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Huddled Mass at Notre Dame

On a Frigid Night, Warmth Radiated from an Ice Chapel on Campus



Photo by Matt Cashore/University of Notre Dame

Thousands gather outside the student-built St. Olaf Ice Chapel on the campus of the University of Notre Dame for Mass on Monday, February 2.

BY MARGARET FOSMOE
NOTRE DAME MAGAZINE

Flickering candles lit up the scene as a large student crowd braved the cold on a February night to join in an outdoor Mass around an elaborate student-built ice chapel.

The temporary church on North Quad near Zahm Hall is made entirely of snow and ice,

with a tall ice spire and roof pinnacles topped with ice crosses. Inside, there's a crucifix of ice. Votive candles lit the walkway to the chapel, its roof, and the area around its base for the service. Many worshippers also held candles.

The Mass, which included a choir, was celebrated the night of Monday, February 2, with Holy Cross Father Greg Haake presiding and Holy Cross Father Pete

McCormick giving the homily. Altar servers carried an icicle cross and candles amid a large circle of worshippers standing and kneeling in the snow.

"We look at a world that can all too often feel as if it is full of bad news. It is full of despair. It is full of heartache," Father McCormick said. "Jesus calls us to live our lives like his – with open hearts, with a love for one another, a love that

knows no limit, a love that willingly sacrifices, and a love that calls others into communion."

After the homily, those in attendance sang the alma mater, "Notre Dame, Our Mother," joining arms and swaying to the song. The Mass drew such a large crowd that the supply of Communion hosts ran out.

NOTRE DAME, page 14

St. Matthew Cathedral Hosts Holy Hour for Peace

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

On the evening of Wednesday, February 4, the Cathedral of St. Matthew in South Bend was a place of solitude and reflection amid a world where too often chaos pervades. Only the buzz of lights and the sounds of footsteps filled the room. Children knelt in prayer while teens and adults used the silence to talk to God through prayer and reflection.

Dozens gathered before the

exposed Eucharist for a moment of contemplation and prayer. Some sat in silent reflection; others prayed the Rosary. Visitors were offered "A Litany for Peace in Troubled Times," a guide for reflection for peace (see sidebar on Page 9) to help concentrate their thoughts on the evening's intention.

Each of those in attendance came in response to Bishop Rhoades' invitation for the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-

South Bend to join a national call to participate in a Holy Hour for Peace.

"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," Bishop Rhoades wrote in a January 31 state. He quoted Arch-

bishop Coakley, who wrote, "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."

In prayer is power – power to examine one's conscience and search the heart for ways to bring hope to a world that is hurting. The Church offered a space for

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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.
— *Gaudium et Spes*, 78

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The Climb to Ash Wednesday

BY FATHER PATRICK
BRISCOE, OP

Being from northern Indiana, I've never lived on a hill. In fact, when I was younger, I often wondered why people bothered to build houses on hills. There were, after all, plenty of flat places that seemed to my 6- or 7-year-old mind much more amenable to construction.

When I first began ministry, I lived on a hill in Providence, Rhode Island. Truth be told, I didn't think much of it, because as a parish priest I had a car.

But now I live on a hill in Rome, and I'm keenly aware of it. I strategically plan every outing, because to leave the Dominican community where I live and go anywhere in the city means I must walk down our hill. And even if the walk down isn't bad, I'll have to walk back up our hill to return home!

The Aventine Hill is one of Rome's famous seven hills. It's located on the Tiber River and boasts spectacular views of the Eternal City. In the ancient myths of the founding of Rome, the Aventine is the hill on which Remus, brother of Romulus, offered his sacrifice to his pagan gods. Long before the coming of Christ, there were temples to other gods here and many houses belonging to Rome's wealthy merchant class.

One of those ancient Roman noblewomen, according to the Church's venerable tradition, was Sabina. She attributed her conversion to Christianity to the witness of her slave, Serapia, who was from Antioch.

When Serapia was denounced as a Christian and martyred, Sabina buried her in her family's own tomb. Rather than retreat in fear, Sabina



CNS file photos

Benedictine and Dominican religious lead a procession from the Church of St. Anselm to the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome before the celebration of Ash Wednesday Mass on February 14, 2024.

claimed her servant's relics, buried them honorably, and openly professed her new faith. For this, she too was denounced, tried, and beheaded under Emperor Hadrian around the year A.D. 126.

Centuries later, a priest from Illyria (today's Balkan peninsula) would build, at great expense, a marvelous basilica on the Aventine Hill in St. Sabina's honor. Dedicated in A.D. 422, the basilica is graced with magnificent Corinthian columns, topped with marble inlay depictions of the banner of the Legion of Rome. But the Christians made one change to banners: they added crosses.

In fact, Santa Sabina is home to the oldest-known public depiction of Jesus Christ crucified. The basilica's grand antique carved cypress doors date to A.D. 432. And in the upper left corner, on a small panel measuring 16 inches wide and 12 inches high, hangs Our Lord

between two thieves.

I love the basilica, and not just because it's been a major center for the Dominican Order since it was given to us in 1220.

I love the basilica because of her story.

Some scholars think her marvelous columns were reused from a nearby pagan temple. Other elements of our medieval Dominican cloister were certainly recovered from nearby sites and recycled. In her stones down to her very foundation, Santa Sabina captures the moment when Christianity began to transform the old-world order – adapting its architectural forms and repurposing its materials. The basilica is an intersection, a monument to the change the Gospel makes in a place.

I often marvel at the fact that there aren't other older public depictions of the crucifixion. Surely there were some, long since lost to the memory of time. But it could be that it simply

took hundreds of years for Christians to begin to understand the power of the cross. To recognize that the key to Christ's triumph isn't in worldly power or conquest. Christ came to build a different empire, to make us citizens of a different kingdom.

That's why Santa Sabina is an ideal starting place for Lent. Each year, the pope comes to our basilica on Ash Wednesday, following a venerable tradition, to receive ashes and impose them on the cardinals present.

The climb to Santa Sabina itself mirrors the spiritual ascent inaugurated in our 40 days of fasting and prayer. From the foot of the Aventine, pilgrims must make their way upward, an effort that symbolizes our Lenten journey. Through penance, prayer, and self-denial, we ascend, leaving behind those things that hinder and impede.

It's that journey that carves the cross in us, that leaves the mark of Christ on our hearts. Just like the love of Christ changed Sabina's life nearly 2,000 years ago, the love of Christ can change our lives, too.

We may be hesitant at first. I still thoroughly assess whether or not I really want to make the climb every time I step out the door. But now I'm in much better shape after a few months of living on the hill. It's changing me, and I can feel it. It's the promise of Lent, the promise of the Gospel. The promise of life lived with Christ.

Father Patrick Briscoe, a Fort Wayne native, is a Dominican priest and the order's general promoter for social communication.



Seminarians from the Pontifical North American College attend an early morning Ash Wednesday Mass at the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome in this 2010 photo.



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

Deacon Michel Hodge distributes Communion during Mass at the inaugural New York Black Catholic Congress at Blessed Sacrament Church in New Rochelle, New York, on November 22, 2025. Two U.S. bishops in a February 3 statement urged Catholics to be “faithful stewards of memory” during Black History Month, observed in February.

U.S. Bishops Commemorate Black History Month

BY OSV NEWS

(OSV News) – Two U.S. bishops urged Catholics to be “faithful stewards of memory” and “courageous witnesses to truth” during Black History Month, observed in February.

Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, and Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell Jr. of Washington, chairman of the USCCB’s Subcommittee on African American Affairs, issued a joint statement on Tuesday, February 3, to commemorate the month.

They noted that the 2026 observance marks 100 years of commemorating Black history in the United States. “This milestone is an opportunity for us to prayerfully reflect on the ways history has been preserved, honored, and passed on across generations,” Bishop Garcia and Bishop Campbell said.

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson, an American historian, author, and journalist, initiated the first Negro History Week in February of that year. He selected the week that included the birthdays of two key figures in the history of Black Americans: President Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and abolitionist Frederick Douglass (February 20).

It expanded and became Black History Month, officially rec-

ognized by President Gerald R. Ford in February of 1976 and later codified by Congress in 1986. The combined efforts marked what the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture called a century of commemorating the history, achievements, and contributions of Black Americans.

The bishops pointed to “Open Wide Our Hearts,” the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter against racism, in which they said the bishops “recognized that the lived experience of the vast majority of African Americans bears the marks of our country’s original sin of racism.”

“During this year’s observance of Black History Month, we encourage the faithful to consider the lessons of history, honoring our heroes of the past and learning from the mistakes of the past,” they said.

“Although we may at times encounter people or situations in our country that seek to erase ‘memory’ from our minds and books, it can never be erased from our hearts,” they continued.

“May our reflections strengthen our faith and communities. Let us be faithful stewards of

memory. Let us be courageous witnesses to truth. Let us pray and work to honor the inherent dignity of every person and the sacred stories of every people.”

In a joint reflection they issued with the statement, Bishop Garcia and Bishop Campbell emphasized that racism is a sin against human dignity.

“As shepherds of the Church, entrusted with the care of souls and the proclamation of the

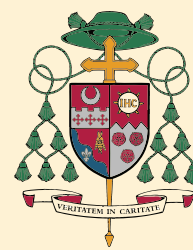
Gospel, we care deeply for our people, their joys and sorrows and the stories they carry. This is especially important in our efforts to witness to the dignity of every person, which requires acknowledging the times in our nation’s history when racism

has prevented that dignity from being realized,” they said.

“This reflection is about the sacred task of remembering,” they added. “We must recommit ourselves to the sacred task of remembering – especially the stories of those whose voices have long been unheard. Sacred Scripture and Tradition offer a way forward for helping us understand why telling our stories is central to the Gospel mandate.”

“We encourage the faithful to consider the lessons of history, honoring our heroes of the past and learning from the mistakes of the past.”

