Sudden rushing forth
19 Sate
20 Does housework
22 Divide
24 Cushion for kneeling
26 OT prophetic book
27 552, to Nero
29 Catholic university in Texas
34 Paycheck letters
38 Patron saint of sailors
40 Aquinas' opus, for short
41 Seize
42 Burn
44 Frozen water vapor
45 AKA Sinai
47 Swindle
48 Throw
49 Part of the foot
51 Gordon Ramsay, e.g.
53 "How Great Thou ___"
55 Laborious
60 Governor of Judah
65 Michelangelo or da Vinci, for example
66 "I fear no ___, for you are with me" (Ps 23:4)
67 Commandment word
69 Hip bones
70 Angelus call
71 Not hollow
72 Season before Easter
73 Scraps of food
74 Shouts
75 Verge

DOWN

1 The Feast of the Annunciation is on the 25th of this month
2 Home of St. Teresa
3 Patron saint of hermits
4 Thoughts
5 Music symbol
6 Cell "messenger"
7 Long fish
8 Catholic vaudevillian, Gracie ___
9 A BlackBerry has one
10 Title for a priest (abbr.)
11 Spanish pot
12 Defeat decisively
13 Rock add-on
21 Land in which Cain settled
23 Cries of discovery
25 Sins against the fifth Commandment
28 It's after Esth
30 One of the seven deadly sins
31 Alphabet string
32 He called for justice to roll down like water
33 Adages
34 Alphabet string
35 Press
36 They may be box
37 Encourage in wrongdoing
39 Archdiocese in Nebraska
43 According to Tobit 13, the gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphires and these precious stones
46 "…but do not perceive the wooden ___ in your own?" (Mt 7:3)
50 Prim
52 WWII president
54 Lake in the Sierra Nevada
56 Beneficial
57 Greased
58 By means of
59 Declare
60 Mount from which Moses saw Canaan
61 "…___ this day be at my side…"
62 Sword handle
63 Old cloth measures
64 Auditorium
68 Diamond Lady

Answer key can be found on page 19.

STATEMENT, from page 1

recognizing, at the same time, our nation's "responsibility to regulate our borders and to establish a just and orderly immigration system for the sake of the common good."

In our Special Message, strongly supported by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, we decried "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people." We prayed for "an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement."

Archbishop Bernard Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis has also called for prayers for peace. I concur with the following statement of Archbishop Hebda: "While we rightly thirst for God's justice and hunger for his peace, this will not be achieved until we are able to rid our hearts of the hatreds and

OSV News file photo

prejudices that prevent us from seeing each other as brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God. That is as true for our undocumented neighbors as it is for our elected officials and for the men and women who have the unenviable responsibility of enforcing our laws. They all need our humble prayers."

As disciples of Jesus, we must stand up for the life and dignity of every human person. This is not optional for us as Catholics. It is the most fundamental principle of Catholic social teaching. We must reject all dehumanizing rhetoric. Such rhetoric can lead to violence.

I urge everyone to reject ideologies contrary to the Gospel and to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Church has a large body of teaching on immigration based on principles of social doctrine that are founded in natural law and illumined by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The issues our nation faces regarding its immigration laws and policies are complex and challenging. The Church is a voice in the public square that never ceases to proclaim the truth about the dignity of the human person and that calls people to justice, peace, and solidarity. We must be faithful to these moral truths and values. The challenges we face in our nation are not only political. There is also a spiritual crisis when Our Lord's commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves is forgotten.

As we pray for peace, let us also ask our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, to intercede for our nation. I think of the beautiful devotion to Mary of so many of our immigrant brothers and sisters in our diocese. May she intercede for those experiencing fear and anxiety during this time. And may the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the patroness of our diocese, pray for all of us, that we may be united in our commitment to the protection of the life and dignity of all, to the cause of peace, and to the pursuit of justice and the common good!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Kevin C. Rhoades

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

SYNOD, from page 1

asking how they could help," Noem told Today's Catholic. "This is a way for them not only to participate but to get credit."

The class, which meets once a week during the spring semester, consists of nine young men and women – four students in the Masters of Divinity program (MDiv), one of whom is a seminarian for the Congregation of Holy Cross, two Masters of Theological Studies students, a Ph.D. student, and two alums of the MDiv program who asked to sit in on the class, which is co-taught by Megan Quigley, the diocese's director of adult faith formation.