U.S. BISHOPS’ PASTORAL LETTER



PUBLIC SCHEDULE OF
BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

Veritatem In Caritate
(Truth in Charity)

- ◆ **Monday, February 16, at 10 a.m.** – Meeting of Bishop’s Cabinet, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne
- ◆ **Tuesday, February 17, at 7 a.m.** – Prayer and Blessing at Servus Omnium Lecture, University of Saint Francis North Campus Gymnasium, Fort Wayne
- ◆ **Wednesday, February 18, at 7 p.m.** – “Mind and Heart” Lecture, Holy Cross College
- ◆ **Thursday, February 18, at 9 a.m.** – Meeting with Diocesan High School Principals, Oakwood Inn, Syracuse
- ◆ **Thursday, February 19, at noon** – Meeting with Council of Teachers, Oakwood Inn, Syracuse
- ◆ **Thursday, February 19, at 6 p.m.** – Meeting with Diocesan School Board, Oakwood Inn, Syracuse
- ◆ **Saturday, February 21, at 3 p.m.** – Question and Answer Session at Rekindle the Fire Men’s Conference, followed by 4 p.m. Mass, Century Center, South Bend
- ◆ **Sunday, February 22, at 10 a.m.** – Mass with Communion and Liberation Community at Notre Dame, St. Francis Convent, Mishawaka
- ◆ **Sunday, February 22, at 2:30 p.m.** – Rite of Election, St. Pius X Church, Granger
- ◆ **Sunday, February 22, at 5:30 p.m.** – Vespers and Dinner, Henri de Lubac Jesuit Community, South Bend

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Theology on Tap Speaker Explores 'Christ in the Chaos'

Winter Series in Fort Wayne Opens with the Theme 'Hope Does Not Disappoint'

BY NICK MILLS

The winter Theology on Tap series in Fort Wayne opened on Tuesday, February 3, by naming a reality many young adults experience daily: chaos. From global conflict and polarized politics to artificial intelligence blurring truth, constant social media noise, and deeply personal struggles, disorder can feel inescapable. This season's Theology on Tap series, titled "Hope Does Not Disappoint," was intentionally designed to meet people in that place – not by avoiding chaos but by walking through it toward hope.

Organizers explained that the series is structured as a journey, mirroring Christ's own passage through the desert during Lent. Just as Lent ultimately leads to resurrection, the Theology on Tap series is meant to lead participants toward hope – a fitting focus following last year's Jubilee Year of Hope.

The first two talks of the winter series confront the environment many people inhabit daily: wars, political division, AI-driven misinformation, biased media, technological escapism, and the fatigue that comes from being constantly connected. Coupled with personal struggles – family tension, vocational uncertainty, and fractured relationships – this constant noise can easily lead to hopelessness and despair. These opening sessions are meant to name that reality honestly before turning toward healing and renewal.

'God's Order Is Not Our Order'

The series began with "Christ in the Chaos," presented by Mike Habeeb, director of mission programming at the University of Saint Francis. Habeeb structured his talk around two perspectives: first, that God is the author of order, and second, that God is one who works even within what appears to us as disorder. While the first idea is familiar to many Christians, the second is more challenging – and, he argued, more transformative.

Beginning with Genesis, Habeeb described creation as emerging from Tohu wa-bohu – a Hebrew phrase often translated as "formless and void" but more accurately understood as "chaos and desolation." Into that chaos, God speaks order into existence.

But if God is the author of order, where does that leave people



Photos provided by Theology on Tap

Young adults attending the opening of the winter series of Theology on Tap in Fort Wayne raise their glasses for a toast at Classic Cafe on Tuesday, February 3.

when life falls apart?

Habeeb shared stories that illustrated how God is often encountered not after chaos has passed but while it is actively unfolding. One such story came from World Youth Day in Spain, when a violent storm tore through a field of more than a million pilgrims during an overnight vigil.

"There was chaos – pure chaos," Habeeb recalled. Yet in the middle of the storm, people ran toward danger to help others. A group of pilgrims lifted a collapsed tent so those trapped beneath it could escape, while at the same time someone else carried the Blessed Sacrament to safety.

Another story brought listeners into a hospital emergency room after Habeeb suffered a severe table saw injury on his

final day at a woodworking job. After hours of untreated pain, a nurse intervened despite being told to wait.

"For me, she was the face of pure mercy," Habeeb said. "That was God in the chaos."

Habeeb then pushed the audience further, suggesting that God is not only present in brief moments of relief but actively at work within chaos itself – even when it defies understanding.

He pointed to moments in Scripture that appear chaotic from a scientific perspective: the Red Sea parting, storms instantly calming, and water turning into wine. "That's not how water works," he repeated, emphasizing the tension between human logic and divine action.

"Our perspective is limited," Habeeb said. "God's justice is not our justice. God's order is

not our order."

What appears chaotic to us, he argued, may actually be God restoring a deeper order that we cannot yet see.

Habeeb grounded the message in everyday experience by reflecting on family life. Raising young children, he admitted, is rarely peaceful or predictable. Mornings are loud, Mass can be exhausting, and patience is constantly tested.

Yet rather than viewing those moments as obstacles to holiness, Habeeb framed them as his vocation.

"In serving my children," he said, "I serve Christ."

Holiness, he suggested, is not found only in silence and stillness but in faithfulness amid the mess.

Attendees Reflect on the Message

For many in attendance, the talk offered a new way of understanding their own experiences.

"I gained a new perspective on viewing chaos in general life situations," said Grace Huisman, noting that "even though it doesn't inherently seem like there can be beauty in it ... God's way and God's plan" can still be present. "I feel like I can take that with me from here on out," she added.

Molly Nord resonated with the challenge to rethink disorder itself. "I love chaos. I thrive in chaos," Nord said before reflecting that "God's justice isn't our justice," and "God's order isn't our order." What feels

disordered to us, she said, may actually be God "seeing order and making order out of it."

For Sidney Swick, reflection was key. "Sitting with that and looking back and reflecting, you can also gain perspective," she said. Often, she added, "we're not going to even know or be able to understand until afterwards." Taking time to reflect allows people to "actually appreciate how God was working in those moments."

A Journey Toward Hope

As the Theology on Tap series continues, organizers hope participants will come to see that chaos and hope are not opposites. Rather, hope often takes root precisely where chaos seems most overwhelming – not a shallow optimism but the enduring hope rooted in Christ Himself.

As St. Paul reminds the Church, "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). That conviction framed Mike Habeeb's opening talk and sets the tone for the entire series.

Hope begins where Christ enters our mess. Hope is found in chaos. And in Christ, hope does not disappoint.

A schedule of upcoming sessions, recordings of talks, and more information on Theology on Tap are available at diocesefwsb.org/tot-fw.



Mike Habeeb, director of mission programming at the University of Saint Francis, speaks during the opening session of the winter Theology on Tap series on the topic "Christ in the Chaos."

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.

Stepping Beyond the Classroom

Field Trips Give Saint Joseph Students an Opportunity for Hands-On Learning

BY TIMOTHY FREEL

Students from many different classes at Saint Joseph High School venture outside of their classrooms and experience hands-on learning through a variety of field trips throughout the school year. They emphasize the relevance of the curriculum to real applications and reinforce how the ideas in the classroom extend into the world as a whole.

Each fall, the AP English Language and Composition students kick off the first quarter with a visit to the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame and the Hesburgh library. Former Saint Joseph alum Claire Kucela gave the students a presentation about applying to college and what institutions like Notre Dame are looking for. Kucela, an adviser for the Upward Bound program, noted that universities want to get to know who students truly are and encouraged them to share themselves in an authentic voice. The senior students then toured the facility of the Raclin Museum, exploring how visual art communicates complex ideas and emotions as well as the deeper meanings and morality behind each piece.

Another former Saint Joseph alum, Maggie Dosch, was the liaison for the visit in her role as assistant curator for educational outreach. Dosch helped students explore the tradition of art and encounter some of its ambiguities. This visit emphasized a key message in AP English Language by encouraging each student to think and develop their own beliefs about art. They stepped into the role of critic as they worked together to formulate their stances on contemporary pieces such as Andy Goldsworthy's "Red Flags" and Zhang Huan's "Ash Banquet." The teacher, Phil DePauw, explained why he added this field trip to the course.

"Our readings dig into the philosophical reasons for defining and evaluating art, so I wanted something to tie together the unit in a more tangible way," DePauw said. "At its best, art is a marriage of the abstract and the concrete. Plus, having such a wonderful gem like Notre Dame so close by makes it a home run."

The art museum is not the only asset Notre Dame has to offer to students at Saint Joe. The Engineering Design and Development class for Project Lead the Way traveled to the Engineering Innovation Hub on campus. There, they experienced the cutting-edge equipment and laboratories used by the undergraduate students while observing how these tools help shape future engineers. This helps cement the key message that the Engineering Design and Development class focuses on developing the future.

Each spring, multiple classes travel to visit another art museum – the world-famous Art Institute of Chicago. Jennifer Firestone in the art department takes AP Art students, as does Mike McCarthy with his freshmen World History students. They trace the progress of history over time by looking at the treasures in the collection. The day helps make the vast centuries of the past more real as students see firsthand works that were made long ago. As a bonus, students have a chance to snap photos to create their very own "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" moment.

Every year, the Student Media students tour the local studio of WSBT in South Bend to see a noon broadcast of the local news. They witness how a professional show is produced. This mirrors the daily broadcast put on by the students, who air a 10-minute news program each day to the school. This allows the students to see the possibilities of a career in journalism here in the local community. They are able to ask anchors questions after the noon broadcast ends. Some even have gone on to pursue a career in journalism, such as local weatherman Jack Van Meter at WNDU and sports reporter Jacob Morris, who covers the Crimson Tide of Alabama.

Through these and dozens of other trips throughout the year, Saint Joseph High School extends the knowledge of students beyond the classroom. It shows the dedication that the teachers have toward developing critical, innovative and cultured students while cementing the notion that experience is fundamental to the success of learning.

Timothy Freel is a senior at Saint Joseph High School.



Photos provided by Saint Joseph High School

Saint Joseph High School students pose for a photo outside of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Saint Joseph Student Media students visit the studios of television station WSBT in South Bend.



Students in Saint Joseph's Engineering Design and Development Class visit the Engineering Innovation Hub at the University of Notre Dame.

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Leo: Human Trafficking Is a 'Grave Crime Against Humanity'

VATICAN CITY (OSV News) – Ahead of the 12th World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, Pope Leo XIV has condemned the scourge of modern slavery, which has taken even more disturbing forms in our online societies. In his message for the day, which was marked on Sunday, February 8, the pope renewed the Church's "urgent call to confront and bring an end to this grave crime against humanity." He focused on the Risen Christ's greeting "Peace be with you," saying these words offer "a path toward a renewed humanity." "True peace begins with the recognition and protection of the God-given dignity of every person," he said. "Yet, in an age marked by escalating violence, many are tempted to seek peace through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion." Pope Leo entrusted the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking to the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita, whose life, he said, stands "as a powerful witness of hope in the Lord who loved her to the end."

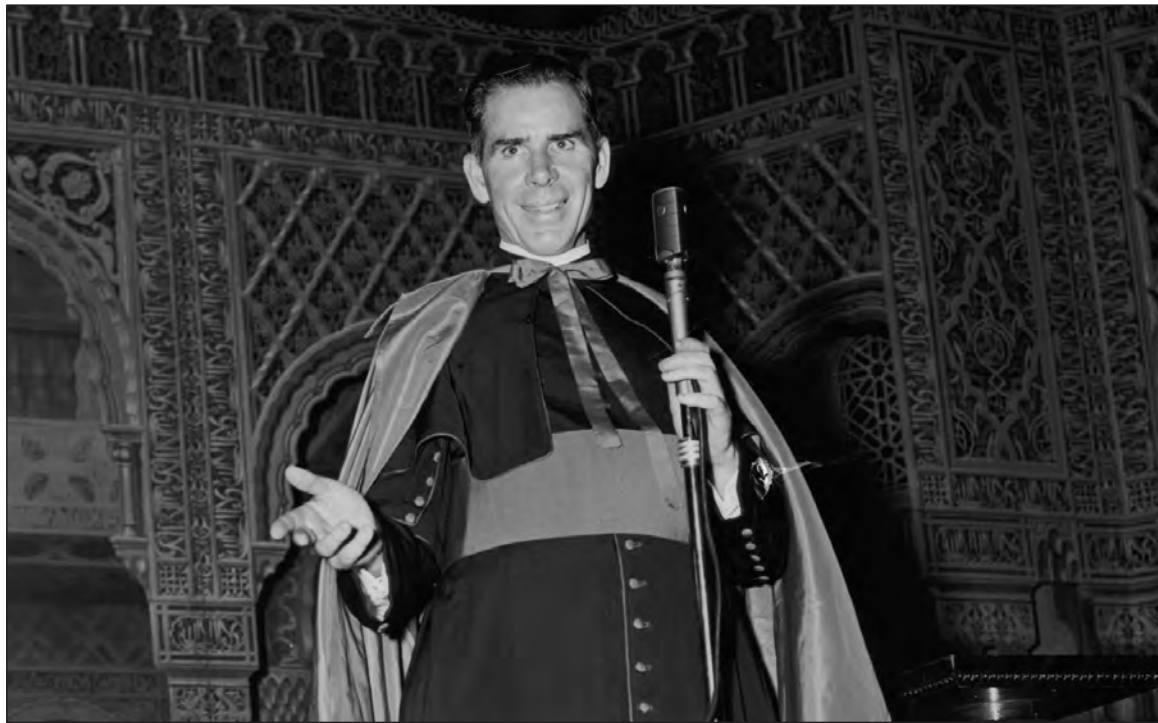
Sister Thea Bowman's Sainthood Cause Moves to Vatican Review

JACKSON, Mississippi (OSV News) – Servant of God Thea Bowman's canonization cause has moved ahead, as a Mass and ceremony marking the closure of the cause's diocesan phase was held on Monday, February 9, at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson, Mississippi. Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz of Jackson celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving followed by an official closing session of the diocesan phase of the canonization process, where the cause's leaders sealed the boxes containing the diocesan phase's documents and findings. Those boxes will be shipped to the apostolic nunciature in Washington for transfer to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican, which will further investigate the cause. In 2018, Bishop Kopacz opened the cause for Sister Bowman, a Mississippi native and the only African American member of her religious community, the Wisconsin-based Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Before she died of cancer in 1990 at age 52, she was a widely known speaker, evangelizer, singer, and trailblazer for Black Catholics.

Vatican Confirms Pope Will Not Visit U.S. in 2026

ROME (OSV News) – The Vatican has confirmed that Pope Leo XIV has no plans to visit the United States in 2026. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni told

ARCHBISHOP SHEEN'S BEATIFICATION MOVES FORWARD



OSV News file photo

The Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, announced on Monday, February 9, that Venerable Fulton J. Sheen will soon be beatified now that the Vatican has given the green light. No date or location for the beatification was given. The announcement comes six years after the Holy See had postponed the beatification, initially scheduled for December of 2019, only weeks before the event was to take place.

"The Holy See has informed me that the Cause for the Venerable Servant of God Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen can proceed to Beatification," Bishop Louis Tylka of Peoria said in a statement. "The next step in the process is the celebration of the Beatification, in which Fulton Sheen would be declared Blessed." The bishop said the date and event details will be released soon through celebratesheen.com, the website for the cause of Archbishop Sheen, who Bishop Tylka called "one of the greatest voices of evangelization in the Church and the world in the 20th century." Read more at TodaysCatholic.org.

reporters on Sunday, February 8, that a U.S. trip is not on the pope's calendar, despite an invitation extended last year by Vice President J.D. Vance on behalf of President Donald Trump. While Pope Leo has said he would visit the U.S. "at some point," tensions over immigration policy have made a near-term trip unlikely. Meanwhile, Pope Leo is expected to travel this year to Angola, Algeria, and Spain, and has voiced a strong interest in visiting Latin America, though no dates are set.

Pro-Democracy Activist Jimmy Lai Sentenced to 20-Year Imprisonment

HONG KONG (OSV News) – Hong Kong media entrepreneur and pro-democracy advocate Jimmy Lai has been sentenced to 20 years in prison, in what critics say

is the harshest penalty yet under China's national security law. A Hong Kong court handed down the sentence on Monday, February 9, nearly six years after Lai's arrest sparked international outrage. Lai, founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily, was convicted in December of sedition and conspiring to collude with foreign forces. His family condemned the ruling as "heartbreakingly cruel," warning that the 76-year-old's declining health makes the sentence life-threatening. "If this sentence is carried out, he will die a martyr behind bars," said Lai's daughter, Claire. The case has renewed global concern over press freedom, religious liberty, and human rights in Hong Kong.

New York Becomes 13th State Allowing Assisted Suicide

ALBANY, New York (OSV News)

– New York Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul on Friday, February 6, made good on her promise that early this year she would sign a bill into law allowing physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have now legalized assisted suicide. Hochul, a Catholic, had said in a December 17 commentary in the Times Union daily newspaper she would sign it once the Legislature added certain "guardrails" to "address the concerns of some who fear that vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities or the elderly, will be pressured into a decision they would not have made on their own." Among the guardrails now part of the law are an opt-out for "religiously oriented home hospice providers" and a mandatory five-day waiting

period between when a lethal prescription is written and filled. New York's Catholic bishops called assisted suicide "a grave moral evil on par with other direct attacks on human life." The law takes effect in six months.

USCCB Chair: Trump's 'Blatantly Racist' Post 'Inexcusable'

WASHINGTON (OSV News) – A video posted on President Donald Trump's Truth Social account that depicted former first couple President Barack and Michelle Obama as apes was deleted after widespread outrage denounced the content as racist. Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, said in written comments to OSV News: "As my brother bishops and I have said in our pastoral letter against racism: 'Every racist act – every such comment, every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin – is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God,'" he said. White House officials at first defended the post and claimed Trump did not post the video, blaming an unnamed staffer. It was posted late at night on Thursday, February 5, and deleted by noon on Friday, February 6.

Pope Meets Leaders of Apostolate for Catholics with Same-Sex Attraction

ROME (OSV News) – on Friday, February 6, Pope Leo XIV met with leaders of Courage International, a Catholic apostolate that offers spiritual support to people with same-sex attraction who seek to live chaste lives in line with Church teaching. The private audience included Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, chair of Courage's board of bishops. In a statement, Courage officials said the meeting was an "opportunity to share with the Holy Father the works of the apostolate, to provide pastoral accompaniment to persons who experience same-sex attraction but who strive to live chaste lives or to accompany family members who have a loved one who identifies as LGBTQ." Founded in 1980 by Father John Harvey at the request of then-Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York, Courage now has more than 160 chapters, including in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and received canonical status in 2016. The apostolate's five core principles focus on chastity, prayer, fellowship, support, and leading by example.

ICC, Bishops Call for 'Humane Solutions' on Immigration

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

As the debate over immigration continues to intensify nationwide, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and the state's bishops are urging Indiana lawmakers to seek solutions that are rooted in empathy and respect for human dignity.

At the heart of the discussion is Senate Bill 76, the centerpiece of immigration legislation in this short session of the Indiana General Assembly. The measure aims to tighten the enforcement of federal immigration laws at the local level in Indiana, mandating cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by state and local law enforcement, government bodies, employers, colleges, and other entities.

Concerns over the measure, which passed the Indiana Senate in late January and at press time was advancing through the House, prompted the ICC to submit a letter to lawmakers calling for a balanced approach.

The ICC – the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana – urged caution with “continued legislative efforts to amplify indiscriminate immigration enforcement” without also seeking to “protect legal and unauthorized immigrants from unjust discrimination and unnecessary deportation, preserve family unity, and promote humane legislative solutions.”

“In Indiana, we cannot justify a one-sided approach to immigration policy that is only focused on enforcement,” said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, in his letter to members of the Indiana House. “Immigration enforcement is not intrinsically unjust, but we argue against its indiscriminate application.”

The letter notes that Indiana is home to 137,000 unauthorized immigrants, citing data from the Washington, D.C.-based Migration Policy Institute. More than 60 percent have lived in the state at least a decade, and nearly 40 percent have called Indiana home for more than 20 years.

“The Indiana Catholic Conference argues that the humane solution for many of these long-time residents is not deportation but, rather, earned pathways to citizenship,” the letter states. “This is not an endorsement of open borders or illegal entry but rather a prudential moral judgment applied to the challenges of today.”

The national discussion over immigration has escalated dramatically in recent weeks, as unrest in Minneapolis and the killing of two anti-ICE protesters there have sparked widespread outrage and backlash. Now, in Indianapolis, Senate Bill 76 has generated fierce debate at the Statehouse.