Noem said the first four weeks of the class consisted of researching synods and synodality – both at the diocesan level and in the universal Church. On Friday, January 30, the class took what Noem called "a field trip" to Fort Wayne and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, where Bishop Rhoades gave them an hourlong lesson on the missionary roots of the diocese and its early history.

"Our students are from all over," Noem said, "and so they're participating in our identity as the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. And to best do that, they need to know our identity in a fuller way to be able to appreciate the work they'll be doing."

Bishop Rhoades said that getting a better understanding of the history of the diocese gives the students who will compile the synod consultation reports relevant context to their work.

"I think it always is important and helpful to know the history of our diocese, because we build on what our ancestors did," Bishop Rhoades said. "I find myself being inspired when I see what our ancestors of the faith here in this diocese did."

Noem said it was also important for the students to come to Fort Wayne, where few had visited prior to their class outing, in order to get a better sense of the geographical and demographical landscape of the diocese.

"It just blows up kind of your idea of the size of the diocese, the specificity, and the particularity of each of the little communities in the diocese," Noem said. "Knowing it in your head is one thing, but to hold it inside of you as you work with a summary that's coming from Bluffton or from Wabash – to have just a pinch of that, I think, is really important."

Nohemi Tragesser, a graduate of Saint Mary's College and Notre Dame who is in her second year in the Masters of Divinity program, told Today's Catholic that she grew interested in the topic of synods and synodality during the worldwide Synod of Bishops in Rome that took place in 2023 and 2024.

"I was just curious about the process of it and how it came to be, and so when it was announced that there was going to be a diocesan synod, I was excited," Tragesser said. "When I found out there was going to be a class on our synod, that was another layer to it – that I could

Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades gives students a tour of the sanctuary of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception during their visit.

actually help use the time that I'm in school to contribute, I was just really excited."

She continued: "My majors in undergrad were computer science and math, so I really love solving puzzles and building new things, and it feels a little bit like that's what we were going to be asked to do by bringing all this information together; it's like putting together a puzzle where you get to figure out what people are saying, what the Holy Spirit is saying through them, and then we have to figure out how we're going to compile it and present it to Bishop Rhoades."

While the students haven't yet begun sifting through the parish summaries, Tragesser has already been involved in the synod process, as she served as a notetaker for St. Jude during its parish consultation.

"I think what I found really beautiful was the importance placed on the call to serve others in all areas, including the elderly and people who have fallen away from the Church," she said. "I've just felt that it's been really beautiful to see this play out in the parish and support it."

Tragesser said getting a chance to hear Bishop Rhoades speak to the class about the history of the diocese will inspire her in the group's synodal work.

"I think hearing how the diocese came to be – how it began with missionary Catholics – was really important for us all," she said. "It reminds us how we're called to evangelize and be on mission, and hearing Bishop Rhoades talk really got me thinking about how we as a diocese can do that for each other and for the world."

As Bishop Rhoades left the group to continue their field trip by touring the Diocesan Museum and worshipping at Mass, the students thanked him for his time and the wisdom he imparted.

"It's the least I could do," Bishop Rhoades said in return, "especially considering the importance of the work you're going to be doing for us, so thank you."

Scott Warden is editor-in-chief of Today's Catholic. Email him at editor@diocesefwsb.org.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING? highlights upcoming events from around the diocese. Discover more Catholic events or share your own at todayscatholic.org/event. To feature your event and gain more exposure, call us at (260) 399-1449 to learn about space options.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8
K of C All-You-Can-Eat Polish-Style Buffet / Super Bowl Party
4 – 11 p.m.
SOUTH BEND – The Knights of Columbus – No. 553 Santa Maria Council of South Bend, 553 E. Washington St., will host its legendary all-you-care-to-enjoy six-course Polish buffet for $16 per person (kids 7 and under free). Carryout is available. Enjoy a free Super Bowl party, food service until 10:30 p.m., and a responsibly served cash bar. Reservations suggested for parties of six or more.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11
Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage Experience
7 – 9 p.m.
MISHAWAKA – Enjoy a spiritual and prayerful "pilgrimage" with a trained virtual pilgrimage guide at St. Monica Catholic Church, 222 West Mishawaka Avenue. This interactive journey includes the invitation and history of a pilgrimage, the apparitions and message of Lourdes, and the footsteps of St. Bernadette. The evening will include touching the grotto rock, a candlelight Rosary procession, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Every pilgrim will receive the gift of a small bottle of Lourdes water to take home. No cost, but a free-will offering is appreciated.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Theology On Tap Fish Fry Social
6 – 9 p.m.
FORT WAYNE – Theology on Tap will be hosting a fish fry on February 13 at Park Edelweiss, 3355 Elmhurst Dr. There will be a cover charge of $15 per person. This will cover not only your entry fee but also an all-you-can-eat cafeteria style menu and an open bar. Food service stops at 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Valentine's Square Dance
6:30 – 11:30 p.m.
WALKERTON – The Knights of Columbus – Council 5709 are hosting a Valentine's Square Dance on February 13 at 6:30 p.m. in Letko Hall at St. Patrick Church in Walkerton. Featuring caller Avery Arnold will lead you through all the steps, and no experience is needed! Heavy hors d'oeuvres and cash bar is available. This is a free-will donation event, and all are welcome for those 21 and up. RSVP by calling TJ Borton at 574-229-6288, the parish office at 574-586-7152, or email at info@saintpatricks.church.