Its author, Catholic lawmaker Senator Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne), has emphasized that the bill – which has the backing of the Indiana Sheriffs' Association – will ensure proper training for local law enforcement officers in helping to carry out federal immigration policies. This is training for which they have “repeatedly asked,” she told her fellow lawmakers during a February 2 hearing on the measure in the House Judiciary Committee.

Dozens of people – most opposing the bill – waited for hours to testify on the measure. Fueling the debate was an amendment that had just been added to the bill by its House sponsor, Representative J.D. Prescott (R-Union City), which introduced language from a similar bill he had authored in the House that failed to get a hearing.

Prescott's House Bill 1039, dubbed the FAIRNESS Act, was a stronger anti-sanctuary measure that White House Border Czar Tom Homan called the “gold standard” for state-level immigration action. Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita lauded the addition of the amendment, which further aligns Senate Bill 76 with the immigration policies of President Donald Trump.

Following five hours of emotional debate, the amended Senate Bill 76 passed the House Judiciary Committee on a 9-4 vote.

Days after the hearing, the committee's ranking minority member, Representative Victoria Garcia Wilburn (D-Fishers), reflected on the implications of the measure moving forward at the Statehouse. The Catholic lawmaker, who was among those voting no on the bill, said that “President Trump has even called into question” some of the tactics that are reflected in this type of legislation.

“(The president) has admitted that perhaps as a country we have been too aggressive over the last two months in how we are pursuing those whose legal status in this country is questionable,” Garcia Wilburn said. “The stories that have come out of states where this has been implemented



Wikimedia

The Indiana Statehouse is seen in an undated photo. A bill that passed the Indiana Senate in late January and is making its way through the House calls for stricter enforcement of illegal immigration in the state.

have been difficult to watch, irrespective of what side of the aisle you land on.”

“I want to encourage all of our fellow Catholics to seek the heart of Jesus during this time, which can be so divisive, and to relentlessly pursue unity,” Garcia Wilburn added.

In recent months, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and several of Indiana's bishops, including Bishop Rhoades, have addressed the growing concern and unrest over the country's immigration policies and practices.

“The recent shootings of protesters, attacks on government officials, and continued indiscriminate deportations of so many of our neighbors have sparked outrage and grave concern about the integrity of our nation,” wrote Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in a January 29 statement. “Have we lost our moral compass? Have we sacrificed our sense of human decency for unbridled freedom without obligations or restrictions?”

Archbishop Thompson noted that “the path to lasting peace and unity, Pope Leo XIV reminds us, is predicated on the building of bridges rather than walls.”

“Given the escalating violence of both rhetoric and brutality in our society, it seems that both humility and empathy are gravely

lacking among us as the growing lack of civility continues to spiral out of control,” Archbishop Thompson continued. “Rather than recognizing one another as brothers and sisters, members of the same human race or family, the extremes of polarization are causing us to hold one another in suspicion as some type of threat or enemy.”

In the ICC's recent letter to lawmakers in the Indiana House, Mingus echoed many of the sentiments expressed by Archbishop Thompson and his brother bishops. He noted that the USCCB has offered the perspective of the Catholic Church on immigration matters for decades, and that Catholic social teaching is particularly relevant given today's challenges.

“Sacred Scripture emphasizes ‘welcoming the stranger,’ while Catholic social doctrine also acknowledges the responsibility of sovereign nations to justly regulate national borders and flows of immigration,” Mingus wrote. “These principles are not mutually exclusive. We should acknowledge that immigration enforcement does achieve beneficial outcomes: Violent criminals and drug dealers have been deported, and child trafficking rings have been discovered and broken up. However, these good outcomes must be pursued in a way that is just, prudent, and proportionate.”

In a recent ICC podcast, Mingus further discussed what he termed as a “very complex situation.” He said that the Catholic Church agrees with “the importance of immigration enforcement that helps to protect public safety, preserve the common good, and that is a just use of federal resources.”

“The pressure point comes down to when that net is cast so broadly over a problem that has been decades in the making,” Mingus said during the podcast, which he co-hosts with Roarke LaCoursiere, the ICC's associate director.

The ICC's leaders call on the Catholic faithful to remain engaged on these issues at this pivotal time.

“We really hope that you stay updated, and that you take some time to read and reflect on what our bishops have said on these important matters,” Mingus said. “And we hope that you pray for our state and our country as we above all try to move toward peace and unity.”

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.

The History and Significance of Ash Wednesday

BY D.D. EMMONS

(OSV News) – Among the beautiful, meaningful and solemn ceremonies of the Catholic Church is the gathering of the faithful on Ash Wednesday.

This special day begins our Lenten journey. It is the start of 40 days of prayer, penance, and almsgiving as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. But why does Lent begin on a Wednesday, and what is the significance of ashes?

Ash Wednesday was added to the liturgical calendar well after the 40-day penitential season of Lent became the norm throughout the Latin Church. Lent, in turn, was universally established only after the early Church sorted out the date of Easter. The issue was clarified at the famous Council of Nicaea in 325 where “all the Churches agreed that Easter, the Christian Passover, should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon (14 Nisan) after the vernal equinox” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1170). The vernal (spring) equinox generally falls on March 21, thus the date of Easter in the Western Church can

occur anytime between March 22 and April 25.

The word “Lent” is from an Old English term meaning “springtime,” and by the second century the term was being used to describe the period of individual fasting, almsgiving, and prayer in preparation for Easter. Among the Christians of the first three centuries, only those aspiring for baptism – the catechumens – observed a defined period of preparation, and that time lasted only two or three days.

The idea of Lent being 40 days in length evolved over the next few centuries, and it is difficult to establish the precise time as to when it began. Among the canons issued by the Council of Nicaea, the Church leaders, in Canon 5, made reference to Lent: “and let these synods be held, the one before Lent that the pure gift may be offered to God after all bitterness has been put away, and let the second be held about autumn.” The language of this canon seems to validate that Lent, in some fashion, had by the fourth century been established and accepted by the Church. While the exact timing and extent of Lent both before and after the Nicaea council is unclear, what is clear from historical docu-

ments is that Christians did celebrate a season of Lent to prepare themselves for Resurrection Sunday and used a variety of ways to do so.

That Lent evolved into a period of 40 days in length is not surprising, as there are numerous biblical events that also involved 40 days. Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving instructions from God for that number of days (see Ex 24:18); Noah and his entourage were on the Ark waiting for the rains to end for 40 days and 40 nights (Gn 7:4); and Elijah “walked 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of God, Horeb” (1 Kgs 19:8).

Mostly, though, the 40 days of Lent identify with the time Our Lord Jesus spent in the desert fasting, praying, and being tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1-11). “By the solemn 40 days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (Catechism, No. 540).

There is, therefore, evidence that by the end of the fourth century Christians were participating in a 40-day Lent before Easter. The dilemma now became how to count the 40 days. In the Latin Church, six weeks were used to identify the Lenten period, but one doesn't fast on Sundays, so six

Sundays were subtracted and there remained only 36 fasting days. In the early seventh century, St. Pope Gregory I the Great (pope from 590-604) resolved this situation by adding as fast days the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday before the first Sunday of Lent. Thus the Lenten 40-day fast, or the Great Fast as it was known, would begin on a Wednesday.

Initially, people fasted all 40 days of Lent. They ate one meal a day and only an amount of food that would sustain survival. But the Church taught, and people believed (then as now), that fasting is not about what we eat, it is about changing hearts, interior conversion, reconciliation with God and others. It's about living in an austere way, giving from our abundance to the poor. St. John Chrysostom (347-407) explained it this way: “Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works! ... If you see a poor man, take pity on him! If you see an enemy, be reconciled to him! If you see a friend gaining honor, envy him not! If you see a handsome woman, pass her by!” (Homily on the Statutes, III.11).

The Church has long used ashes as an outward sign of grief, a mark of humility, mourning, penance, and mortality. The Old Testament is filled with stories describing the use of ashes in such a manner. In the Book of Job, Job repented before God: “Therefore, I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:6). Daniel “turned to the Lord God, to seek help, in prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes” (Dn 9:3). Jonah preached conversion and repentance to the people of Nineveh: “When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes” (Jon 3:6). And the Maccabees army prepared for battle: “That day they fasted and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their garments” (1 Mc 3:47).

Ashes were imposed on the early catechumens when they began their preparation time for baptism. Confessed sinners of that era were also marked with ashes as part of the public penitential process. Other baptized Christians began asking to receive ashes in a manner

similar to catechumens and penitents. Christian men had ashes sprinkled on their heads while ashes were used to trace the cross on the forehead of women. Thus the use of ashes as the sign of penance, in readiness for Easter, was becoming a Church-wide practice.

During the papacy of St. Gregory the Great, the practice was further expanded and is mentioned in the sixth-century Gregorian Sacramentary. Around the year 1000, Abbot Aelfric of the monastery of Eynsham, England, wrote: “We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the new that men who repented of their sins bestowed on themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent, that we strew ashes upon our heads, to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten feast.” This same rite of distributing ashes on the Wednesday that begins Lent was recommended for universal use by Pope Urban II at the Synod of Benevento in 1091.

So, when we go to that early Mass on Ash Wednesday morning and receive the blessed ashes on our forehead, we are repeating a somber, pious act that Catholics have been undergoing for over 1,500 years. As “The Liturgical Year, Septuagesima,” by the Benedictine Abbot Gueranger, written in the middle decades of the 1800s, puts it: “We are entering, today, upon a long campaign of the warfare spoke of by the apostles: 40 days of battle, 40 days of penance. We shall not turn cowards, if our souls can but be impressed with the conviction that the battle and the penance must be gone through. Let us listen to the eloquence of the solemn rite which opens our Lent. Let us go whither our mother leads us, that is, to the scene of the fall.”

Like all those before us, we unhesitatingly embrace this invitation to sanctity, this time to turn away from sin. We are part of that great cloud of witnesses who through all the ages have donned the ashes, publicly acknowledging that we are Christians who have sinned and seek to repent. We acknowledge that “we are dust and to dust we shall return.”

D.D. Emmons writes from Pennsylvania.

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A Litany for Peace in Troubled Times

God the Father, have mercy on us.
 God the Son, have mercy on us.
 God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
 Holy and blessed Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
 In these days of trouble, fear and sorrow, have mercy on us.
 In our despair at the violence that seems to fill the world, have mercy on us.
 In the pain of lost life and shattered hopes, have mercy on us.
 In our grieving for those who have died, have mercy on us.
 In our compassion for all who are bereaved, have mercy on us.
 From the history of violence that corrupts every society and our own,
 O Lord, deliver us.
 From the greed and injustice that divide the world into rich and poor,
 O Lord, deliver us.
 From the urge for revenge that adds to the cycle of violence, O Lord, deliver us.
 From the fear that grows into hatred for people who are different,
 O Lord, deliver us.
 From being too quick to attribute blame and demand retribution,
 O Lord, deliver us.
 From believing ourselves safe through anything other than your grace,
 O Lord, deliver us.
 From dying suddenly and unprepared, O Lord, deliver us.
 For those who plan and carry out acts of violence, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For all who seek justice and ensure the rule of law, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For the victims of war and terrorism everywhere on earth, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For all who live in fear, and for refugees from violent regimes,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For courage to resist demonizing and dehumanizing others, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For wisdom in choosing the paths of peace, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For solidarity with the suffering of the dispossessed, Lord, hear our prayer.

For generosity in sharing fairly the world's resources, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For respect in conversation with people of other faiths, and none,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For honesty in knowing and confessing the sin in our own hearts,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For grace to change and be changed as you forgive us, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For rescue workers and medical teams treating those injured in conflict zones,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For aid agencies and their workers, responding with practical care in dangerous
 places, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For the leaders of all the nations, looking for ways to work together beyond fear
 and suspicion, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For people of goodwill, responding generously to the needs of suffering
 communities, Lord, hear our prayer.
 For all who have friends and family involved in areas of conflict and disaster,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For communities that are terrified by missiles, snipers, vigilantes, or death squads,
 Lord, hear our prayer.
 For the vulnerable and defenseless in conflict zones, for the children, the elderly,
 the disabled, the sick: Lord, hear our prayer.
 For Christ to bring all the peoples of the world into one flock with one shepherd,
 we pray to you, O God.
 For Christ to bring healing and comfort for those we love who are sick or in
 mourning, we pray to you, O God.
 For Christ to lead us into the paths of peace, writing the law of love on our hearts,
 we pray to you, O God.
 For Christ to bring us, with all who have died in faith, to a joyful resurrection,
 we pray to you, O God.
 God of all peace, have mercy on our broken and divided world, and on your
 people who cry out to you for healing, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Photos by Lisa Kochanowski

Worshippers gather at the Cathedral of St. Matthew in South Bend for a Holy Hour for Peace on Wednesday, February 5. The parish hosted the Holy Hour in response to Bishop Rhoades' call to pray for peace amid the ongoing strife in the U.S.



HOLY HOUR, from page 1

people of all ages to remove themselves from the rhetoric of hate, finding solace at the cross.

"As we pray for peace, let us also ask our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, to intercede for our nation," Bishop Rhoades said in his statement. "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," noted Bishop Rhoades in the statement.



"Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words."

– POPE LEO XIV



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Members of the Seven Sisters Apostolate Take Time for Silence, Prayer at Annual Retreat

BY ANDREA KRUMANAKER

Members of the Seven Sisters apostolate throughout northeast Indiana gathered for their annual retreat at St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington on the weekend of January 31-February 1. The retreat of the theme was silence.

The Seven Sisters apostolate is a Catholic ministry that invites women to offer faithful, hidden prayer for their parish priests through a weekly Holy Hour. When seven women each commit to praying on a designated day of the week, the parish pastor is spiritually supported by uninterrupted prayer throughout the entire week.

Each Holy Hour is ide-

ally prayed in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, placing Christ at the center of the apostolate's mission. Through this quiet and consistent commitment, Seven Sisters seeks to strengthen priests and support the life of the Church through intercessory prayer.

To support this mission, participants are invited to attend an annual retreat designed to foster spiritual renewal and deeper communion with the Lord. According to Lindsey Arnold, who organized the retreat, silence was chosen intentionally to reflect the heart of the Seven Sisters apostolate, which emphasizes prayer that is hidden, faithful, and rooted in trust in God's work.

"The heart of what we do as sisters is to offer hidden prayer for the life of the Church, so it only

felt fitting, when planning a time for these sisters to step away from their busy lives and receive from the Lord's abundant goodness, that we would stay in line with the heart of the apostolate and offer ample time for prayer and silence," Arnold told Today's Catholic.

Throughout the retreat, participants spent extended time in silence, Eucharistic adoration and Holy Mass. Arnold said silence allows space for the Holy Spirit to work personally in each woman's life, allowing God's grace to be received rather than forced.

Stephanie Kingsley, a Seven Sisters participant, said the retreat offered a rare opportunity to step away from daily responsibilities and distractions.

"It was a total gift. I am blessed to be a stay-at-home mom to four lovely young children, and to have this time to step away in silence made the voice of the Lord so much clearer," Kingsley said.

Kingsley said the weekly commitment to praying for priests has not only supported her parish pastor but has also helped deepen her own prayer life. By intentionally setting aside time each week, she said she has grown in her relationship with the Lord and in her ability to pray for priests more faithfully.

Another participant, Rose Hillman, echoed the importance of silence, particularly in a culture that often leaves little room for quiet reflection or prayer.

"In our secular world, we don't take the time to be silent. The retreat was a gift," Hillman said, adding that retreats offer renewal through prayer and the sacraments by helping participants reconnect with the foundations of their faith. She said the experience



Photos by Andrea Krumanaker

Father Caleb Kruse, parochial vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Fort Wayne, holds the Book of the Gospels during Mass for members of the Seven Sisters apostolate at St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington on Saturday, January 31.

reinforced the value of stepping away from daily routines in order to focus more fully on God.

During the retreat, Bishop Rhodes celebrated Mass and offered a homily reflecting on the theme of the faithful remnant, drawing from both the Old and New Testaments. He described the remnant as the humble and faithful through whom God continues His work, pointing to figures such as the Blessed Virgin Mary as a model of humility and openness to God's will. He emphasized the Beatitudes as the heart of Jesus' teaching and a roadmap for Christian life, describing them as a program of life for the Church. He encouraged participants to allow the Beatitudes to shape not only their actions but also their interior dispositions, calling people to live according to the logic of God rather than the values of the world.

Hillman said the homily af-

firmed what many in the apostolate experience through their commitment to prayer for priests.

"The fruits we don't always see, but we know they are there. Our priests repeatedly have told us they feel our prayers. They know that they're sustained by the prayers, and Bishop said that he knows his physical stamina is affected by all our prayers," she said.

At the heart of the retreat, and the Seven Sisters apostolate, is devotion to the Eucharist. Arnold said the rhythm of silence, prayer, and communion helps the ladies receive from the Lord and carry those graces back into their families and parishes.

Arnold said: "I pray they leave with deeper peace in their hearts and greater confidence in God's providential care of them and those they love [and] that they would be radiant light of the Lord's love in the world – for the praise of His glory!"



Members of the Seven Sisters apostolate pose with Bishop Rhodes following Mass at a retreat at St. Felix Catholic Center in Huntington on Saturday, January 31.

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Ablaze Retreat Invites Young Adults to 'Be Still'

BY ELYSE MALDONADO

More than 60 young adults representing 23 parishes across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend gathered for a weekend retreat organized by Ablaze Mission, a young adult apostolate based in South Bend. The retreat offered a time of respite and an opportunity to find peace in Christ amid life's storms. This year's theme, "Be Still: Jesus Calms the Storm," resonated with many young adults eager to disconnect from the fast-paced world and spend time with peers navigating similar life stages while striving to grow closer to God.

Young adult life is often transient, marked by milestones such as graduations, new jobs, relationships, marriage, and everything in between. The retreat provided a space for attendees to step away from the busyness of daily life and rest in the Lord.

Held at the Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center in Plymouth from Friday evening, January 30, through Sunday afternoon, February 1, Ablaze Mission's second annual Young Adult Retreat encouraged a weekend of quiet reflection, surrendering control, and recognizing God's power to act amid the storm.

"Retreats are critical for everyone because they provide time to step away from daily life, make honest assessments of our relationship with God, discern adjustments, and reenter life walking more closely with Him," Sean Allen, founder and president of Ablaze Mission, told *Today's Catholic*. "It is important to have retreats specifically designed for young adults because they are in a unique stage of life that differs from both youth and older adults."

Allen, Jesse Iamarino, the assistant mission director of Ablaze Mission, and several other young adults formed the retreat planning team. Praise and worship throughout the weekend was led by a team under the direction of Christian Quilon, an admissions counselor at the University of Notre Dame. The Saint Hildegard Project also provided music for Sunday Mass.

By and large, the retreat felt timely for attendees.

"One of the most important parts of the retreat planning process is selecting the theme," Iamarino told *Today's Catholic*.



Photos provided by Ablaze Mission

More than 60 attendees pose for a photo in the Ancilla Domini Chapel during the Ablaze Mission Young Adult Retreat, which was held in Plymouth during the weekend of January 30-February 1.

"The team spent time in prayer, along with talking to their peers, asking for the Holy Spirit to guide us to a theme that would speak to the young adults where they are and in the trials they are facing."

The retreat schedule included personal prayer, talks, small-group discussions, testimonies, Mass, Eucharistic adoration, confession, and opportunities to connect with peers from across the diocese. Speakers included Father Brian Isenbarger, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Garrett; Father Mark Gurtner, vicar general of the diocese; and Michael Nolan, founder of *Shadow on the Water*, a full-time missionary, husband, and father. Local speakers Katie Klee and Tommy Kostielney also led separate men's and women's sessions addressing life transitions and experiences unique to each group. In addition to the principal talks, retreatants had opportunities for prayer minis-

try and silent reflection. Other activities included a trivia night, evening socials, and morning and night prayer.

Father Gurtner opened the retreat on Friday evening with a talk titled "Calm in the Chaos." He encouraged retreatants to nourish their faith through prayer, emphasizing that faith is both a gift from God and a choice that must be continually nurtured. His talk led directly into adoration, giving retreatants the opportunity to reflect on their personal prayer journeys and consider ways to deepen their relationship with God.