Poor Handmaid Sister Virginia Kampwerth Dies at Age 83

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Sister Virginia Kampwerth (formerly Sister Alberta) passed away on January 14 at Catherine's Cottage in Donaldson. Her parents, Al and Dorothy Kampwerth, and older sister, Marabeth, welcomed Virginia to the family on September 27, 1942, in Breese, Illinois. Later, two more siblings, Alan and Kathleen, joined the Kampwerth family. Sister Virginia is survived in death by her sister, Marabeth Petermeyer.

Sister Virginia entered the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ community on August 22, 1960, and professed her first vows on August 6, 1963. Her education included Ancilla College in Donaldson and Alverno College in Milwaukee, where she majored in German and Latin. She studied in Munich and received her master's degree in German from Purdue University in Lafayette. She ministered at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Hammond, St. Monica School in Mishawaka, Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, and Mater Dei High School in Breese, Illinois.

In 1983, she studied for her doctorate in philosophy at St. Louis University. After receiving her doctorate, she then became academic vice president of Ancilla College and then president of Ancilla College. In 1993, following a one-year sabbatical, she became the assistant principal at Mater Dei High School from 1994-2005.

In 2005, she was elected to provincial leadership as vicaress for the Poor Handmaid Community. She served until 2013. In 2023, she celebrated 60 years as a Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ. Sister Virginia, a lifelong educator, officially retired in 2018.

Sister Virginia wrote: "Besides my professional work as a Catholic school educator and administrator, the spirituality of being a Poor Handmaid of Jesus Christ has developed through my annual retreats and my academic sabbatical to become a spiritual director, completing the program for spiritual direction through the Jesuits at St. Louis University. My love for the German language and my ability to do simultaneous translation have afforded me the opportunity to serve as translator in Germany for the Poor Handmaids of Jesus and the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis. Serving on hospital boards and the board of Rehabilitation Marshall County, Indiana and Clinton County, Illinois, have been ways for me to help continue bringing the healing and teaching ministry to people in various areas. My continual growth as an individual and as a member of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ is in response to the daily call I hear within me to be 'One in the Spirit.'"

A visitation, wake service, and Mass of resurrection were held on Saturday, January 24, at the Ancilla Domini Chapel in Donaldson.

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne
Mary Louise Gatton, 73, St. Patrick Arcola
Judith "Judy" Mae Jenkins, 89, St. Therese
Rosalie Cummings, 90, St. Vincent de Paul
Ursula Hatfield, 94, St. Vincent de Paul
Lori Hoover, 76, St. Vincent de Paul
Patricia Noll, 95, St. Vincent de Paul
Kimberly Walker, 66, St. Vincent de Paul

Goshen
Margaret "Peg" Hooley, 88, St. John the Evangelist

Granger
Zonia Cardozo de Pina, 85, St Pius X
Larry Miller, 85, Saint Pius X
Mary Schoen, 72, Saint Pius X
David Spenner, Jr. 55, St Pius X

Huntington
Elizabeth "Betty" Ann (Eckert) Kindler, 88, SS. Peter and Paul

Mishawaka
Ray Gervais, 99, Queen of Peace

New Haven
Gerald "Jerry" Bendele, 83, St. John the Baptist

South Bend
Roselie Dennis, 79, Holy Cross
John R. Dresbach, 85, Holy Family
William (Bill) McCammon Jr., 88, Holy Family
Pauline S. Nowicki, 88, Holy Family
Lorena (Parra) Cristobal, 50, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
Maria Garcia, 62, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
Xavier Islas-Vazquez, 81, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
John Matthews, 62, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
Juliann M. Michalak, 99, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
Rodolfo Reyes, 79, SS. Casimir and Adalbert
Josephine Sipocz, 89, St. John the Baptist
Dianne Talboom, 87, St. John the Baptist
Joan Fahey, 95, St. Jude
Dorothy VanParis, 97, St. Jude

Send obituaries to obituaries@diocesefwsb.org.