In his Saturday morning talk, "Living in the Present Moment," Father Isenbarger invited retreatants to reconsider what it truly means to live in the "now." He explained that viewing life as a series of disconnected moments can be exhausting. "If we frame our lives in terms of moments," he said, "what we inevitably do is move from one

moment to the next, and that's how we find ourselves worn down."

Drawing from Scripture, Father Isenbarger emphasized that Christians are called to live in the tension of the present, where God is already present but not yet fully revealed. "To live in the present moment is to live in relationship," he said, encouraging retreatants to place their anxieties in God's care and trust Him even in life's storms.

On Saturday evening, retreatants gathered in the Ancilla Domini Chapel at Lindenwood for adoration, praise and worship, and prayer teams who prayed for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon each retreatant. For many, this was a powerful experience.

Emily Horn, a recent convert to Catholicism who was encouraged to attend the retreat by a member of the planning team, reflected, "I think it was the closest I've ever felt to the Holy Spirit."

Attendee Elijah Coburn-McDonald described the retreat as a grounding experience.

"I haven't had time to spend a whole weekend in prayer and spiritual community in quite a long time," Coburn-McDonald told *Today's Catholic*. "Being on the retreat really grounded me and my ability to hear God. Life is crazy, and if we don't make time for dedicated silence, God

can easily be drowned out by the noise of the world."

On Sunday morning, Nolan delivered the final talk, "Returning to the Storm." He challenged participants to let go of self-reliance, describing himself as "the wrong guy for the job," a reminder that discipleship does not depend on personal strength or qualifications. Nolan emphasized that Christians are called to spiritual poverty and obedience rather than control.

"You actually have everything you need," Nolan said, explaining that God works most powerfully when people surrender their weakness to Him. Nolan encouraged retreatants to trust that God is at work even when they feel unprepared and reminded them that true peace comes not from escaping the storm but from remaining reliant on God within it.

Coburn-McDonald said Nolan's talk particularly resonated with him.

"Mike Nolan's talk was without a doubt my favorite," he told *Today's Catholic*. "Hearing him speak about 'not being the right person for the job' directly addressed certain hitches I'd

"It is always such a privileged place to be walking with young adults, to see their faith in the Lord, and to see what their trust in what He can do."

JESSE IAMARINO

been experiencing in prayer and helped me realize things I'll be taking to prayer moving forward."

Reflecting on the weekend, Coburn-McDonald added, "I went into the retreat with some big questions that I wanted

answered. I learned that while the questions weren't bad, they weren't the right ones right now. My focus needed to be on God and my pursuit of Him above any of these external worries I had been carrying."

Iamarino left the retreat inspired by its fruits, saying, "It is always such a privileged place to be walking with young adults, to see their faith in the Lord, and to see their trust in what He can do."

For many attendees, the retreat offered clarity and reassurance, leaving them with a renewed sense of God's presence in their lives. As Horn reflected, "I feel recommitted to growing in my faith. It was a good reminder that we are never alone in doing so."



Michael Nolan, founder of *Shadow on the Water*, speaks to attendees on the topic, "Returning to the Storm."

Silence in Place of the Homily at Daily Mass



TRUTH AND LIGHT

LEONARD J. DELORENZO

Imagine a daily Mass where, after the Gospel is proclaimed, the priest simply sits. The congregation sits. Silence fills the space – not an uncomfortable void, but a presence. After perhaps two minutes, the priest rises and continues with the prayers. What might such a practice offer in our word-saturated world?

We live surrounded by constant noise. News alerts interrupt our meals. Podcasts accompany our commutes. Social media scrolls endlessly before sleep. Even our churches have embraced verbosity, as if more explanation equals more faith. But the Church's own law recognizes what we've forgotten: The homily at daily Mass is recommended, not required.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal makes this explicit – while Sunday homilies are mandatory “and may not be omitted without a grave reason,” on weekdays the homily is merely “recommended, especial-

ly on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter Time” (GIRM, No. 66).

This isn't a loophole but a liturgical wisdom: Daily Mass can breathe differently than Sunday Mass.

More striking still, that same instruction prescribes silence as part of the Liturgy of the Word itself (GIRM, No. 56). The Second Vatican Council went further, listing “reverent silence” among the primary ways the faithful achieve “active participation” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, No. 30). This isn't passivity but engagement – silence as a deliberate liturgical act.

Pope Benedict XVI developed a “theology of silence,” arguing that the word of God can only “find a home in us” through interior quiet. “The great patristic tradition teaches us,” he wrote, “that the mysteries of Christ all involve silence. Only in silence can the word of God find a home in us, as it did in Mary, woman of the word and, inseparably, woman of silence” (Verbum Domini, No. 66).

The mysteries themselves require stillness to penetrate our hearts. Without it, the proclamation remains external – informational rather than transformational.

Cardinal Robert Sarah pressed this further, warning that we've created a “dictatorship of noise.” “God is silence,” he wrote, “and in a world generating so much noise, seeking moments of silence has become both harder and more necessary than ever before.” When even the liturgy becomes dominated by human words, we lose the sense that God is the primary actor.

The irony runs deep: We fill the Mass with explanations of God's word while suffocating the space where that word might actually take root. This is especially true at daily Mass, which attracts those already committed – people who return day after day not for instruction but for encounter. These are disciples hungry for the Bread of Life, coming before work, during lunch breaks, in the quiet hours of early morning.

For Sunday Mass, where the homily remains essential, Pope Francis offered gentle correction about brevity. The homily “should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a speech or a lecture,” he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*. It should be like “a mother's conversation” – warm, personal, focused on one nourishing idea. When Sunday

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All Sin Is Personal, but All Sin Is Social



PUBLIC SQUARE

KENNETH CRAYCRAFT

You are likely reading this column either just ahead of Ash Wednesday or a few days into Lent. In my adult lifetime, I don't think there's ever been a time when we the people have been more in need of repenting our collective sins.

This is not to suggest that it's the most morally corrupt era in U.S. history. Surely nothing can compete with the onerous institution of chattel slavery that prevailed for some 250 years. But, with this exception, we may be living in the most morally corrupt era in U.S. history. And if we do not repent of our sins, our lives together will continue to be degraded into warring sects and factions.

It's a dangerous game to cherry pick verses from the Hebrew Bible about blessings (or curses) of nations and apply them to the United States. In the first instance, such a practice tends to feed the pernicious myth that

the United States is a chosen nation, or a Christian nation, or otherwise privileged by God over other nations. Catholic Christians should reject such ideas, as they tend toward idolatry, if they are not idolatrous notions in themselves.

But while it is a mistake to invoke God's specific admonitions to Israel as applying anytime or anywhere else – especially to invoke God's alleged favor – we can still learn what happens when a people turns its back on God.

First, however, we must dismiss the idea that we suffer from some mythical “national” or “institutional” sins. As with ancient Israel from time to time, it is not a “nation” in need of repentance but rather the moral agents – the people – who constitute that nation. Institutions don't sin. The people who administer them do.

Of course, when corruption, duplicity, and violence are as widely spread and deeply entrenched as they are in the current era, it's tempting to blame our current malaise on institutional structures. But only people have moral agency, and thus only people can be corrupt,

CRAYCRAFT, page 13

We Are Called by God to Follow His Law, Not Our Own



THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

The Book of Sirach, the source of this weekend's first reading, is part of a collection of biblical writings that in their very origin teach an important lesson.

As various political, economic, and individual fortunes changed, collapsed, and reversed among God's people in the decades after the Babylonian Captivity, and as new alien empires seized the Holy Land, Jews emigrated from the homeland of their ancestors to other places. Understandably, many went to places where opportunities were more plentiful.

While certainly some of these emigrants not only survived but possibly did well in their new surroundings, one thing was lacking. They were not living in a society in which all acknowl-

edged the God of Israel. In fact, their adopted culture could be hostile to the ancient Hebrew tradition.

So, to record their ancient religious beliefs, and very importantly to pass these beliefs along to oncoming generations, Jewish scholars composed books such as Sirach.

The essential point in Sirach was that human reason and honoring God are not ideas at odds with each other. Obeying God, logic can prove, is the way to order, peace, justice, and reward in human life.

St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians is the source of the second reading. Paul, who would have been no stranger to this notion of a compatibility between divine revelation and human wisdom, as he was so well trained in Judaism but also exposed to Greek philosophy, added a new dimension to the story. Revelation is of a reality that human knowledge often cannot comprehend.

He refers to “hidden wisdom” and “mystery.” We as humans

simply cannot understand all. In great love, God therefore has revealed to us what otherwise we would never know.

The Gospel reading is from St. Matthew. The Lord expounds on the meaning of several of these rules for life given by God to Moses on Sinai.

This process reveals two important factors. The first is that God's law is permanent and unchanging. This is logical. It touches very basic instincts and conditions among humans, all attached deeply and intrinsically to human nature itself, and, as such, it is not open to qualifications or to changes that humans might wish to make.

Second, here the Lord speaks with authority. He defines and explains the law of Moses. Jews did not regard the law of Moses as merely a set of principles personally composed by Moses. Rather, Moses was the medium through which God revealed the divine law to humanity. God is the author of the divine law. He is the author of the commandments. He is the lawgiver.

By defining this law and making it more precise, the Lord acts as God. It is an important revelation of the identity of Jesus.

Reflection

This weekend looks to the past weeks, and feasts, as background, and it looks ahead. In both cases, it confronts us with the realities of our nature. It places us in relationship with God. It shows us that God loves us with a divine love.

At Christmas, the Epiphany, and at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, the Church celebrated the events of salvation achieved for us by Christ, but it also told us about the Lord. It identified the Lord.

In these readings, the Church tells us that to wander away from God's law and follow our instincts or our limited reasoning is folly. Humans, impaired by Original Sin, always have trouble understanding this lesson.

Before too long, the Church will lead us into Lent. It will be a time in which we strengthen ourselves to know our limita-

tions and conform ourselves to what we are, human beings, but humans destined for eternal life with God, in Jesus.

READINGS

Sunday: Sirach 15:15-20; Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

Monday: James 1:1-11; Psalms 119:67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76; Mark 8:11-13

Tuesday: James 1:12-18; Psalms 94:12-15, 18-19; Mark 8:14-21

Wednesday (Ash Wednesday): Joel 2:12-18; Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalms 1:1-2, 3-4, 6; Matthew 9:22-25

Friday: Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday: Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalms 86:1-6; Luke 5:27-32

The Purposeful Walk of an Everyday Pilgrim



**SIGN,
WONDER,
SOWER, SEED**

MOLLY JO ROSE

Many years ago, on my way to class, I drove through snowy, unplowed side streets, past sorority houses quiet in morning light and family homes just starting to wake up to breakfasts and sleepy children. I nosed my winter beater carefully toward school and came upon an old woman, shoulders rounded as she slowly advanced down the snow-trampled sidewalk.

While it wasn't dangerously cold, there was something so measured about her pace, I worried she was struggling until I noticed a certain busyness of her hands gathered in front of her where they swiftly worked the beads of a rosary. By then, I had slowed my car considerably to ask if she needed help. She looked up, smiled, and triumphantly thrust her rosary in the air as if to say, "Good morning! I'm fine! Don't worry! I'm praying for you, too!"

The image of her on that blue cold February morning taking what was likely her daily morning Rosary walk glows white hot in my memory. In her, I saw a portrait of who I wanted to be – an old lady brightening her neighborhood with the regular practice of prayerful walking.

Happily, I have part of her nature down as I am a walker. I walk through snow and rain and temperatures exceeding ninety. I walk up mountains, along busy roads, and through drifts of snow. I walk in spite of bunions, tight calves, and back pain because I know if I don't walk, life will become too big and chaotic. St. Augustine is attributed with saying, "Solvitur ambulando" – it is solved by walking. Done with intention, the propelling of our

feet forward both solves problems and becomes prayer. There is something about walking that both intensifies prayer and is prayer. No other physical activity can claim the spiritual history of the pilgrimage.

There are times as an everyday pilgrim when a rosary swings in front of me just as it did in my mentor's hands. But often, I walk without beads, knowing that footsteps accumulate reflection, that movement can be prayer. What is it about walking that encourages a curious bubbling in the mind and heart, a flowing stream that anxieties and hopes pool into, pulling our feet along in its current? When I walk, I have the certitude that I am in the right place at the right time. I am fully present to myself, the world around me, and the things God wants me to consider. I adjust to terrain and nod to the group of gentlemen I see walking several mornings a week. They, too, are somehow a part of my prayer, a reminder of the community God put me in, all moving toward Him at our own pace with our own stride.

In walking, we put one foot in front of the other. The body and mind work together to handle questions like: Is that black ice ahead of me? Where should I cross the street? How can I help my daughter with that friendship? Which route will return me home in about a half hour? How will that work issue resolve? Don't step in that. When I walk, I am thinking about nothing and everything all at once.

The rhythm of walking is persistent, methodical, and metronome-like. Even when others join me, walking is prayerful. My walking partners keep pace side by side with me. Our arms swing loosely in unison. Facing forward, we do not see each other, but we hear each other better than we would anywhere else. The repetitive monotony of

footfalls encourages us to bring up things we have shoved down, that we are worrying over. The open air makes these things less tangled and ugly. Often, my walking partners and I are silent, inhalation and exhalation our only exchange. We speak in the soft swish of our coats and in the slap of our shoes on the pavement. The prayer of walking expunges the record of our days.

There is no weather we cannot walk in. There is a special grace in the crunch of leaves and the careful shuffle we do across ice. Snow and rain are no match for us. Occasionally, I listen to music when I walk, and through my earbuds, Regina Spektor sings, "I have a perfect body because my eyelashes catch my sweat," meaning God made us so perfectly, He even considered a tool to manage water coming down on us. As in life, we can walk through anything if we suit up properly.

And so, every day, I suit up. I wrap myself in warm clothes, wind the rosary in my pocket around my fingers, and I walk. The streets of my neighborhood know my feet. They have absorbed my unique pitter and patter, the way I stretch my gait longer or shorter to keep pace with a walking partner or with my thoughts. I know every house I pass. The cracks in the sidewalks are my familiars. Someday maybe, you will see me, my measured pace walking toward you. Imagine me with a rosary or without one, but know my feet and hands are praying for you. My back has not rounded yet with age, but mile by mile, I am walking toward becoming her, that everyday pilgrim who still inspires me to hold up my community in prayerful movement.

Molly Jo Rose is a writer living with her husband and three children in Fort Wayne, where they are parishioners at St. John the Baptist. She walks a lot and writes a little.

before, arriving early to settle their hearts, approaching the silent time as prayer rather than awkward pause. This isn't emptiness but fullness, not absence but presence.

"Silence is more important than any other human work," Cardinal Sarah insisted, "for it expresses God." In our words, we express ourselves – our thoughts, our insights, our understanding.

Leonard J. DeLorenzo is a professor of the practice in the McGrath Institute for Church Life and concurrent professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

role; he deepens it. His preparation focuses on proclaiming the readings with care and celebrating the Eucharistic Prayer with reverence. After the Gospel, he gives his people the gift of quiet – a chance to hear not just with their ears but with their hearts.

This requires courage from priests and preparation from the laity. Pastors must trust that silence itself is ministry, that their people don't need their words every day to be fed. The faithful, in turn, must come prepared – perhaps reading the Mass readings at home the night

DELORENZO, from page 12

preaching becomes sharper and more concentrated, it carries greater impact.

But daily Mass offers a different gift entirely. Here, silence becomes mystagogy – a means of entering more deeply into the mystery rather than explaining it from the outside. The regular faithful don't need the basics repeated; they need space to let the proclaimed word sink into the soil of their hearts.

A priest who embraces silence at daily Mass doesn't abandon his

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for February 15, 2026

Matthew 5:17-37

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A: Time is getting short. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

UNTIL	HEAVEN	AND EARTH
PASS AWAY	LETTER	BREAKS
SCRIBES	NOT ENTER	LIABLE
ANGRY	ALTAR	RECONCILED
COURT	GUARD	THROWN INTO
LAST PENNY	LUST	TEAR IT OUT
CITY	GREAT KING	EVIL ONE

HARD WORDS

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

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CRAYCRAFT, from page 12

duplicitous, and violent. But those corrupt, duplicitous, and violent moral agents can and do use institutional structures as their means to foment these human sins.

This is why, even though sin is the personal failure of moral agents, we can identify "social sin," in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, in his 1984 apostolic exhortation "Reconciliation and Penance." While sins are the actions of individual persons, the cumulative effect of those actions have immediate social implications, he explains.

He writes: "By virtue of human solidarity ... each individual's sin in some way affects others." Thus, one can speak of a "communion of sin, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down ... the whole world," he continues. "In other words, there is no sin, not even the most intimate and secret one ... that exclusively concerns the person committing it."

A second social implication of personal sins is more immediate and measurable. They are sins that "by their very matter constitute a direct attack on one's neighbor," he observes.

In the U.S., we can see this, for example, on both sides of the immigration issue. One side ignores the social harm done by unfettered illegal immigra-

tion, especially of organized career criminals. The other side condemns all immigrants in a blanket expression of nationalist xenophobia. I don't need to cite any data or news stories for the reader to recognize the cumulative effects of these sins on particular communities in the U.S.

After having described these "social sins," Pope John Paul II is quick to point out that they do not absolve individuals of their responsibility. "To speak even analogically of social sins must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved," he explains. Rather, recourse to "social sin" is "meant to be an appeal to the consciences of all, so that each may shoulder his or her responsibility seriously and courageously in order to change those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations."

All sin is social sin because all sin implicates all persons in a given community. This season of Lent is the time for Catholic Christians to demonstrate to the world that reconciliation can only come through repentance – not of the "nations" sins but of our own.

Kenneth Craycraft is a professor of moral theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati and author of "Citizens Yet Strangers: Living Authentically Catholic in a Divided America" (OSV Books).



A crucifix made of ice stands on the outdoor altar near the entrance to the St. Olaf Ice Chapel at the University of Notre Dame.



Photos by Michael Caterina/University of Notre Dame

Students hold candles and sing during the outdoor Mass at Notre Dame on Monday, February 2.

NOTRE DAME, from page 1

At the conclusion of the service, Father Haake thanked the student builders for their creativity that provided such a beautiful setting. He apologized to those who weren't able to receive Communion. He said they had prepared about 1,600 Communion hosts and ran out because the size of the crowd exceeded their expectations. "We were thinking hundreds [of attendees]. We had thousands," he said.

The ephemeral structure is named St. Olaf Ice Chapel, in honor of the Viking warrior saint who served as king of Norway and converted that nation to Christianity. The Mass was celebrated at an ice

altar that stands just outside the chapel entrance.

Besieged by snow and cold this winter, some Notre Dame undergraduates have responded by embracing the season and channeling their creativity into snow construction.

The outdoor Mass came about after seniors Martin Soros and Wesley Buonerba recruited volunteers and built the ice chapel. They were inspired by another student, sophomore Liam Devine, who earlier completed a large igloo nearby.

The three young men and many of the other construction volunteers are residents of the Coyle Community in Zahm Hall. Mostly former residents of Fisher Hall (demolished in 2024), they are living in Zahm this academic year, until the new

Coyle Hall opens in August.

Devine, a sophomore biology major from Tampa, Florida, started building the igloo several weeks ago. Friends and dormmates helped. They froze water in recycling bins to create heavy ice blocks for the walls and roof, then sealed the blocks with snow and cold water.

"Dealing with the winter cold is a lot better when you're building an igloo," said Devine, who suffered some frostbite during the work. The snow house includes a skylight, a central pillar to support the roof, and a frill of icicles above the doorway. Once the igloo was complete, Devine and his workmates added a power setup and strings of mini-lights and are now able to relax and play video games inside.

Inspired by Devine's project,

Soros and Buonerba developed plans for the ice chapel.

"Wesley and I were talking about (an ice project) for a while. We decided to just get started," Soros said.

Their efforts also attracted volunteers. Soros is a civil engineering major from Maryland, Buonerba is an architecture major from Michigan, and both are resident assistants. They contacted Campus Ministry and helped with planning for the Mass.

What were the biggest construction challenges? "The cold and lack of sleep," Soros said.

The young men say the ice building projects have helped forge new friendships within their residence hall. And students and employees from across campus have stopped by to watch the work, take photos,

and thank them for spreading joy.

"It all started out as a fun little Friday night project with friends," Devine said. "It's made an already close dorm community even closer."