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ST. JOSEPH, from page 2

confined to religion class or weekly liturgies. Teachers attend Mass with students, spend time in Eucharistic adoration, and mark saints' feast days and liturgical seasons throughout the year. Scripture passages and faith-centered artwork line the hallways, reinforcing lessons lived as well as taught.

"Our staff are very open about sharing their faith," Hoffman said. "They show students that this work is a calling – work God has placed before them."

The school also provides opportunities for students to learn about religious vocations, including visits from the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, helping young people see how faith can shape a lifetime of service.

Learning Faith Through Service and Welcoming

This year marked the school's first special education program – an addition that Hoffman said revealed the character of the student body.

"I see students with exceptionalities treated with genuine respect and kindness," she said. "Students go out of their way to include everyone – in games, activities, and everyday moments. That fills a principal's heart."

Students also live their faith through service beyond the classroom, volunteering at the parish food bank to help prepare for food distribution.

"They're serving the wider community and sharing their faith through that work," Hoffman said.

Parish and School, United in Mission

The close relationship between the parish and school plays a central role in shaping students' sense of belonging in the Church. Father Michael Ammer, pastor of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel, is a regular presence in the school, teaching junior high religion classes, coaching basketball, visiting with students during lunch, and greeting families at dismissal.

"We are so blessed to have a priest who is truly present in our school," Hoffman said. "Students see Father Michael and me working together, and that helps them understand that St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel is one community – and that the school is a ministry of the parish."

Father Ammer sees that unity as essential to Catholic formation.

"The Mass is fundamental to our faith," he told Today's Catholic. "As Vatican II teaches, the Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the Christian life. Everything the parish does surrounds that center."

Students regularly serve as readers, altar servers, and choir members at school Masses, and classes rotate through weekly Eucharistic adoration. Opportunities for confession further anchor prayer in everyday school life.

"The students are receptive," Father Ammer said. "They sing, they serve, they pray. Those experiences shape them in ways that last."

Photos by Tim Johnson

Students in Kurtis Homan's fifth-grade class use exercise balls as seating – a popular nontraditional option that allows students to remain engaged while learning.

Eighth-grade student Megan Shaffer reads the first reading during Mass at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel on Thursday, January 29. During his homily, Bishop Rhoades complimented her proclamation from the Second Book of Samuel about King David.

Affirmed by the Bishop's Visit

During his visit, Bishop Rhoades celebrated Mass with the school community and spent time visiting classrooms, speaking with students about Scripture, the sacraments, and the responsibilities of living the Catholic faith. In one classroom, he discussed the evangelists; in another, he spoke about religious freedom and the importance of faith in public life.

"There is no better way to celebrate than the holy Eucharist," Bishop Rhoades told students, "because it is the Eucharist that makes us one body in Christ."

He also emphasized the role of Catholic schools in forming young disciples.

"Our mission as Catholics is to help build the Kingdom of God – by living our faith, loving one another, and keeping God's commandments," he said.

Katie Hoffman, principal of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel School, sits with students from Sara Bear's pre-kindergarten 4 class during a school visit by Bishop Rhoades on Thursday, January 29.

At the conclusion of Mass, Bishop Rhoades thanked the faculty and staff for their dedication.

"This would not be such a wonderful Catholic school without your teachers and staff," he said. "Thank you for your commitment to this holy mission of Catholic education."

Hope Rooted in Faith

For Hoffman and Father Ammer, the strength of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel lies not only in tradition but in families who continue to live their faith together – during school days, at Mass, and in service to others.

"In a world where many people look to temporary things for meaning," Hoffman said, "St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel is forming students who know their joy, hope, and strength come from their Catholic faith. Our students are a community of believers for one another, and that gives me tremendous hope for the future."

Even amid winter weather and disrupted schedules, that shared faith continues to shape young lives – united in faith, united in community, and rooted in the enduring mission of Catholic education.