For students accustomed to the mild Midwestern winters of recent years, this one has been an eye-opener. South Bend has received more than 75 inches of snow since the first flakes fell in November.

After the nighttime Mass, there were hot chocolate stations across the quad, offering a welcoming warmup for worshippers as they made their way home across the snowy campus.

Margaret Fosmoe is an associate editor of Notre Dame Magazine. This article was reprinted with permission.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

**24th Annual Tolton Mardi Gras Fundraiser
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

SOUTH BEND – Before Lent, y'all drop by St. Augustine Catholic Church, 1501 W. Washington St., for a "Taste of New Orleans," with authentic gumbo, dirty rice, second line music, king cake, silent auction and – as always – fun surprises! Proceeds support cause of sainthood for Venerable Father Augustus Tolton.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

**Singo! Ladies Night
5:30 – 9:30 p.m.**

FORT WAYNE – Ladies, this is your night out! Join our 18+ ladies-only evening at The Fairfield, 1510 Fairfield Ave., for tacos, margaritas, and musical bingo, all while supporting moms experiencing homelessness and their babies.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

**St. Patrick Church Annual Fish Fry
4 – 7 p.m.**

WALKERTON – St. Patrick's Church, 811 Tyler St., is having the annual fish fry. Dine in and carry out available. \$15 for adults and \$8 for kids 6-10 years of age; 6 and younger are free. Dinner includes fish, two sides, a drink, and dessert. No all-fish carryouts are available. Carryouts can only be purchased in the car line. Fish is prepared by Tyner 100F Lodge 821. This is not a ticketed event.

**St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Drive-Thru Fish Fry
4:30 – 7 p.m.**

FORT WAYNE – Knights of Columbus Council 12379 at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel, 11337 U.S. 27, will be hosting a drive-thru fish fry. A dinner includes fish, sidewinder potatoes, coleslaw, apple-sauce, and a roll all for \$13.00. Call Chuck at 260-450-4016 with any questions.

**Immaculate Conception - Auburn K of C No. 9186 Lenten Fish Fry
5:30 – 6 p.m.**

AUBURN – Dine in, carryout, or drive-thru available at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 500 East 7th St. Adults \$14, children under 12 \$7. All proceeds go to Auburn's Women's Care Center.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

**Simple Meal, Mass for the Sick
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

HUNTINGTON – In the tradition of Blessed Father Solanus Casey, please join us at the St. Felix Catholic Center, 1280 Hitzfield St., for a simple meal of soup and bread on Saturday, February 21, 2026 at 11 a.m. Recitation of the Holy Rosary will be at 12:30 p.m. followed by Mass for the Sick at 1:00 p.m. There will also be a special blessing for a bust sculpture of Blessed Father Solanus Casey, donated by the Fort Wayne Knights of Columbus. These events are free, but donations are appreciated.

Victory Noll Sister Alma Bill Dies at 104

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Sister Alma Bill of the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, a resident of Heritage Pointe of Warren, died on the afternoon of Friday, January 30, at the age of 104.

Sister Alma entered the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on October 30, 1947, and made first vows on August 5, 1950. She served in the missions in California, Florida, Missouri, Arizona, and Indiana. Sister Alma returned to Victory Noll in June of 2010 to volunteer in various ways.

Sister Alma was born in Arcadia, Wisconsin, on March 24, 1921, to Joseph Bill and Ida Schank Bill. She is preceded in death by four brothers, Simon, Linus, Werner, and Alban Bill, and by five sisters, Armella Bill, Bernetta Bill, Eileen Bill, Mary Margaret Runkel, and Therese Sgarlata. She is survived by her Victory Noll Sisters with whom she shared life and community for 78 years.

A vigil service and Mass of the Resurrection for Sister Alma were held on Friday, February 6, at the Applegate Chapel at the Heritage Pointe of Warren.

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne

- Tamara Bowers, 53, St. Charles Borromeo
- Barbara Davies, 90, St. Charles Borromeo
- Stephen Cross, 87, St. Charles Borromeo
- Patricia Stoodly, 91, St. Charles Borromeo
- Al Bowser, 90, St. Patrick Arcola
- Daniel Carmody, 25, St. Vincent de Paul
- Janet Sirois Houser, 61, St. Vincent de Paul
- Rosemary Mohlman, 87, St. Vincent de Paul
- William Van Osdale, 92, St. Vincent de Paul
- Donald Page, 92, St. Vincent de Paul
- Thomas Ryan, 84, St. Vincent de Paul
- Kerry Sliger, 62, St. Vincent de Paul
- Ann Turnwald, 77, St. Vincent de Paul

Huntington

- William A. Covey, 91, SS. Peter and Paul

Mishawaka

- Dolores A. Good, 94, Queen of Peace
- Tinh Vu, 79, St. Bavo

New Haven

- Patricia Ann Federspiel, 90, St. John the Baptist

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Speaker Ready to Challenge, Inspire Men at Rekindle the Fire

BY SCOTT WARDEN

Anyone who has seen Father Larry Richards on TV, heard him on the radio, or listened to his podcast knows that the priest of the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania, isn't one to pull punches when discussing the faith. Life's too short, and the stakes are too high to do anything but proclaim the truth – loudly and strongly, but with love.

"Jesus didn't go around tiptoeing through the tulips," Father Richards, who is well known for his EWTN radio shows "The Reason for Our Hope" and "Father Knows Best," told Today's Catholic. "Jesus said very challenging things, but he said everything because of love." And love, he added, "can sometimes be a kick in the butt."

Father Richards aims to provide that spiritual kick during his speech to men of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend at this year's Rekindle the Fire Conference, which will be held on Saturday, February 21, at the Century Center in South Bend. Along with Father Richards, other keynote speakers include Dom Quaglia and Robert Rodgers. Bishop Rhoades will close the conference with a Q&A session before celebrating Mass for attendees.

Father Richards has been speaking at men's conferences for more than two decades, and while he acknowledges that the times have changed – social media has erupted, polarization has gotten worse, the proliferation of internet pornography has grown exponentially – he said, "my message has always been the same ... and I'm strong in giving it."

His message to men is simple: "Be disciples of Jesus."

"I'm the spiritual director of Catholic Men's Leadership



Father Larry Richards

Alliance. ... When we started it, one of the guys, just a couple of years ago, said, 'Father, there's all this stuff going on. What are we going to do?' I said, 'We do what Jesus did.' And what did Jesus do? He died on the cross. And that's the absolute opposite of what most men want to do. So, I say, we're not going to go kill and kick



Nick Meyer

Bishop Rhoades speaks at Rekindle the Fire in Fort Wayne on Saturday, February 22, 2025. He is joined by Father Brian Isenbarger, left, and Father Jay Horning, who served as the conference's masters of ceremonies. This year's Rekindle the Fire conference will be held on Saturday, February 21, in South Bend.

some butt; we're going to die on the cross for people, and we're going to be Jesus."

To do that in the context of a family, Father Richards said, men "have to know who they are. They have to repent and they have to give their lives for others. It's about putting your wife and kids in front of you."

Men need to be challenged, Father Richards said – in how they serve God and their families, but also how they approach their

lives and their faith. For example, he shared a story about how a video of him speaking at an event in Texas went viral on social media. This was during Pope Francis' pontificate, he said, and the Holy Father was being widely criticized by some Catholics. The way Father Richards tells it, "All I was doing was telling the guys

that you've got to support the pope." But the reason the video went viral wasn't necessarily the message but the passion with which he spoke.

Too often, Father Richards said, the Church equates kindness and gentleness with love. His message is different.

"When I'm speaking at confer-

ences, if someone ever asks me to write in their book, I'll say, 'OK, what's your name?' And they'll say, 'Joe.' And I'll say, 'Joe, be a saint. God bless, Father Larry.' And then I hand it back to them and say, 'or go to hell.' There is no in between."

Commitment to living a life in Christ isn't easy, Father Richards said. "Oh, no, no, it's going to kill you. It's going to be much harder. And that's the whole point."

Father Richards said he spoke at the first men's conference in Boston, and organizers asked him to return for the 20th anniversary conference last year. "I went up there and all I did was yell at a bunch of men for an hour, and I really kicked their butt. And I got a standing ovation. They're not used to being talked to as men. So, I talk to them as men."

Father Richards like to quote from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, in which the Apostle of the Gentiles writes that God did not give us a cowardly spirit but one that makes us strong, loving, and wise. "All three of those things must be present if we're living by God's power and not by our power," Father Richards said. "And masculinity today is a masculinity of the world. Masculinity has to be from the God who created us, and Jesus became one of us to show us how this must be

2026 Men's Conference

The Rekindle the Fire men's conference is an opportunity to be inspired and rejuvenated in your faith. This one-day event (Saturday, February 21) includes opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, adoration, and fellowship with other men who want to grow in their faith. The agenda includes hearing from three nationally recognized speakers on topics of our Catholic faith. The conference concludes with a holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Rhoades. Tickets are available at rekindlethefire.net. General admission is \$60, and student tickets are \$30.

lived. So, we don't look at heroes. We don't look at sports figures. We don't look at anybody. I even say, don't even just look at a saint, look at Jesus first. And, yes, these different saints imitated Him in different ways. Great. That person is one saint. You're not called to be him. You're called to be you. So, look at Jesus and let Jesus tell you what He wants you to be as a man. And it's all going to be the same: We've all got to be people of love, because God is love. Jesus is the incarnation of love. We must be love in a world that doesn't know love. It's just that simple. But love is strong; it's not weak."

Father Richards acknowledged that Catholic men can oftentimes be passive in their practice of the faith. Conferences like Rekindle the Fire, he said, help those who attend surround themselves with faithful, virtu-

ous men. Passivity, he said, "is a tactic of the Evil One, because the devil tries to keep us alone and isolated, because if a wolf is going to go after a sheep, it goes after the sheep that is by itself, not one in the midst of other men. So, the devil likes to tell us: You can do this yourself; you can be a lone ranger; you can be strong by yourself. ... He wants you to be by yourself, and that's where people fall off and look at porn and get themselves into trouble. It's when they're alone when the devil gets them. But when men come and be with men, that's where they find their strength. Stop listening to the Evil One. Tell him to go to hell and show up at this conference."

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